

A Cross-Cultural Comparison of Interview Manuals –Impression Management in the Context of Japanese Culture and Society⁽¹⁾–

Richard Goetz *

I. Introduction

This paper will look at Impression Management (IM) in the context of Japanese culture and society by examining cultural differences reflected in interview manuals, which attempt to illustrate proper and effective self-presentation in employment interviews. A cross-cultural comparison of these books will provide insights, reflected in the recommendations for employment seekers, into cultural similarities and differences in idealized notions of effective interview behavior. The examined manuals come from Japan, the USA and Germany. However, the degree to which applicants and interviewers actually perform in interviews according to the depicted IM norms in this type of literature may not directly be inferred from these materials.

II. Impression Management (IM) in Interviews

IM is generally understood as the goal-directed, conscious or unconscious attempt of a social actor to influence the perceptions and images a social audience is forming by regulating and controlling information in social interaction (Tedeschi, 1981). The communicative genre of selection interviews is, because of the high stakes involved, a very rich source for IM research, including self-presentation. Interviewing for selection is a goal-oriented instrumental encounter and the information that speakers try to convey depends on their socially constructed knowledge of what “the encounter is about and what is to be achieved” (Gumperz, 1992, p. 303). As will see later, Japanese

* Graduate Student of GSCC

applicants might have a different understanding of what interviews are and perceive them more as a test and less as an exchange of information or a sale than Westerners do.

III. Cultural Differences

Cultural differences in communication style and norms of IM can influence how performances are evaluated. If a social actor does not meet certain expectations of the communication partner, he or she might be evaluated lower. In intercultural communication, and depending on the definition that can include almost every kind of communication, it is not necessarily language that is a barrier to smooth and mutual understanding. Often it is the differences in IM style and embedded values.

While a social actor (speaker) tries to project a desired image, a social audience (listener) might attribute a resonant or discordant image (Bilbow, 1997; Bilbow & Yeung, 1998). IM style norms, part of the mental programming received through socialization, are so fundamental that we usually do not notice our expectations about them. In intercultural communication differences in mentality, communication style and embedded values can influence the perception and effectiveness of IM, distort the intended images and lead to unintended results.

The potential for mismanaged impressions is far greater in intercultural encounters because values and communication styles might not be shared. Depending on the intercultural communication partners, certain IM tactics will be expected, appreciated, and understood. Others will not. Mismanaged impressions seldom lead to a breakdown in communication, however, they can not only unpleasantly mystify the communication partners but may lead to the development or reinforcement of participants' perceptions of each other's personal characteristics (Bilbow, 1996, p. 64). Even if inappropriate or ineffective IM behavior is not devastating, sub-optimal performance will lower desired outcomes and will likely make the relationship less rewarding.

Research on cultural influences on IM tactics is still limited (see Zaidman

& Drory, 2001). Differences between relatively more similar cultures have been studied even less, but these differences could potentially be even more serious because the communication partners might have more confidence in their interpretations of each other. Not being aware of these differences then can lead to evaluations of “ineptness, boorishness, or lack of interest on the part of the other person” (Hall, 1966, p. 131). See Goetz (2005) for a more detailed discussion.

In intercultural selection interviews, participants rely on different rhetorical strategies that are taken for granted, and might not be able to negotiate shared understandings. Unaccustomed communicative complexities make cognitive, interactive, and rhetorical demands on participants, which, even with a functional command of a foreign language, lets candidates “fall back on rhetorical strategies acquired in their own native-language environment” (Gumperz, 1992, p. 303). Job interviews require a high degree of shared knowledge and experience and are one of the most culture-specific events we can face (Roberts & Sayers, 1987, p. 114). Interviewers might evaluate candidates as awkward or obtuse when problems arise. These do not have to be language differences but can be schema and frame mismatch, for example, a mismatch involving the schema that an interview is an opportunity to sell oneself.

IV. Comparison of Interview Manuals

IM strategies which Japanese applicants utilize might manifest in interviews, as well as in interview preparation manuals and a comparison of these manuals might reveal possible cultural differences in IM.

1. Method

In this study twenty-two interview preparation manuals were selected. The twelve Japanese interview manuals included ten employment and two educational institution interview manuals. From the two educational institution interview manuals (J4 and J8) only the sections related to interview manners were used. The ten manuals for American Western style interviews consisted of

four U.S. American (A1-A4) and six intercultural manuals, which try to prepare candidates for interviews in English. The six intercultural manuals consisted of four Japanese (JE1-JE4) and two German manuals (GE2-GE1). While the German manuals try to prepare for employment outside of Germany, Austria and Switzerland, the Japanese manuals focus on working for foreign affiliated companies inside Japan. The twenty-three books, listed in table 1 (see appendix), were selected from current and historical holdings of the Japanese National Diet Library, academic libraries and general, on-line and used-bookstores. Publication dates range from 1939 to 2004.

