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The Cultural Entry Process in Japan and Mexico – Cultural Factors to be Considered

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THE CULTURAL ENTRY PROCESS
IN JAPAN AND MEXICO -
CULTURAL FACTORS TO BE CONSIDERED

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B.A. University of Washington 1972

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Master of Arts in Teaching degree at the School for
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This project by David C. Riggs is accepted in its present form.

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Abstract

This paper is intended to present a triangular cultural comparison of American, Japanese, and Mexican societies. It is written primarily for Americans who plan to live for extended periods of time in either Japan or Mexico, and is written from an American cultural point of view. Included are descriptions of my cross-cultural experiences in the three countries. The main body of the paper deals with the cross-cultural factors which I consider to be the most important to consider when attempting to successfully adapt oneself to living in either Japanese or Mexican society. It is hoped that in some way my own experiences will provide a heightened awareness for future ESL teachers of the cultural challenges presented by Japan and Mexico. The final section of the paper lays down several areas of personal skills which I deem most crucial to successful acculturation in a foreign culture.

ERIC Descriptors

- (1) Japanese Culture
- (2) Mexican Culture
- (3) Cross-Cultural Studies
- (4) Cultural Interaction
- (5) Cultural Inter-relationships
- (6) Social Values

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
Preface	1
<u>CHAPTER ONE</u>	
Introduction	3
Method	3
General Background of Cross-Cultural Experiences	6
Japanese Cross-Cultural Experiences	7
Mexican Cross-Cultural Experience	13
Culture Defined	15
Reverse Culture Shock	18
<u>CHAPTER TWO</u>	
<u>FACTORS TO BE CONSIDERED IN THE CULTURAL ENTRY PROCESS</u>	
<u>LANGUAGE</u>	20
Language Study Tips	27
<u>TIME</u>	28
Time Defined	28
Time Structures in the U.S., Japan, and Mexico	29
Japanese vs. American Time	30
Mexican Time	31
<u>HUMAN RELATIONS AND VALUES</u>	36
A Definition of Two Types of Culture	37
American Values	38
Distinctions Between Insiders and Outsiders in Japan and Mexico	40
Interpersonal Relationships - Japan vs. America	45
Japanese Groupism vs. American Individualism	48
Interpersonal Relationships - Mexico vs. America	51

	<u>Page</u>
Women	55
<u>NORTH-SOUTH DISTINCTIONS</u>	57
Material & Environmental Considerations - U.S. - Mexico	58
Class Distinctions in Mexico	61
United States - Mexico - Historical Perspective	63
<u>FOOD</u>	65
Japanese Food	66
Mexican Food	67
<u>PROXEMICS</u>	69
Animal Experiments and Findings	70
Japanese Proxemics and Personal Experiences	71
 <u>CHAPTER THREE</u>	
<u>SUGGESTIONS FOR THE FUTURE MULTICULTURAL PERSON</u>	75
 <u>NOTES</u>	
 <u>BIBLIOGRAPHY</u>	

PREFACE

Ever since first traveling to Japan in the summer of 1967 as a member of The Experiment in International Living, I have been extremely interested in culture. My first experience was an eye-opener in many ways. It took me away from my own cultural surroundings for the first time in my life and placed me in a culture radically different from my own. It also forced me to look upon my own country, the United States, in a very different light. Since my initial experience in 1967, I have subsequently travelled to Japan in 1970, 1973, and 1976, living in Japan for a total of six years while serving as an instructor of English as a Second Language for five and half of those six years. In addition to my Japan experiences, I also taught in Mexico during my 1983 Winter Internship for a period of two months spanning mid-January to mid-March.

As a result of my experiences in both Japan and Mexico, I have become ever more interested in culture and the cultural entry process, and in particular how each affects an ESL teacher or any other person who plans an extended stay in a foreign culture. Learning about the cultural entry process, which includes culture shock, is of vital interest to the ESL instructor, in my opinion. Although some may secure employment in the United States, which negates the effect that a foreign culture will have on us, (although there exist many cultural subgroups in the United States) a great majority of ESL instructors will obtain work in foreign countries, and thus will enter a cultural

milieu which is different, sometimes radically, from our own. It is vitally important for all ESL instructors who plan to teach abroad to have at least some knowledge of the cultural entry process and the stresses it is likely to induce so as to be able not only to deal with it effectively, but also to gain the most intellectually and emotionally from the experience. Those who enter a foreign culture unprepared to deal with differences between the host culture and their own are those people, in my opinion, who will become most easily disillusioned and vulnerable to the sometimes drastic effects which culture shock can have on foreigners.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

There are two main reasons for writing this paper. One is purely personal. I would like to look back on my own diverse cultural experiences in Japan and Mexico to understand better what I went through and how I fared. (I also travelled to the Philippines for nine days in the spring of 1980, but don't wish to include that brief trip in this paper given the limited contact with Filipinos). For example, how did I react to different languages and systems? Was I successful or not? What did I learn from such experiences and what have I still to learn? These are very personal considerations. My second and perhaps more idealistic reason for writing this paper is the hope that it will be of service to ESL teachers faced with important decisions as to whether or not they should pursue teaching careers abroad. Hopefully, this narration and analysis of my own experiences with the cultural entry process in Japan and Mexico will serve as a handy information source for what they themselves might expect in a similar cultural situation.

METHOD

I have always enjoyed reading and learning accounts from other people of foreign travel or experience in living in foreign lands. Such accounts are usually enjoyable as well as educational.

They also help us to make direct comparisons between the experiences of other people and our own. For this reason I would like to present this paper in the following manner: I plan to provide a narrative of my experiences in both Mexico and Japan, describing what happened to me and how I dealt with the situation. As much as possible I would like to bring forth examples to illustrate cultural differences, not only bilaterally between U.S.-Japan and U.S.-Mexico, but also between Japan-Mexico. In other words, I would like to attempt to create a free-flowing triangular relationship between the three countries, not necessarily treating them individually and in somewhat linear fashion, but more to try to explain my experiences in relation to each other.

In addition to the narrative, I will also, wherever possible, try to draw conclusions by analyzing what I have experienced. Observation is no doubt important, but knowing why it happened is more crucial to understanding a different cultural process at work. Therefore, to add intellectual backbone to this paper I will strive to analyze events to supplement the narrative. Wherever relevant, I would like to expose the reader to ideas from authors who have written about various aspects of cross-cultural communication, cultural shock, and the cultural entry process. Surprisingly, the cross-cultural field is a relatively new one, and not a tremendous amount has been written about culture shock and cultural entry, but I will try to draw from pertinent articles when I deem it appropriate.

The paper has been divided into three chapters. Chapter 1 includes the Introduction, Method for presenting the paper, plus a general summary of each of my cross-cultural experiences

in the United States, Japan, and Mexico. Also included in Chapter 1 is a section entitled "Culture Defined", which attempts to define the meaning of "culture", plus other cross-cultural phenomena such as "culture shock" and "reverse culture shock". It is hoped that this section will provide a base upon which the body of the paper can be understood. Chapter 2, the main body of the paper, is divided into 6 categories: (1) Language; (2) Time; (3) Human Relations and Values; (4) North-South Distinctions; (5) Food; and (6) Proxemics. These six categories include the primary factors I believe to be crucial to people going through the cultural entry process in Japan and Mexico. There are other factors involved, I'm sure, but the ones I have written about I believe to be the most important. In Chapter 3, Suggestions for the Future Multicultural Person, I have attempted to lay down several principles which, from my own cross-cultural experiences, I believe to be the most important personal skills necessary in successfully acculturating oneself into a foreign society.

In certain categories of the paper, I have included new definitions which may be unfamiliar, and in all categories I have attempted to describe and analyze my cross-cultural experiences to give a better understanding of events, and what to expect in Japan and Mexico. Although various cultural factors have been treated separately in this paper, in reality different cultural factors are dynamically inter-related and usually overlap each other

I am an American, so, therefore, I can only describe and

analyze events from an American cultural point of view. This should be kept in mind. Although this paper is written primarily for the benefit of ESL instructors, most American, I strongly believe that the principles, as outlined in this paper, can be utilized by people of almost any nationality or occupation.

General Background of My Cross-Cultural Experiences

Japan and Mexico provide an interesting contrast. Japan, the world economic superpower, is an Asian island nation lying off the Asian mainland with a basically feudal social structure (even today!) originally based on Confucianism. Approximately 119 million people crowd into this small archipelago which, in the major metropolitan areas, resembles more a human bee hive with its incredible congestion. Mexico, on the other hand, is a continental nation lying just south of the United States which has a social structure inherited from the Spanish tradition. Its native language is Spanish and its social and religious institutions are heavily influenced by the Roman Catholic Church. As such, its customs often radically differ from those of Japan. Upon reflection, I am pleased that I have chosen two countries which provide such a contrast because we will be able to discover how cultural factors may differ from society to society.

Another point I would like to emphasize is that my experiences in and knowledge of Japan and Mexico are a study in contrast themselves. I have been associated with Japan and the Japanese language for approximately 16 years since my initial trip to

Japan in 1967. I also majored in Japanese Studies in college and took 55 credit hours in the Japanese language. My relationship with Japan has progressed along a gradual continuum of increasing understanding of its culture and language through travel, knowing Japanese people, reading, and work responsibilities. In a word, it has been a long and deep relationship. By contrast, my contact with Mexico has been quite recent. I went to Mexico during my winter internship between January and March, 1983. I lived for 10 weeks with a Mexican family in the city of Puebla while teaching English as Second Language. My Spanish is not as fluent as my Japanese, nor is my understanding of Mexican society as deep as that of Japan. However, I do not feel that such a discrepancy will detract from my cultural analysis because my Mexican experience was short, concentrated, and very vivid in my memory. Therefore, even though the nature of the experiences was vastly different, they both are suitable for comparison.

Description of Japanese Cross-Cultural Experiences

April 19, 1966 was a turning point in my life. That is the day when a Japanese man from Ibaraki prefecture (Japan) came to live with my family in Albany, New York for a period of three weeks as a member of a group of Japanese educators who had come to the United States to study the American educational system under the auspices of the Japanese Ministry of Education. In all, there were 10 members in the education group, including two interpreters, and each member was placed with an American homestay family. This Japanese man was chosen by the local reception committee to live with us. It was a momentous moment for me,

in particular, because it marked the first time in my life that I had ever come in contact with a foreigner (non-American), and certainly was the first time that a foreigner had ever stayed in our home. What made this encounter even more interesting was the fact that the Japanese man spoke absolutely no English and we, a typical American family, spoke no Japanese. It was my first cross-cultural experience of any kind. One would naturally assume that in such a situation communication would be extremely difficult. Verbal communication was, in fact, minimal, yet there was in its place a beautiful and splendid type of communication which takes place in an atmosphere of love and goodwill. The essential humanity and warmth of this Japanese gentleman clearly transcended any minor problems we had with words. As a matter of fact, words might well have served as a barrier between us. Words often get in the way of true human feelings. Though we had little verbal communication, we became fast friends and would spend hours teaching each other things through drawings, pictures, gestures, and looking words up in the dictionary. He taught us about his country, Japan, and we taught him similar things about our country. We would spend hours at the dinner table "communicating" via facial expressions, gestures, etc. The three weeks passed quickly and suddenly it was time for our Japanese friend and his colleagues to depart and head on to their next homestay in a different part of the United States.

What took place at the Albany bus station upon departure was an unforgettable experience which will be etched in my memory for as long as I live. No one who was there was left untouched.

When it was time for the bus to depart, all the grown Japanese and Americans were sobbing unashamedly. So much love and respect had developed between the Americans and the Japanese during the three weeks that only tears could express the deep feelings that existed between the two peoples.

This initial cross-cultural experience served to change my vision of the world greatly. Before meeting the Japanese man who lived in our community, I had been a typical 16-year old American youth who was culturally insulated from the rest of the world. My first cross-cultural experience shattered this insularity forever. Because of his visit I began to see beyond the confines of my own culture and slowly began to develop an interest in this far-off, exotic, and at that time unknown island called Japan.

My first trip to Japan took place the very next summer of 1967. Realizing how much I had been affected by the Japanese visit, my father asked me sometime during the fall of 1966 if I would like to visit Japan. Of course, I jumped at the chance! I filled out an application to become a member of the 1967 Experiment high school summer group to Japan, went to Putney for an interview, and was accepted fairly soon after that.

