Bringing Cultural Background Knowledge to the Surface to Better Understand Cross-Cultural Conflict in Specific Contexts

Stephen B. Ryan, Yamagata University

The thesis of this research is that much of the information we use to communicate exists as dynamic sets of schema continually built up through exposure to a limited number of groups that make up our cultural norms and values. In cross-cultural contexts, this knowledge is used to make consequential decisions in all fields affecting both cross-cultural participants in an unintended way. To select, organize, and interpret the vast amount of information available to us, we need to simplify and apply schema based on past experiences so that we can make sense of the events around us occurring every second of every day. This simplification process can also be labeled as a form of ethnocentrism or stereotyping. It is argued that recognizing and trying to understand the process of stereotyping is a fundamental step to becoming more mindful of our previously unrecognized communication habits that can have a disruptive effect in cross-cultural communication contexts. This paper draws on theory and methodology from the field of cognitive psychology to analyze data using comparative content analysis from 101 cross-cultural questionnaires gathered through non-random sampling at a Japanese and American university. The goal of the analysis is to highlight the background cultural knowledge that can result in people from different cultures experiencing the same conversation but having a different culture-based interpretation of it. The research is in the preliminary stages and on-going.

This paper presents results of an exploratory cross-cultural research questionnaire that aims to highlight how cultural schemata, or background knowledge, affect communication in cross-cultural contexts. This area of research is consequential because our culturally underpinned schemata play a significant role in how we communicate cross-culturally. We often fail to recognize the most basic communication values of our own culture that, for the most part, consists of smooth communication with people in a mono-cultural context. For example, the American schema assumes "directness" and "social equality" while Japanese communication tendencies are towards "indirectness" and "social hierarchy." Such contrasting schemas are mostly unrecognized by each speaker so that communication can be accomplished with little time and mental effort. However, when speakers from these two distinctive cultures interact in a particular context, these cultural schemata are often the underlying cause of cross-cultural conflict. Furthermore, highlighting specific cultural schema is problematic because it is psychological in nature and in order to address it, it must first be raised to a higher level of awareness. In the past, cognitive scientists have mainly used schema theory as a tool to investigate reading and literacy studies (McVee, Dunsmore, & Gavelek, 2005). Nishida (1999) gives a useful overview of a cognitive approach to analyzing cross-cultural communications using schema theory by dividing schema into eight categories that generate human behavior in social contexts. Few studies, however, have taken up this approach of using Associative Group Analysis (AGA) to search for cognitive differences

across cultures to examine how they may affect cross-cultural communication in specific contexts.

Terms

Schemata can be defined as being "generalized collections of knowledge of past experiences which are organized into related knowledge groups and are used to guide our behaviors in familiar situations" (Nishida, 1999, p. 754). Schema(ta) and *background knowledge* are used interchangeably to imply unrecognized culture-specific groups of knowledge that the speaker uses to interpret a text or utterance.

Intercultural is used in a broader sense than *cross-cultural*. The latter shall refer to two specific national cultures such as Japan and the US. A cross-cultural conflict or incident is defined as a specific cross-cultural context where native and non-native speakers may have recognized or unrecognized misunderstandings due to the underlying beliefs and value patterns of their cultural system.

Finally, *culture* is referred to as "a learned meaning system that consists of patterns of traditions, beliefs, values, norms, meanings, and symbols that are passed down from one generation to the next and are shared by varying degrees by interacting members of a community" (Ting-Toomey & Chung, 2005, p. 28).

Research Theory

Because researchers approach the concept of culture differently, it is worth noting that, for this cross-cultural research, culture is defined as both a stable phenomenon (passed down from one generation to the next) and a dynamic one (shared by varying degrees) depending on context. Another focus of culture from this perspective is that we are looking for patterns of a culture's values, beliefs, and norms in which members share meanings due to similarities in upbringing, language, group memberships, religion, and educational systems as opposed to emergent behavior (i.e., personality-driven traits) in small groups. Culture, by its shared values, beliefs, and norms, is the glue that bonds individuals to help them interact in an efficient and harmonious way. This definition is central to the premise that people at the national level have different value and belief systems and these particularities "can easily override the universality of human experience, and change our perception of one another in such profound and decisive ways" (Kurotani, 2009, p. 14).

This research takes a constructivist approach in an attempt to locate "the nexus of cultural influence on knowledge structures (in this case schemata) that guide negotiators' judgments and decisions" (Morris & Ho-Ying Fu, 2001, p. 324). This approach originates from cognitive psychology and attempts to incorporate both an etic and emic approach to interpreting data.

Chen (2009) divides intercultural communication competence (ICC) into three distinct areas: affective, cognitive, and behavioral. He maintains that intercultural competence, as a concept, is too large and complex to try and investigate all three aspects with a single survey instrument.

