

## An Experimental Group Session for Cross-Cultural Social Skills Learning for International Students in Japan

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### Abstract

As the acquisition of social skills for new environments is critical for cross-cultural adaptation, we conducted a small, experimental group session to develop a cross-cultural social skills learning program for international students in Japan, based on cognitive and behavioral learning techniques. A total of nine international students, four males and five females, enrolled in a Japanese university participated in the session. They learned cognitive and behavioral social skills, which focused on culture-specific behaviors through self-assessments, lectures, role-plays, feedback, and discussions. There was an increase in self-evaluation scores of behaviors and cultural understanding and positive attitudes were demonstrated. A total of 77 Japanese host students later watched video recordings of the role-plays and evaluated the performances using micro and macro-evaluation items. The performances of the international students and their impressions of these performances improved throughout the session. Extended effects related to their cross-cultural adaptation were investigated by a follow-up survey 1 year later. This method could be integrated into the health education curriculum for international students.

**Keywords:** Cross-cultural social skills; Cross-cultural adaptation; International students in Japan; Experimental session; Health education for sojourners

### Introduction

#### Social skills and culture

Social skills are cognitive and behavioral techniques for making, maintaining, and developing interpersonal relationships. Some studies argue that the acquisition of social skills in new environments enhances cross-cultural adaptation for sojourners, who are defined as people staying in different countries [1-3]. However, few interventional studies have actually attempted to teach social skills to sojourners.

The first study that connected the concepts of social skills and cross-cultural adaptation was a questionnaire survey regarding the social difficulties faced by international students in England [1]. The study considered interesting ideas around social-skills learning for sojourners, and 40 situations were examined, including “going to dinner” and “seeing a doctor.” Six factors were considered: formal relations/focus of attention, managing personal relationships, public rituals, initiating contact/introductions, public decision-making and assertiveness. The highest difficulty score was given to “making friends with English people of the same generation.” Items related to forming and maintaining interpersonal relations were generally given higher difficulty scores. They recommended to get social skills to cope with such situations to reduce culture shock. However, this study did not explain the social skills that were actually involved in these situations, and they did not show any interventional study.

Same questionnaire as above [1] was used for studying international students in Japan [2]. Four factors of social difficulty were found: public situations, assertion, relationships with friends, and daily life.

Although this study presented interesting information regarding social difficulties, it only implied possible areas of learning and did not list the actual skills involved. Another shortcoming of the study was that no accurate survey regarding the difficulties of living in Japan was implemented; rather, items of difficulty for living in England were applied. The basic idea of cross-cultural social skills is concerned with cultural differences in human behaviors. More attention must thus be paid to cultural differences regarding social difficulties and how to cope with them.

#### Social skills learning

In light of the abovementioned studies, it can be said that a large gap exists between idea and the actual practice of social skills learning for cross-cultural transitions.

Intervention research of social skills for people who stay in different culture is quite few, however valuable intervention research into approaches to teaching social skills to sojourners has been reported [4]. It criticized the fact that few intervention surveys were carried out for many years after the first social skills approach was developed, and therefore decided to pursue practical studies. In this research, the participants, who were international students in Australia from England and the USA, were trained to discuss problems as sojourners with their hosts, focusing on differences in daily life or school environments. The study referred to this as “social skills training.” As a result of the training program, the discussion competency of the guests increased. This research did not assume different styles of discussion; discussion behavior itself was regarded as a kind of general cultural behavior in both guests and hosts. The study authors did not appear to be concerned about specific cultural dimensions in social skills. This might have been because, since the participants shared a western, cultural background with their hosts, focusing on differences in behavior style was not critical.

Today there is increasing opportunity for students and sojourners to travel, not only to areas that share a similar culture, but also to place where they will experience a different culture. Some areas share westernization and modernization, which have comparative global values in today's world, while other areas do not. Therefore, since some parts of the world still maintain highly culture-specific phenomena, social skills are not always global. We consider social skills that include culturally-specific interpersonal behavior.

### International students and social skills

In Japan, the number of international students from all over the world has increased from around 5,000 in 1977 to approximately 137,756 in 2012, as a result of relevant government policies. As a result of this increase, the cross-cultural adaptation of international students is receiving more attention in Japanese society, and is becoming an important theme for applied social psychology. In the present study, we offer practical education that may help to overcome these difficulties. Clinical psychologists have developed social skills training-methods with demonstrated effects that enhance social adaptation in both patients and the general population from young to old [5,6], which may be useful for our purpose. Though cross-cultural trainings has been focused on cognitive learning in general [7], psychology can offer behavior learning ideas and method.