The two German intercultural manuals for interviews in English were used because they were the only ones which could be located in this group. In addition, the five American and Japanese books that are between forty-seven and sixty-six years old are also the only older books, which the author could access. Other manuals were chosen because of their high circulation or long year continuation. However, several Japanese manuals published after 1980 were convenience samples.

The manuals were consulted as sources of information to investigate possible culture specific differences in IM. The Japanese and U.S. American manuals address issues in their respective countries, referred to in this paper as general manuals. The ideal conduct depicted in these manuals, however, should not be confused with usual behavior in the given culture. Recommendations and lists of “do’s” and “don’ts” do not directly reflect actual behavior. They sometimes reveal just the opposite. If every member in a given society performed efficiently in interviews, then there would be no need for such a manual. Rather, the fact, that these books offer advice on certain behavior suggests that variations and conflict about them exist within the culture (Sugimoto, 1998, p. 48). The various authors describe what they perceive as effective, but not uniformly executed, IM and interview behavior. Their advice reveals what interviewers view as proper manners and desirable deportment: “the behavioral codes, and, more important, the *behavioral ideal*” (Wouters, 1987, pp. 406-407 cited in Sugimoto, 1998, p. 46). Recommendations on how not to behave also show what

behaviors are within the range of the imaginable in the culture.

On the other hand, with the exception of JE4 (see table 1), the Japanese and German intercultural interview manuals address issues on how to successfully behave in interviews in a different country to the authors and readers. These manuals are referred to in this paper as intercultural manuals. Comparing these two groups of manuals can show differences in adjusting to interviews in English, mostly to a U.S. American style.

2. Selected Manuals

Table 1 shows the four groups of manuals in this study. In the text of this paper they are referred to by the abbreviation group (J, A, JE and GE) and the number in the table.

The general Japanese (J) and U.S. American (A) manuals differ in one important point. Most new Japanese manuals address young university students with no prior employment or only with unrelated part-time work experience. In contrast, the U.S. American manuals target adults in general, usually expecting them to already have some relevant work experience.

The Japanese and German intercultural manuals mainly, but not exclusively, address the conduct ideals for interviews in the United States of America. Therefore, the manuals from these two groups have basically the same goal as the U.S. American manuals: to educate their readers on how to successfully perform in Western American culture interviews. There are, however, some basic differences between the German and Japanese manuals in regard to place of employment, distinction of countries, foreign language acquisition purpose and image of employment at foreign companies.

V. Findings and Discussion

In this section we will look at differences in interview concept, non-verbal communication instructions, including eye contact and voice volume, differences in structural tightness, self promotion and honesty, *amae*, and questions from the applicants.

1. Differences in Interview Concept

Most Western manuals depict interviews as a sale. This comparison is especially strong in the U.S. American manual from 1939 (A1). The interview is seen as a sale in which the employer is the buyer of the candidate's skill. This concept can still be found in almost every contemporary manual.

However, new comparisons also appeared. In 1987, interviews were not described as a sale anymore but, at least in the early stages, as an information exchange: "You are not there "to sell yourself" as so many career counselors may mistakenly tell you. You are there to find out more information (...)" (A3, p. 193). Interviews are also compared to a "romantic date", in which two people are sizing each other up: "The job interview is indeed in every bit like "the dating game." Both of you have to like each other, before you can get on to the question of "going steady"" (A3, p. 197). One of the German manuals uses a similar comparison. Sympathy should be built up systematically and similar as with love, the principle is to make the interviewer "fall in love" with the applicant (GE2, p. 150).

Contemporary manuals also use comparisons with acting performance, using expressions as "on stage at the interview" (A4, p. 81) and where entrances are described as "The interview is a performance, and while the entrance is an important part of the show, the play's opening speech should not be yours. Let the interviewer(s) speak first" (A4, p. 72). While partly a performance the social actor should not forget that it is also "a live interactive exchange" (A4, p. 90).

Interviews are also compared to dance: "This chapter shows you how to think of the interview as a dance - a meeting of would-be partners who move and maneuver about one another, communicating in a language of words and non-words" (A4, p. 79).

In contrast, in ten out of twelve Japanese interview manuals (see table 2), interviews are usually seen and described as a test. This concept manifests itself in the Japanese language through the words for interview, interviewee or interviewer. In the 1940's and 1950's, interviews were called *kotoshimon* (口頭試問) (J1, p. 6), referring to oral examination. In contemporary manuals, the word

shiken, meaning test, is often added to the word for interview, creating the word *mensetsushiken* (面接試験). One manual (J11) describes the main purpose of an interview as a communication ability test (“面接の主目的は、コミュニケーション能力テスト”) (J11, p. 45).