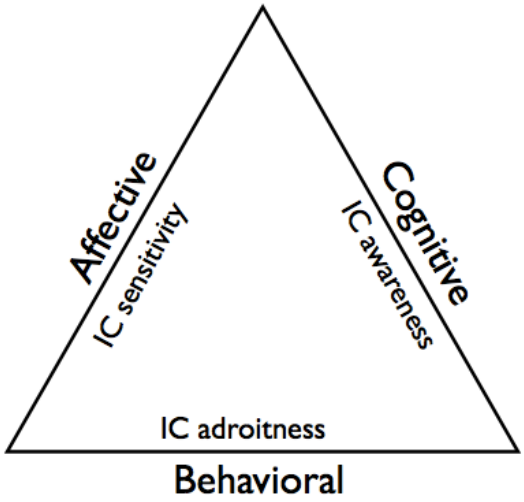

Figure 1. Model of intercultural competence (Chen, 2009)

This research concerns the cognitive aspect of the ICC model, as we are attempting to raise intercultural awareness by highlighting the conventions that affect how we think and behave. In essence, it is a general attempt to draw a cognitive map of specific words or phrases that are cognitively loaded with culturally-relevant meaning. In addition, the author of this paper contends that the cognitive aspect of the ICC model may possibly have a greater importance in cross-cultural interaction because participants may find it problematic to manage their emotions (affective) or apply ICC strategies (adroitness) if they have little awareness of why their own way of thinking and behavior differs in a cross-cultural context. This preliminary study uses AGA to compare cross-national beliefs by clarifying how two distinct groups (e.g., Japanese and Americans) integrate their perception and understanding of the world around them and how this understanding may affect their communication with each other in a specific context such as business meetings. Szalay and Deese's (1978) original AGA methodology sought to permit a systematic way to compare cross-national beliefs by clarifying how two distinct groups integrate their perception and understanding of the world around them. More recently, Linowes, Mroczkowski, Uchida, and Komatsu (2000) have taken up this research and adapted it in an innovative way to better show visually these differences and their salience. This work is adapted from Linowes et al.'s (2000) study.

Questionnaires

An exploratory cross-cultural questionnaire (see Appendix A) consisting of two parts was distributed to both Japanese in Japan and American participants at a large public American university. The Japanese data were collected from students at the author's institution. A sample of 62 (N = 62) was collected from the Japanese participants. However, only 39 questionnaires (N = 39) qualified for analysis from the American participants. Originally 50

American questionnaires were collected but 11 were disregarded as the respondents indicated that (American) English was not their native language. All the Japanese respondents were native Japanese speakers. American participants' average age was 19.5 and the Japanese averaged 22.6 years old. There were more male Japanese respondents (M = 48, F = 14) than American respondents (M = 15, F = 24). Part I asked respondents to associate words with eight words chosen by the author. Part II consisted of three conversations that the participants had to complete. Due to space limitations, Part II of the questionnaire will not be analyzed in this paper.

Method

The cross-cultural questionnaire was originally created and written by the author in English. Afterwards, it was translated into Japanese by a team of two native Japanese speaker assistants. The Japanese results were then translated into English by the same team of Japanese assistants. Both questionnaires were distributed at approximately the same time period in Japan and in the U.S., respectively. All questionnaire participants were either native Japanese or (American) English speakers. AGA methodology was replicated from Linowes et al.'s (2000) and Ryan's (2006) studies. AGA is defined as:

> An unstructured method of research used to reconstruct people's subjective images from the spontaneous distributions of their free associations. The aim of the approach is to determine how people actually perceive and evaluate a particular issue or concept, carefully considering the characteristics they consider most important….The basic unit of analysis is the stimulus word, or theme word, which evokes these associations and hence serves as a key unit in the perceptual representational system. (Linowes et al., 2000, p. 75)

For the data presented in the paper as a practical example, AGA methodology was performed on each participants' results, yielding a list of words that the participant spontaneously associated with a given theme word. Some of the theme words were linked to the conversational situations in Part II and past research (Ryan, 2006) to further investigate the concepts thought to be problematic in cross-cultural communication between Japanese and Americans. The example presented below is given as an example from Part I (question #1) that explored the concept *argument*. To perform AGA methodology, the theme word *argument* was given to both groups of cross-cultural participants, yielding two correlated response lists (one in Japanese and the other in English) of words that participants associated with it. The full response lists for both groups of participants are given in Appendix A. Starting at the top of each participant's word list, each word was ranked 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1. In Part I of the questionnaire, participants were asked to associate up to six words for each concept or theme word. Each answer received a point total. A total of six points were given to the first answer associated with the word, five points for the response on the second line, four points on the next line, and so forth. For a word to be included in the weighting, it had to be generated on two or more participants' word lists. Each participant's list of responses was weighted according to the readiness with which the word came to mind (rank order). The weighting was done empirically via differential stability of rank place using the test-retest

method (Kelly, 1985). This technique was modeled and adapted after Linowes et al. (2000) and was also replicated in Ryan (2006).