The cross-cultural adaptation of Japanese high-school students in the USA was investigated and it showed that English language ability did not directly affect interpersonal adaptation [8]. An outgoing personality positively influenced adaptation through mediation by social skills practice because interpersonal relationships require mutual interaction. Language ability is not effective without conversion to overt behavior, suggesting that language itself does not affect interpersonal relationships, and learning how to behave is more important than language itself. Behavior learning is a practical and realistic method for helping the adaptation of sojourners.

### Cross-cultural social skills learning

Cross-cultural social-skills-learning is defined as learning interpersonal skills for making, maintaining, and developing interpersonal relationships in cross-cultural settings [3]. Such clinical-social psychological experimental sessions, which use the learning methods of cognitive and behavioral therapy for educational purposes, enhance social adaptation for sojourners. Clinical-social psychology is an interdisciplinary area between clinical and social psychology that allows us to explore new research possibilities by exchanging techniques or ideas [9]. We transfer social skills training methods to social psychological purposes that enhance adaptation under new socio-cultural contexts. Participants learn social skills through role-plays in small groups that are followed by examples of clinical psychology. Positive reinforcement, modeling, etc., are used so that participants gain new cognitive restructuring and behavior repertoires.

The aims of cross-cultural social skills learning are: 1) understanding behaviors in different socio-cultural contexts and environments, and 2) acquiring behaviors necessary for cross-cultural relationship formation in different cultural environments. We expand behavior repertoires to increase behavioral options; using them remains the choice of the individual. The features of the current study's cross-cultural social skills learning program include: 1) learning methods of social skills training from cognitive and behavioral therapy in clinical psychology, 2) applications for educational purposes from a

clinical-social psychological perspective, and 3) psycho-education for sojourners.

The purpose of this article is thus to report on an exploratory investigation of a cross-cultural social skills learning session and its effects on the cross-cultural adaptation of sojourners from a social skills perspective as a demonstration of applied psychology.

## Methods

### Participants

Nine graduate students from several different regions of origin who were enrolled in a Japanese university participated in this study. The students' cultural backgrounds included East Asia (four students), Southeast Asia (three), South Asia (one), and Africa (one). This constitution seemed to reflect the current diversity of international students in Japan, in which 92.3% are Asian, with students from East Asian countries comprising the largest group, and students from Southeast Asian countries comprising the second largest group (10). The mean age of the participants was 33.0 years old (SD=5.22). Five of the participants were female, and four participants were male. Finally, their mean duration of stay in Japan was 23.2 months (SD=20.11).

### Languages

The nine participants evaluated their own level of Japanese language ability as follows: beginner (five students), intermediate (one), and advanced (three). They expressed the following language preferences: Japanese to English (two), English to Japanese (six), and either Japanese or English (one). Both Japanese and English were used during the sessions.

### Staff

Staff included a Japanese facilitator (the first author of this paper) and a Japanese co-facilitator (a graduate student).

### Duration

"Cross-cultural adaptation" class was conducted for 4 days from January 6-9, 2006. The last day was devoted to cross-cultural social skills learning. Follow-up surveys 1 year after the initial sessions were conducted by mail in January and February, 2007.

### Framework of learning

The framework of the learning is shown in Figure 1. We used the AUC-GS learning model [1] to organize the cross-cultural educational content. Learning followed three steps: A: awareness, U: Understanding and C: coping with cultural differences and focused on culture-general and culture-specific phenomena. "Package learning," a popular idea in clinical psychology is available by covering the six cells shown in Figure 1. Previous cross-cultural training has usually focused on the UG cell, which leads to general and abstract understanding of cross-cultural encounter phenomena. Little of attention has been given to behavior learning methods, especially with regard to specific cultures. Our cross-cultural social skills-learning session focus on the C stage: the coping level. Some general skills (G) were included, but we focused primarily on, specific skills (S), in Japanese cultures in the case of our session. The seminar lasted 4 days and covered all six cells, using lectures, movies, games, etc. In this paper, we report the cross-cultural

social skills learning paradigms that were conducted on the final day. The first 3 days of the social skills learning sessions increased participant awareness of the importance and impact of culture. As a final step, participants learned what they should or could actually do regarding their own behavior while staying in Japan.

embarrassment to international students. They evaluated their usual performance of Japanese social skills on a 4-point scale, ranging from 1 (not at all) to 4 (often). They also indicated whether they used these skills in their home country.