The summer sojourn started in San Anselmo, California, where 30 other high school students and I participated in the Experiment's summer orientation program at the Katherine Branson School, located about an hour north of San Francisco. The daily program consisted of 5-6 hours of intensive Japanese language training under the direction of a Japanese professor who was Director of the English Language Center at Michigan

State University. Such language training was exhausting, yet so thorough that to this day I can still remember the first Japanese dialog that I was taught. The language training lasted two and a half weeks, at which time we departed Oakland International Airport and flew west to the Land of the Rising Sun. (To be renamed many years later by American humorist Don Maloney as the "Land of the Rising Everything" because of its incredible inflation rate!!) After a short orientation period in Tokyo we headed further west on the bullet train ("shinkansen") to our respective homestays in the industrial city of Amagasaki, a suburb of Osaka.

Such is the Experiment's philosophy that "people learn to live together by living together". This was my first experiment in international living! I was at a very impressionistic age (17) and everything was new to me, everything wonderful! It was a totally positive experience with, surprisingly, a minimum of culture shock. I believe that there were several reasons for this. First of all, I was a member of a group, and this tended to soften the shock of being in a different culture. Since we had many group activities planned during our one month's stay I was never away from Americans or the English language for very long, and this was comforting. Second, since I could speak only rudimentary Japanese, my Japanese brother spoke with me mainly in English and thus protected me from having to speak in Japanese, which would have been very stressful and tiring considering my poor linguistic proficiency at the time. Third, I was so preoccupied with and open to all the new cultural stimuli that I had no time to even think about the ramifications

of living in a different culture. I was like a child in a candy store - everything was new and wonderful! I was seeing Japan for the first time and I had not yet reached a state of maturity where I could look at things with a critical eye.

My homestay situation was aided immensely by the fact that I was blessed with a wonderful family, who welcomed me with open arms and showed me extraordinary warmth and hospitality throughout my stay. I was also fed good food, and it was plentiful. These were all factors which contributed to the overall positive attitude which I developed toward Japan and the Japanese people.

When I look back on my own experience and those of others, I believe that one can not emphasize enough the importance of a homestay in not only easing oneself into another culture, but perhaps more importantly, in shaping one's overall impression of a foreign land. One can only judge a foreign culture by its people, and the prism through which we view another culture can only be the people we come directly in contact with.

Similarly, my older sister had a wonderful homestay family in Orizaba, Mexico when she did her summer internship as an MAT in 1972. She came back raving about what a great country Mexico was and how hospitable the Mexican people were. My younger sister had two very successful homestay families in Chile and pre-Sandinista Nicaragua, respectively, and returned to the United States not only speaking Spanish fluently, but also with an enhanced motivation to improve her Spanish and knowledge of Latin countries. All of these examples indicate the great importance of initial contacts, because these contacts

will often crystallize our impressions of a new society.

My second trip to Japan took place during the summer of 1970, between my sophomore and junior years at the University of Washington (Seattle). During my first trip in 1967 I had met a good Japanese friend, and he invited me to come during my summer vacation and live with his family in the port city of Kobe. This marked a great difference in the manner in which I was travelling to Japan - in 1967 I had sojourned as a group member, but in 1970 I went independently. It was quite a carefree summer, staying around the house, talking with family members, (particularly the mother and grandmother), listening to Japanese and Western music, and sightseeing in the around the Kobe-Osaka (Kansai) area.

Culturally and linguistically, the summer of 1970 was significant in several ways. It marked a giant step forward in my understanding of the culture and the language. One of my vivid memories is my relationship with my Japanese grandmother. I found through subsequent experiences that in a foreign culture it is often one particular person you become close to, and through that person you can learn so much. My Japanese grandmother took a distinct liking to me, and since she spoke no English I had to communicate in Japanese. Although my Japanese was quite broken at the time, it improved greatly during the summer of 1970 because I was forced to use it. It marked the first time in my life that I was removed from my own native language for an extended period of time. My improvement was due to two factors: (1) I had studied two years of college-level Japanese, which provided me with a solid linguistic base, and

(2) I was enveloped in a totally linguistically Japanese environment.

My third trip to Japan took place almost three years later when I returned in the spring of 1973 as an English instructor at the Seido Language Institute in the city of Ashiya, a wealthy residential area sandwiched between Kobe and Osaka on the Osaka Bay. I taught at Seido for one year, teaching all levels of English classes including elementary, intermediate, and advanced. While in the Kansai area I lived with three separate Japanese families over the first six months, and the last six months was spent living in a small room in a dormitory maintained for the employees of a local bread company.

My fourth trip to Japan began in the fall of 1976 and extended four and a half years to the spring of 1981 when I served as an ESL instructor at the Nagoya YMCA English School as a member of the International YMCA's Overseas English Teaching Program. Again, I taught all levels of English classes - elementary, intermediate, advanced, and seminar. In addition to my English teaching responsibilities, I also served for two years as the Director of the YMCA's Cross-Cultural Center, in which capacity I advised Japanese students who wished to study English in Intensive English Language programs in the United States and Great Britain. While in Nagoya I lived in an apartment.

Description of Mexican Cross-Cultural Experience

My experience in Mexico came about as a result of the internship training period at the School for International Training. All MAT candidates had to arrange their own internships in the

fall of 1982, and I decided to go to Mexico. There were several reasons for this: (1) the relationship between the American and Mexican Experiment offices has traditionally been strong, and by deciding on Mexico I was guaranteed a well-organized program which would not only provide a suitable school in which to teach, but also a homestay through which I could be introduced to Mexican society. I was particularly excited about living with a Mexican family; (2) both of my sisters had been to Mexico previously and talked about what a wonderful place it was; and (3) I thought that I could expand my understanding of Hispanic cultures and the world by meeting Mexican people and by experiencing Mexican culture first hand.

In retrospect, I am glad that I made the decision to go to Mexico because I had a wonderful experience, learning much Spanish in addition to more knowledge about all aspects of Mexican life - social, educational, religious, political, and economic. I lived for a period of 10 weeks with a warm and funny Mexican family in the beautiful colonial city of Puebla, approximately two hours east of Mexico City by bus. By living with a Mexican family and being surrounded by so much colonial history I felt that I was truly experiencing Mexico as Mexicans did. I spoke only Spanish at home and ate almost totally Mexican food. I taught from Monday to Friday for a total of 15 hours a week at a newly-established school, the English Training Center, founded by a former MAT.

Culture Defined

What do we actually mean when we say "culture"? This is a legitimate question to ask because culture is a broad, all-encompassing concept which has different meanings to different people. Let me define it this way - culture is a total communications framework which gives each person his identity no matter where he is born - words, actions, postures, gestures, tones of voice, facial expressions, the way he handles time, space, and materials, and the way he works, plays, makes love, and defends himself. ¹ Culture can not be understood separately, piece by piece, but rather must be seen as part of an integrated whole, a total communications network. One aspect of culture will consequently be interrelated to all of its other components.

Anthropologists agree that culture is not innate, but learned. In other words, cultural characteristics are not peculiar to a certain race or ethnic group, but are common among the group members as a whole. For example, black Americans share many of the same cultural characteristics as white Americans, who likewise share common traits with Asian Americans. Culture also serves to distinguish between different groups of people. In this paper we will focus on three distinct cultural groupings; the Americans, the Japanese, and the Mexicans. Each group is differentiated from each other by factors such as geography, customs, and language, and each culture must be viewed as a self-contained whole.

Whether we are aware of it or not, we are all "products" of our own culture, and we remain in the grip of a particular

type of cultural identification. No matter how hard man tries, it is impossible for him to divest himself of his own culture, for it has penetrated to the roots of his nervous system and determines how he perceives the world. ² In a sense, we have been "programmed" to fit neatly into our own culture - Arabs are programmed for Arab culture, Americans for American culture, Japanese for Japanese culture, and Germans for German culture. However, as Edward T. Hall so rightfully has pointed out in his book, "Beyond Culture", the hidden cultural control mechanism makes us unconscious of our own cultural identities in our cultural milieu. This is because the rules of social behavior are based on the principles of negative feedback. As long as we follow the system of hidden cultural controls, we are completely unaware that such a system of controls even exists! We are, so to speak, fish in water. It is only when we are "out of water" (when we leave our home culture) that we begin to experience negative feedback.

The director of the Experiment's 1967 summer intensive Japanese language program in California made this appropriate analogy: if our home is on top of a mountain, we really are not aware of our own mountain, but, if by chance, we climb another mountain peak and look back at our own mountain, we see it from a totally different perspective, and finally understand where we came from.

Throughout this paper we will discuss the phenomenon known as "culture shock". Culture shock is the experience that people go through when they are denied the signs, expressions, symbols, sounds, etc. which they are familiar with in their own culture.

Uneasiness and frustration set in when we are placed in surroundings whose symbols and language are different from our own. In my own foreign experiences, I suffered varying degrees of culture shock in both Japan and Mexico. The culture shock begins to lessen as one becomes more familiar with the language and other social cues. It is my belief that the degree of culture shock will be proportionate to the differences in language, customs, and values between the host culture and your own.

It is entirely possible in the acculturation process to not only overcome culture shock, but to identify to a high degree with the host culture by learning its language and taking on the behavior and mannerisms of the indigenous people. My relationship with Japan is a good case in point. My infatuation with that country began in 1967 during my first visit and continued through consecutive visits in 1970, 1973, and 1976. By speaking Japanese constantly and by living with the people, I actually started to take on behavioral characteristics of the Japanese people. My mannerisms had become Japanese-like and I unconsciously would bow in appropriate social situations. Likewise, Americans who live in Latin cultures will most likely take on characteristics or mannerisms of the Latin people. I am convinced that if a foreigner becomes actively involved in a foreign culture it is practically impossible not to be influenced by that culture.

Reverse Culture Shock

When a person has achieved a high degree of emotional identification with a foreign culture and returns to his own culture, a phenomenon known as "reverse culture shock" is likely to occur. This happens when the foreigner becomes so used to another society that he finds it extremely difficult to readjust to his own. My first experience with reverse culture shock was when I returned to the United States from Japan after having completed a one year teaching contract in the spring of 1974. After returning to my parents' home in Albany, New York, I remember actually bowing when a visitor entered our front door! My reverse culture shock symptoms were characterized by feelings of hostility toward things American, and by constantly and unfairly comparing American behavior with Japanese behavior. Mentally, I would ask myself questions such as, "The Japanese do it this way, why don't the Americans?" It took me several months to totally readjust to American realities, and it took an even longer time to realize that it is unfair, and even stupid, to directly compare contrasting cultures, because what occurs within a particular culture can only be fully understood within the context of that particular culture. Separate cultures have their own unique character.

I also suffered a milder form of reverse culture shock when I returned from Mexico in March, 1983. Upon reflection, I believe that much of my difficulty in readjusting to the United States was due to the great effect which Mexican time had on me. (This will be discussed at greater length later in the paper)

After returning to SIT in late March (1983), it seemed that for the longest time I was in a fog, and couldn't focus my energies on my studies. I was extremely social, and it seemed that the only things I was interested in doing was visiting people. Unlike my reverse culture shock upon returning from Japan, my reverse culture shock from Mexico was not characterized by negative reactions to things American, but rather by a feeling of total disorientation, which continued for at least three weeks before I finally settled back into the academic grind at SIT. I was not the only one who was traumatized. Two other MATs went through reverse culture shock much worse than I did, and many MATs who taught in Mexico remarked about the difficulties of readjustment. We had all passed through a great time tunnel which separates Mexico and America. I am convinced that time was the major factor underlying the trauma which we experienced in differing degrees.

Edward T. Hall tells of the real value in studying other cultures when he wrote:

"The real job is not to understand foreign culture but to understand our own. I am also convinced that all that one ever gets from studying foreign culture is a token understanding. The ultimate reason for such study is to learn more about how one's own system works. The best reason for exposing oneself to foreign ways is to generate a sense of vitality and awareness - an interest in life which can only come when one lives through the shock of contrast and difference".³

CHAPTER TWOFACTORS TO BE CONSIDERED
IN THE CULTURAL ENTRY PROCESSLANGUAGE

From my several foreign experiences, no problem is greater nor more immediate in overcoming differences in culture than is language. Language is so vital because it is totally pervasive in any society. Almost all communication which we either give or receive is by language, or at least a form of language. The value of learning a foreign tongue when entering a foreign society can never be underestimated. It is absolutely crucial in establishing meaningful communication with the native people. Those people who travel to another culture and neglect to learn the language of that country become cultural prisoners, living in their own small worlds and not being able to understand what transpires around them. By not learning the foreign tongue we are reduced to the status of children and are easily manipulated.