The total response list for each group yielded schemas linked to the theme word to give a "mental map" that measures the "dominant mindset" (Linowes et al., 2000, p. 71) of Japanese and Americans for the particular concept being tested. In addition, the salience of each theme is measured. Each national groups' word list can be totaled, yielding a weighted response list or salience of word associations for a given theme word:

> The salience of a theme is the total response score generated by all associations to that theme by all respondents. It is a measure of "meaningfulness," in the sense that it reflects the total magnitude of associations linked to the theme in respondents' minds and so serves as a measure of what is foremost in peoples' minds. (Linowes et al., 2000, p. 78)

After all eight theme words and their response lists were collated and scored in Appendix A, they were put into a table showing the salience of each category word. Table 1 is an abbreviated example of the response list of the Japanese responses translated back into English. Japanese respondents scored higher in total salience than their U.S. counterparts, indicating that the word *argument* held slightly more meaning for them.

Content Analysis

The AGA method is intended to measure the participants' national cultural schema. Questionnaires (Appendix A) yielded a list of words and phrases for the following eight stimulus words: *argument*, *business*, *competition*, *contract* (*business*), *quiet person*, *democracy*, *negotiate*, and *government*. Only four are analyzed in this paper: *argument*, *competition*, *contract*, and *negotiate*.

These lists were then analyzed according to their rank order and a numerical total for each response was generated. This generated a ranked order response list (Appendix B) for each group's stimulus words. Next, a team of two native English speakers analyzed the content of these ranked order lists and put them into a common set of broad-based categories (see Table 3), creating a schema for each stimulus word. Both groups' response lists are then compared and analyzed in the results in order "to determine the components of meaning for each word" (Linowes et al., 2001, p. 78).

As a result of categorizing by content both the American and Japanese participants' words into an appropriate schema, two numbers (American and Japanese) were generated for each content category by adding the weighted score for each word. Once all theme word responses are totaled for both groups, the salience of each theme word can be determined by adding the composite scores of each word list. In the *argument* example (Table 2), Japanese participants recorded a total score of 244 versus 342 for the Americans after the number of participants was balanced. Thus, the salience or "meaningfulness" of the word *argument* was greater for this content category for the Americans than for the Japanese.

Table 1.
Weighted Response List Example
Argument
Example of a Weighted Response List and Scoring
Abbreviated scored responses to stimulus word *argument* (*giron* 議論)

American responses		Japanese responses	
fighting/quarrel	76	debate	126
disagreement	58	discuss(ion)	105
yelling	37	the Diet	79
Total (Salience):	**171**		**195**

After the content category point values have been determined, a "semantograph" (Linowes et al., 2001, p. 78) can be created visually showing the associations each national group makes in each content category, that is to say, their cultural schema.

Results

In this section, selected results that were determined to have relatively large cultural schema differences are briefly presented and discussed. Scored response lists to the selected stimulus words for both groups of participants can be viewed in each of the tables following below.

Argument

As a permanent American expatriate resident of Japan, I have often had some confusion with the way Japanese regard *giron* (*argument*) in communication. There seems to be a mismatch in meaning and schema that warrants exploring as it often involves a contentious point in communication. In the content analysis for *argument* in Table 2, it can be seen that only four schema categories were determined, indicating that both groups have clear associations for the term. However, large differences appeared in the cross-cultural schema. Americans associated it with some kind of oral conflict such as *yelling* or *quarreling* while the Japanese respondents associated it with *talking* and *people*. In addition, American respondents had a negative association for the word *argument* while the Japanese did not.

The word *argument* clearly holds a different meaning for both groups of cross-cultural participants and may need to be redefined in most standard English-Japanese dictionaries (e.g., Canon Wordtank G70 Electronic Dictionary, E-Gate English-Japanese Dictionary, 2003). Although this difference is mostly a semantic difference and not necessarily culture based, when the American non-native speaker (NNS) hears the word *giron* in Japanese it can create a negative schema, which can lead to a different perception of a particular communication event. For example, a Japanese colleague once told me that there was a *giron* concerning the hiring of a new faculty member. I unconsciously applied my American schema to this bit of information and concluded that there was a major problem with the

Table 2.
Component Analysis for Argument

Components of perception and evaluation of the stimulus word *argument* (*giron*)

Content Category Underlying responses	American score	Japanese* score
Oral Conflict A: fighting/quarrel (76), yelling (37), confrontation (17), loud (10) J: argue/quarrel/confrontation (28), deny/contradict/object (12), assert/insist (5)	**140**	**28(18)***
Negativity A: frustrated (33), anger (30), bad (18), negative (9), headache (6), disagreement (58) J: dispute (18), trouble (14), violence (11), hard/difficult (9), heated (8),	**154**	**38 (24)***
Talk A: debate (17), discussion (11) J: debate (126), discussion (105), meeting (54), conference (32), opinion (29), conversation/talk/chat (14), speech (12), subject (6)	**28**	**238 (150)***
People A: boyfriend (10), Mom (10) J: the Diet (79), politics (18), many people (15), chairman (11), politician (7),	**20**	**82 (52)***
Total	**342**	**386 (244)***

*Japanese N = 62 (total category score *.63) to balance with American respondents
American N = 39

candidate since other faculty members felt so strongly. However, I later came to understand that what was meant was that everyone's opinion had yet to be accounted for and consensus was still in the process of being made.

From the data displayed in Figure 2, we can see that *argument* for Americans is an emotional, mostly negative, display of one's opinion while for Japanese it is more related to discussion and consensus making. Scores for Figure 1 were balanced by the same number of respondents as indicated in parenthesis in Table 2.