**Selection of target behaviors:** Their learning needs were considered and target behaviors selected. In our previous studies, we investigated interpersonal difficulties for international students in Japan and proposed lists of Japanese social skills for them to learn [13]. Participants were asked which skills from the list they wanted to learn, and were asked about previous experiences related to these skills, as target behaviors should be overt and clear. The list items “drinking communication,” and “attitude toward superiors,” were selected as learning targets because they reflected the participants’ learning needs.

**Setting task situations:** Role-play situations were decided by referring to participant experiences because the situations should be familiar and interesting to them as well as be realistic.

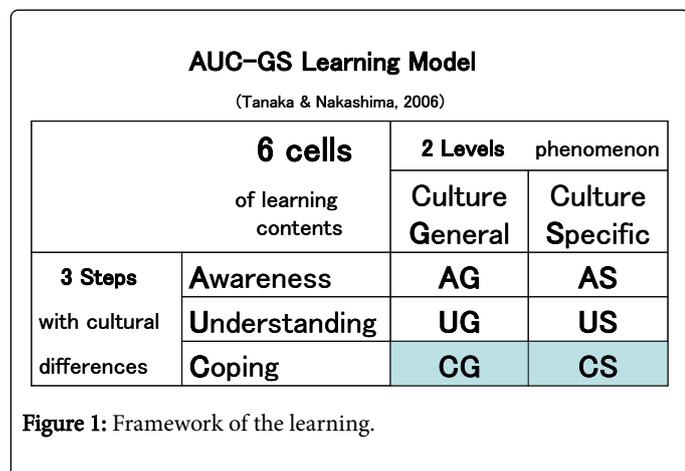


Figure 1: Framework of the learning.

### Setting

In Figure 2, psycho-educational sessions were conducted in a small group, a style which is based on the original framework of clinical psychology. Study participants sat in chairs arranged in circles in small groups for the role-plays. The facilitator used the whiteboard for explanatory purposes, while the co-facilitator participated in role-plays, offered opinions as a host, etc.

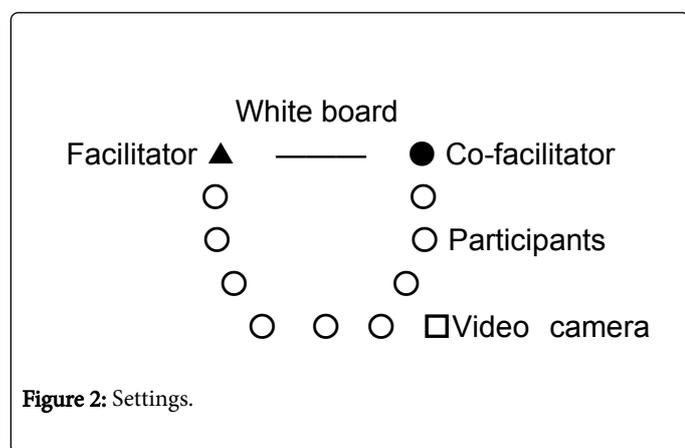


Figure 2: Settings.

### Contents of the session

The outline of the session (Figure 3) and the learning techniques reflected social skills training in clinical sessions [5,6]. The details are as follow.

**Assessment:** The daily behaviors of the participants were assessed. They were given a list of Japanese social skills and asked to self-assess their daily performance of these skills. The items in the “Japanese social skills for international students,” shown in Table 1, were taken from the surveys of the daily performances of Japanese social skills by international students, which were based on the interpersonal difficulties experienced by international students in Japan [12]. The sentences reflect typical, culture-specific behaviors that often cause

