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The Impact of United States of America College Education on the Japanese Students' Keigo Toward Their Senpai

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The Impact of United States of America College Education on the Japanese Students' *Keigo*

toward Their *Senpai*

By

Manami Matsuoka

A Thesis submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Science

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The Impact of United States of America College Education on the Japanese Students' *Keigo*
toward Their *Senpai*

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This thesis paper has been examined and approved by the members of the students' committee.

Advisor

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Abstract

The purpose of the study is to research whether studying abroad experiences in the United States of America affect *keigo* usage of Japanese college students toward *senpai*. 58 Japanese college students in Japan and the United States of America completed a 25-item survey. Honorifics usage of both Japanese college students in Japan and international Japanese students in the United States were tested. The Results revealed that study abroad experiences influenced/changed international Japanese students' original communication style and *keigo* usage toward *senpai*.

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Chapter One

Statement of the Problem

Introduction

Japan ranks as one of the greatest economic powers of the world, and it has many job opportunities for people all over the world. The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (2017) announced that the number of Japanese nationals studying overseas in 2016, based on their annual statistics, reached to 96,641. According to the annual report in 2017, the number of Japanese students studying abroad increased by 12,185 compared to the previous year, and the United States of America had 20,159 Japanese students which increased by 1,483 people compared to 2016. The United States of America became the most popular country for Japanese study abroad programs followed by Australia (9,472) and Canada (8,875). Japanese international students in the United States of America are exposed to American culture, and they need to adjust to the new culture and lifestyle to be successful as an international student. Additionally, Japanese international students need to navigate between the strict honorific rules of the Japanese language alongside the more relaxed rules of English.

Keigo is a honorific, formal expressions of Japanese language which play a functional role by showing not only respect and politeness toward superiors and others but also binding groups of Japanese people in harmony. Understanding the different meanings of *keigo* is crucial for people to use it appropriately. For example, the meaning of *senpai* - *kohai* relationships provides the following context (Iwasaki, 2010): *Senpai* is senior or someone more knowledgeable or experienced and *kohai* is junior or someone opposite of *senpai*. The relationships prepare Japanese students to be successful members of Japanese society. *Keigo* is

essential for not only Japanese people but also it is needed for others to fully understand the culture and build relationships with Japanese people (Nishina & Fan, 2009).

Choices of polite expressions by Japanese and American people (Hill, Ide, Ikuta, Kawasaki & Ogino, 1986) and honorific usage of Japanese language by American international students after their studying abroad experiences in Japan (Iwasaki, 2010) are addressed in previous research. In addition, Ueno found changes of Japanese middle school students' identities as a result of living in the United States of America (2001). However, research of *keigo* usage among Japanese college students in both Japan and America toward *senpai* does not exist. While Japanese college students in Japan stay in the Japanese traditional environment, international Japanese college students in America explore new cultures and traditions while adjusting to the environment. Thus, the purpose of this study is to investigate whether studying abroad experiences affect *keigo* usage of Japanese college students toward *senpai*, specifically students studying abroad in the United States of America. Definitions and previous research about characteristics/virtue of Japanese people, *keigo*, *senpai-kohai* relationships in Japan, and intercultural differences between Japan and the United States are introduced in the literature review.

Research Questions

This research attempts to answer questions about the impact of study abroad in the United States on Japanese International students' communication style. The research focuses on Japanese International students' *keigo* usage toward *senpai*.

1. Do International Japanese students who study in the U.S. use polite spoken language and behave toward senior or older students in same ways as Japanese students in Japan?

Significance of the Study

The findings of this study will help studying abroad program offices in Japan and the United States understand whether a study abroad program and experience induces changes in Japanese students' communication styles. This study may help international Japanese students comprehend the process of cultural adaptation and adjust in a new environment. They may be able to learn what changes to expect in their communication styles after their study abroad experience.

Definition of Terms

Keigo refers to respectful or honorific, humble and, polite expressions of Japanese language (Davies & Ikeno, 2002).

Kohai is junior or someone opposite of *senpai* who enters the same school or company after their *senpai* (Arai, 2004).

Senpai is a high-status person in terms of age, knowledge, skill, experience (Arai, 2004)

Wa refers "peaceful and harmonious relationship with others" (Davies & Ikeno, 2002).