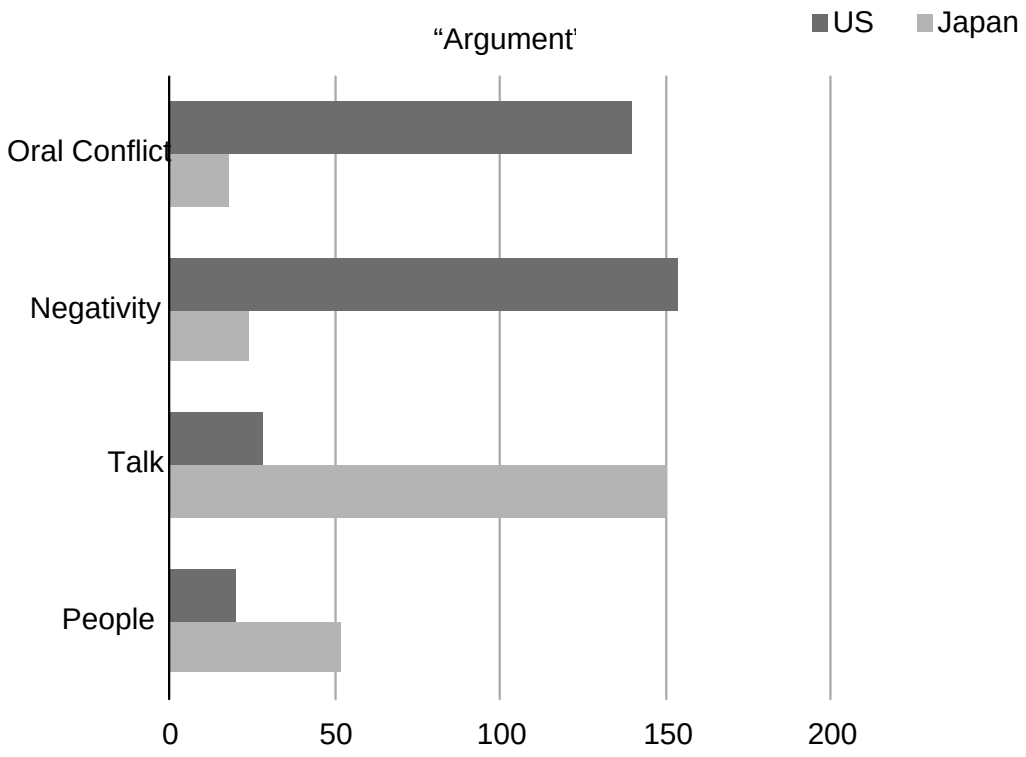

Figure 2. Argument

Competition

The stimulus word *competition* also generated large differences in cross-cultural participants' responses. In Table 3, content analysis was performed that resulted in nine distinct schemas. As the idea of competition is one of the pillars of American society and culture, it is not surprising that the American respondents had a mostly positive schema for it with such schemata as, *win*, *best*, and *healthy*. American respondents also associated individualism with competition.

The Japanese respondents, on the other hand, had a more negative schema of competition and associated it more generally with society and entrance exams. Unlike the U.S., the Japanese educational system requires junior high students to take high school entrance examinations to enter the school of their choice. This creates a highly competitive and stressful atmosphere for students and parents because, in the Japanese system, the better high school one attends, the better university one can enter. So, it is quite natural that the Japanese respondents, who are university students, would have this schema. Figure 3 gives a visual interpretation of Table 3.

Table 3.
Component Analysis for Competition

Components of perception and evaluation of the stimulus word *competition* (*kyousou*)

Content Category Underlying responses	American score	Japanese* score
Win A: win/winner (61) J: victory/win-lose (29)	**61**	**29 (18)***
Lose(r) A: lose/loser (14) J: -	**14**	**0**
Sport A: sports (52), game (31), (foot) race (26), Olympics (12), athletic (12) J: sports (101), (foot) race (70), contest/match/game (24), Olympics (18), relay/track meet/marathon (17), horse race (9)	**133**	**239 (150)***
Positive Attribute A: best/good (18), healthy (11), cheerleading (11), fun (11) award/medal (10) J: make money (9)	**61**	**9 (5)***
Negative attribute A: - J: war/battle (33), hard/struggle (14), severe (10)	**0**	**57 (36)***
Societal attribute A: - J: society (11), economy (15)	**0**	**26 (16)***
Individual attribute A: drive/determination (11), pride/dignity (5), opponent (11) J: -	**27**	**0**
Competitiveness A: competitive/compete (22) J: competition (53)	**22**	**53 (33)***
Examination A: - J: examination (25)	**0**	**25 (16)***
Total	**318**	**438 (274)***

*Japanese N = 62 (total category score *.63) to balance with American respondents
American N = 39