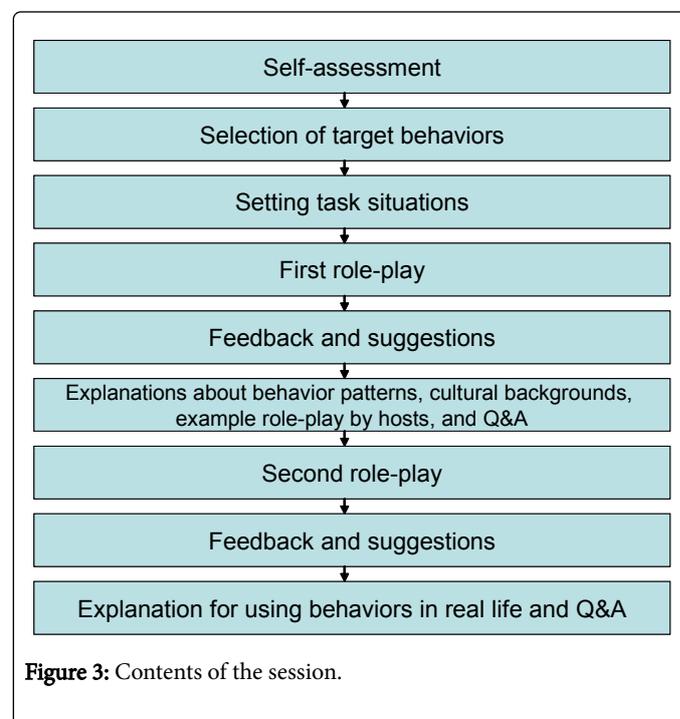


Figure 3: Contents of the session.

**First role-play:** After the facilitator explained the situation, participants were free to behave as they wished. The co-facilitator acted as a host, and after each role-play, players were applauded to show appreciation and generate a warm and friendly atmosphere.

**Feedback and suggestions:** The facilitator asked the participants to give positive feedback to each other. The instruction was, for example, “what was good in the plays by your peers?” They were expected not to provide negative comments because a positive atmosphere reduces hesitation and increases motivation to tackle new behaviors. Gathering and combining relevant aspects of the behavior was targeted for “shaping” the behavior as a whole.

**Explanations of behavior patterns, cultural backgrounds, role-play examples by hosts, and Q&A:** Cultural behavior patterns that include verbal and non-verbal factors and their cultural backgrounds were explained. The facilitator gave suggestions regarding the details of the behaviors. Example role-plays were shown by the facilitator and co-facilitator.

**Second role-play:** Members tried a second role-play. They integrated what they had just learned into their second role-play, depend on their favorite.

**Feedback and suggestions:** Positive feedback was collected from the participants. The instruction was, for example, “What was better?” The facilitator then offered praise.

**Explanations for using behaviors in real life and Q&A:** Time was allotted for the participants to ask questions, and a summary of the session was conducted. Judgment, timing, variation of behaviors, and Japanese expressions were explained, and participants were encouraged to freely try new behavior in their daily life.

1. Indirect expression	1) Indirect refusal, 2) Listening to others, 3) Perceiving without words, 4) Hesitation, 5) Humility
2. Socially Graceful	1) Greetings, 2) Drinking communication, 3) Attitudes to superiors, 4) Sociable invitation, 5) Giving gifts, 6) Public manners
3. Appropriate openness	1) Controlling emotional expressions, 2) How to refer to other people
4. Different genders	1) “Slow” dating, 2) Ignoring “ladies first”, 3) Same gender friendships
5. Group behaviors	1) Behaving in the same manner, 2) Respecting others
6. Treatment as foreigners	1) Japanese language use, 2) Discussing cultural conflicts, 3) Initiating activities, 4) Explaining one’s culture

**Table 1:** Self-evaluation of Japanese social skills performance.

### Cognitive-behavioral therapy techniques

The session procedures used a variety of learning techniques. The “role-plays” allowed participants to practice the behaviors, which functioned as “behavior rehearsal,” positive feedback functioned as “positive reinforcement” in technical terms of cognitive behavioral therapy. “Feedback” included comments about the role-plays, which helped participants to modify their behavior. “Modeling,” which is learning by watching others, is a kind of “social learning.” Dividing behaviors into small aspects and practicing them one by one is a “shaping” procedure that gradually completes behaviors. Evaluations of one’s own behaviors are “self-assessments,” which increase participant awareness of performances. “Setting learning tasks as ‘target behaviors’” is useful for clear learning. Using the “evaluations of others” reflects objective evaluations.