Chapter Two

Literature Review

Characteristic/Virtue of Japanese people

Japanese people are often described as “quiet” and “followers” in the global world because the most important aspect of Japanese society is 和 *Wa* (to make harmony or a peaceful relationship with others). *Wa* is based on these Japanese virtues: modesty (謙虚 *kenkyo*), silence (沈黙 *chinmoku*), actual intention and superficial words (本音と建前 *honne to tatemae*). Davies and Ikeno (2002) stated that *kenkyo* is one of the important and expected aspects of proper Japanese behavior despite people’s social status in Japan. As a Japanese proverb, 出る杭は打たれる (*Deru kui wa utareru*), explains, it is risky to stand out or display talents or knowledge openly because it is viewed as arrogant. Hence, “silence” (*chinmoku*) is a communication style representing hesitation or thoughtfulness. The purpose of *chinmoku* is to find smooth and appropriate ways to communicate without offending others. *Chinmoku* can also be considered a type of ambiguity 曖昧 (*aimai*), because unclear statements or answers in Japan come from politeness and consideration for others or situations. Moreover, *aimai* is used to explain the concept 本音と建前 *honne to tatemae*: actual intentions and superficial words. Davies and Ikeno (2002) write “The Japanese do not like to express themselves in a straightforward manner for fear that it might hurt others’ feelings, so they are usually careful about what they say and often use *tatemae* in order to get along well with others” (p.116). These virtues are considered as necessary to be a thoughtful person, a good member of Japanese society, and for building peaceful relationships. Japanese children acquire appropriate behaviors and language usage

through interacting with non-family members under supervision. Knowing when and how to choose appropriate languages and behaviors toward people with various backgrounds is an important skill in Japan.

Keigo

Children in collectivist countries begin learning appropriate language and behaviors from family members, neighbors, other children, and people living closer to them (Hofstede, 2001). Japanese children learn how to show respect toward others by observing interactions with others who have different backgrounds and social statuses. Davies and Ikeno (2002) explain that *keigo* is categorized into three types: *teineigo*, *sonkeigo*, and *kenjogo*. *Teineigo*, as a type of polite and expressive language is usually introduced to foreign students at the beginning of Japanese language studies, because it is considered inoffensive, and it is so used daily in Japanese society. Japanese children also learn *teineigo* after acquisition of *futsugo*, an informal or plain form of speaking. *Futsugo* is spoken among family members, people who have close relationships, and also by superiors toward their subordinates. *Sonkeigo*, honorific expressions or language, describes superiors' behaviors in two ways: using plain form of a superior's action verb which is added the pattern "o - ni naru" or the suffix *-reru* or *-rareru* depending on what kind of action verbs that the superiors do and specific action verbs such as *irassharu* (go, come, exist, be, live, and stay), *ossharu* (say and speak), and *nasaru* or *sareru* (do). The last honorific form *kenjogo*, humble expressions or language, is used to describe a speaker's own action toward his superior(s). There are two ways to use *kenjogo*: transforming informal forms of action verbs with "o - suru" and remembering special humble forms such as *mairu* (go and come), *mousu* (say and speak), and *itasu* and *sasete itadaku* (do) (Davies & Ikeno, 2002).

Davies and Ikeno (2002) further explain that *keigo* is addressed superiors or people who are respected, and commonly used when people talk to strangers or people who are older than one's self. Moreover, it is a standard for company employees to address their bosses using *keigo* out of respect for bosses' positions of authority. Thus, *keigo* is also a form which does not regard one's true feelings for others. It is important for Japanese youth to learn how to be good members of Japanese society who are well-versed in etiquette and common sense. Proper etiquette is demonstrated by practicing *keigo* with superiors.

Senpai-Kohai Relationships

Japanese elementary school students do not acknowledge the need to use *keigo* as often because they do not have an obvious hierarchical system yet; however, they need to understand *keigo* once they enter junior high school where they begin to develop *senpai - kohai* relationships (Davies & Ikeno, 2002). *Senpai* refers to someone who is either older or superior in ability, and *kohai* refers to someone who entered the same school or company after their *senpai* (Arai, 2014). The *Senpai - kohai* relationships provide Japanese students opportunities to learn Japanese hierarchical systems at school, and train them to get along with their *senpai* by using appropriate *keigo*. The *senpai - kohai* relationship continues throughout Japanese lives, even after their retirement from work or graduation from school. The hierarchical systems in Japan plays a strong and important role for the *senpai - kohai* relationship. According to Midooka (1990), four elements that dictate superiority in Japan are age, position, experience, and wisdom and knowledge. It is common to respect and take care of people who are older than one's self because they have lived longer and are considered having more experiences, wisdom, and knowledge. People in higher social status are also looked up to because they are expected to have more knowledge, education, or power. Additionally, younger people can earn respect and become

superiors regardless of age if they have more experience or wisdom and knowledge in a particular group. Midooka (1990) further explains that the hierarchy affects Japanese people's communication behaviors. People who are in lower social ranks are often considered having less knowledge, wisdom, and experience, and so Japanese youth put more value on their superiors' opinions rather than their own and use *keigo* toward their superiors to show their respect. More importantly, younger people or those who are in low social statuses are discouraged correcting or acting against their superiors and their opinions because these behaviors are impolite.

Ono and Shoji (2015) show that freshmen students who are at the lowest rank in junior high school and high school are affected the strongest by *senpai*, because they are followers of their *senpai*. Having a good relationship with *senpai* is extremely important for *kohai* students, especially at junior high school and high school. *Senpai* are supposed to take care of *kohai* by leading and teaching them rules within a group. In return, *kohai* would do errands for *senpai*, for instance to clean and prepare rooms or fields for club activities in order to receive *senpai's* favor. In addition, *Kohai* greet and talk in respectful manners to *senpai*, and acknowledge *senpai's* leadership roles and their followership roles. Japanese people are and will be influenced by *senpai-kohai* relationships throughout their life in Japan, and the usage of *keigo* toward superiors and *senpai* is important for their success in life.

