A Proposal of Measurement Levels of Acculturation among International Students in Japan

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Abstract. The term acculturation refers to the result of the processes of adopting the cultural traits or social patterns of another group. Although not all groups undergo acculturation in the same method, the underlying hypothesis is that there will be two main components to how acculturation takes places. It is projected that attitudes and behaviors are the two main components that determine the level of acculturation (Berry, 2005). Using this principle, there will be multiple trials of experimentation to prove or disapprove this hypothesis. Ultimately, this paper will focus on defining a measure of acculturation and reporting how our experimentation methods will affect international students with acculturation.

Keywords: Acculturation, culture, guidelines, culture shock, adaptation, assimilation, and cultural groups.

1 Introduction

There are different patterns as to how an individual acculturate, integrate, and assimilate into new cultures both psychologically and socioculturally. More recently, there are studies that involve ethno-cultural groups and how each relate to each other and change as a result of attempting to live together in culturally different societies (Berry, 2005).

For this project, the first step is was to conduct interviews with random international students and ask about the types of changes that they have had to make in order to acculturate into Japanese society. After gaining background information through the in-person interviews, an online survey was launched to assess specific thought processes about the entire acculturation process. The responses from the in-person interviews provided important insights as to how the questions for the online survey were to be constructed. Individuals with lower scores on the survey revealed that the level of acculturation into Japanese culture and society was estimated to be low.

2   Measurement

2.1   Experimentation Method and Concept

After surveying 25 individuals who have reportedly spent time abroad or were foreign to Japan, I have discovered that there were roughly six main areas that were related to acculturation and adaptation to new lifestyles. The following section outlines the six main areas that I have identified for this study.

Language Usage and Media Preference
Language usage refers to the level of Japanese usage when it comes to speaking, reading, and writing. Media preference is determined by how much an individual chooses to watch or listen to Japanese media over any type of entertainment source that comes from their home country.

Cultural Identity and Balance of Cultures
Cultural identity requires an individual to identify the culture that they are the most comfortable with. If an individual is a foreigner to Japan, it is essential to balance between cultures and to embrace all differences in cultural beliefs, values, and behaviours to fit in to a new society.

Relationships
Relationships refer to an individual's social life in Japan. It assesses how well an individual makes acquaintances and friends even with differences in languages, beliefs, cultures, and customs.

Health, Well-Being, and Mobility
Health and well-being refers to both the physical and mental wellness of an individual. Mobility refers to how much an individual may feel comfortable with using the public transportation system in Japan.

Food and Diet
Food and diet refers to how much an individual's diet may have changed after moving to Japan. This section also assess whether an individual prefers Japanese diets over the meals from their country of origin.

Personal Hygiene
Personal hygiene assesses whether an individual feels more obligated to care about their physical aesthetics. For instance, it examines if an individual spends more time and effort to follow the latest Japanese fashion trends.

Because this experiment requires both the pre-experiment and post-experiment thought process of each participant, the same survey will be distributed numerous times compare the changes. To visually examine the before and after differences in the survey outcomes, I have decided to use a 6-dimension diagram to present my data outcomes.
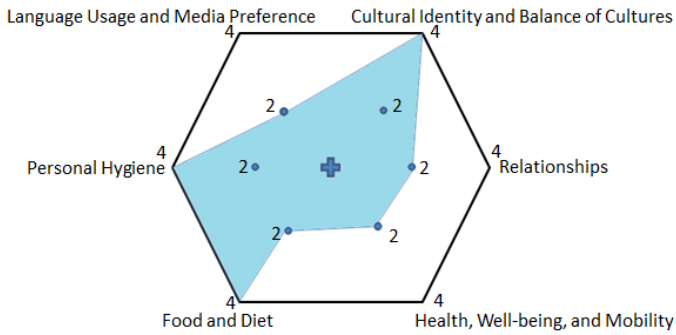
Fig. 1. An example of a 6-dimension diagram that present 1 respondent's survey results in a visual format

Table 1.