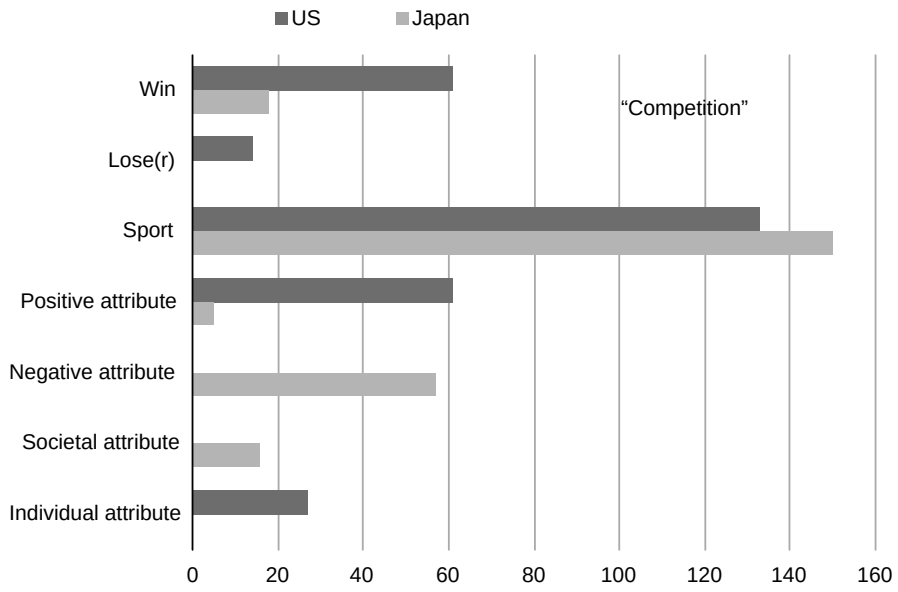

Figure 3. Competition

Contract (Business)

The way Americans and Japanese participants perceived the stimulus word *contract* (*business*) indicated there were differences in schema due to divergent cultural norms and values. American respondents had a strong schema of *legalities* and *guarantee* while the top Japanese respondents' schema was *role*, *guarantee*, and *negative attribute*.

The U.S. is a highly litigated society and the contract is believed to be a way of protecting the individual from liability. Therefore, it is often regarded as a necessary and indispensable fact of life in American business. An agreement is often not legitimized in the eyes of Americans unless it is written down and signed by both parties. The Japanese participants, on the other hand, viewed the contract as something with a more specific role, showing one's responsibility. Verbal agreements are often preferred in Japan because this puts emphasis on one's role and responsibility to the group ("interrelational") and shows that you are trustworthy to do business with in the future.

In describing cross-cultural business relations, Elwood (2009, p. 15) points out that "longer written contracts were associated with lower goodwill trust in Japan but not in the United States" (as cited in Sako & Helper, 2002). Because of this approach, Japanese business relationships take much more time to develop than the binding contract preference of

Table 4.
Component Analysis for Contract *(*Business*)*

Components of perception and evaluation of the stimulus word *contract* (*business*) (*jigyounokeiyaku*)

Content Category Underlying responses	American score	Japanese* score
Guarantee A: binding/concrete/locked in (48) J: promise (22), contract (12)	**48**	**34 (21)***
Money A: money (22) J: money (21)	**22**	**21 (13)***
Name seal A: - J: name seal (28), fingerprint (3)	**0**	**31 (20)***
Signature A: signature (29) J: signature (24)	**29**	**24 (15)***
Legal A: legalities (38), rules/regulations (23), lawyers (13), protection/safety (8), agreement (32) J: law (9)	**114**	**9 (6)***
Interrelational A: cell phone (12) J: negotiation (15), partnership/association (8)	**12**	**23 (14)***
Role A: work (9) J: employment/job (10), company (17), responsibility (11)	**9**	**38 (24)***
Document A: paper/paperwork/document (16), read/read everything (9) J: document (15)	**25**	**15 (9)***
Negative attribute A: - J: swindle/unscrupulous (22), difficult (16)	**0**	**38 (24)***
Total	**259**	**233 (147)***

*Japanese N = 62 (total category score *.63) to balance with American respondents
American N = 39

western cultures. In sum, the way Japanese and Americans view a business contract differs due to cultural norms and values and this has a strong potential to cause cross-cultural misunderstanding unless both sides are aware of these culture-based viewpoints.

Negotiate

Continuing to explore cultural schema for business concepts, Japanese and American respondents each had unique schemata for the stimulus word *negotiate*. Content analysis on the associations of the word response list resulted in 13 associations. Eight schema categories