Intercultural differences between Japan and America

The *senpai-kohai* relationship is not only promoted by the Japanese hierarchical system, but also other key components such as collectivism, 和 *Wa*, and わきまえ *Wakimae* also describe Japanese society.

Collectivism, or the idea of group consciousness, is considered an important virtue in Japanese society (Davies & Ikeno, 2002). The important values of collectivism are "Modesty,

Moderation, Thrift, [and] Equality in the distribution of rewards among peers, and Fulfillment of other's needs [sic]" (Triandis, Brislin, & Hui, 1988, p. 277). People from collectivist cultures tend to be cautious of family importance and use family titles or roles to present themselves as if their families are themselves (e.x. introducing themselves by their family name). They emphasize ingroup activities such as family celebrations because caring for each member of a group is extremely important. Although Japan is a family-centered culture, the style shifted toward work-centered which has enabled Japan to become one of the greatest economic powers in the world. Both diligence and motivation are expected in collective business organizations (Sugiman, 2010). For example, while Japan was still in the process of overcoming restoration from World War II, Japan earned a reputation as the "miracle of the East", because of its high economic growth period in the 1960s. One of the reasons for the internationally successful economic growth was the diligence of Japanese people and high motivation to work.

Sugiman (2010) further explains that Japanese companies promote collectivism in society further by providing organizational systems called the four Imperial treasures of Japan: lifelong employment, seniority-based wages, joint enterprise cooperative, and small group activities of employees in a company. Each system indicates the collective nature of Japanese society and promotes bonding as a team to achieve the same goals. For example, the lifelong employment system gives employees security that they do not have to worry about getting fired or finding another stable job again, the seniority-based wage system promises equal opportunities for all the employees to reach the same salary at certain ages, the joint enterprise cooperative system allows employees to improve their working rights and systems with their company, and the small group activities of employees keep and strengthen bonds among employees inside and outside of the work place. That is, everyone is encouraged to build *Wa* with one another to work cooperatively

in the Japanese society. Thus, collectivism promotes not only *Wa*, peaceful and harmonious relationship with others (Davies & Ikeno, 2002), but also binds people from different groups, such as clubs, families, or companies, to support Japan's economy.

Japanese people tend to prioritize *Wa* to have good relationships even though they may put up with unreasonable situations which contrast with their opinions or feelings (Midooka, 1990). To keep the harmony of the group and peaceful relationships with others, people tend to hide their true thoughts and avoid direct expressions that may possibly damage relationships (Davies & Ikeno, 2002). It is natural for *kohai* to feel greater pressure to agree with their *senpai* to build good relationships with them. *Kenkyo* is also a key in keeping *Wa* with others. A famous proverb, 能ある鷹は爪を隠す *Nou aru taka wa tsume o kakusu*, teaches that great people are modest and hide their power (Kajita, 2009), and it is expected that educated Japanese people display appropriate manners without showing off talents, social status, or power. To be considered an educated person in the Japanese society, it is also important to choose appropriate behavior each time.

Wakimae is the concept of having a sense for socially-agreed-upon norms which apply to verbal and nonverbal behavior and an automatic selection of an appropriate linguistic forms and/or actions (Hill, Ide, Ikuta, Kawasaki, & Ogino, 1986). Hill et al. (1986) also note that “discernment” covers concept of *wakimae*, and politeness is decided by discernment and volition in any language. Discernment is based on various factors such as perceived emotional distance between an addressee and a speaker in different contexts. Japanese people should know how to use *wakimae* to have and maintain good relationships with others. According to Hill et al.'s study, identifying similarities and differences of politeness systems between Japanese and American English, confirms that both languages reflect levels of politeness based on

discernment; however, Japanese politeness is more clustered than American politeness. As Japan traditionally uses *keigo* depending on context and relationship types, Japanese language has certain rules for *keigo* usage; Japanese people select levels of politeness based on *Wakimae*/discernment. In contrast, selecting polite wording by American people depends on individuals. The following part of this section will be introducing individualism and American culture.

Individualism values “Freedom Honesty, Social recognition, Comfort, Hedonism, and Equity [sic]” (Triandis, Brislin, & Hui, 1988, p. 277). Priority is given to an individual’s needs, preferences, will, or rights, not giving priority on decision making to others (Triandis, Brislin, & Hui, 1988). Ueno (2001) explains that individualism in America is based on independence, and the idea of “self” is necessary because American people view each person as different. In contrast, Japanese consciousness is dependent on groups to ensure comfortability, stability, and success. Individualism in the United States of America and collectivism in Japan have been discussed by many scholars in previous literature, in which power distance further explained, the two concepts.