At this point it might be useful to gain a better understanding of just what language is. Edward T. Hall defines language in the following manner:

"Language is much like a mathematical system which becomes elaborated into a self-contained conceptual system which previsualizes all possible experience in accordance with certain accepted formal limitation".⁴

Another capsulized definition of language might be:

"Language is a system for organizing information and for releasing thoughts and responses in other organisms".⁵

We all live within the confines of our own language and are very much bound by its rules. Language not only dictates what we say but also how we pattern our thoughts. This is why we generally suffer great culture shock when we initially enter a foreign culture. All of the familiar signs and cues which we feel so comfortable with in our home culture now are gone, and we have nothing to fall back on. Since the sounds we hear are completely new to us, we begin to feel uncomfortable and, as Edward T. Hall states, "we experience the other person as an uncontrollable and unpredictable part of ourselves".⁶

I was no exception in experiencing linguistic culture shock. At times this shock was frustrating and at other times more severe. I began to experience more severe culture shock when I was staying with another Japanese family in the spring of 1973. In this situation I was forced to fend totally for myself in the Japanese language. It was at times a very mentally fatiguing process, struggling to express myself and trying to master Japanese syntax. I can remember times when I did not care to wake up in the mornings because to do so meant that another day's struggle with the Japanese language was about to begin! It was mentally tiring and psychologically depressing.

A difficult Oriental language such as Japanese presents particularly perplexing problems to the Western student because of its grammatical structure and incredibly complex writing system. English has only 26 letters in its alphabet, a through z. Its

syntax is such that in any given sentence the subject usually appears first, followed by the verb, and lastly the object. In linguistic terminology, English is thus classified as an "SVO" language. (Subject; Verb; Object) Japanese, on the other hand, is an "SOV" language, with the subject followed by its object, and the verb appearing at the end of the sentence. This means that the Western student of Japanese has to totally rearrange his or her thought process to properly accommodate the radically different sentence structure. Moreover, Japanese is not a Roman language and does not employ the alphabet as we do. Instead, the Japanese language consists of thousands of pictographic characters, which were introduced into Japan from China around the 7th century A.D. Both Japanese and Chinese languages long have been renowned for their extremely complex writing systems. Words are not formed by putting together letters, but by juxtaposing characters with each other. Such a radically different writing system causes great problems for the Westerner and makes penetration of the Japanese culture all the more difficult.

Spanish also produced great culture shock for me when I travelled to Mexico. Before leaving on my teaching internship in January, 1983, my older sister (who was an MAT in 1972 in Mexico), told me that my first several weeks in Mexico would probably be the most exciting because everything would be new at first, and later culture shock would set in as the initial euphoria wore off. I, however, experienced my greatest culture shock during the first three weeks as a result of my inadequacy in the Spanish language. My linguistic culture shock was most

clearly illustrated during my very first day in Puebla, where my internship was. After an introduction to the school, my Mexican father picked me up and took me to the home of his mother, where all the family members had gathered in honor of the newly-arrived "norteamericano". I was really on center stage because I was a new face, and all the family members wanted to know more about me. It was a fairly festive occasion, yet as the dinner progressed I became increasingly quiet and emotionally withdrawn. I simply could not understand what was being said to me, and this produced great mental fatigue and emotional frustration. I was smiling on the outside, yet inside I was in turmoil! To become quiet and withdrawn in such a setting was very much out of character for me. During such times I am normally talkative, lively and ebullient.

Although this was the most spectacular example of initial linguistic culture shock, it was not the only one. For a period ranging from two to three weeks I continued to feel uneasy in my new environment. Only Spanish was spoken at home, no English at all. Until I became more familiar with the Spanish language and my host family, my reaction continued to be greater than usual silence and emotional withdrawal. I would be abnormally quiet at meals and say only those things which were essential for fundamental communication.

How is one to overcome the great barriers that different languages present to a newly-arrived foreigner? In my opinion, there are two options available: (1) to culturally and linguistically isolate oneself from the native people and associate primarily with people from one's own country, or (2) make a

conscious effort to blend oneself with the native culture and people by making positive efforts to learn the language and culture. The first option is the negative, head-in-the-sand approach to cultural entry, although it can be accomplished in places where there are great numbers of Americans. The second approach, although more emotionally and psychologically difficult, is by far the more rewarding over the long run.

There are two key factors in language learning: ability and motivation. Assuming that a person has at least average or above average mental capabilities, motivation is probably the most crucial factor in being able to overcome the language barrier.

In my own case, when I returned to the United States after my first trip to Japan in the summer of 1967 I had been so impressed by what I had seen and experienced in Japan that my motivation to learn more about the country and language was extremely high. As a matter of fact, I made a firm decision to major in Japanese Studies upon entering college after graduation from high school in 1968. Subsequent trips to Japan increased my motivation and, consequently, I performed very well in my Japanese courses on the university level. I seriously doubt if my academic performance would have been as good if my motivation had not been as high.

Conversely, my initial lack of motivation was a factor in retarding my progress in learning Spanish when I was in Mexico. My time in Mexico was quite limited - only two and a half months. A great problem with which I struggled inwardly was reconciling the fact that I needed to learn Spanish to communicate with the

realization that after my internship I may never have any use for Spanish again! This was a very real dilemma, and temporarily adversely affected my learning of the language. However, as I grew to know the Mexican people better and began to understand their warmth and compassion, my motivation for learning increased and, therefore, my progress was greatly enhanced. Motivation is likely to increase with deeper involvement in the host society.

When I was in Mexico I discovered that an interesting phenomenon occurred pertaining to multiple language learning. My native language is, of course, English, my second language is Japanese, and in Mexico I was studying Spanish as my third language. While learning Spanish I found that there was a tremendous amount of linguistic interference from my second language, Japanese. Before 1983, whenever I had been in a foreign culture I had spoken Japanese, and when I was suddenly placed in a totally Spanish-speaking environment my instinct was to respond in Japanese, even though the situation demanded a Spanish reply. I remember clearly a conversation I had with my Mexican mother toward the end of my first week in Puebla. At the end of the conversation I instinctively blurted out "sayonara" ("goodbye" in Japanese) instead of the proper Spanish word, "adios". On other occasions, I often said to myself "nan to iu no ka naa" ("I wonder how you say that?" in Japanese) when searching for a proper Spanish word instead of employing the Spanish phrase, "Como se dice?" It took me well over a month to finally rid myself of the second language interference, and this was only accomplished through total immersion and constant daily usage of Spanish. The interesting point to consider is that linguistic

interference on the third language came from the second language, not from the mother tongue.

Another important factor in language learning in a foreign milieu is the basic human need for self expression. I found this principle to be true in both my study of Japanese and Spanish. I would say that this is particularly true for extroverted people who have a great inner drive to express themselves through words. If we think about this carefully, it may be that the essential need for humans to express themselves is itself the prime motivating factor in learning a second language. I know for fact that my need to express myself was a major motivation in my desire to deal with Japanese in Japanese and the Mexican people in Spanish. The ability to express oneself in another language brings one closer to the indigenous people while at the same time reducing psychological stress.

It is important for the foreigner to remember that when he or she enters a foreign culture, linguistically they are not adults. With the exception of those people who receive a great amount of pre-departure training, many foreign travelers do not have strong language foundations in the host tongue. Many foreigners make the mistake of thinking that since they are adults they should commence studying on an adult level. This is a major mistake because linguistically they are mere children. Accordingly, language study should begin with easy vocabulary and sentence structures and gradually progress to more difficult syntax. Many times I have observed Americans in Japan who tried to bite off more than they could chew when studying Japanese. Eventually it became too difficult for them, they became discouraged, and quit.

Language Study Tips

I will describe how I tackled the Japanese language and how I was gradually able to achieve communicative competence. An incessant curiosity is vital. I attempted to create as many speaking opportunities for myself as possible by engaging as many people as possible in actual conversation. This gave me essential practice in verbalizing what I knew. I incessantly asked other people questions about unknown vocabulary, and I would write words down with their English equivalents in a notebook which I carried with me at all times. At night before going to sleep, I would re-study the list of words which I had accumulated for that day, and by doing so I discovered that I could retain them in my long-term memory for a much longer period of time. I found that study just before sleep greatly enhanced retention.

However, verbal communication was not enough. I felt strongly that reading should also be done to supplement verbalizing. I began reading Japanese by subscribing to the elementary school newspaper, which would be comparable to the Scholastic Weekly Reader in America. I began reading simple articles and marking off those words I could not understand. Gradually, as I became familiar with greater amounts of vocabulary and sentence structure, I moved on to the junior high school newspaper, and finally to regular papers read by Japanese adults. The process was gradual, one step at a time. We might call it the "building block" approach. The lesson to be learned for the prospective traveler is that language learning is a difficult process and should be tackled

systematically, mastering more simple sentence patterns and moving progressively toward those of increasing difficulty.

TIME

Time Defined

According to anthropologist Edward T. Hall, there are two distinct categories of time. One is Monochronic-Time (M-Time) and the other is Polychronic-Time (P-Time). M-Time emphasizes schedules, segmentation, and promptness. For M-Time people reared in the northern European tradition, time is linear and segmented like a road or ribbon extending forward into the future and backward to the past. It is also tangible. They speak of it as being saved, spent, wasted, lost, made up, accelerated, slowed down, crawling, and running out".⁷ P-Time systems are characterized by several things happening at once. They stress involvement of people and completion of transactions rather than adherence to preset schedules".⁸

The United States, Japan, and Mexico make a very interesting triangular comparison. According to Hall's dichotomy of time, the United States and Japan can be lumped together as essentially M-Time societies, while Mexico can be classified as being much closer to a P-Time culture. Therefore, although differences in time exist between America and Japan, the more interesting and valuable comparisons will be between United States-Mexico and Japan-Mexico, since the Mexican treatment of time is often radically different from the other two.

Time Structures in the United States, Japan, and Mexico

First, let us look at how Americans are likely to view and utilize time. Allow me at this juncture to extract some relevant quotes from Edward T. Hall's books concerning the typical American perception of time:

"Not only do we Americans segment and schedule time, but we look ahead and are oriented almost entirely toward the future. We like new things and are pre-occupied with change. We want to know how to overcome resistance to change". 9

"Promptness is also valued highly in American life. If people are not prompt, it is often taken either as an insult or as an indication that they are not quite responsible". 10

"The American never questions the fact that time should be planned and future events fitted into a schedule. He thinks that people should look forward to the future and not dwell too much on the past. His future is not very far ahead of him. Results must be obtained in the foreseeable future - one or two years or, at the most, five or ten. Promises to meet deadlines and appointments are taken seriously. There are real penalties for being late and not keeping commitments in time. From this it can be surmised that the American thinks it is natural to quantify time. To fail to do so is unthinkable. The American specifies how much time it requires to do everything". 11

"M-Time people, by virtue of compartmentalization, are less likely to see their activities in context as part of a larger whole". 12

Without realizing it, time literally dictates much of our behavior. Since we live in an industrialized society, time is all the more important to us because we must wake up at a certain time in the morning, get to work, attend meetings, schedule meetings, meet for dinner dates, etc. As Edward T. Hall states,

"Time is now imposed as an outside constraint and sends its tenacles into every nook and crevice of even our most private acts". 13

Japanese vs. American Time

Japan is very comparable to the United States as an M-Time society because schedules are quite important to the Japanese, as well. By and large, Japanese people are quite fastidious and punctual by nature. Appointments usually start on time and last just their allotted time. The train system is also extremely punctual - rarely will a train be more than several minutes late. Also, while in Japan I noticed that almost all Japanese wear watches, which is indicative that time is an extremely important factor in Japanese society.