### Task situations

**Situation one:** Visiting a Professor; situation one, which concerned attitudes toward superiors, is an “individual situation” in which participants visit professor’s office to ask for a scholarship recommendation on short notice. The behavioral learning tasks included making a polite request and being well-mannered while entering and exiting the office. An acknowledgement of the current circumstances of the professor, an avoidance of unilateral request, and a display of somewhat sorry feelings were useful for making a polite impression. Overly assertive behavior that does not show concern for the feelings of another often gives an impression of rudeness in Japan, where expressions of “social apologizing” are used to show consideration of others, even if the person making the apology does not believe that they are truly wrong. An understanding of the relationship between superiors or seniors and subordinates, based on Confucianism, is the focus of cognitive learning.

**Situation two:** Drinking communication; the second situation concerned social norms regarding drinking. This “group situation” involved superiors, seniors and subordinates going out for drinks and conversation. Laboratory members and colleagues sometimes go out together to have small gatherings that involve alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks. Such situations offer enjoyable, open, and relaxed atmospheres. However, social norms exist for the treatment of professors and senior students in these situations, and some customs

must be followed with regard to offering and refusing drinks, etc. A particular role is expected of the coordinator of the party, for example paying attention to other people’s drinks for kind assistance like pouring drinks. The understanding and following of these norms, and the sharing of such enjoyable atmospheres, must be learned, so we set up a year-end-party situation to participate the relevant behaviors.

### Measurement

**During sessions:** The session data were measured as follows. The first describes their previous experiences of the task situations. The second is their self-evaluation of their first and second role-play performances during the session. Descriptive data were analyzed by content analysis. Participants evaluated their role-play performances by selecting one of four categories: “very good,” “good,” “fair,” and “poor.” Third, Japanese students watched the role-plays on video and conduct an evaluation. Following cognitive and behavioral therapy methods 14), two types of evaluations of each behavior and the impression as a whole were set. Evaluation items were composed by “micro items,” which defined each expected behavior, and “macro items,” which evaluated the whole. We compared the scores between the first and the second role-plays and judged the progress from the perspective of the hosts. At the end of the session, participants evaluated its usefulness on a 5-point scale. The Japanese co-facilitator also provided comments.

**Follow-up:** Firstly, the participants were asked questions regarding their performance of social skills. Did they use the learned skills? If yes, participants described their behaviors, feelings, and the results; if not, why not? These questions investigated the “habituation” of learned social skills and their successful application in real-life situations. Behavior therapy emphasizes real-life effects for problem solving. Next, participants were asked about other useful skills they had used and whether they had any comments regarding the usefulness of the sessions. Their answers were analyzed by content analysis. Third, participant awareness of changes after the sessions was assessed by a 5-point scale; for example, “After the sessions, did you notice any changes in your attitude toward your hosts or your interpretation of their behaviors?” They evaluated 13 items that reflected our expectations, for example: “I try to pay close attention to Japanese behavior and follow the patterns.” Finally, the Japanese co-facilitator,

who belonged to the same graduate school as the participants and kept in touch with them, also left comments about the session and the daily performances of the participants. Behavior therapy emphasizes the importance of evaluation by persons close to the individual for multidimensional information.

## Results

### Situation one: visiting a professor

Self-evaluations by participants are shown in Table 2. To confirm the validity and the learning needs of the target behaviors, questions regarding past experiences of the situation, behaviors, and feelings were asked. Since many of them had had similar experiences and difficulties, we recognized the learning needs and familiarity of the situation.

Fortunately, many participants improved their performances in such difficult situations through the sessions. Their self-evaluation of the second role-play was higher than their evaluation of the first. Participants claimed that their behaviors were more sophisticated, they understood the meaning of behaviors more, and they became more relaxed.