Power distance is the level of inequality or influence on interpersonal power formed in hierarchal systems (Hofstede, 2001). Hofstede (2001) found that Japan ranked as thirty-three and United States of America ranked as thirty-eight among fifty-seven countries in his “Power Distance Index Values for 50 Countries and Three Regions” research (p. 87). The result indicates that Japan has larger power distance than the United States of America. According to Oetzel et al. (2010), people from large-power distance culture accept hierarchal systems and different treatments depending on social status or ranks, which explains the focus on harmony in Japanese society requiring politeness and respect toward superiors and *senpai*. Expressing disagreement

with superiors is fearful for subordinates because disagreement can be offensive and disrespectful, and it can destroy harmonious relationships with superiors. A parent in countries where power distance is large teaches inequality between a child and the parent (Hofstede, 2001). Children are also expected to apply the same pattern with their teachers and other adults. At school, children are expected to respect their teachers and follow the teachers' instructions without speaking with anyone unless their teachers ask them to speak. Maintaining harmony is also a virtue in the collectivistic classroom; thus, conflicting with others and hurting others should not occur. Education in most collectivistic countries tends to be teacher-centered, and students' academic success depends on teachers' excellence because the collectivistic cultures contain large power distance. It is crucial for children to learn the hierarchy system at school and apply the same attitude at work. Conversely, people from small-power distance cultures such as the United States of America, expect to receive equal rights and social statuses (Oetzel et al., 2010). They do not need to have levels of politeness to make *Wa* with their bosses, superiors, or teachers. Although teachers have control and authority over students at school, teachers and students expect to give and receive equal treatments from one another. Students are allowed to speak up to teachers freely in contrast with students in collectivistic cultures. The education in small power distance countries employs student-centered learning. Teachers expect students to ask questions, express their opinions and even disagree with the teachers because academic success is based on individual students' excellence (Hofstede, 2001). Davies and Ikeno (2002) explain that the concept of *Wa* is negatively perceived as "no opinion" or "no identity" in other societies, such as the United States of America. Because opinions of Japanese people are largely affected by others, Davies and Ikeno further argue that Japanese people may have difficulties sharing their opinions in a group of non-Japanese people. Western negative perceptions are

furthered, because cooperative attitudes are more highly valued in Japan than the strong, inflexible, insistent personalities that are valued in Western countries.

Any person is considered a “foreigner” or “outsider” by members of a host country when traveling in another country or navigating a different culture. Kim (2001) explains that people stay in different countries for a long term are categorized as immigrants and people who stay for a short term as sojourners. Newcomers start their lives as “outsiders” or “strangers” in unfamiliar environments, but they may also become “insiders” of the host environment through cross-cultural adaptation. The concepts of cross-cultural adaptation consist of assimilation, acculturation, coping and adjustment, and integration. Assimilation is acceptance of a different culture and acculturation is acquirement of the different culture. Coping and adjustment means individuals’ reactions to cross-cultural challenges, and integration means social participation in the culture. These concepts require the outsiders to engage in encoding (initiating messages or responding to others) and decoding (receiving and processing communicative messages) for enculturation to be a member of the new society. Hofstede (2001) states that smooth intercultural transaction promotes cultural adaptation in the alien culture; however, lack of cultural adaptation causes a sense of discomfort, stress and helplessness that might affect their physical health. Meanwhile newcomers experience cross-cultural adaptation through verbal/nonverbal and intentional/unintentional communication with the local individuals and the environment. To fit in, newcomers must give up their cultural identities, including their mother language (Kim, 2001). International students must go through the cultural adaptation process and balance their cultural identities and language in order to navigate themselves in the host environment.

Study abroad experiences promote the acquisition of language which is associated with social norms and situations in a host culture (Iwasaki, 2010). People need to adapt to a frame of the host culture when expressing one's self in different languages (Hofstede, 2001). Iwasaki's study of American students' language choices influenced by studying abroad in Japan showed that the students' usage of informal forms increased; however, their understanding of when to use more formal forms of language also increased. Another example of cross-cultural adaptation is Ueno's (2001) study on 15-year-old Japanese students who came to the United States of America due to their families' businesses. Ueno interviewed six female and five male Japanese students to address potential changes in their personalities or their language abilities. Ueno's findings indicate that the students are in a transitional position between their original Japanese identities and American identities. They maintain their Japanese traditions and American traditions at the same time with both agreement and disagreement regarding both traditions. On the other hand, Ueno also emphasizes that the students develop American characteristics such as not being afraid to make mistakes when sharing their opinions. Living and studying in America influences Japanese students' minds and personalities; it indicates that detraditionalization occurs in people who live overseas.