Interviewers are, besides the words *mensetsukan* (面接官) and *mensetsunokakarikan* (面接の係官) (JE1, p. 39) also called *shikenkan* (試験官) (JE1, p. 35), meaning tester. In a similar way, some manuals call interviewees *shikensha* (試験者) or *kyukensha* (受験者) (J2, introduction p. 1; J11, p. 44). Both terms are referring to that the fact that interviewee undergoes an examination. Another manual (J12), although nothing to do with English interviews, writes “Employment Exam” in English on the cover of the manual and states that interviews are to see what cannot be evaluated through written examinations such as general knowledge or SPI tests (J12, p. 13).

Three out of the twelve Japanese general manuals (J5, J6 and J10) do not attach the word test to interview, interviewer or interviewee as described above. One of these manuals (J5) states that interviews are a place to communicate with the interviewer. However, it uses the word *check* (p. 169) and *communication ability check* (p. 166), in a way which resembles a test.

Showing modesty could be another important part for passing the interview “test” in the context of Japanese society and culture. Roberts and Sayers (1987) in their interethnic interviews study describe a discrepancy in the understanding of the purpose of an interview as a schema and frame mismatch (p. 122). They argue that shared knowledge and experience are necessary for the successful negotiation of an interview and define schemata as the accumulation of knowledge and experience into a set of belief structures (p. 115).

In summary, ten out of twelve Japanese general manuals refer to interviews as a test and it seems that in Japanese culture, in contrast to U.S. American culture, interviews are not so much seen as a sale or information exchange, but perceived and labeled more as a test which needs to be passed.

2. Differences in Non-verbal Communication Instructions

The quality of an Impression Manager's non-verbal communication, such as a handshake or bow, or a speaker's tone of voice, can have a tremendous impact on the social audience's first impression. For a more detailed discussion of impression formation and how this first impression is likely to influence subsequent perceptions see Goetz (2005).

Through his own reactions to interviewing Japanese applicants, the European author of this paper found that it was very difficult to get used to certain styles of communication and IM which did not conform to or which violated his norms. Certain non-verbal violations continued to create strong negative feelings even though a large number of people behaved in this way. Negative reactions were especially strong for constant avoidance of eye contact, quiet voices and "dead fish" handshakes.

The next section will examine differences in the interview manuals' non-verbal instructions for eye contact and voice volume.

(1) Eye Contact

Non-verbal behavior of Japanese candidates, which does not conform to a Western interviewer's norm, especially constant avoidance of eye contact, can create strong negative feelings. With only one exception (J1) (Table 2) all selected manuals in all groups talk about eye contact, often stating that eye contact is very important. However, there are some differences. In U.S. American manuals there is no warning for staring and firm eye contact is associated only with positive values. On a scale on gaze in one of the manuals (A1), "rarely looks one in the eye" is at the bottom, followed by "somewhat uneasy", and "Never wavers" is at the top (A1, p. 233).

Whereas all Western interview preparation books in this study consistently stress the importance of firm eye contact without limitation, almost all Japanese general interview manuals advise the avoidance of direct eye-contact or limitation of eye contact to the time when the applicant is speaking or answering a question (for example, J5, p. 170). Instead of looking into the eyes of the

interviewer, applicants are advised to look at the interviewer's nose (J8, p. 45; J7, p. 85; J12, p. 41), mouth or chest (J7, p. 85), between the chest and the chin (J9, p. 18), eye-zone (between interlocutor's eyes and necktie) (J10, p. 39) or knot of the necktie (J4, p. 24). Applicants are warned not to appear grim [*kowai*] by staring (J4, p. 24), not to appear scowling (J12, p. 41), not to stare (J2, p. 75; J4, p. 24; J9, p. 18) and that it is not necessary to make unnatural eye contact with the interviewer (J6, p. 40). J8 explains that many Japanese are not used to direct eye contact (J8, p. 149). Only J11 mentions eye contact but does not limit it (p. 78).

Considering the importance of eye contact given by the Western interview preparation materials it is surprising that only two of the four Japanese intercultural manuals (JE2 & JE3) recommend direct eye contact while talking. JE 3 warns that staring is not a good feeling for the interviewer (JE3, p. 77).

JE1 and JE4, however, do not limit eye contact to times of talking. JE4, written by U.S. American authors, explains that eye contact shows Westerners respect and honesty, it addresses the indirect eye contact recommendations of other manuals by stating that following such advice and looking at the interviewer's tie will certainly give a bad impression (JE4, p. 113). JE1 advises to regularly practice talking with eye contact with a friend (JE1, p. 21).

In summary, there is a clear difference in the recommendations of eye contact between Japanese and American manuals and even two of the four Japanese intercultural manuals do not recommend full eye contact.