There are several differences that I know of in which time structures are different between the United States and Japan. One area that I can immediately think of in the working sphere is overtime. Americans, it seems, are much more conscious of quitting time. When an American has put in his 8 hours a day, that's it! - time to go home. Although Japanese generally are conscious of time, they are less preoccupied than Americans with leaving the work place at exactly 4:30 or 5:00. Generally, they will stay later if necessary to complete the task at hand. Almost no one leaves exactly on time. I can remember working at the Nagoya YMCA and doing hours of unpaid overtime and not thinking anything of it because everyone else was there, too! Americans are generally more aware of overtime than Japanese and often resent having to do it, whereas the Japanese often do

overtime willingly and are not paid for it.

Although I was not a businessman in Japan, I know that business transactions in Japan, particularly involving foreigners, are handled in a very different manner from the way they are in the United States. This is a function of time. Whereas the American businessman is anxious to conclude the deal as rapidly as possible (after all, time is money!) and move on to the next, the Japanese are more inclined to take longer amounts of time to get a gauge on their prospective client and ascertain his intentions. The fast-paced American businessman has often loudly complained about the great amount of time it takes to consummate a business deal. This irritation stems basically from the different way the two sides are handling time. Therefore, we might conclude that while Japanese time can essentially be classified as monochronic, certain aspects of its culture are handled polychronically.

Mexican Time

By far the more interesting comparison of respective time systems is between the United States and Mexico, and how this difference is likely to affect the newly-arrived foreigner. While an American can travel to far-off Japan and basically find that time is handled in the same manner and the day is broken up similarly, this does not hold true in Mexico, where time is much more polychronic in nature.

What is the likely consequence when people from M-Time societies go to live for extended periods of time in P-Time

societies such as Mexico? Edward T. Hall states that Americans overseas living in P-Time systems are quite likely to be psychologically stressed in many ways. ¹⁴ This is because time is treated much more cavalierly south of the border. To the low-context, monochronic, one-thing-at-a-time person, polychronic behavior can be almost totally disorganizing in its effect, which is identical in its consequences to overcrowding. Action chains get broken, and nothing is completed. The two systems are like oil and water; they do not mix.¹⁵

The full force of P-Time culture shock was brought home to me during my internship in Puebla, Mexico. In many ways, I suffered the same psychological stress which many Americans go through in Latin countries. Examples abound. First of all, the Mexican day is organized quite differently from the day in either America or Japan. While in the United States and Japan the working day is broken up only by a short half an hour or hour lunch break, in Mexico my school, English Training Center, was closed on weekdays from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. Other businesses are usually closed in the afternoons for a minimum of two hours. This is because the Mexican day centers around "La Comida", which literally means "The Meal". It is usually much larger than our lunch, and Mexicans like to eat it leisurely and not be rushed. After "La Comida" came an afternoon "siesta", or nap. This was a difficult custom for me to get used to, since I almost never take naps in the United States. The afternoon siesta had the effect of making me a little drowsy in the afternoon after returning to school around 4:00 p.m. Evening classes were from 6:00 - 9:15, and I usually returned to my

homestay family's home no earlier than 9:45 p.m., at which time I ate a light supper. This meant that I was eating dinner almost 4 hours later than I normally did in the United States! I gradually became accustomed to eating at such a late hour, but the lateness of the meal provided less digestion time for my food before sleeping, and as a result I gained some weight.

I began to experience psychological stress and realize my own "Americanness" more clearly on Sunday afternoons. This was the day when my Mexican family usually went to the home of my Mexican mother's parents, several kilometers from our apartment. In a way, I was resistant to the idea because it seemed like we spent endless hours just sitting around doing nothing except talking. I became very irritated and frustrated because, being a typically production-oriented American, I considered such long periods of talking as being unproductive. I was dying to escape by myself and quietly read a book, which I often do at home in the United States. I was caught in the classic situation of Americans wanting to treat time monochronically while the Mexicans were treating it polychronically. The family was obviously enjoying itself immensely, yet no matter how hard I tried to be the model Experimenter, my distaste for the long Sunday afternoon get-togethers never abated.

There are several other examples I can think of concerning the way Mexicans treat time. One interesting example that I remember clearly concerned the repair work that was being done on the swimming pool of an athletic club known as Alpha Uno, where I was a member. It was my normal practice to go swimming at the Alpha pool every morning around 11:00 a.m. One morning

I arrived at the club in mid-February to find that the water level in the pool had been lowered considerably. After inquiring as to what was going on, I discovered that the pool was being cleaned and that it would be ready for use in about a week's time. One week later I returned to find that the pool was still not operational, and when I asked the club officials how long it would take to re-open, they answered another week! Though a bit incredulous, I accepted the bad news (I love to swim) and returned a week later to find that it still had not been fully cleaned and was still not operational! When I left Puebla in mid-March the pool still had not been opened, which means that almost a full month had passed and the pool was still not in use.

What had happened? From a North American or Japanese point of view, the Puebla pool incident was a horribly inefficient operation. Cleaning a 50 meter pool should have taken several days, but never as long as a month. If so, what had happened? I surmise that it was the Mexican treatment of time. To the Mexicans, cleaning the pool and having it operational for the customers as soon as possible probably did not have a high priority. The job would get done, but there simply was not the urgency.

Another observation I made was that evening meals in Mexico were often longer and more leisurely than in the States. It appeared that the Mexican people placed a high value on not only enjoying the meal, but perhaps more importantly on enjoying each other's company. Dinners sometimes lasted hours and conversation was lively. "La Cena" (dinner) seemed less a function

than an event to be experienced. This could be either wonderful or irritating, depending on the situation. I recall, in particular, one night when I was dining in the Zona Rosa section of Mexico City with two Mexican women friends of mine, it seemed an interminable amount of time between the time that the cocktails were served and when we actually ate. I was becoming irritable because I was hungry and wanted to eat, but my Mexican friends were chatting away amicably and were seemingly unconcerned that so much time had elapsed. It is said that in Latin America one commonly hears the expression, "our time or your time?" ("Hora americana, hora mejicana?")

Edward T. Hall related an interesting story concerning the P-Time system employed by the Latin people in his book, "The Silent Language":

"An old friend of mine of Spanish cultural heritage used to run his business according to the "Latino" system. This meant that up to fifteen people were in his office at one time. Business which might have been finished in a quarter of an hour sometimes took a whole day. He realized, of course, that the Anglo-Americans were disturbed by this and used to make some allowance for them, a dispensation which meant that they spent only an hour or so in his office when they had planned on a few minutes. The American concept of the discreteness of time and the necessity for scheduling was at variance with this amiable and seemingly confusing Latin system. However, if my friend had adhered to the American system he would have destroyed a vital part of his prosperity. People who came to do business with him also came to find out things and visit each other".¹⁶

The famous Mexican poet and philosopher Octavio Paz has often commented on the huge psychological and philosophical differences which separate the United States and Mexico. After experiencing Mexican life for several months, I tend to agree

with him. Since time is treated so differently in the two societies, Americans look at life through a different prism from the Mexicans. While Americans segment and apparently fight time, Mexicans seem to flow more naturally with time and the rhythms of life. While Americans may view the Mexicans as slow and inefficient, the Mexicans probably look upon the Americans as pushy and mechanical. In my opinion, for an American to successfully adapt him or herself to P-Time societies, they must consciously attempt to slow their pace a bit and not worry so much about schedules. To do so is by no means an easy process, but if we are successful in changing our patterns of segmenting time, we may become more human and less alienated from ourselves and others.

HUMAN RELATIONS AND VALUES

The way in which people interact with each other, the values which they hold, and their attitudes toward outsiders vary greatly from culture to culture. It is important for the prospective ESL teacher or any other foreign traveler to be aware of not only social interaction in foreign settings, but also about one's own American values, as well. If we understand clearly what type of cultural beings we are and what the nature is of the society which produced us, then we will be able to better comprehend the different natures of foreign societies and what potential cultural conflict exists when we become members of these societies. In other words, a better understanding of one's self might quite possibly ease the cultural entry process in a foreign society.

In this section I would like to examine human relations in three separate societies - the United States, Japan, and Mexico. Through this analysis I hope to identify areas of similarity and those of discrepancy, and hopefully provide the future ESL instructor with a better idea of what to expect when trying to assimilate oneself into these societies, particularly Japan and Mexico.

A Definition of Two Types of Culture

In his book, Beyond Culture, Edward T. Hall draws a clear distinction between two radically different forms of culture. These are (1) high-context (HC) cultures and (2) low-context (LC) cultures. Roughly speaking, high context cultures are characterized by a high degree of involvement of people with each other, and a tendency toward high commitment in completing action chains. Conversely, low-context cultures are characterized by less involvement of people in completion of action chains and a greater degree of atomization in society. Some additional features of HC cultures are that they generally make greater distinctions between insiders and outsiders than low-context cultures do, and people raised in HC cultures expect more from others than do participants in LC cultures.¹⁷ People from HC cultures often exercise greater caution and reluctance when beginning something, particularly in fields or relationships that are not well known.¹⁸ According to Hall's definition, America is classified as low-context, while Mexico and Japan are more high-context.

American Values

It is valuable at this point to take a look at some of the more prominent features of the American character. What does it actually mean to be an American? Modern day Americans are products of a highly industrialized, technical society which is highly mobile, perhaps the most mobile in the world. Individualism has deep roots in our past, starting from the days when the Puritans arrived at Plymouth colony in Massachusetts, fleeing political and religious persecution in the Old World. When we think of the Wild West of the United States we think of the ruggedly individualistic cowboys and trappers who opened up new frontiers. These values are often glamorized on television and in movies. The Americans are, in fact, a people who believe deeply in the value of the individual. I would like to quote some passages from Edward C. Stewart's excellent book, "American Cultural Patterns: A Cross-Cultural Perspective", in which he attempts to define the American character:

"Personal relationships among Americans are numerous and are marked by friendliness and informality; however, Americans rarely form deep and lasting friendships. Friends and membership groups change easily as the American shifts status and locale; consequently, his social life lacks both permanence and depth. Although social activities occupy much of his time, he avoids personal commitments to others".¹⁹

"Running throughout the American's social relationships with others is the theme of equality. Each person is ascribed an irreducible value because of his humanness. Interpersonal relations are typically horizontal, conducted between presumed equals. When a personal confrontation is required between two persons of different hierarchical levels, there is an implicit tendency to establish an atmosphere of equality".²⁰

"Americans pursue their own personal goals while cooperating with others who, likewise, pursue their own. They accept the goals of the group, but if their expectations are unfulfilled they then feel free to leave and join another group". 21

"When confronted with people who do not identify the self with the individual, the Americans react with bewilderment, since the idea of the self not being located in the individual, is culturally preposterous for most Americans". 22

Running throughout these comments by Stewart is the theme of the primacy of the individual, and his or her freedom to make the choices in life which he believes are most beneficial to his success. Mobility is also a major factor in the American character - the freedom to move from place to place and job to job. Another common theme running throughout the American character is the theme of equality. Although there are certainly different social strata in the United States, class distinctions and rank tend to be minimized by Americans. Americans are intent on breaking down formality as soon as possible. Consequently, the use of first names is very widespread among Americans. When an American suspects too much formality he is likely to say, for example, "Just call me 'Bob'".

It is important for all Americans who plan on extended stays abroad to at least have a basic understanding of the major components of their own national character because a fundamental understanding of oneself will aid the American in comprehending what elements in foreign cultures are most likely to produce internal conflict during the cultural entry process.

Distinctions Between Insiders and Outsiders in Japan and Mexico

Based on my own experiences in Japan and Mexico, I would like to look at human relations and values in both Japan and Mexico and attempt to predict what problems a typical American might face in these societies and how these problems might be best overcome. Much of my analysis will be based on my own personal experiences and supplemented by my background knowledge of the two societies.

Let's start first with a comparison of the United States and Japan. I have studied Japan and the Japanese people for over 16 years, half of my lifetime, and I am still amazed at the incredibly close relations which the two countries have in the economic, political, educational, and cultural spheres. My amazement stems from the fact that American and Japanese cultures have evolved along radically different paths. America is a low-context society which stresses more individualized behavior and less group commitment in the completion of action chains. It is a society of basically horizontal relationships, which places a high value on mobility and informality.