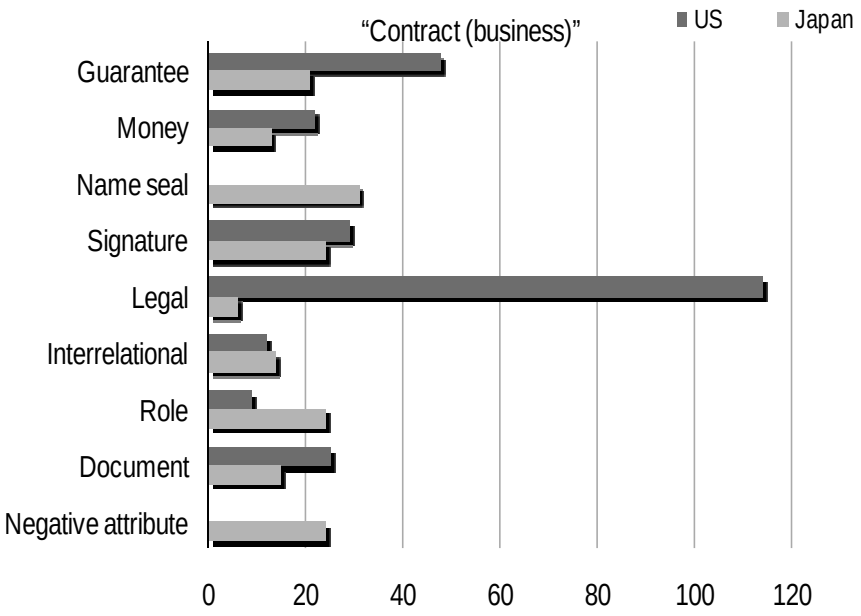

Figure 4. Contract (*business*)

were determined for the American respondents and 10 for the Japanese respondents. However, a total of eight categories (indicated by a 0 category score for one of the groups) were found to be unique to either Americans or Japanese. This means that both groups are drawing from a very different set of schema when applying meaning to the stimulus word.

Figure 5 summarizes the level of association for each content category and highlights the differences between the two schemas. The American schema had a strong association with *compromise* and *agreement*. *Contract* was also highly associated with these terms and for Americans in business, a contract provides a formal method for achieving clarity and mutual understanding. The Japanese schema had a strong association with *communication*, *negotiator*, and *benefit*. Both participants' schema included *haggle* as a strong association. Interestingly, both respondents had schema that the other did not. The three unique American categories were *agreement*, *hostage*, and *flexibility*. (*Hostage* is often collocated with *negotiation* in the English language.) Categories particular to the Japanese were *negotiator*, *benefit*, *challenging*, *people*, and *criminal*, which taken together seems to indicate a more human element but also some distrust. In negotiation, the American mindset seems to be, "We can reach an agreement if we stay flexible enough to find a compromise in our demands of each other." The Japanese mindset seems to say, "Although it is challenging to take the role of a negotiator, we can receive some benefit if we communicate honestly." Both approaches are drawn from cultural norms of the U.S. and Japan. In U.S. society, to be able to reach a compromise, clarity and the ability to be flexible are valued. Of course, these concepts are also valued in Japanese society but more so in the context of interpersonal harmony

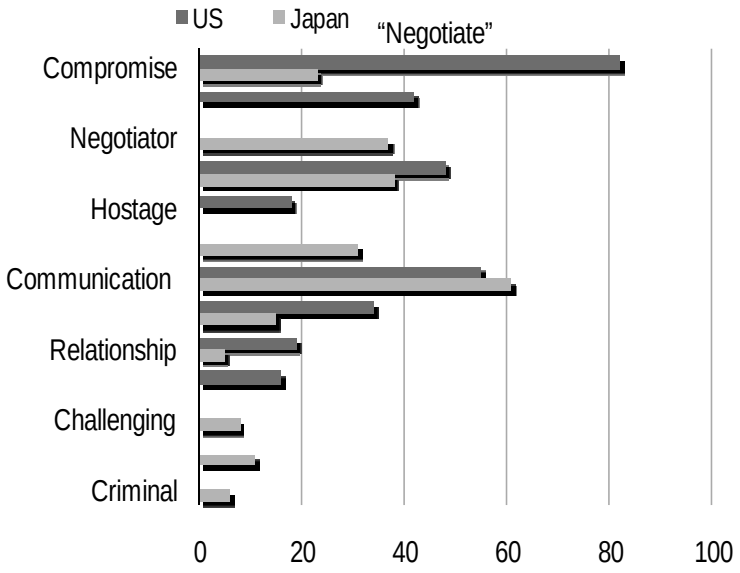

Figure 5. Negotiate

because decision making in a business context is done by group consensus. Therefore, Japanese culture highly values maintaining long-term interpersonal relationships and avoiding conflict in order to maintain this harmony. Thus, *negotiate* may be perceived as a threat to the disruption of social harmony and loss of face because it may only bring about a benefit to one side. In sum, the schema for *negotiate* for Americans reflected the American preference for flexibility so a compromise can be reached and clarified by a contract. In Japan, where unspoken or tacit agreements are more common, the schema seems to be concerned with the lack of clarity in the role one would play in a negotiation to develop and maintain interpersonal relationships.

Limitations

There are several significant limitations to the study. The largest limitation to this preliminary study is the non-random sampling of data criteria as the questionnaires were convenience samples taken from the author's university in Japan and from an American university with aid from a colleague. Thus, drawing generalizations from a small number of participants may result in bias in the data interpretation as they may not be representative of the overall population. Although the method of sampling was open-ended as participants were completely free to associate, with the only requirement being their native language, future research will require more care and control to establish a link between the general population and the sample in order to establish validity.