(2) Voice

A weak voice can quickly ruin the all so important first impression. Speaking in a quiet, slow or whining voice often creates negative emotions, at least for Western interviewers. In one U.S. American manual (A1) a few voice problems are identified but they do not necessarily include features associated with a weak voice as described above: "Voice is an important part of the personality. If it is harsh, raucous, high-pitched, or nasal, it may irritate the interviewer. If the job seeker has a voice problem, he should strive to overcome

it” (A1, p. 229).

Japanese manuals recommend Japanese to speak clearly (ハキハキ) (J10, p. 51; J11, p. 44; JE1, p. 15). Readers are told that: speaking with a tiny voice projects a passive, insecure image. (...) Speaking clearly and with a loud voice (“小さな声のボソボソ”) is basic (J9, p. 20) and that, while smiling, they should tighten their stomach muscles and speak with a strong loud voice (“おなかに力を入れて、ハリのある大きな声で話す”) (J10, p. 52).

Four of the twelve general Japanese manuals explicitly recommend Japanese speak loudly. However, one manual actually advises not to speak too loud: do not misunderstand the – say your name in a loud voice – advice from interview manuals and other materials. Interview places are no sport event gatherings (J12, p. 70) and an interview is not a screaming contest. Only raising one’s voice is by no means a plus (“面接は声の大きさを競う場ではない” “声だけやたらに大きいのは、決してプラスではない。”) (J12, p. 149).

J5 and J7 also do not promote a loud voice. J7 mentions a moderate volume (適度な音量) (p. 86) and J5 a clear and properly loud voice (J5, p. 171).

Advice not to speak too loud might address applicants who went through interview preparation training schools or similar programs. The author of this paper has participated in different Japanese training programs and observed that in these programs applicants are taught to yell out, especially their greetings, and self-introductions, in an almost military fashion. Applicants are told that a loud voice shows youth and vitality. Some applicants follow this advice to a strange unnatural level.

Not one of the U.S. American manuals talks about a loud voice and one of the German intercultural manuals advises not to speak too loud: One should answer all question within 60 seconds and be calm, self-controlled and not speak too loud (“Man sollte auf alle Fragen maximal 60 Sekunden lang antworten und dies ruhig, selbstbeherrscht und mit nicht zu lauter Stimme tun”) (GE1, p.158) and do not talk too fast/slow, loud/quiet or monotone (“reden Sie nicht zu schell/langsam, laut/leise oder monoton”) (GE1, p. 169). For telephone conversations with interviewing companies (not interviews), applicants are advised to speak

not too pushily but also not too submissive, not too loud but also not with a too weak voice (“Sprechen Sie nicht zu aufdringlich, aber auch nicht zu unterwürfig, nicht zu laut, aber auch nicht mit zu leiser Stimme”) (G1, p. 146).

In summary, one third of the Japanese manuals explicitly recommend talking with a loud voice in contrast to the U.S. American and the German intercultural manuals, which mostly do not cover voice volume.

3. Differences in Structural Tightness

Japan is often described in the literature as high in structural tightness. This structural tightness is an identity-relevant manifestation of uncertainty avoidance (Crittenden & Bae, 1994, p. 657) and reflects anxiety in the face of unstructured situations. This structural tightness in Japanese culture supposedly results in low tolerance of deviation from standard or “proper” behavior (Keeley, 2001, p. 31). Reciprocal role expectations of the role partners are said to be deeply embedded in Japanese culture. Tight protocols might change the way IM strategies are formed and executed because actors will focus more on the appropriateness of behavior according to the social roles of the actors and less on personal characteristics:

A structurally tight society imposes role expectations with little leeway for individual interpretation or negotiation for deviance . . . Structural tightness has implications for trait preferences and the person perception process. In a tight culture, traits involving individual initiative and autonomy would be less valuable, and person perception would seek the bases of social behavior in social identities and roles rather than in personal traits (Triandis, 1988, cited in Crittenden & Bae, 1994, p. 657).

The Japanese recruiting process for new graduates is a good example of how highly regulated interactions are. Not following the protocol will be immediately detected and most likely lead to the end of the application process. The specific set of rules resembles a detailed acting script. Standardized

behavior, as entering the interview room, is covered in every new Japanese manual with little divergence. In contrast, the U.S. American manuals in this study did lack detailed step-by-step descriptions on such behavior. Only one of the older U.S. American manuals in this study (A1) included a more detailed description on how to enter the interview room (A1, p. 333).

Further studies will be needed for more conclusive data but emphasis on conformity seems greater, more uniform and more explicit in the Japanese manuals.

4. Difference in Self Promotion and Honesty

This section will examine statements in the selected manuals regarding self-presentation strategies and particularly focus on recommendations concerning exaggerations and advice to abide with, or in some cases to diverge from, the truth. Variations in the recommendations in manuals on whether to exaggerate, bend the truth or utilize “white lies” might indicate a stronger, more aggressive approach to self-presentation and possible cultural differences in IM practice.