According to Kim's (2001) explanation of deculturation, cross-cultural adaptation allows outsiders to be insiders of a new environment as the new culture replaces their original culture. However, it not only influences their psychological and social experiences, but also their mother language. The aspects of their original cultures are lost while assimilating into a new host environment. Once they acquire the appropriate behaviors, thoughts, and feelings in the new culture, their original culture and appropriate behavior in their original environment are not the same. Zhang and Goodson (2011) found English proficiency and social interactions with

American people are the most frequent psychological adjustment predictors of international students. Zheng and Goodson further argue that the higher English proficiency international students have, the easier they can fit in their host culture. High levels of English help international students interact with American people easier. Good communication experiences in English and American manner with Americans accelerate their acculturation process to their American culture. In order to succeed in their daily and academic lives, international students need to use appropriate English language and American communication styles rather than their original communication styles.

Theoretical Framework

Tinto's (1975) social integration theory, symbolic interactionism, and cultural adaptation theory will guide this study. Social integration theory assumes that student persistence in college depends on academic success and degree of social integration into the institution's social system. Successful interactions through working with their peers, faculty, and administrators increase the students' academic integration and consequent the student persistence. Japanese international students in the U.S. are exposed to a new educational and social system. The students need to integrate into the environment which differs from their original environment to be academically successful while building attachments to the university and social experiences with people in the host culture. Social integrationists assume that culture exists at a meta level that is, all cultures are similar and the university merely mirrors society.

The symbolic interactionist perspective focuses on a micro-level analysis of how people act toward one another and make sense of their daily lives (Schaefer, 2015). Herbert Blumer (1969) explains how people share meanings and come to understand terms, actions or events specifically and similarly through interactions with one another. Japanese students develop *keigo*, a staple of appropriate Japanese manners, through daily practice in Japan. When the Japanese students start their lives in America, they need to learn a set of appropriate American manners from local people, understand meaning and terms, and practice with others. American educated Japanese students are exposed to a different culture, lifestyle, language, and communication style through interactions with people in the host environment.

The cultural adaptation further explains learning and understanding process of new custom and communication styles in order to fit in a new environment. Kim (2001) suggest acquiring a host culture can change newcomers' original communication styles including their

mother language and behaviors. Their original Japanese communication style may be affected by the new culture and may change. Thus, their *keigo* usage toward their *senpai* differs from Japanese students in Japan. Therefore, the following hypothesis is put forward for this study:

H₁: There is a difference between Japanese students in Japan and Japanese students in America in their polite spoken language “*keigo*” toward their *senpai*.

Chapter Three

Research Methods

Based on the literature review and theoretical framework on social integration, cultural adaptation, and symbolic Interactionism, the hypothesis is listed. The researcher uses quantitative research method to accomplish this study. *T*-test is used to test the hypothesis because comparison between international Japanese students in America and Japanese students in Japan would indicate differences made in international Japanese students by study abroad experiences. The topics reviewed in the following section include procedure, participants, measures, and data analysis.

Procedures

With IRB approval (see Appendix A), Japanese international students in America were recruited through the Japanese Intercultural Association (JIA) at Minnesota State University, Mankato via private messages on Facebook. Japanese college students in Japan were recruited through the Japanese international students' words of mouth and cooperation from Seinan gakuin university in Japan. The researcher conducted an online survey which took approximately 15 minutes to complete on *Qualtrics*. Participants received an invitation message with the online survey link. Accessing the link directly took the participants to the informed consent page and the survey questions on *Qualtrics*. The survey questionnaire is found in Appendix B.

Participants

Participants for this study were Japanese college students in America and Japan. 68 total respondents in Japan and the U.S. participated in this study; however, six respondents in the U.S. were eliminated from the analysis because they did not fulfill the minimum one semester study abroad experience at American institutions, and four respondents in Japan were also eliminated

from the analysis because they did not complete the survey. A total of 58 participants were considered for the analysis.

Measures

A 25-item survey questionnaire was used to collect data. The questionnaire consisted of five questions pertaining to demographics, seven general questions, and 13 questions pertaining to Japanese politeness. Honorifics usage and degree of politeness were assessed using the Japanese politeness scale which the researcher developed. The politeness items were measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The questionnaire was comprised of several survey items such as “I call older Japanese students’ name followed by *san*.”, “I do not mind if younger Japanese students disagree with my opinion.” and “I tend to praise older Japanese students.” The participants were given the following instructions: *Read each statement and answer how you generally feel about interacting with older/senior students from Japan in the current country you live in.* Items 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 11, and 12 were reversed scored. The greater the score on this scale, the greater level of honorific usage. The Cronbach’s alpha for the politeness scale was .707. The mean and standard deviation in this study are presented in Table 2 (see Appendix C).

Data analysis

Missing data was replaced with multiple imputation procedure using LISREL software. The researcher used SPSS computer software to analyze the data. To test the hypothesis, t-test was used. The means and standard deviations of the politeness variables and scale were calculated for both Japanese students in Japan and Japanese students in the United States of America.