If someone could invent a country which would have a social system almost diametrically opposed to the American system, that country most likely would be Japan. Unlike America, Japan is a HC culture, which stresses participation in group action for the completion of actions chains. Japanese tend to identify themselves less as individuals, and more as members of a certain group or unit. Personal relations are more vertical (hierarchical) in nature, there is dramatically less occupational mobility, and the Japanese are outwardly much more formal than the breezy Americans. Also,

as mentioned before, being high-context people, Japanese are more likely to draw greater distinctions between outsiders and themselves. The Japanese often refer to the words "uchi" (us) and "soto" (them). One often hears in Japan the expression "wareware nihonjin" (we Japanese), which is a clear indication of the extent to which the Japanese are conscious of their own national character. The word "gaijin" refers to a foreigner in Japan, but its real meaning is closer to the English "alien" or "non-Japanese".

This sharp distinction can be traced to two factors. First, the Japanese nation is racially perhaps the most homogenous in the world. It's population is ethnically 99.5% Japanese, with approximately 600,000 Koreans being its largest minority. Second, the Japanese went through approximately 250 years of near total isolation from the rest of the world commencing with the establishment of the Tokugawa Shogunate in 1603, and ending in 1853 when Commodore Perry forcefully opened Japan to international commerce with his show of force at Suruga Bay, south of Tokyo. This long period of isolation tended to increase the Japanese sense of their own distinctiveness. It is these two factors, I believe, which have contributed greatly to the distinction which the Japanese draw between themselves and others.

These attitudes undoubtedly have ramifications for the foreigner attempting to break into Japanese society. I can particularly remember the time when I began teaching English at the Nagoya YMCA in the fall of 1976. I was puzzled at the initial coolness of my employers in the YMCA English office. It was at least several months before I was really able to break the ice and feel like I was a true member of the office. This initial coolness,

I believe, was due in part to the reserve of the Japanese people and in part because I was an outsider. The Japanese often do not warm up to strangers as quickly as Westerners do. They want to look the newcomer over carefully to find out whether he or she is trustworthy before deciding to make friends.

Although breaking into Japanese society is by no means easy, establishing a proper role is vital in making initial contacts with the people. In my own case, during my third and fourth trips to Japan my role was already established because I entered the country as an English instructor. This has huge advantages because it puts the individual in the position of being in contact with large numbers of students, and thereby a network is created by which the individual can develop meaningful relationships. In this sense, status is very important in Japan in developing friendships. For example, an English teacher in Japan has a relatively high status and is generally accorded a great deal of respect by those around him. Also, English teachers are well known and students will often approach him or her for advice or counselling. The foreign teacher is often placed on a pedestal, which can be flattering in the sense that the teacher is accorded an unusual amount of respect, or maddening in the sense that he can often be excluded from normal activities.

How does one most effectively break through the great cultural barriers which separate Americans and Japanese? There are several ways, in my opinion. First of all, it is essential that the ESL instructor take a positive attitude toward learning the language and customs of the country. We discussed its importance

in the "Language" section of this paper, but it should never be underestimated. The Japanese, in particular, are flattered when a foreigner attempts to communicate with them in their difficult language because they realize that Japanese is not a universal language. The Japanese-speaking foreigner can much more easily cut through the exterior reserve of the average Japanese and help establish an immediate emotional bond. Japanese, although many have studied English for several years, do not open up easily through the medium of English. By speaking Japanese, the foreigner gives a clear signal to the Japanese that he is interested in really knowing them. I was also able to establish a warm rapport with my students because by knowing the Japanese language I was able to greatly reduce the psychological barriers separating us.

Language learning also played an important role in reducing the psychological barrier between me and Mexicans during my internship in that country. My Mexican father was surprised when he found out that I could not understand much Spanish upon my arrival in Puebla. However, as I mastered simple Spanish syntax and vocabulary, and gained greater confidence in the language, my circle of acquaintances increased, and I established more meaningful relationships with the Mexican people. One major difference I noted between the Japanese and Mexican people was the Mexicans expected me to learn Spanish, whereas the Japanese usually do not expect foreigners to speak their language, but are genuinely delighted when they do.

This led me to conclude that the Mexican people are more willing to accept foreigners who speak Spanish as one of them,

while the Japanese are more willing to perpetuate the difference between themselves and foreigners by not insisting that foreigners learn their tongue. I remember reading about the account of an old American man who had lived in the Japanese port city of Yokohama for more than 50 years, and he said that he was always treated as a foreigner.

Social acceptance was more easily forthcoming for me upon my arrival in Mexico. The very first night that I arrived in Puebla I was treated to a huge feast at my Mexican family's home, and later that night at the home of a different relative they enticed me to sing Frank Sinatra songs. It was as if I had known them for years! This episode and others to follow demonstrated to me the warmth of the Mexican people, and also the fact that they draw less distinction between insiders and outsiders than do the Japanese. After socially accepting you, a Mexican is likely to say, "mi casa es tu casa". (My home is your home). This phrase was repeated to me many times while in Mexico. About three weeks after my arrival in Mexico I celebrated my 33rd birthday and was given three separate birthday parties by my students. The Mexican hospitality seemed overwhelming!

During our orientation sessions prior to departure for our internships, I heard an interesting example of the way that Mexicans are likely to treat foreigners after the foreigners are socially accepted. An MAT staff member related the story of a former MAT who discovered that she was constantly missing her socks and underwear. In fact, they were actually being taken and used by other members of the family! This example leads me to conclude that Mexican people are less likely to draw rigid

distinctions between themselves and others if they socially accept you. This practice is likely to create cultural confusion for the American who differentiates more strictly what is mine and what is not mine.

Another fine example of this lack of distinction was provided to me by a colleague who taught with me in the same school in Puebla. She reported that in her home there was a constant flow of visitors and neighbors in and out of the house. Different people would show up for lunch everyday, also. This was very annoying to her because it seemed to her that there was little or no privacy at all. Again, this example leads me to conclude that, among friends, there is less distinction among Mexicans than among Americans and Japanese about what's yours and what's mine.

In Japan the home is a sacred place. The Japanese draw a very sharp distinction between what is public and what is private. The home is a sanctuary to which one can escape the worries and tensions of the outside world, and this boundary can not be easily trespassed. Accordingly, Americans may be puzzled to discover that even though they can make friends, invitations to a Japanese home are rare. In Nagoya, with the exception of a few close friends, I received very few dinner invitations. The breezy American custom of casually dropping by to visit a friend does not fit in a country like Japan.

Interpersonal Relationships - Japan vs. America

Any American who is going through the cultural entry process in Japan is likely to suffer varying degrees of disorientation as

a result of the hierarchical nature of human relations in Japan, particularly in relationships in the work place. The reason that psychological stress is likely to occur is because interpersonal relationships in America, as we stated before, tend to be informal and horizontal in nature, with each person being ascribed an irreducible equal human value. In Japan interpersonal relationships are much more vertical in nature, with superiors and inferiors (in rank), and equality is not a value which can be assumed. Edward T. Hall, in his book, "The Silent Language", explains it this way:

"The Japanese formal view of life is that there must be an order in the relations between men and this order is expressed by people taking and demonstrating their positions in a hierarchy. People of higher status are addressed by certain polite forms; respect is shown by bowing quite low with the upper part of the body held rigid". 23

This hierarchical nature and formality in interpersonal relationships is manifested in many aspects of Japanese society. During the Tokugawa period of Japanese history, the social infrastructure of Japanese society was known as "shi-no-ko-sho", which translated means "samurai-farmers-artisans-merchants". Under the Confucian ethic, society was broken down rigidly in this fashion, and social mobility between classes was forbidden. Although Japan is now a modern nation, the hierarchical nature of the Japanese social infrastructure remains. For example, an employee of lower rank must always affix the suffix "san" to the last name of his superior, while the superior will often refer to the lower person as so-and-so "kun", an affectionate suffix used to denote a person of lower rank. (e.g. Isobe-kun)

(Incidentally, Japanese always refer to each other by the last name). Japanese, in general, feel comfortable with these forms of address because they feel more secure when they understand their position vis a vis each other. In Japanese universities, upperclassmen are referred to as "sempai" and lowerclassmen as "koochai", and the latter are often ordered to perform tasks for the former. Man-wife relationships also provide an excellent example of a set hierarchy. A Japanese wife refers to her husband as "shujin", which has the connotation of "master". In old Japan, the husband's word was law, but things have changed greatly in the modern world.

Until the American becomes accustomed to the greater formality and reserve of the Japanese people in the initial stages of cultural entry, a certain amount of confusion and culture shock are bound to occur. Edward T. Hall states it this way:

"Signs of friendship, the glad handshake, the ready smile, the slap on the back have become part of the normal way of American behavior. Whenever the American is deliberately denied expressions of friendship or or popularity, his reactions are confused, since he is denied one of the requirements for personal assurance".²⁴

A major factor in the difficulty which the American experiences in adjusting to Japanese formality stems from the fact that much of American life lacks formal social rituals, which have been the social glue of Japanese society for centuries. To fit into Japanese society, a Westerner must be willing to consciously accept a certain degree of formality in dealings with other people, learn to address people in the proper manner, and even learn how to bow properly. Proper manners such as these will positively

impress the Japanese, and serve as a lubricant in making personal interactions flow more smoothly.

Japanese Groupism vs. American Individualism

One potential area for great misunderstanding between Americans and Japanese concerns the confrontation between individualism and groupism. As we noted before, Americans identify the self with the individual, and any notion that the self is not centered in the individual is absurd to the American. At this point, it may be valuable to quote Edward C. Stewart from his book, "American Cultural Patterns: A Cross-Cultural Perspective". He writes, commenting on American individualism:

"From the earliest age, the American child is encouraged to decide for himself - to make up his own mind; he is encouraged to believe he himself is the best judge of what he wants and what he should do The American believes, ideally, that he should be his own source of information and opinions, and also solve his own problems". 25

"(In America) there is an intense self-centeredness of the individual - so striking that an American psychologist has suggested this as a universal value".²⁶

As recently as last fall (1982) and this spring (1983) an American historian visited SIT, and in his lecture entitled "America: West of History", he talked about the "radical individualism" of the American character, and how this individualism has produced modern Americans who are, he emphatically emphasized, "profoundly lonely".

In Japan, however, the definition of the individual is quite different. The Japanese defines himself in terms of a system of

social links with his family and extended group.²⁷ This explains in part why Japanese are often misunderstood by non-Japanese, and why it is difficult to penetrate Japanese society. When I was teaching in Japan I was fortunate enough to have been affiliated with a large organization such as the YMCA, because through the YMCA I was able to make numerous friends. I met almost all of my friends through the YMCA, and our mutual YMCA affiliation is what cemented us together. An individual in Japan identifies less with the self and more with the group to which he or she belongs. For example, a person working for Mitsubishi Corporation is likely to introduce himself, "I'm Satake from Mitsubishi", and the chances are high that a company employee will wear his company pin on his lapel as a symbol of group identification.

Japanese group identification also explains why the process of expression is different between Japanese and Americans. Americans are essentially spontaneous and open in nature, and we are taught to take responsibility for our own decisions. Americans are also fairly linear, in that they are direct in their dealings with others and usually express exactly what they feel. What is confounding for the American is that Japanese, in general, are much more reluctant to take strong individual stands than are the Americans, particularly in the presence of others, and would rather work within a group and attempt to find some type of a consensus among the group. One of the terms most frequently used by the Americans to describe the Japanese modus operandi is the word "indirection". An American banker who had spent years in Japan and made the minimum possible accommodation reported that

what he found most frustrating and difficult was the indirection of the Japanese. While the American is looking for a straight answer, the Japanese may not give one because he is taught that too much directness is impolite.

In the Japanese language is an expression - "deru kugi wa utareru" ("The nail that sticks up gets pounded down"). This means that any person who tries to be better than others or more conspicuous will be brought into line by group peer pressure. Reggie Jacksons are hard to find in Japan. This indirection and facelessness creates cross-cultural misunderstandings. Edward C. Stewart explains it this way:

"The Japanese consider it brash for an individual to make definite decisions regarding himself or others. It is offensive for an individual to urge the acceptance of his opinion as a course of action. He must use circumlocution and maintain a rather strict reserve. These features of Japanese decision making contrast sharply with the American pattern where responsibility for the decision is normally attached to the individual decision maker. Among Americans, the individual is ideally the locus both of decision making and the responsibility for it".²⁸

Consequently, whereas Americans reach decisions by majority rule, Japanese tend to reach decisions through consensus.