Table 5.
Component Analysis for Negotiate
Components of perception and evaluation of the stimulus word *negotiate* (交渉する)

Content Category Underlying responses	American score	Japanese* score
Compromise A: compromise (82), agreement J: compromise (22), common ground/fairness (14)	**82**	**36 (23)***
Agreement A: agreement (16), settlement/deal/bargain (26) J: -	**42**	**0**
Negotiator A: - J: negotiator/negotiation(59)	**0**	**59 (37)***
Haggle A: haggle/debate (14), barter/trade (10), persuade/reason with (14), argue/challenge (10) J: request (15), persuasion (13), dealing/barter (12) beat down/break down (20)	**48**	**60 (38)***
Hostage A: hostage (18) J: -	**18**	**0**
Benefit A: - J: discount/cut price (25), benefit/advantage (14), money (10)	**0**	**49 (31)***
Communication A: discuss/talk(ing)/conversation (32), communication (23) J: discuss/conversation/talking (37), negotiate with (36), diplomacy (24)	**55**	**97 (61)***
Contract A: terms/stipulate (13), contract (10), business (11) J: treaty/contract/promise (15), company (9)	**34**	**24 (15)***
Relationship A: ties/connection (9), win-lose/winner (10) B: kneel down on ground (8)	**19**	**8 (5)***
Flexibility A: workable/pliable/not set in stone (16) J: -	**16**	**0**
Challenging A: - J: challenging/hard (12)	**0**	**12 (8)**
People A: - J: group/people (9), conference (8)	**0**	**17 (11)***
Criminal A: - J: criminal (10)	**0**	**10 (6)***
Total	**314**	**372 (234)***

*Japanese N = 62 (total category score *.63) to balance with American respondents
American N = 39

Another problem inherent with most cross-cultural studies is that different languages are not always word-for-word translatable. That is, one word or phrase in one language may hold a different meaning or nuance than in the other language, thus putting the validity of the results in question. The author's original 2006 study established a control group for this purpose which was tested via a level 2 Chi-Square test to assess the validity of translation of the cross-cultural questionnaires in addition to a one-way ANOVA test using culture as a single, between-subjects independent variable. However, it could also be argued that culture affects our perception of how we regard language, thus reinforcing the argument for attempting to highlight the cultural schema used by both speakers. A limitation in the methodology of the current research is that the number of participants was not equal. Sixty-two Japanese participated in the survey while only 39 Americans did so. This number was balanced when computing total category salience scores. Both the original unbalanced score and the balanced score are shown.

Finally, another limitation to the questionnaire involved the imbalance of gender as the Japanese respondents were predominantly male (M = 48) while the American respondents were mostly female (M = 15). Gender differences were not tested as this was not the goal of this study, but there may have been some variation in the associations due to gender.

Preliminary Conclusion

This cross-cultural research analyzed culture-specific background knowledge that both Americans and Japanese may apply when they interact in a business or government context. For this short paper, only four themes were discussed and analyzed, and there were numerous limitations to the study. Future research is needed to address these shortcomings before any concrete conclusions can be made. However, the tentative research results presented here do lend some support to the two major premises of this work. First, our culturally-based schemata are largely unrecognized and often disruptive in cross-cultural contexts. Those in regular international business encounters will need to become more aware of the expectations they bring to the international workplace. Second, cultural schemata cause differences in perception and, in turn, interpretation of fundamental concepts that both Americans and Japanese on the surface appear to be in agreement on. The implications of these kinds of tacit misunderstandings could lead to larger, open disagreements and mutual distrust adversely affecting future interactions. Because there have been relatively few studies using this approach, there is a great need for further research in the cognitive area of intercultural competence using comparative content analysis. Future research using AGA methodology that explores specific concepts, particularly in the field of international business and health care, could have a profound effect on understanding the interactions of diverse national groups with each other.

References

Chen, G. (2009, September). The past, present, and future of intercultural communication competence study. Keynote presentation at the 15th IAICS World Conference 2009, *Intercultural Communication and Collaboration within and across Sociolinguistic Environments.* Kumamoto Gakuen University, Japan.

E-Gate English-Japanese Dictionary (1st ed.). (2003). Tokyo, Japan: Benesse.
Elwood, K. (2009, September 29). Trust in Global Communication. *The Daily Yomiuri*, p. 15.
Kelly, R. M. (1985) The associative group analysis method and evaluation research. *Evaluation Review, 9*(1), 35-50.
Kurotani, S. (2009, October 20). Is Hikikomori uniquely Japanese? *The Daily Yomiuri*, p. 14.
Linowes, R. G., Mroczkowski, T., Uchida, K., & Komatsu, A. (2000). Using mental maps to highlight cultural differences: Visual portraits of American and Japanese patterns of thinking. *Journal of International Management*, *6*, 71-100.
McVee, M. B., Dunsmore, K., & Gavelek, J. R. (2005). Schema theory revisited. *Review of Educational Research*, *75*(4), 531-566.
Morris, M. W.,& Ho-Ying, F. (2001). How does culture influence conflict resolution? A dynamic constructivist analysis. *Social Cognition*, *19*(3), 324-349.
Nishida, H. (1999). A cognitive approach to intercultural communication based on schema theory. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, *23*(5), 753-777.
Ryan, S. B. (2006). Using associative group analysis methodology to explore unrecognized cultural background knowledge in cross-cultural communication research. *Yamagata University Annual Research Report*, *3*, 59-110.
Sako, M., & Helper, S. (2002). Determinants of trust in supplier relations: Evidence from the automotive industry in Japan and the United States. Retrieved October 15, 2009, from *dsspace.mit.edu database* https://dspace.mit.edu/handle/1721.1/1448
Szalay, L. B., & Deese, J. (1978). *Subjective meaning and culture: An assessment through word associations*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
Ting-Toomey, S., & Chung, L. C. (2005). *Understanding intercultural communication*. Los Angeles, CA: Roxbury Publishing.
Wordtank G70. Japanese-English Electronic Dictionary. Canon, Inc.