<b>Similar experience</b>	Yes=5, with professors (problems=5/5,100%) Yes=1, with secretary (problems=0/1, 0%) No=3
Problems	Might be rude, wanted to show I was sorry, wanted to respond to help professor feel better, hoped to show politer attitude, wanted to communicate more politely, worried about inadequate attitude, didn't know right expressions
<b>Self-evaluation of role-play performance</b>	First < Second: 7 First=Second: 1 Unknown: 1
<b>Differences between first and second role-plays</b>	Positive change 8
Cognition and Behaviors	Unknown 1 Fluent conversation, well-mannered attitudes, politeness, sophistication, social apologizing, expressing not only assertion but respecting feelings
Emotions	Feeling good, self-confidence, calm and reduced strain, confusion, doubt and anxiety
Relatio006E	Comfortableness of counterparts, emotional exchanging, mutual understanding
<b>Comment by Japanese participant</b>	Importance of an apologetic attitude as a buffer expression in social situations

**Table 2:** Situation 1: Visiting professor.

**The Japanese co-facilitator in the role-play gave the following appraisal:** “Good or bad Japanese language skills are irrelevant. Using

expressions for apologizing makes a good impression on the counterpart. It is better to say ‘you’re sorry’ even once in broken language than to simply assert without any expression of regret in perfect language.”

	F1	F2
<b>Factor 1: Agreement of norm</b>		
Bowing correctly*	0.89	
Saying “Excuse me” and coming in/out politely*	0.89	
Smoothly saying “I’m sorry”*	0.89	
Making a favorable impression**	0.67	
Behaving with conviction and confidence*	0.64	
Asking whether talking is appropriate*	0.50	
Attitude that resembles Japanese**	0.49	
<b>Factor 2: Natural attitudes</b>		
Describing purpose*		0.97
Making natural responses**		0.93
Talking in natural sequences**		0.60
Factor analysis, *Macro items, **Micro items; 4-point scale		

**Table 3:** Evaluation of others by Japanese hosts.

A total of 77 Japanese students later watched the video and evaluated the first and second role-plays in Situation One. Two factors were found by factor analysis (main factor methods, promax rotation) of the evaluation items (Table 3). In both Factor 1, “agreement of the norm,” and Factor 2, “natural attitude,” scores increased in the second role-play compared to the first (Factor 1:  $t(58)=-6.16, p<0.001$ ; Factor 2:  $t(67)=-4.20, p<0.001$ ). The performance of participants showed progress not only from self-evaluation, but also from the perspective of the host.

### Situation two: Drinking communication

Participants’ self-evaluations are shown in Table 4. Since many had previously experienced this situation and reported confusion, this task was also inferred to be familiar and necessary.

The self-evaluation scores of role-play performances increased more with regard to the second role-play compared to the first. They reported that in the second role-play, they behaved systematically, understood the roles of each member, and felt more comfortable.

The Japanese co-facilitator made the following comment: “Since they simply didn’t know how to behave there, I noticed that they didn’t show the expected behaviors.

I realized that many Japanese behaviors are trivial. They just didn’t know what to do.” This session also increased the cultural awareness of the host, who joined this session as a helper.

<b>1. Similar experience</b>	Yes=7 (problems=6/7. 85.7% ) No=2
Problems	Didn't understand situations, didn't know how to behave or talk, kept quiet without any conversations, behaving in original cultural way and never noticing about the strangeness anxiety and stress, being rude, felt difficult and uneasy.
<b>2. Self-evaluation of role-play performance</b>	First<Second 9
<b>3. Differences between first and second role-plays</b>	Positive change=9 negative change=0
Behaviors	Behaved in good order, systematic behavior, adjusted to rules, followed the norm, behaved in Japanese way, did the "right thing". Reduced non-acceptable failure, or passive attitudes.
Cognition	Understanding meaning of behaviors, understanding roles, understanding what should be done.
Emotions	Confidence, hope, feeling good. Joy, calm, honesty. Reducing irritating, unfamiliar, strained, confusing, and difficult feelings.
Relation	Not being rude.
<b>4. Comment by Japanese participant</b>	"As they don't know, they don't do" Japanese culturally specific behaviors.

**Table 4:** Situation 2: Drinking communication.

	F1	F2	F3
<b>Factor 1: Group harmony</b>			
Communicating well in groups**	0.92		
Making a favourable impression**	0.88		
Achieving good group atmosphere**	0.80		
Attitude resembled Japanese**	0.57		
<b>Factor 2: Natural attitudes</b>			
Natural responses**		0.95	
Talking with each other in a natural sequence**		0.79	
Behaving with conviction and confidence*		0.61	
<b>Factor 3: Agreement with norms</b>			
Pouring drinks for superiors*			0.75
Considering seating arrangement before sitting*			0.62
Receiving drinks from others*			0.61
Factor analysis, *Macro items, **Micro items; 4-point scale			

**Table 5:** Evaluation by Japanese hosts.

A total of 77 Japanese students also watched a video of the situation after. Three factors were found through factor analysis (main factor methods, promax rotation), (Table 5). All factors, "group harmony," "natural attitudes," and "agreement of the norm," showed increases in the second play compared to the first (Factor 1:  $t(72)=-5.64$ ,  $p<0.001$ ; Factor 2:  $t(70)=-7.67$ ,  $p<0.001$ ; Factor 3:  $t(58)=-12.79$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). This suggests that their performances improved from the perspective of the hosts.