Chapter Four

Findings

Participants in the study were 19 males (61.3%) and 12 females (38.7%) in America and 8 males (29.6%) and 19 females (70.4%) in Japan. There were 12 respondents who were 20 to 21 years old (38.7%), 10 respondents who were 22-24 years old (32.3%), and 9 respondents who were 25 years old or older (29.0%) in the U.S. There were 10 respondents who were 20 to 21 years old (37.0%) and 17 respondents who were 22 to 24 years old (63%) in Japan. Further demographic variables were also collected to examine school affiliation, fields of studies, understanding of American English language, frequency of social interactions with American students, and number of America friends in the entire sample. The results are found in Table 1 (see Appendix C).

The hypothesis stated that studying abroad experiences affect *keigo* usage of Japanese college students toward *senpai*. To test this hypothesis, the politeness scores from Japanese students in America were compared to the scores from Japanese students in Japan. Results of the t-test revealed a significant difference between the two groups ($t = -2.79, p = .007$) with the international Japanese students reporting being less polite ($M = 38.4, SD = 5.67$) than the Japanese students in Japan ($M = 42.7, SD = 6.13$). The Levene's test for the equality of variances was not significant ($F = .15, p = 0.7$), so equality of variances can be assumed.

Chapter Five

Discussion/Conclusion

The results of this study indicate significant differences regarding polite language usage and behaviors toward their *senpai* in international Japanese students in the U.S. and Japanese students in Japan. International Japanese students speak less politely with their *senpai* and treat their *senpai* more casually and equally compared to Japanese students in Japan. Acquiring appropriate American communication style which does not require different language and behaviors toward their *senpai* influenced Japanese students' appropriate interactions with their *senpai* that developed in Japan.

The finding can be understood under cross-cultural adaptation theory (Kim, 2001) inferring newcomers' communication styles including their first language would change by assimilating into their new culture. In order to fit into American culture, international Japanese students need to speak English and adapt to American communication styles through interactions with American people. Bulmer's (1969) symbolic interactionism further explains that international Japanese students learned meanings of appropriate actions, terms, or events in America when communicating with American people. Tinto's (1975) social integration theory suggests that successful interactions with faculty, classmates, and staff at educational institutions support students' academic success. The current study can be understood that being academically successful requires international Japanese students to perform their American communication styles with people in their institutions. Fulfilment of integration into institution's social system promotes international Japanese students' assimilation into American culture and affects their original communication styles toward their *senpai*. Thus, international Japanese students' communication styles including *keigo* and appropriate behaviors toward *senpai* are affected by

study abroad experiences in America through cultural adaptation, the process of understanding and sharing meanings with others, and social integration into American educational institutions.

With the findings, the study is significant because international Japanese students who are originally from a collectivistic and large power distance culture might be more influenced in their communication styles than international students from individualistic and low power distance cultures. Because Japanese international students got over the huge cultural gaps between Japan and America, the impacts in Japanese international students' communication styles might be larger than the communication changes in other international students from similar cultural backgrounds to America.

The current study is limited in designs by a sample of Japanese college students in the United States as opposed to other countries, self-reporting by participants, sample size, and relying on survey methodology over more qualitative approaches. Further research regarding gender differences would be beneficial for gender comparison on polite behavior. Moreover, additional data collection on whether the participants have belonged to sports club activities in the past may be beneficial for clarifying relationships between participants and respectful behavior toward *senpai*. As a continuous research, future research whether international Japanese students' Americanized communication styles would need to be readjusted in Japan after their study abroad experiences would be also beneficial. In addition, conducting research on communication style changes of international students from both collectivistic and individualistic cultures would provide further insights on levels of cultural adaptations.

Appendixes

Appendix A: Institutional Review Board Approval Letter



December 13, 2018

Dear Kebba Darboe:

Your proposed changes to your Minnesota State University, Mankato Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved research ([1323235-4] The impact of United States of America college education on the Japanese students' polite spoken language (Keigo) toward their Senpai) have been accepted as of December 13, 2018. Thank you for remembering to seek approval for changes in your study.

If you make additional changes in the research design, funding source, consent process, or any part of the study that may affect participants in the study, you will have to reapply for approval (see <https://grad.mnsu.edu/irb/revision.html>). Should any of the participants in your study suffer a research- related injury or other harmful outcome, you are required to report them to the Associate Vice-President of Research and Dean of Graduate Studies immediately.

The letter approving your changes is attached to your original proposal; therefore, the original approval date has not changed. When you complete your data collection or should you discontinue your study, you must submit a Closure request (see <https://grad.mnsu.edu/irb/closure.html>). If you will be collecting data for one calendar year or longer, please submit a Continuation (<https://grad.mnsu.edu/irb/continuations.html>). All documents related to this research must be stored for a minimum of three years following the date on your Closure request. Please include your IRBNet ID number with any correspondence with the IRB. Please include your IRBNet ID number with any correspondence with the IRB.

We wish you success in your research. If you have any questions, feel free to contact Mary Hadley at irb@mnsu.edu or 507-389-5102.

Cordially,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mary Hadley".

Mary Hadley, Ph.D.
IRB Coordinator

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jeffrey Buchanan".