Scores – Definition on Survey			
1	2	3	4
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

2.2   Usage

By utilizing the six main areas as the main dimensions of the hexagon, each response can be visually represented. For example, if the blue area inside the hexagon is shown to be smaller in size, the respondent has chosen answers that connect to lower scores. Ideally, the blue area inside the hexagon should increase in size after the experiment as higher scores tend to reveal that an individual is more likely to be comfortable in their new settings and culture.

3   Guidelines

Based on the responses of these participants, I have developed a lifestyle guideline. To justify and rationalize the ideas behind each guideline, I referred to the responses of the survey. For instance, if the survey answers have revealed that watching Japanese TV has improved language skills, I would create a guideline that may require a participant to watch TV.

Only a selected number of individuals from the pool of 25 foreigner/Japanese students participated in a one-week experiment. The experimentation consisted of following a tool that was consisting of guidelines.

When the experimentation had started, each participant needed to choose 7 of the 20 guidelines. These guidelines ordered a person to act a certain way and be designed to help and facilitate easier acculturation. Once the experimentation was over, each participant wrote a statement about each change made.

Table 2.

Few examples of the Guideline (3 out of the complete 20).	Predictable Outcome
• Try to eat at least 5 different and new Japanese foods that you have never tried before.	• Through new eating experiences, you will be able to increase the dimension level from the food and diet dimension. Challenging oneself with new foods may translate to one's efforts at trying to fit in.
• Replace showers with baths at least 3 times during this experimentation timeframe.	• This guideline was testing the participant's willingness towards changes in lifestyle. It is expected that the personal hygiene dimension's dimension level may increase.
• Try to follow the current fashion style by trying different hair styles or trying on new styles of clothing that is out of your comfort zone.	• This guideline is expected to increase the personal hygiene and cultural identity dimension level. If one is trying to fit in to another culture through certain actions, it can be translated as one's efforts toward acculturation.

Using the results of the survey and the actual thought processes of each individual, acculturation will be measured using two components: attitude and behaviour. For example, if a participant dislikes seafood due to its texture, this can be considered an "attitude" as there is no action involved. If the same participant makes changes to their diet by adding seafood once the experiment starts, this can be considered a "behavioural" change. As one set of experimentation outcome may not be sufficient in drawing conclusions, it may be necessary to repeat the experimentation a number of times to ensure data integrity.

4   Conclusion and Further Work

During the initial stage of the project, in-person interviews have been conducted to discover the drastic lifestyle changes that international students have experienced in order to acculturate successfully into the society. Apart from the obvious issues that come from language barriers, there were some interesting changes that were found insightful. Subsequently, the approach concentrated on translating these small examples or episodes into questions for the survey and guideline.

According to the results of the experimentation, there were three main dimensions that the participants focused on following. First, majority of participants attempted to change or alter their diets to be more Japanese-oriented. Second, because all of the foreign participants regularly took showers, it was a new experience for them to change their hygiene regime to regular baths. Third, majority of the participants took attempts to improve their Japanese language skills by engaging in more social activities and conversations or by simply studying through reading or listening exercises. The most frequently followed guidelines were identified to be:

- Try to eat pre-made foods or convenience store foods and leave a note of whether you like it or dislike it.
- Replace showers with baths at least 3 times during this experimentation timeframe.
- Watch at 7 or more hours of Japanese TV during the week to improve your listening/speaking skills.

As for the continuation of this study, literature reviews and further experimentation is essential in setting clear parameters on defining "acculturation." Specifically, I plan to videotape an outing with two foreign individuals. This particular filming experiment will allow me to observe and record the different types of components of Japanese culture that will be new, different, and even shocking to the two foreign individuals have experienced throughout their lives. All of the participants will then be required to give feedback on the film. Based on the feedback of the participants, there will ideally be two more rounds of experimentation where the participants follow 7 of the 20 guidelines. To ensure a certain level of data integrity, multiple repeats of experimentation may be required to yield usable data.

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