**Usefulness of the session:** At the end of the session, the participants evaluated its usefulness. The evaluation categories and the numbers of participants who checked each category were as follows; "very useful" (eight), "somewhat useful" (one), "unknown" (zero), "not very useful" (zero) and "not useful at all" (zero). They used terms such as "interesting," "enjoyable," and "important" to describe the sessions. None of the participants gave negative comments.

#### Follow-up

**Social skills performances:** The participants in the follow-up included eight of the original nine international students, as one had already left Japan (return rate 88.9%), and the Japanese co-facilitator. Comments by the international students are shown in Table 6. All had used the visiting professor skills within 1 year of completing the session. Those who had had opportunities to go out for drink or to parties used the drinking communication skills. After having used the skills, they reported positive reactions. They felt more relaxed and self-confident. They were able to improve relationships and the atmosphere with the people around them.

**Self-recognition of changes after the session:** Participants were asked how their behavior had changed after the session. The expected items, which they evaluated with 4-point scales, are listed in Table 7. The scores related to feelings of security and self-confidence is noteworthy. Moreover, participants reported that they often followed the behaviors of the host. Higher scores were also given to items regarding observing host behaviors with interest, searching for reasons to explain these behaviors, estimating the results of their behavior, and consciously choosing their behaviors. These results suggest that they learned cultural behaviors themselves through the sessions. Negative effects, such as avoiding cross-cultural contact, were found to be rare.

	Situation 1: Visiting Professor	Situation 2: Drinking communication
Did you use the skills?	Yes=8 No=0	Yes=4 No=4 (They had no chance)
What were the results? International students	Confident, calm, relaxed, comfortable, 'left good, demonstrating themselves as a person familiar with Japan, Achieving correct and adequate communication	Calm, reduced rudeness, more relaxed, 'el: more at home, felt good
Counterpart	More friendly	Happy, recognized as belonging.
Each other	Created better atmosphere and enhanced communication	Achieved a sense of unity and atmosphere

**Table 6:** Self-evaluation at the follow up.

I feel safe by understanding Japanese patterns of behaviors. 4.38 (0.74)
I have more interest in Japanese behaviors. 4.38 (1.06)
I try to imitate Japanese behaviors. 4.38 (1.06)
I try to learn the reason behind Japanese behaviors. 4.25 (1.04)
I consciously selected Japanese-type behaviors or my own. 4.25 (1.04)
I try to pay close attention to Japanese behaviors and learn the patterns. 4.14 (0.69)
I estimate the influence of my own cultural behaviors on Japanese people. 4.13 (0.99)
I borrowed Japanese ways and found communication become easier. 4.11 (0.93)
I try to explain my own cultural behaviors to Japanese people. 4.00 (0.93)
I often ask Japanese people about their ways. 3.88 (1.25)
I pay attention to some of my own cultural behaviors that may cause misunderstanding. 3.88 (1.81)
I am becoming relaxed in my understanding of Japanese ways. 3.75 (1.04)
I avoid communication with Japanese people because cross-cultural behaviors are tiresome. 1.63 (1.06)

**Table 7:** Self-recognition of changes after session: 5-point scale, M (SD).

**The Japanese co-facilitator made the following comment:** “They became more ‘natural’. For example, they visited laboratories and used such visiting skills as knocking before entering and greeting people in a manner that was socially expected. Before the sessions, I had given up and was prepared to endure their unfamiliar attitudes. Now I imagine that they might not reflect their actual intentions. If they knew the important points, they might use them.”