Appendix A. Questionnaire (English)

This is a confidential research questionnaire that will be used for research purposes only. It does not reflect the views of the institution where it is given. Please answer as truthfully as possible.

Is English your native language? Yes No

Gender: F M

Age: _____

Thank you for your cooperation!

Part 1 of 2
Directions: What do you first think of when you hear or read each word below? Write as many words or phrases as you like under each word. Please do not change any answers after you have written them down.

argument	**competition**	**government**	**quiet person**
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

_____ _____ _____ _____
_____ _____ _____ _____

_____ _____ _____ _____
_____ _____ _____ _____

(business) contract **democracy** **negotiate** **business**

_____ _____ _____ _____

_____ _____ _____ _____

_____ _____ _____ _____

_____ _____ _____ _____

_____ _____ _____ _____

_____ _____ _____ _____

Note: Part 2 of questionnaire not included due to space limitations.

Appendix B. Ranked Order Response Lists

Scored responses to stimulus word *argument* (*giron* 議論)

American responses	**Weighted score**	**Japanese responses**	***Weighted score**
fighting/quarrel	76	debate	126
disagreement	58	discuss(ion)	105
yelling	37	the Diet	79
frustrated	33	meeting	54
anger	30	conference	32
bad	18	opinion	29
debate	17	argue/quarrel/confrontation	28
confrontation	17	dispute	18
discussion	11	politics	18

American responses	**Weighted score**	**Japanese responses**	***Weighted score**
loud	10	many people	15
boyfriend	10	conversation/talk/chat	14
Mom	10	trouble	14
negative	9	deny/contradict/object	12
headache	6	speech	12
		violence	11
		chairman	11
		hard/difficult	9
		heated	8
		politician	7
		subject	6
		assert/insist	5
Total:	**342**	*[adjusted N = .63 * 613]	**386**

Scored responses to stimulus word *competition* (*kyousou* 競争)

American responses	**Weighted score**	**Japanese responses**	***Weighted score**
win(ning)/winner	61	sports	101
sports	52	(foot) race	70

American responses	**Weighted score**	**Japanese responses**	***Weighted score**
game	31	competition	53
(foot) race	26	war/battle	33
competitive/compete	22	victory/win-lose	29
best/good	18	examination	25
lose/loser	14	contest/match/game	24
Olympics	12	Olympics	18
athletic	12	relay/track meet/marathon	17
healthy	11	economy	15
opponent	11	hard/struggle	14
cheerleading	11	society	11
drive/determination	11	severe	10
fun	11	(make) money	9
award/medal	10	horse race	9
pride/dignity	5		
Total:	**318**	*[adjusted N = .63 * 438]	**276**

Scored responses to stimulus word *contract* (*business*) (*jigyounokeiyaku* 事業の契約)

American responses	**Category score**	**Japanese responses**	**Category score**
binding/concrete/ locked in	48	name seal	28
legalities	38	signature	24
agreement	32	swindle/unscrupulous	22
signature	29	promise	22
rules/regulation	23	money	21
money	22	company	17
paper/paperwork/ documents	16	difficult	16
lawyers	13	negotiation	15
cell phone	12	document	15
work	9	contract	12
read/read everything	9	responsibility	11
protection/safety	8	employment/job	10
		law	9
		partnership/association	8
		fingerprint	3
Total:	**259**	[adjusted N = .63 * 233]	**147**

Scored responses to stimulus word *negotiate* (交渉する)

American responses	**Category score**	**Japanese responses**	**Category score**
compromise	82	negotiator/negotiation	59
discuss/talk(ing)/ conversation	32	discuss/conversation/talking	37
settlement/deal/ bargain	26	negotiate (with)	36
communication	23	discount/cut price	25
hostage	18	diplomacy	24
agreement	16	compromise	22
workable/pliable/not set in stone	16	beat down/break down	20
haggle/debate	14	request	15
persuade/reason with	14	treaty/contract/promise	15
terms/stipulate	13	common ground/fairness	14
business	11	benefit/advantage	14
win-lose/winner	10	persuasion	13
barter/trade	10	dealing/barter	12
argue/challenge	10	challenging/hard	12
contract	10	criminal	10
ties/connection	9	money	10

American responses	**Category score**	**Japanese responses**	**Category score**
		company	9
		group/people	9
		conference	8
		kneel down on ground	8
Total:	**314**	[adjusted N = .63 * 372]	**234**