Table 2 shows which manuals endorse honesty. Manuals with weak endorsements of honesty are not counted as supporting honesty. At least three Japanese general manuals do not encourage “white lies” and strongly recommend being honest. J11 states that many people mistake self-presentation for exaggeration but this is never so (“自己PRとは、自分を大げさに言ったり、誇大広告することだと勘違いしている人が多くいますが、けっしてそんなことはありません。”) (p. 32) and J7 claims that it is okay for applicants to assertively appeal to make one’s good points clear but to decorate and present oneself beyond actual ability will lead to failure (“実力以上に自分を飾り立てて見せようという気持が働くこと失敗するのである。”) (p. 71).

Other manuals, however, appear to be a little bit more flexible. Sentences such as: Exaggerated expressions and easy to expose lies should not be told (“表現を誇張したり、簡単に見抜かれてしまうようならそはいわない。”) (J10, p. 53) could be interpreted as: Only tell lies that are difficult to expose. Another

example of weak encouragement for honesty is in J9: If possible, avoid telling a company to which you apply just as insurance that this company is your first choice (“本当はすべり止めなのに「御社が第1志望」と明言するのは、できることなら避けたい。”) (p. 33). J8 states: It is better not to tell blatant lies (“見え透いた嘘はつかない方がいいです。”) (p. 18). Such sentences imply that on some occasions it might be unavoidable to lie.

In U.S. American manuals, candidates are advised to moderate self-presentation. They are cautioned to speak up distinctly, but not to be too aggressive (A2, p. 106) and to “be careful about overaggressiveness” (A2, p. 109). Honesty, and truth are sometimes mentioned but, as with the Japanese manuals, it is sometimes difficult to tell if the authors really endorse honesty in self-presentations, for example in sentences such as: “If you cannot cast a problem into a positive, productive light, avoid discussing it” (A4, p. 93) or “Don’t confess your flaws or express your doubts. Respond as positively as truth and credibility permit. Your objective is to make yourself look good. Period” (A4, p. 220). Credibility of integrity falls further when the manual recommends making up excuses if needed: “Graceful lies will allow you maximum flexibility [to conceal the fact that you are job hunting from your current employer]” and “Keep your lie simple. The best lies are the most basic. Elaborate stories are usually too flimsy to stand up for long” (A4, p. 37).

A1 endorses honesty: “The truth need not to be masked or clouded. Arguments can be developed to offset seeming handicaps - arguments that will indicate the fundamental honesty of the applicant and his ability to appraise himself” (A1, p. 120). Honesty is described as “a fundamental requirement” since “it is reasonably certain that any person of good character will be fair and understanding both in conduct and thought” (A1, p. 327).

Even though the author of A2 states: “By and large you’ll get further by telling the truth – and the whole truth. Half-truths or exaggerations often come back to plague you (...)” (A2, p. 106) it is not clear if A2 always endorses integrity. Stating what applicants should not lie about may be interpreted as making lying an option. Applicants should not lie about their age (p. 107) or

about their marital status: “For some reason some employers prefer not to hire married women. So many wives continue to use their maiden names at work or when looking for a job. But if you are asked directly, give your true marital status. It’s almost certain to come up sooner or later anyway” (p. 107). A3 warns that employers are looking for “any signs of dishonesty or lying” (p. 196) without any further recommendations.

Regarding advice on confidence in the Japanese intercultural manuals, the level of recommended confidence to be projected sometimes seems to exceed the recommendations in U.S. American manuals. For example, to the question “Why should we hire you?”, are answers such as “You should hire me because I am undoubtedly the most motivated, enthusiastic candidate you could hire. You will not find anybody who will work harder for you” (JE4, p. 142). Such strong and what maybe seen by some people as over-confident expressions are explained with: “from the cultural background, marketing oneself in America is number one” (JE4, p. 4). The authors of JE4 claim that Japanese have a need to use such strategies in English interviews (JE4, p. 6) and have to learn to express themselves in a way that highlights their strengths. They claim that such behavior will not be perceived as boastful and that over-confidence is not negatively evaluated (JE4, p. 6). However, in a different section of the manual the authors do address over-confidence and state that the difference between confidence and over-confidence is subtle and non-native speakers of English might have difficulties making this distinction.

J5, although a general Japanese manual, devotes two pages for English resumes and states that applicants should avoid modest expressions and appeal magnificently(“堂々とアピールする”) (p. 144). Another manual (JE2) states that “in order to sell oneself, weak points and defects should not be shown” (p. 29).