## Discussion and Conclusion

### Reaction of participants

The progress of participant performances throughout the session is shown in both self-evaluations by sojourners and evaluations by hosts. International students achieved improved performances and made better impressions on their hosts as the session progressed. Their learning level became high enough to appeal to hosts. Participants also reported progress in cultural understanding and more secure feelings. This effect covers the ABC model, based on the following: A: affects, B: behavior, and C: cognition for humans.

Depend on the follow-up data; the participants became more familiar with Japanese culture because they now understood the meanings and effects of their behavior after the learning session. Furthermore, uncomfortable feelings were reduced, and they observed host behaviors and adopted some of them. They learned the learning method itself.

However, some, but not all, sojourners are willing to actively embrace new cultures, distinguished between socio-cultural adaptation and psychological adaptation [15]. A social skills approach might be an effective strategy for persons who prefer acculturation. For participants who are passive in terms of culture learning, this behavior learning method may not be appropriate. Only cognitive learning might be welcomed by, and beneficial to, such participants.

### Effect of the session

We hypothesized two effects of the session, both short- and long-term. During the sessions, we observed a growth of understanding and acquisition of social skills and a reduction of anxiety in the participants. This “short-term effects” is assumed to have three dimensions: behavior, cognition, and feeling. Behavior learning is the

primary aim of sessions in which individuals acquire culture-specific behaviors. The cognition aspect falls under cognitive restructuring in cognitive and behavioral therapy. They obtain a new framework and a new standard of behavioral decision-making. Understanding cultural behaviors should clarify situations and alleviate stress. Dissolving misunderstanding and gaining empathy toward new cultures could reduce feelings of incompatibility and prejudice. An emotional effect means having positive feelings and reducing stress in the example situations from the sessions.

If someone later uses the learned behaviors in cases of need, feelings of reassurance and self-confidence should increase. Gaining behavioral skills should be accompanied by cognitive and emotional changes that gradually contribute to cross-cultural adaptation in individuals. In addition, behavior learning possibly works favourably in interpersonal and group relationships over long periods. Such a complicated and expanded influence is called the "long-term effect." Individuals learn how to learn about cultural behaviors and become motivated to learn them. When individuals understand cultural systems and the reason for certain behaviors, they feel more comfortable, have fewer misunderstandings, gain more empathy, and reduce feelings of prejudice. When they use these behaviors freely and get positive reactions in socio-cultural contexts, they feel increased social competence and as if they are a part of their host society. We assume that behavior intervention is accompanied by cognitive and emotional changes that affect cross-cultural adaptation through mutual interaction with others.

Although this application is an early trial, we have shown that not only natural learning, which is a spontaneous kind of acquisition without specific intention in everyday life, but also artificial learning, which is a kind of designed learning in a classroom environment, is available for culture-specific behavior learning. As stated previously, new behaviors are acquired by experiences gained in daily life. Behavior learning by psychologists is an idea that has not yet been sufficiently tested. If people recognize that artificial behavior learning is available, a new approach to cross-cultural adaptation is admitted.

### Tasks in future

Scope for future researches include more sophisticated session formation and detailed evaluation of the effects, and investigation of the process of behavioral practice. And we expect to investigate the precise changes in behavior and the cognition of participants, to accurately measure evaluations by others, and to grasp the mutual effect of interpersonal relationships. Many other situational learning tasks besides those used in this session are available, and merit integration into future studies. If such studies are developed in a variety of cultural context, psychology might render a meaningful service to intercultural matters. We also must collect more data from more diverse groups of study participants for future analysis of the influences of demographic backgrounds to the session.

Cross-cultural social skills education is a new perspective and a helpful strategy for the adjustment of sojourners in Japan, where culture specificity tends to receive much attention from other countries. Many international students have come to Japan without sufficient enough cultural knowledge and have suffered from a cultural gap, and interpersonal relationships are especially difficult for them [16]. We thus propose a unique and practical method to help sojourners. It is desirable to have this method as an option in health education for international students. Since we have provided the required procedure in detail, different versions of the program could

be developed for other cultural context. However, since our results correspond to the current Japanese socio-cultural environment, relevance of some findings may be limited to this society.

Furthermore, when we would like to contact with a variety of people, we may use the above ideas regarding social skills learning and improve relationship formation with diverse group of people. For example, social skills for enhancing interpersonal relationships between elderly people and young people were investigated [17]. This model thus may provide an extension of social skills to a diverse range of interpersonal experiences.

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