Jeffrey Buchanan, PhD
IRB Co-Chair

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Julie A. Carlson".

Julie Carlson, Ed.D.
IRB Co-Chair

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within Minnesota State University, Mankato IRB's records.

Appendix B: Interview Schedule

The interview schedule has three sections. Section 1: asks general demographic questions; section 2: asks general questions regarding international students; section 3: asks general questions regarding social interactions with *senpai*. The total number of questions is 25.

Section I: questions about demographics

1) What is your age?

1. 20-21
2. 22-24
3. 25 or older

2) Gender

1. Male
2. Female

3) What is your class rank at Minnesota State University-Mankato or other university/college?

1. Freshman
2. Sophomore
3. Junior
4. Senior
5. Grad student
6. Other

4) Which of the following best describes where you are living while attending college?

1. Dormitory
2. Fraternity or sorority house
3. Residence, for example, house, apartment within walking distance to the University
4. Residence, for example, house, apartment farther than walking distance to the University
5. Live with family
6. None of the above

5) What is your major field of study?

1. Biology
2. Business
3. Education
4. Engineering

5. English
6. Ethnic Studies
7. Mathematics
8. Psychology
9. Social Work
10. Other

Section 2: General Questions: Japanese students who attended college/university in the United States

- 6) Did you attend a college/university in the United States?**
 1. Yes
 2. No

- 7) If you answered “Yes” on 6), did you attend the school in the United States for at least one semester?**
 1. Yes
 2. No

- 8) Do you understand the American English Language?**
 1. Yes
 2. No

- 9) How often do you have social interactions with American students?**
 1. Never
 2. Sometimes
 3. Often
 4. Usually
 5. Always

- 10) How many of your friends are Americans?**
 1. 0-2
 2. 3-4
 3. 5-6
 4. 7 or more

- 11) Do you agree that Americans are accepting of other cultures?**
 1. Strongly disagree
 2. Disagree
 3. Neutral
 4. Agree

5. Strongly agree

12) How is your education financed?

1. Family
2. Sponsor
3. Scholarship
4. Work-study program
5. Other

Section 3: Social interactions with older/senior students in the current country you

live in.

Read each statement and answer how you generally feel about interacting with older/senior students from Japan in the current country you live in.

13) When I am with senior Japanese students, I use polite language naturally.

1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neutral
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

14) I address older Japanese students' name followed by *san*.

1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neutral
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

15) I speak to senior Japanese students the same way I speak to friends.

1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neutral
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

16) I talk about my success stories with senior Japanese students.

1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neutral
4. Agree

5. Strongly agree

17) I feel I should agree to older Japanese students' opinion.

1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neutral
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

18) I address older Japanese students' name followed by *senpai*.

1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neutral
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

19) I inform older Japanese students when I think their opinion is wrong.

1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neutral
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

20) I feel offended if younger Japanese students speak to me casually.

1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neutral
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

21) I do not mind if younger Japanese students disagree with my opinion.

1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neutral
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

22) I tend to praise older Japanese students.

1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neutral
4. Agree

5. Strongly agree

23) I address senior Japanese students by their first name.

1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neutral
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

24) I speak to senior Japanese students the same way I speak to non-Japanese students.

1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neutral
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

25) I am careful to not offend senior Japanese students.

1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neutral
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

Appendix C: Tables

Table 1: Demographic Variables

| Frequencies | 31 Japanese Students in America | 27 Japanese Students in Japan |
|--|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Class rank | | |
| Freshman | 0 (0%) | 4 (14.8%) |
| Sophomore | 4 (12.9%) | 1 (3.7%) |
| Junior | 8 (25.8%) | 4 (14.8%) |
| Senior | 10 (32.3%) | 9 (33.3%) |
| Graduate | 5 (16.1%) | 6 (22.2%) |
| Other | 4 (12.9%) | 3 (11.1%) |
| Majors | | |
| Biology | 0 (0%) | 1 (3.7%) |
| Business | 8 (25.8%) | 1 (3.7%) |
| Education | 1 (3.2%) | 1 (3.7%) |
| Engineering | 2 (6.5%) | 0 (0%) |
| English | 6 (19.4%) | 15 (55.6%) |
| Ethnic Studies | 0 (0%) | 1 (3.7%) |
| Math | 0 (0%) | 0 (0%) |
| Psychology | 1 (3.2%) | 0 (0%) |
| Social Work | 1 (3.2%) | 0 (0%) |
| Other | 12 (38.7%) | 8 (29.6%) |
| Understanding of American English | | |

| | | |
|--------------------------|--|--------------------------------------|
| Yes | 30 (96.8%) | 16 (59.3%) |
| No | 1 (3.2%) | 8 (29.6%) |
| N/A | 0 (0%) | 3 (11.1%) |
| Frequencies | 31 Japanese Students in America | 27 Japanese Students in Japan |
| Interactions with | | |
| U.S. Students | | |
| Never | 3 (9.7%) | 8 (29.6%) |
| Sometimes | 10 (32.3%) | 14 (51.9%) |
| Often | 3 (9.7%) | 0 (0%) |
| Usually | 6 (19.4%) | 1 (3.7%) |
| Always | 9 (29.0%) | 2 (7.4%) |
| Numbers of | | |
| American Friends | | |
| 0-2 | 2 (6.5%) | 18 (66.7%) |
| 3-4 | 7 (22.6%) | 2 (7.4%) |
| 5-6 | 4 (12.9%) | 2 (7.4%) |
| 7 or more | 18 (58.1%) | 3 (11.1%) |
| N/A | 0 (0%) | 2 (7.4%) |