However, not all Japanese intercultural manuals instruct interviewees to put themselves forward so aggressively. JE3 for example states: “do not overreach yourself. It is good if you sincerely say what you think and believe” (JE3, p. 81) and “do not pretend beyond your ability”(“背伸びせずに自分らしさを”) (JE3, p.

76).

Another manual (JE1) writes that Japanese value modesty but some foreigners answer questions with: “Yes, I can do it”, even if they can do something only a little bit (JE1, p. 31). The author concurs with most other manuals that “showing your ability to the highest limit” (JE 1, p. 13) is important but he does not compromise integrity to adjust to intercultural interviews in English: It is important not to deceive but to prepare thoroughly so you can answer honestly (JE1, p. 15).

One German intercultural manual instructs German-speaking readers to self-promote more in English interviews than they would in their own country: German speaking applicant’s are often too humble (GE1, p. 45) and that especially in the USA, but also in other English speaking countries, people are more self-confident than German speakers are used to (GE1, p. 155). German speakers have to adjust to compete for attractive jobs. The authors recommend to exaggerate and in some cases make wrong statements in order to adjust to U.S. American presentation style. They state that the people who cannot handle the game or are overmodest are missing the good jobs. The Anglo-American region application strategy called “*extended truth*” is using well-calculated exaggerations and sometimes wrong statements with the goal of making one’s experiences and knowledge appear more suitable to the job. The authors claim that this strategy of *extended truth* is quite common and leads to successful applications. Therefore they recommend a moderate and controlled use of exaggerations and half-truths (“Daher empfehlen wir einen mässigen und kontrollierten Umgang mit übertreibenden Formulierungen und Halbwahrheiten”) (GE1, p. 50) but also warn applicants not to overdo it: Do not use too strong exaggerations (“benutzen Sie keine zu starken Übertreibungen”) (GE1, p. 161).

GE2, in contrast, recommends being honest and warns that a suspicion that the applicant does not tell the truth is enough to exclude him from the further process (GE2, p. 45).

In summary, finding the balance between needed and expected self-

promotion and avoiding boasting or display of over-confidence, at least in an intercultural setting, might be a difficult task. Four of the twelve Japanese manuals explicitly endorse honesty without exaggeration and two of the Japanese intercultural manuals also adjusted less to the American standard of exaggeration than one of the German manuals did. However, further studies and clear definitions of exaggerations in self-presentations are needed before one can draw fuller conclusions.

5. Questions from the Applicants

Most Japanese manuals in this study do not address the issue of whether or not applicants should ask questions. Only three of the twelve general Japanese manuals (J6, J10 and J12) describe the importance of asking questions. J6 describes asking no questions as “throwing away a chance to make a good impression” (p. 107). J10 recommends asking proactive questions (p. 53) and provides a list of “questions you certainly want to ask” (p. 50). J12 describes asking no questions as a strong demerit (“大きな減点だ”) (J12, p. 136), but even though several good questions have to be prepared only one question can be asked: Squeeze it to one: Ask only one question. Definitely do not ask many questions (“最後なので、1つに絞る。1つだけにして、複数の質問は絶対にしない。”) (p. 137).

J5 sees asking questions as optional (“「とくにありません」という答え方でも問題はありません。”) (p. 196). J11 recommends asking questions at company presentation events (説明会) (p. 30), but the topic does not reappear in other parts of the manual. The remaining seven general Japanese manuals do not cover the topic.

Only A1 does not cover questions from the applicants except for the closing questions “Have you a job for me?” and “Will you employ me?” (p. 373). In contrast, the other three U.S. American manuals strongly recommend that applicants show initiative by asking questions, for example about specific duties. One manual (A4) even dedicated three separate chapters with a total of thirty-two out of three hundred ten pages for questions. One basic message is

that questions should do more than just gather information. They should be used as an additional way to sell oneself, to demonstrate one's skill, knowledge and character (A4, p. 141). Asking no questions or idle questions is described as "one of the worst mistakes" (A2, p. 103) one can make.

All of the six intercultural manuals advise interviewees to be proactive and to ask questions and one of the Japanese intercultural (English) interview manuals (JE4) has a dedicated chapter on questions from the applicants (twelve pages). JE3, however, considers asking questions as optional but not essential: "Should applicants ask questions? If they do not have any questions they naturally do not have to ask anything. Some people worry that by not asking questions they will miss showing assertiveness but that has absolutely nothing to do with it" (JE3, p. 82).

The German intercultural manuals give neutral general guidelines for asking questions such as applicants should ask their questions in a relaxed, polite, open and still determined way (A1, p. 155).

In summary, general Japanese manuals do not encourage, support or recommend applicants to ask questions to the degree American or intercultural manuals do.