Edward C. Stewart explains:

"One Western concept that has never really functioned in Japan, although written into constitution and law, is the idea of majority rule. The Confucian ethic, which still governs Japan, demands unanimity, and in order to respect the "rights of the minority" the majority will compromise on almost every issue until a consensus of some kind is reached. This principle applies not only to government, but to business board rooms, union halls, association meetings, and family councils. No one must ever be completely defeated, because if he is, he can not "hold up his face".²⁹

Japanese indirection and reluctance to be conspicuous has direct ramifications for the ESL teacher, as well. Japanese students are often taught by rote learning, and many times never challenge what the teachers say. Consequently, Japanese students tend to be passive and often will not volunteer information unless specifically called on by the teacher, and this tends to frustrate the ESL instructor. I discovered, to the contrary, that Mexican students were lively and very spontaneous, and often carried on active discussions not only with the teacher, but with other students, as well.

Marriage in Japan is often times impossible for the Japanese girl unless she has permission from her parents. In the United States, the decision to marry lies with the individual solely, and although parental blessing is desirable, it is not required. When I taught in Japan, I dated several Japanese girls and was sometimes frustrated when they had to return to their homes early or had to receive permission from their parents to do something. On one occasion, a young Japanese woman came to me and asked me advice on how she could best set up her financial independence. I thought the solution was simple: I told her to find a job she liked, find a suitable apartment, and then she could establish her independence. But although she paid lip service to setting up on her own, she still continued to live with her brother's family.

Interpersonal Relationships - Mexico vs. America

My initial impressions of Mexicans, which were re-enforced throughout my stay in Mexico, were that they were a people of

warmth and great hospitality. My Mexican family opened up their hearts to me and made me feel very much at home. My observations in Mexico were that personal relationships were more horizontal than in Japan, and Mexicans, like Americans, had a lively and strong sense of themselves as individuals.

One major difference between interpersonal relationships in Mexico and the United States concerns the family as a social institution. The Mexican family structure is exceedingly strong, and it is the nucleus around which many activities revolve. I found this to be true of my Mexican family, who often got together for group activities. Not only on Sundays, but on weekdays as well, my Mexican father and mother would alternately visit their respective parents' homes. The strong emphasis on family activities was irritating to me because there were many times when I simply wanted to be by myself, and not have to put on a smile for other family relatives. Any American who lives with a Mexican family for an extended period of time is likely to suffer this form of culture shock. While the American is more likely to want to enjoy activities individually or in peer groups, the Mexicans are more likely to want to do activities as a family. John Condon, in his excellent article, "So Near the United States: Notes on Communication Between Mexicans and North Americans", explains the situation this way:

"The family forms a much less important part of an individual's frame of reference in the United States than is usually the case in Mexico. For the American, neighbors, friends or associates, even some abstract 'average American', may be the basis for the comparison needed in evaluating oneself or others. 'Keeping up with the Jones' may be important in New York or Chicago,

but keeping up with one's brother-in-law is more important in Mexico City. In the same way, the Mexican depends upon relatives or close friends to 'help arrange things' if there is a problem or to provide a loan. While this is by no means rare in the United States, the dominant values in the culture favor institutions which are seen as both efficient and fair".³⁰

It took me several weeks to become accustomed to the Mexican cultural environment and to my Mexican family, and for them to get used to me, also. After this initial period, I became more comfortable in the Spanish language and when I opened up to them, my Mexican family opened up to me. Through this interchange I was able to discover more about the Mexican character, and how it differs in certain aspects from the American character. One thing I learned was that the Mexican is far more likely to flatter, tease, or otherwise attempt to charm another than is the North American, whose culture has taught him to distrust or poke fun at anyone who "really lays it on".

My Mexican family used to tease me mercilessly (and each other other, as well) when they found out that I was good-natured and could laugh at myself. At times I really had to develop thick skin to stem their teasing onslaught! For example, they used to tease me constantly about a former Japanese student of mine who said that she might come to visit me in the United States. In their minds, they were sure that I was going to marry her, and nothing that I said could convince them differently. On the occasion of my 33rd birthday, my Mexican brother-in-law kidded me by saying, "David, you're 33 so you'd better watch out because Jesus Christ died when he was 33 years old, you know!" After my birthday had passed I met him several weeks later and told

him that I was still alive! He laughed. My Mexican parents teased each other constantly. I once told them that the Japanese people had a proverb which says that people who are always healthy are less intelligent and sensitive than people who catch colds. After I taught them this proverb my Mexican father would point to himself and say, "I'm very sick", and point to his wife and say "she's always healthy". She, of course, did the same thing to him. The whole situation was very comical.

If a Mexican teases an American too much he is likely to make the American feel uncomfortable, because while the Mexican may simply be trying to engage the other person in conversation, the American may feel that the teasing is unnecessary or "too personal", and not wish to respond. This attitude may re-enforce the view held by many Mexicans that Americans are cold and aloof. While the Mexican may talk about a person's inner qualities in terms of a person's soul or spirit (alma or espiritu), North Americans are likely to feel uncomfortable using such words to talk to people.³¹

What do Mexicans feel about Americans? Basically, it seems that Americans are welcome in Mexico, but several incidents occurred during my internship that gave me some clues as to how Mexicans interact and what expectations they have of others. More than anything else, the human factor is most important in Mexican society.

The Mexican people, I found, appreciate the unique character of the individual. One time the sister of my Mexican father said to me, "David, you're an iceberg". I'm not sure whether she thought that I was unemotional or just too rational, but it was evident

from her comment that in her mind I did not project a warm image as a human being, and this bothered me. Was it simply my personality, or was the image I projected representative of North Americans as a whole? I am still not certain. On a different occasion, I was having dinner with the niece of my Mexican mother. I was enjoying myself, but was perhaps a little more quiet than normal. The niece said to me, "Why don't you talk? Aren't you having a good time?". The fact was that I was enjoying myself, but the Mexicans weren't perceiving that I was. These incidents and others lead me to believe that Mexicans and Americans express themselves differently in certain social situations, and thus the chances for cross-cultural misunderstanding are great.

Women

I think it may be appropriate at this time to mention that the cultural entry process differs not only from person to person, but can also differ greatly depending on sex. I have observed through my various cross-cultural experiences in both Japan and Mexico that women go through different forms of acculturation from those of men. I have talked with American women about their experiences, and often times their view of a particular country or situation was quite different from my own.

The reasons for this, I believe, lie in the fact that the socialization process for American women is quite different from those of women in Japan and Mexico. It has been approximately twenty years since the beginning of the Women's Liberation Movement in the United States, and over this span traditional female roles have changed greatly. Women have demanded equal opportunity with

men and have entered the labor force in ever increasing numbers. Women now do jobs that were once exclusively those of males, such as policeman, fireman, bus driver, taxi driver, telephone climber, construction worker, and so forth. The number of professional women also has dramatically increased. Along with this has come greater sexual freedom with the introduction of the pill. These developments have provided women with much greater economic independence and overall liberation. Moreover, men-women relationships in the United States are much more casual, and the sexes can mix freely in social situations without sexual overtones.

However, American women are more likely to experience greater acculturation difficulties in Japan and Mexico because these countries have social fabrics which are much more traditional. Consider Japan first. From a Western woman's point of view, Japan would likely be considered a very chauvanistic country. A man's world is quite separate from a female's. Traditionally, man has been socialized to be the bread winner and a woman was supposed to take care of the home. Under Western influences, things have changed and women have gained greater equality with men, but change is slow. Japanese women in business are systematically discriminated against, and most women in large companies must quit after marriage. (This has been changing recently, though, and more and more Japanese women are continuing to work even after marriage) Men's best friends tend to be men, and women's friends women. Young women are also much more sheltered than their American counterparts, and the vast majority live with their parents until they are married.

Similarly, the Mexican woman lives in a much more sheltered

and restricted atmosphere than does the American woman. My perception of Mexican women was that they were traditional and, like Japanese women, felt more comfortable when the man took the lead. I observed that the Mexican man tends to believe more deeply in romance, and women are treated more like "ladies". One major difference that I noticed between Mexico and Japan was that in Mexico, womanhood, or motherhood, was greatly exalted and is almost sacred among Mexicans. Women in Japan, on the other hand, are not exalted and usually stay in the background.

In addition, American women are often the victims of sexual stereotypes that foreign men have of them. In Japan, for example, Japanese men are attracted to blonds because of their exotic appeal. Foreign models in Japan almost invariably are blond. Western women are also subject to personal harassment more often than men. In Mexico, many of the women MATs were whistled at, and men would sometimes make sexist comments about them behind their backs. These unfortunate incidents upset American women and often give them negative impressions of the host culture. Such experiences often make cultural entry a more tedious task, and suggest that while American women are certainly capable of successful acculturation into a more traditional society, gender distinctions do make a difference.

NORTH-SOUTH DISTINCTIONS

In recent years, the enormous problems which nations of the world face, such as population, food, trade, human rights, and economic opportunity, have been brought into clearer focus.

In particular, one enormous issue which has been hotly debated is the North-South issue, pitting the industrialized "have" nations of the Northern hemisphere against the southern "have-not" nations, which suffer to a much greater degree from poverty, hunger, lack of education, and a plethora of other social ills. North-South issues are still being debated, and as of now the outcome of these negotiations is still unresolved.

Material and Environmental Considerations - U.S. - Mexico

North-South distinctions and differences between the richer and poorer nations are important to consider, I believe, because differences in wealth, efficiency, and material possessions are likely to affect not only our impressions of another country, but also the degree of success we have in integrating ourselves into another society. Americans, for example, are apt to suffer less material culture shock in a country like Japan than in a less developed country like Mexico. Both the United States and Japan are modern, industrialized nations which are oriented toward production. Material wealth is abundant, and consumers have a dazzling array of material products from which to choose. Although various factors of Japanese culture are bound to induce cultural disorientation, material considerations are not among them.

Materialism has produced such abundance in America that Americans consider it almost their right to be materially well off and physically comfortable. They expect swift and convenient transportation - preferably controlled by themselves, a variety of clean and healthful foods and comfortable homes equipped with

numerous labor-saving devices, and certainly including central heating and hot water. ³² Most Americans drive their own cars, many own their own homes, and expect nothing but the best and most prompt service. They also insist on a clean and healthy environment. Technology has developed to such an extent that science has practically been elevated to the status of a religion. American people tend to believe that many, if not all, problems in society can be solved by the miracles of technology.

Compared with many other societies, American institutions do not invest tradition with an enormous weight, and even our most powerful traditions do not generate the binding force which is common in other cultures. ³³ Likewise, Americans have tended to compartmentalize religion and to reduce its social function more than any other people. ³⁴ Edward T. Hall, in his book, "Beyond Culture", explains it this way:

"The dazzling success of our technology, as well as our understanding of the physical world, has blinded Europeans and Americans alike to the complexities of their own lives and given them a false sense of superiority over those who have not evolved their mechanical extensions to the same degree". ³⁵

Americans are likely to either consciously or unconsciously compare the material conveniences and efficiency of their own country with the lack of these in countries which are, in our own terms, "developing". Even the phrase "developing nations" has a certain chauvanistic, condescending ring to it because it infers that other nations have not matured to the extent that we have, nor have they developed their mechanical extensions as much as we have.

When I was teaching in Mexico, I was irritated by several

material inconveniences about that country. Most noticeable was the pollution problem. Mexico City had some of the worst pollution I had ever seen! Photochemical smog burned your eyes, and it made Los Angeles' smog appear transparent by comparison. I loudly complained in Spanish to my Mexican friends about Mexican buses, which were equipped with no type of pollution controls and which, to my absolute horror, were spilling black fumes into the atmosphere unchecked! These pollutants were slowly destroying the city of Puebla and make Mexico City look like a soup bowl from the air. An American friend and colleague of mine said that the bus fumes were so nauseating that she refused to take the bus to school in the morning, thus reducing the trips between her home to school from four to two. Tough pollution laws that exist in the United States and Japan simply do not apply in Mexico.