Table 2: Descriptive statistics for the variables

| Variable | Mean | SD | N of items | Cronbach's alpha |
|-----------------|-------------|-----------|-------------------|-------------------------|
| Politeness | 40.41 | 6.175 | 13 | .707 |

Appendix D: Consent Form

CONSENT FORM

You are invited to participate in a research project conducted by Manami Matsuoka in the Department of Ethnic Studies under the guidance of Dr. Kebba Darboe in the Department of Ethnic Studies, at Minnesota State University, Mankato, regarding Japanese students' communication with superior/senior(s). If you agree to participate, you will be asked to answer online survey questions. This survey should take about 15 minutes to complete. If you have any questions about the research, please contact Dr. Kebba Darboe at 507-389-5014, or kebba.darboe@mnsu.edu. If you have any questions about participants' rights and for research-related injuries, please contact the Administrator of the Institutional Review Board, at 507-389-1242.

Participation is voluntary. You have the option not to respond to any of the questions. You may stop taking the survey at any time by closing your web browser. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your relationship with Minnesota State University, Mankato, and refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits.

Responses will be anonymous. However, whenever one works with online technology there is always the risk of compromising privacy, confidentiality, and/or anonymity. If you would like more information about the specific privacy and anonymity risks posed by online surveys, please contact the Minnesota State University, Mankato Information and Technology Services Help Desk (507-389-6654) and ask to speak to the Information Security Manager.

The risks of participating are no more than that would experience in daily life. However, if you have any concerns, you can contact the primary investigator or the IRB administrator to express any concerns regarding the survey.

There are no direct benefits to participants in this research. However, the results of this research could help studying aboard program offices in Japan and the United States better understand impact of U.S. life and education on Japanese students. Submitting the completed survey will indicate your informed consent to participate and that you are at least 20 years of age or older. Submitting the completed survey will end your participation in the study.

Please print a copy of this page for your future reference.

MSU IRBNet ID#: 1323235

Appendix E: Recruitment Scripts

Request to Support a Research

REQUEST TO SUPPORT A RESEARCH

Dear President of Japanese student organization,

I am a graduate student majoring in Ethnic and Multicultural Studies at Minnesota State University, Mankato. Dr. Kebba Darboe, the Chair of Ethnic Studies department, and I are looking for Japanese college students in Japan and the United States of America to participate in our study regarding Japanese students' communication with superior/senior(s).

We are hoping to have your support for the study by copying a research invitation message and sending it to members of your organization via facebook messenger.

Participation in the survey is completely voluntary and all your responses will be anonymous.

The involvement in the study would include a maximum of 15 minutes to answer questions online.

Participants' decisions whether or not to participate will not affect their relationship with Minnesota State University, Mankato, and refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits.

There are no direct benefits to participants in this research. However, the results of this research could help studying aboard program offices in Japan and the United States better understand impact of U.S. life and education on Japanese students.

Survey link: https://mnsu.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_enEf6VWGn4GLFU

We welcome any questions or concerns you may have for the study. Please contact us at kebba.darboe@mnsu.edu.

We look forward to your participation.

Yours sincerely,

Kebba Darboe, PhD

Department Chair of Ethnic Studies at Minnesota State University, Mankato

Manami Matsuoka, Graduate student

Department of Ethnic Studies at Minnesota State University, Mankato

*Invitation to Participate in Research***INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH**

Dear Japanese college students,

We are looking for Japanese college students in Japan and the United States of America who would be willing to participate in our study regarding Japanese students' communication with superior/senior(s).

Your involvement of the study would include a maximum of 15 minutes to answer questions online.

Participation in the survey is completely voluntary and all your responses will be anonymous.

You have the right to stop participation at any time. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your relationship with Minnesota State University, Mankato, and refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits.

There are no direct benefits to participants in this research. However, the results of this research could help studying aboard program offices in Japan and the United States better understand the impact of U.S. life and education on Japanese students.

Survey link: https://mnsu.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_enEf6VWGn4GLFUp

We welcome any questions or concerns you may have for the study. Please contact us at kebba.darboe@mnsu.edu.

We look forward to your participation.

Yours sincerely,

Kebba Darboe, PhD

Department Chair of Ethnic Studies at Minnesota State University, Mankato

Manami Matsuoka, Graduate student

Department of Ethnic Studies at Minnesota State University, Mankato

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