VI. Conclusion

This paper examined Impression Management in the context of Japanese culture and society by pointing to possible cultural differences reflected in interview manuals. A cross-cultural comparison of these books provided insights into cultural similarities and differences in idealized notions of effective interview behavior. The manuals came from Japan and the USA. This paper also compared German and Japanese manuals for intercultural interviews in English. In summary, this study found that:

1. In the Japanese manuals the word "test" and "exam" was frequently used to describe interviews. It seems that in Japanese culture interviews are not only seen as a sale or information exchange but also perceived and labeled

as a test. Schema and frame differences about what the nature and purpose of an interview is may exist.

2. In Japanese manuals, recommendations on direct eye contact are limited to times when the interviewee is speaking. Warnings not to stare are frequent and even the intercultural manuals do not always support full eye contact in contrast to the U.S. American manuals.

3. Japanese manuals are more concerned about the volume of applicant's voices than U.S. American and intercultural manuals. Four out of twelve Japanese manuals recommend applicants to speak loudly in interviews.

4. Emphasis on conformity seems greater, more uniform and more explicit in the Japanese manuals than in the American manuals.

5. Japanese manuals seem to endorse honesty in self-presentations more than American manuals from which some tended to promote exaggeration. Also, two of the Japanese intercultural manuals adjusted less to the American standard of exaggeration than one of the German manuals did.

6. The general Japanese manuals do not encourage, support or recommend applicants to ask questions to the degree that American or intercultural manuals do.

The findings partly explain the personal experiences of the author of this paper while conducting over 2500 employment interviews at a temporary employment agency in Tokyo, for example, why many candidates seemed unable to establish or maintain full eye contact. This study showed that even professionals in the recruiting industry are unaware of this aspect of non-verbal communication, which is so important in a Western context. Weak self-presentations could also be partly explained by applicant's failing to adjust to an American standard of strongly emphasizing one's abilities, possibly including exaggerations and immodesty.

Limitations:

Several issues in this study might limit the internal and external validity of the results. As mentioned before, several manuals published after 1980 were convenience samples. If the selection of books had been different, the

findings may have been different. Another point to consider is that the norms and guidelines for interview behavior reflected in the recommendations in the manuals may sometimes reveal just the opposite of the actual cultural norms.

The European author of this paper might have his own cultural biases, which may have influenced his selection and analysis of data. His two and a half years experience working as an interviewer might not only have raised his awareness about impression management of Japanese candidates but might also have influenced all aspects of this qualitative study.

Further research is needed to validate and expand the present findings and explore additional aspects.

Appendix

Table 1: Selected Manuals⁽²⁾

Japanese Manuals

- J1 主要会社採用試験問題及解答：昭和 24 年度 (1949) by 進藤恵助編
- J2 面接試験：試験官はこうみている (1958) by 林太郎著
- J3 マンガ・面接試験突破大作戦 (1986) by 経営実務研究会就職班編
- J4 高校入試面接ラクラク合格作戦 (2000) by 都築秀行編著
- J5 女性の転職・再就職パーフェクトガイド (2003) by 新星出版社編
- J6 わかる !! わかる !! わかる !! 面接&エントリーシート (2004) by 新星出版社編集部編
- J7 面接試験対策講座 (2004) by 早稲田教育出版編集部編
- J8 外国人留学生のための面接：合格するための本 (2004) by 目黒真実著
- J9 面接自己アピール 100 (男子学生編) (2004) by 松浦敬紀監修
- J10 面接の虎 (2005) by 就職情報研究会編
- J11 面接トレーニング (2005) by 坂本直文著
- J12 面接の常識 2007 (2005) by 新星出版社編集部編

U.S. American Manuals

- A1 The strategy of job finding (1939) by Lyons and Martin
- A2 Your Job (1948) by Fritz Kaufmann

A3 What color is your parachute? : A practical manual for job-hunters & career changers (1986) by Richard Nelson Bolles

A4 The complete idiot's guide to the perfect interview (2000) by Marc Dorio

Intercultural (English) Manuals

For Japanese

JE1 就職のための英語面接 (1980) by トミー植松著

JE2 就職活動面接英語 & 英文履歴書マニュアル 1993 年度版 (1992) by 就職情報研究会編

JE3 外資系企業就職完全マニュアル 2001 年度版 (1999) by 就職情報研究会編

JE4 受かる! 英語面接: ネイティブのビジネス英語 (2003) by ロッシェル・カップ, アン・コディ, ランディ・クロス著

For German Speakers

GE1 Weltweit bewerben auf Englisch (Apply worldwide in English) (2003) by Klaus Schuermann and Suzanne Mullins

GE2 Die optimale Bewerbung fuer das Ausland (The optimal application for foreign countries) (2004) by Andreas Schieberle