The lack of running water can also present problems for the newly-arrived American. In very dry areas such as Puebla, we often had no running water for several days, which meant that I could not take my customary daily shower, and the dirtiness of my body made me feel uncomfortable. When water was available, showers could only be taken between 7:30 and 8:00 a.m. because after that the water was stopped. Moreover, tap water was not suitable for drinking, and to do so might bring on diarrhea or other illnesses. All drinking and cooking water was bottled.

To an American, Mexican buildings often appear to be run down in appearance. Streets, particularly on the outskirts of a city, are unpaved and often dusty. Also, the great amounts of trash and papers thrown along the side of country roads may offend the sense of cleanliness which many North Americans have.

Class Distinctions in Mexico

Several aspects of Mexican society affected me and gave me clues as to the social class system and poverty of the country. Although Mexico has a very wealthy class and a sizeable middle class, the single greatest difference in class structure between Mexico, America, and Japan is Mexico's larger lower class. A great many more Mexicans in the lower end of the class scale live in poverty. As a result, there were several phenomena I observed in Mexico which I rarely if ever saw in the United States or Japan.

It is impossible to ignore the tremendous number of beggars in Mexico. I saw scores of them on the streets in Mexico City and many in Puebla, also. With the exception of a few large metropolitan cities, begging is rarely seen in the United States because our poor are usually taken care of by welfare. Begging is almost unheard of in Japan. The sight of multiple beggars in Mexico to the unaccustomed American is initially quite unsettling. Although I sometimes gave money, and consider myself a compassionate person by nature, I was often annoyed when people interrupted my lunch or dinner by arriving at my table to ask for money. Although I was sympathetic, I never lost my irritation at the invasion of my privacy. I am sure that many of my fellow Americans felt the same way during their internships.

I also noticed a large number of hawkers in Mexico, particularly at tourist or resort locations. What was different was that in America the customer usually approaches the vendor, while in Mexico often the hawker will approach the customer. I observed this practice not long after I arrived in Mexico when I

visited the famous Pyramids of the Sun and Moon at Teotihuacan, outside of Mexico City. Wherever I walked I was stalked by friendly, yet insistent, hawkers who wanted to sell me their goods. While I was walking along I often spotted them out of the corner of my eye and would do my best to avoid them by employing all kinds of diversionary tactics. After watching how Mexicans handled the same situation, I finally learned how to graciously turn them away by saying, "gracias, pero no".

Perhaps the best and clearest manifestation that I found of the hierarchical nature of Mexican society was the great number of servants working for Mexican families. There are, of course, servants and maids employed in the United States, as well, but not to the extent that can be found in Mexico. Maids I talked with usually came from poorer families in the countryside, and working for a wealthier family in a larger city was often a good way for them to make a living. But, for some reason, the servant system offended my North American sense of basic human equality. The fact that one person was the server and the other was the one being served made me feel uncomfortable, since Americans are more prone to horizontal relationships and self-reliance. The Mexican system made me think of the plantation days in the Old South, when the slaves served their masters. Although I realize that the Mexican system is not like that system, I could not help making the mental connection. It led me to believe that Mexican people do not necessarily believe that all people are inherently equal, but that human relationships should assume a more hierarchical form. This is likely to offend American sensibilities. Perhaps naively, I attempted to strike up conver-

sations with servants, but my initial attempts were unsuccessful because it seemed they were too shy to talk, and I believe that they were surprised that I had initiated conversation in the first place. I found that it was excruciatingly difficult to engage cooks and maids in meaningful conversation. Perhaps I was a North American over-stepping his bounds.

United States - Mexico - Historical Perspective

Why have such great psychological and cultural differences developed between Mexico and the United States? To find the answers to this question, it heeds us to listen to some interesting conclusions drawn by Mexican philosopher and poet, Octavio Paz. According to Paz, Mexico and the United States are two distinct versions of Western Civilization, and over time have developed along radically different lines. According to Paz, the fundamental difference between the two countries, which he declares are "condemned to live alongside each other", is to be found in the values of their two separate religions, Catholicism and Protestantism.

In England the Reformation triumphed, whereas Spain was the champion of the Counter-Reformation. Basically, this means that change and criticism became institutionalized in Anglo culture, and work had a redemptive value which was energetically affirmed in new societies like the United States. Capitalism exalted the activities and behavior patterns traditionally called virile: aggressiveness, the spirit of competition and emulation, and combativeness. American society made these values its own. 36

Doing became the dominant cultural value of Americans. Commenting

on contemporary American society, Paz had this to say:

"The United States, because of its origin and its intellectual and political history, is a society oriented toward the future. The extraordinary spatial mobility of America, a nation constantly on the move, has often been pointed to. The American lives on the very edge of the now, always ready to leap toward the future. The country's foundations are in the future, not in the past. Or, rather, its past, the act of its founding, was a promise of the future, and each time the United States returns to its source, to its past, it rediscovers the future". 37

Mexico's orientation was just the opposite. Hispanic Catholicism developed along extremely orthodox lines, resistant to change and criticism. Its ideal was to conserve the image of divine immutability. 38 For the society of New Spain, work did not redeem, and had no value in itself. Manual labor was servile. The superior man neither worked nor traded. He made war, he commanded, he legislated. He also thought, contemplated, wooed, loved, and enjoyed himself. Leisure was noble. 39 Unlike the aggressive and competitive North Americans, Mexicans have had a traditional devotion to the Virgin of Guadalupe, which is the ancient vision of femininity. (Indeed, I noticed a great gentleness of character among the Mexicans I knew). Hispanic Catholicism was founded on the double principle of domination and conversion, and has tended to be hierarchical, centralist, and respectful of the individual characteristics of each group. It believes in the strict division of classes and groups, each one governed by special laws and statutes, but all embracing the same faith and obeying the same lord. 40 Consequently, unlike the democratic trends in North America, government rule was authoritarian and attempts in Mexico to establish a more liberal republican

democracy met with stiff resistance from an orthodox Catholic Church. From the sixteenth century onward, the attitude of Mexico towards the modern era has been ambiguous, ranging from attraction to repulsion. Utopia for the Mexican is not the construction of a future, but a return to the source, to the beginning. 41

FOOD

If it is true that we are what we eat, then it is probable that people around the world are indeed different because cuisine differs greatly from culture to culture. Food is often one of our first culture shocks, and we do not realize how accustomed we have become to a certain type of food until we are introduced to a totally new food system.

I have discovered through several experiences in both Japan and Mexico that it generally takes a week or two from the time that I enter a foreign culture to become totally accustomed to another country's cuisine. For other people this may be even longer, and some people may never get used to the new style of food. During one trip to Japan and during my winter internship (1983) in Mexico, I vomited within one week after arriving in the country, and I surmise that this was the transformation that my stomach was undergoing changing from one food system to another.

The comparative food systems of the United States, Japan, and Mexico are as different as the societies themselves. American food is basically simple, with each main meal consisting of meat, a carbohydrate (e.g. potatoes), and a vegetable. It is usually

more plain and straightforward than food from other countries. Japanese food is traditionally lighter than American food, and much of it comes from the sea, since Japan is an island nation. Japanese love to eat all varieties of fish, and other sea products such as seaweed. Rice is the staple at almost every meal. By contrast to the United States and Japan, Mexican food has traditionally been hot and spicy, with much deep frying. Many Mexican meals are accompanied with a hot chile sauce and a basket of bread, and often represent a mixture of meat and vegetables.

Japanese Food

Both Japanese and Mexican food are different enough from American food to make the culinary adjustment period difficult at times. Let's take a look at Japanese food first. To the American who is usually used to somewhat heavier foods, Japanese food generally tends to be lighter in texture and low in calories, and consequently the American is likely to complain that Japanese food, while being delicious, is not filling enough. The Japanese pride themselves on their food, which they describe as "assari shite iru" ("light and simple"). While American sandwiches tend to be hefty with much meat between the slices, Japanese sandwiches are almost dainty by comparison, usually with the crust trimmed off and a small cucumber inside. Many Americans still have problems getting used to eating raw fish because our fish almost invariably are grilled or fried. American reluctance to try raw fish is often more psychological than anything else. Likewise, seaweed is a difficult food for Americans to eat easily because of its smell and texture. Although it is delicious and healthy,

many Westerners do not care for bean curd ("tofu") because of its jelly-like texture. Although I loved most Japanese food, I found it difficult to subsist on totally because of its lightness and saltiness. Consequently, I ate Chinese and Italian food more often because it was more filling.

Another problem that foreigners may have eating Japanese food is that it is eaten with chopsticks. They can be mastered after a little practice, but it is often frustrating at first trying to coordinate the two sticks. When my father visited me in Japan in 1974, he had many difficulties and finally had to switch to a knife and fork! In addition, Japanese often sit on the floor while eating, many times crossing their legs. Americans usually can not sit cross-legged for long because their backs and legs begin to stiffen.

Mexican Food

Although very popular with Americans, Mexican food on a daily basis can provide real acculturation problems for the foreigner. The problems lie in the fact that while American food is rather plain with few spices, Mexican food is much hotter and spicier. At almost all meals, the Mexicans serve a mildly hot red sauce called "salsa", which can be put on just about anything. In addition, Mexicans often put green and red-colored chile peppers on meat and bread. Consequently, American food can be classified as "cool" while Mexican food is "hot". The spiciness of Mexican food will likely cause stomach problems and diarrhea for the North American until his or her system adjusts.

I was no exception. During the first week that I was in

Mexico my stomach was rumbling and growling during its initial adjustment period to Mexican food. I found myself going to the bathroom quite often, and, embarrassingly, once I had to excuse myself in the middle of class! Although I normally loved most of the Mexican food that was served me, my stomach simply could not tolerate food that was deep-fried, which included many tortilla dishes. I had to be careful not to overdo it at meal time because I knew that I would invariably pay for it later. Even a Mexican specialty like "chalupas" (fried tortillas with sauce) had to be approached gingerly. I also noticed that my Mexican mother fried the morning eggs in oil instead of butter, which is common in the United States. It appeared to me that Mexicans seem much more used to heavier foods than we are.

One of the greatest problems Americans have with Mexican food is with the hot peppers, called "chiles". My older sister, who lived in Bogota, Colombia for two years, was amazed to find that in Mexico there are perhaps 20 different types of chiles, and each had a different name! She had thought that a chile pepper was simply "chile". I once asked my Mexican mother what the hottest chile was, and she answered that it was a small chile called "chile loco". ("loco" means "crazy" in Spanish). It was called this because, evidently, the chile was so hot that it makes you crazy!!

I used to brag to my Mexican family that even though I was North American I could eat many chiles at one meal. But one day the chiles got their revenge. One Tuesday evening after I had returned from our MAT mid-conference meeting in Cordoba, I was having my favorite "tortas compuestas" (a type of ham and cheese

sandwich) with several chiles on it. Evidently, I had put one too many on because at about 5:00 a.m. Wednesday morning my stomach was growling and I felt violently ill. To make a long story short, I was quite sick for three days. I lost my appetite, slept through lunch for two straight days, and felt weak throughout my body. I, along with my Mexican mother, agreed that the illness had been induced by an overdose of hot chile peppers. From that time onward, I was extremely careful about what I ate and in what quantities.

From a food standpoint, I escaped Mexico relatively unharmed. However, in our MAT internship group, there were two "muchachos" who did not fare as well. Both suffered greatly from the change in diet, and were sick almost the entire time that they were in Mexico. Their systems never adapted to the new food.

From my own brief experience in Mexico, I believe that the watchword on Mexican food should be "caution". Because of the type of food that we normally eat in the United States, Americans are vulnerable when they come in contact with food on a regular basis which is hotter, heavier, and spicier than our own. A certain adjustment period is required.

PROXEMICS

Sir Winston Churchill once said, "We shape our buildings and they shape us". What Churchill was indirectly referring to was the rather new science known as proxemics, which is the study of spatial relationships among humans and animals, and how architecture

can subtly affect those relationships. Edward T. Hall, in his excellent book, "The Hidden Dimension", talks at length about proxemics, and how humans from one culture are likely to experience cultural disorientation and psychological stress when confronted by cultures which handle space in different manners.