Table 2: Summary of Findings

Topic or characteristic	Japanese (J)												USA (A)				Jap. (JE)				(GE)		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	
An interview is a test	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	—	✓	✓	✓	—	✓	✓	—	—	—	—	✓	—	—	—	—	—	
Eye contact	—	↯	↯	↯	↯	↯	↯	↯	↯	↯	↯	↯	↯	↯	↯	↯	↯	↯	↯	↯	↯	↯	↯
Loud voice	—	—	→	→	—	—	—	—	→	→	—	⊗	—	—	—	—	→	—	—	—	⊗	—	
Q&A scripts	—	—	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	—	—	—	—	✓ ⁽¹⁾	✓	✓	—	✓	—	
Honesty	—	—	—	※	Ψ ⁽⁴⁾	—	※	◇	◇	—	※	◇	※	◇	—	Ψ	※	—	※	—	Ψ	※	
Prior employment	—	—	—	—	✓	—	—	—	—	—	✓	—	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Applicant's questions	—	—	—	—	⊙	○	—	—	—	⊙	⊙	○	—	○	—	⊙	○	⊙	⊙	⊙	○	⊙	

Legend:

- General: ✓ The topic or characteristic is covered
— The topic or characteristic is not covered
- Eye contact: ↔ not limited
↯ limited to times of speaking; warnings not to stare, etc.
- Loud voice: → explicitly recommends speaking loudly
⊗ recommends NOT to speak too loud
- Honesty: ※ Integrity
◇ Questionable integrity, honesty is not always strongly endorsed
Ψ Encourages exaggerations and lying if needed
- Applicant's questions:
○ Asking questions is explicitly stressed as important
⊙ Asking questions is discussed neutrally
⊕ Asking questions is optional (not important!)

Notes

- (1) This research was funded by the ICU COE and Yoneyama Rotary program.
- (2) Please refer to the reference section for the complete references.
- (3) Q&A scripts are present but minimal. See section on model answers for details.
- (4) Encourages wrong statements involving resignation reasons.
- (5) Questions are described as a useful self-presentation tool for company PR seminars. However, they are not covered in the interview part of the manual.

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面接マニュアルの異文化比較 —日本の社会・文化における印象管理—

< 要 約 >

リチャード・ゴッツ

本稿では、日本、米国及びドイツの採用面接の際における種々の相違を調査する。研究の目的は上記3か国の印象管理の違いを認識する事である。様々な場面で役立つと推定されるが、特に異文化コミュニケーションを必要としている企業における採用面接、社員評価等に有効である。又、面接を受ける人材にとっても、価値があるであろう。この印象管理の違いを認識する事で、自己の印象を、より良いものに変化させる事ができるかもしれない。

研究方法として面接マニュアルを比較する。面接マニュアルは色々な国で刊行されているが、国や文化によって、どのような相違があるか、研究した。

本稿では、22冊の日本、米国及びドイツの面接マニュアルを比較した。このマニュアルの内訳は12冊が日本における一般的なマニュアル、4冊は米国における一般的なマニュアル、6冊は異文化（英語）面接について書かれたマニュアルである。英語面接マニュアルの内訳は4冊が日本人向け英語面接のマニュアル、2冊はドイツ語を母語とする人向けに書かれたマニュアルである。12冊の日本における一般的なマニュアルの内訳は2冊の入学面接のマニュアルを含むものとする。

本稿の研究の結果、日本と米国や日本とドイツの英語の面接マニュアルでは、様々な相違があることが明らかになった。面接の概念、視線、声の大きさ、一致、自己PRと正直さ、面接を受ける人（応募者）からの質問について相違がある事を確認した。表1を参照されたい。

1. 日本の面接マニュアルはほぼすべて「面接」イコール「試験」を意味するように書かれている。おそらく、日本では米国に比べて面接を試験として認識することがはるかに多い。一方、米国やドイツの面接マニュアルでは、「面接」はしばし

ば情報交換の場を意味する言葉として用いられている。

2. 視線については、日米独の相違がはっきり出てきた。異文化（英語）マニュアルでも4冊中2冊は、直接相手の目を見るようにとは書かれていないものがあつた。
3. 日本の一般的なマニュアル12冊のうち4冊と、4冊の異文化（英語）面接マニュアルのうち1冊が、直接大きな声で話すように指導している。米国やドイツのマニュアルは一回もその事について触れていない。
4. 日本のマニュアルの方が米国とドイツのマニュアルより社会構成の厳しさが表されているようだ。一致や従うことが強調されているようだ。
5. 一般的なマニュアルを比較するには、正直さの定義を明確にする必要がある。異文化（英語）マニュアルの場合、日本のマニュアルはドイツのマニュアルのように過剰表現をする事を推奨していない。
6. 一般に日本のマニュアルは米国のマニュアルほど応募者からの質問をあまり歓迎せず、重視しない。これが日本人が消極的な印象を与えてしまう一つの原因かもしれない。