Without realizing it, all people stake out territorial claims for themselves. In other words, all people need a certain area of social space, and this social space will differ from culture to culture. When social space is repeatedly violated, degrees of psychological stress will take place. For example, Arabs, who tend to talk to each other face to face with little social space between them, will often prove overbearing to the American, who feels that the Arab is violating his territorial space and is breathing down his neck. Similarly, we may also be overwhelmed by the Latin who requires a shorter communicative distance when speaking. Edward T. Hall writes:

"In Latin America the interaction distance is much less than it is in the United States. Indeed, people can not talk comfortably with one another unless they are close to the distance that evokes either sexual or hostile feelings in the North American. The result is that when they move close, we withdraw and back away. As a consequence, they think we are distant or cold, withdrawn and unfriendly. We, on the other hand, are constantly accusing them of breathing down our necks, crowding us, and spraying our faces". 42

Japanese, on the other hand, may need even greater space than the American, and may feel a bit uncomfortable at the American's normal social distance.

Animal Experiments and Findings

It may be instructive at this point to consider the effects

of crowding on humans by looking at the results of several animal experiments. Edward T. Hall reports that in an experiment in which many rats were crowded into a small space over an extended period of time, a great many of the rats either died off or suffered greatly from psychological stress. Female rats became infertile and tended to die off more quickly than the males. Rat experiments conclusively prove that even rats need their own space. Overcrowding causes great stress and aberrant behavior.

In a separate study on the deer population of James Island in Chesapeake Bay conducted between 1955 and 1958, it was discovered that from a peak number of 290 deer in 1955, 190 deer died over a two-year period stretching into the early months of 1958. The death rate could not be explained by starvation because there was plenty of food, nor could it be explained by illness because there were no signs of disease among the animals. Scientists concluded that stress caused by overcrowding was the major factor involved.

Japanese Proxemics and Personal Experiences

Proxemics played a much greater part in my acculturation process in Japan than it did in Mexico. This is because there is such a vast difference in the manner in which space is handled in the two countries. America is an enormous, continental nation characterized by vast amounts of open space and minimal crowding, except in a few selected metropolitan areas. It is basically a rural society, low-context in nature. Conversely, Japan is a small, crowded, island nation, and is typified by mass concentrations of people in congested metropolitan areas. Japan can

thus be classified as a high-context, urban society. These spatial discrepancies, in large measure, can explain the difference between Americans, who are more "laid back", and the Japanese, who are more intense.

Americans are bound to be surprised and perhaps disturbed by the incredible crowding that can be found in Japanese society. This includes housing, public transportation, stores, and restaurants. Privacy is an aspect of life that Americans covet dearly, but it is hard to find in Japan because of the congested conditions. My older sister, who visited Japan in the summer of 1968, complained about the fact that she did not have enough space that she could call her own. While in America restaurants are usually fairly subdued, Japanese restaurants are more often than not crowded and noisy. Japanese have a much higher tolerance for crowding in public spaces and in conveyances than do Americans and Northern Europeans. 43

When I returned from Japan to the United States in April, 1981, I stayed for a week with a friend studying at Stanford University, and one night we went to eat Japanese food at a Japanese restaurant in San Mateo, just south of San Francisco. My friends and I were drinking and eating, and acting merrily as we would in a Japanese restaurant in Japan. However, we received several complaints from other customers who thought that we were being too loud and noisy. We had been totally unconscious of our behavior. This incident brought into clearer focus the differences in proxemic behavior between Japanese and Americans in public places.

Crowding also affects human behavior in other ways. In Japan,

because of tremendous crowding and reduced personal privacy, people tend to draw invisible shields around themselves, which Americans may mistake for coolness or aloofness. In actuality, people in public places take on these behavioral characteristics as a way of protecting what little personal privacy they have. This privacy, or personal space, is not to be violated at any cost. The British people behave in a similar fashion, and the outgoing American, who has an impulse to break down formality, is often frustrated by such behavior.

Another effect of crowding concerns eye contact between people. Americans are taught that when you talk with another person you should look the other person straight in the eye. To not look at another person directly is often interpreted as weakness of character or untrustworthy. However, Japanese are taught just the opposite. Japanese will often avoid direct eye contact with another person because they are taught that staring directly into the eyes of another person is impolite, or even challenging. Such divergent cross-cultural behavior is bound to cause confusion and frustration from time to time.

Japanese office space is treated in a much different manner than that of the Americans. In America, office space is usually compartmentalized, with one or two employees sharing one office or cubicle. In Japan, no such personal privacy exists (with the exception of the highest ranking officials of a particular organization) because in a normal Japanese office everyone sits in an open room with no partitions between people. There is free movement among desks, and people usually sit very close to each other. The American working in such a situation must accustom

him or herself to freer personal interaction and less privacy than normal in the United States.

I, too, was a victim of overcrowding in Japan. During the four and a half years that I taught in the Nagoya YMCA English office, there were two major re-alignments of desks in the office. Each re-alignment resulted in reduced working space for the English teachers, particularly the second move, which reduced our working space by about 1/3 to make room for another division of the YMCA which was moving its office into our office. Whereas before I had had leg room sitting at a desk on an aisle, I now was cramped between two people. The increased crowding served to increase my stress, and made working conditions much more uncomfortable than they had previously been.

Proxemics, without our realizing it, has a great effect on the lifestyles we live. The crowding and close spatial relationships in Japan dictate the pace of life, which in the metropolitan areas is frenetic. Tokyo, for example, is less a city than it is a state of mind. It is a giant human ant hill, with humans moving around at a ferocious pace. If you live in a large Japanese city, it is impossible not to get caught up in the fast pace of life. I found that the crowded restaurants and convenient public transportation were quite conducive to drinking, and I have always thought of Japan, in this sense, as a "seductive" society. When I returned to the United States in 1981 I returned to a completely different proxemic environment, and I found that my lifestyle not only slowed down, but my behavioral habits also underwent substantial change.

CHAPTER THREESUGGESTIONS FOR THE FUTURE MULTICULTURAL PERSON

If we observe the modern world closely, we will discover that, increasingly, nations of the world are becoming interdependent. The days when we can comfortably isolate ourselves from other nations are gone forever as it becomes clearer that mankind can only survive through cooperation and mutual self-respect. Where would American industry be if it could not import Middle Eastern oil? How could Japan survive as a nation if it were not for international principles of free trade? Mankind is beginning to realize that we all share a common destiny - united we all survive, divided we will perish.

Towards this end, ESL teachers are playing an integral role in bringing the brotherhood of man together through the English language. English language teachers today can be found almost everywhere around the globe. Domestically, American universities continue to play a vital role in international education by attracting thousands of overseas students to its campuses to train them (in English) in their respective specialties before they return to their native countries. The foreign student population in the United States is likely to increase in the future. Language teachers on the elementary and secondary level, as well, are stressing the importance of second language training and its implications in cross-cultural encounters. Such training will be invaluable to those young Americans who venture into foreign cultures in the future.

A new type of personality is emerging in our increasingly inter-dependent world. Peter Adler, a researcher at the East-West Center in Honolulu, refers to this new person as "multicultural man". (MCM) He represents a radically different personality from traditional identity patterns. MCM is a person who is intellectually and emotionally committed to the fundamental unity of all human beings, while at the same time appreciating the fundamental differences that lie between people of different cultures. MCM seeks to preserve whatever is most valid, significant, and valuable as a way of enriching his own constantly changing views of himself and the world. As such, multicultural man is a dynamic personality, in that he is being propelled from identity to identity through a process of cultural learning and un-learning.

Adler's description of this newly-evolved human being so fascinated me that I wrote my final paper for the Inter-Cultural Communications course based on his ideas. It also made me wonder if there are certain principles that can be utilized by people entering different cultural settings to assure their success in cultural adaptation.

In conclusion, I would like to attempt to lay down several principles for the reader which I found helpful in adapting myself to both Japanese and Mexican societies, but which I firmly believe can be applied to any person attempting cultural entry in a foreign society. These principles are:

- (1) Understanding of One's Self - It is of utmost importance to understand one's own personality and values. When we understand ourselves and the social forces which shape us, we gain a better appreciation and

understanding of different cultures. Our entire vision of our individual worlds stems from our core character.

- (2) Understanding Cultural Relativity - It is extremely important to keep in mind that each culture has its own uniqueness, and can only be understood from within by taking into account the dynamics of its own cultural origins. No culture is inherently superior or inferior to another - they are only different.
- (3) Flexibility - Each person must be flexible to the extent that he or she can adapt to different languages, customs, time patterns, values, and food. Cultural rigidity will lead to a form of chauvanism and will prevent successful cultural adaptation.
- (4) Effort - This is perhaps the most indispensable attribute to have when entering a foreign country. When you reach out to other people and make a genuine effort to learn about all aspects of that society, you w^ll not only liberate yourself, but also ingratiate yourself to the indigenous people. Effort also includes studying about the host culture before departure from your own country.
- (5) Language Training - Language is so crucial to know because we use it daily for all forms of communication. Without language ability we are reduced to the status of children, have no control over our social environment, and are easily exploited. Anyone planning on an extended stay in a foreign country should undertake a serious study of the host country's language to further understand the culture, and to increase one's number of acquaintances.
- (6) Patience - We all go through culture shock in one form or another, and patience is vital to overcome the frustrations which we feel. Patience will give us time to understand why we are experiencing difficulties, and later we can take actions to counteract our frustrations.
- (7) Motivation - Motivation is the key intangible factor which often determines effort. It is likely that the acculturation process will be successful if the motivation to learn about the foreign culture is high. Motivation and effort are inextricably linked. Motivation generally leads to greater effort, which in turn leads to deepened understanding.

In striving to mold a future world based on peace and mutual respect for all, it is becoming more necessary for us to transcend our own limited cultural identities and gain a firmer grasp of ourselves as part of a global community which shares a common humanity. Transcending one's own cultural identity is by no means an easy task, but it is a process which we must continue if we are to understand ourselves and the world we have created. This is perhaps the single most important task facing mankind today.

NOTES

- 1 Edward T. Hall, Beyond Culture (Anchor Press - Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1976), p. 42
- 2 Edward T. Hall, The Hidden Dimension (Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1966), p. 188
- 3 Edward T. Hall, The Silent Language (Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1959), p. 30
- 4 Edward T. Hall, Beyond Culture (Anchor Press - Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1976), p. 15
- 5 Idem.
- 6 Ibid., p. 239
- 7 Ibid., p. 19
- 8 Ibid., p. 17
- 9 Edward T. Hall, The Silent Language (Doubleday and Company, inc., 1959). p. 7
- 10 Ibid., p. 9
- 11 Ibid., p. 147-148
- 12 Edward T. Hall, Beyond Culture (Anchor Press - Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1976), p. 23
- 13 Ibid., p. 136
- 14 Ibid., p. 17
- 15 Ibid., p. 15
- 16 Edward T. Hall, The Silent Language (Doubleday and Company, inc., 1959), p. 7
- 17 Edward T. Hall, Beyond Culture (Anchor Press - Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1976); p. 113
- 18 Ibid., p. 147

- 19 Edward C. Stewart, American Cultural Patterns: A Cross-Cultural Perspective (Intercultural Press, Inc., Chicago, 1972), p. 49
- 20 Ibid., p. 50
- 21 Ibid., p. 56
- 22 Ibid., p. 69
- 23 Edward T. Hall, The Silent Language (Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1959), p. 81
- 24 Edward C. Stewart, American Cultural Patterns: A Cross-Cultural Perspective (Intercultural Press, Inc. - Chicago, 1972), p. 58
- 25 Ibid., p. 32
- 26 Idem.
- 27 Ibid., p. 10
- 28 Ibid., p. 34
- 29 Ibid., p. 32-33
- 30 John Condon, Article: So Near the United States - Notes on Communication Between Mexicans and North Americans, p. 4
- 31 Ibid., p. 3
- 32 Edward C. Stewart, American Cultural Patterns: A Cross-Cultural Perspective (Intercultural Press, Inc., Chicago, 1972), p. 64
- 33 Edward T. Hall, The Silent Language (Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1959), p. 72
- 34 Ibid., p. 54
- 35 Edward T. Hall, Beyond Culture (Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1959), p. 206
- 36 Octavio Paz, Article: Reflections - Mexico and the United States, p. 2

37 Ibid., p. 3

38 Idem.

39 Ibid., p. 4

40 Ibid., p. 5

41 Idem.

42 Edward T. Hall, The Silent Language (Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1959), p. 185

43 Edward T. Hall, The Hidden Dimension (Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1966), p. 61

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