

# Importance of Teaching Cross-Cultural and Interpersonal Communication in Foreign Language Classrooms

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# Capstone Outline

- Significance of the Study
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  - Appropriate and Inappropriate Interpersonal Communication
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# Significance Of The Study

- Karina took an intercultural communication and psychology class while studying abroad at Ritsumeikan University in Japan and learned about intercultural communication.
- Abaigael studied interpersonal communication techniques in dramatic arts and speech communication classes earlier in her academic career
- Want to know more about how people communicate cross-culturally because it is essential to the modern workplace as countries become more globalized and increasingly more diverse culturally.
- With the help of this study we will be able to get a peek at how people communicate in cross cultural situations like a foreign language classrooms and during study abroad.

# Research Questions

- 1) How does foreign language education affect students' perceptions of their ability to function in the target culture?
- 2) What areas of cross-cultural competency can be enhanced by study abroad that would not be found in the foreign language classroom?
- 3) In what way does cultural bias affect student's perception of appropriate interpersonal communication?

# Literature Review: Outline

- A. Interpersonal Communication Definition
- B. Appropriate and Inappropriate Communication Connection
- C. Interpersonal Communication Style (America & Japan)
- D. Cross-Cultural Conflict Example
- E. Cross Cultural Setting
- F. Foreign Language Education Laws and Curriculum
- G. Foreign Language Classroom Issues
- H. Communication Competency and Study Abroad
- I. Other Influences on Cross Cultural Communication I & II

# Interpersonal Communication Definition

- The process by which people exchange information, feelings, and meaning through **verbal** and **nonverbal** messages.

**Nonverbal** messages consist of body movement, facial expressions, etc. to convey (or contradict) an idea

**Verbal** messages consist of spoken ideas exchanged face-to-face, over the telephone, etc.

(SkillsYouNeed, 2015 )

- Learners interact and negotiate meaning in **spoken, signed, or written** conversations to share **information, reactions, feelings, and opinions.**

(The 5 Cs : Standards , 2015)

**Interpersonal  
Communication**



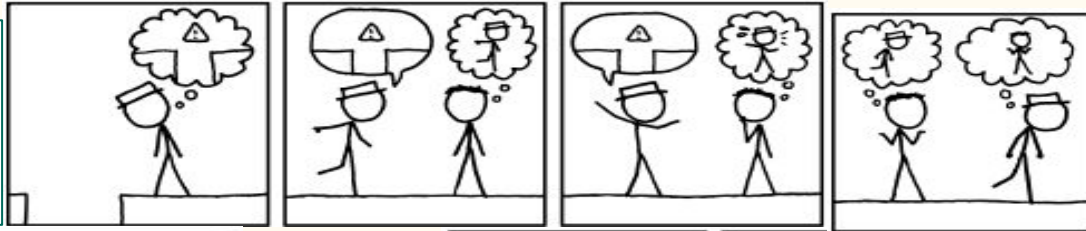
**Real World  
Communication**



**Essential to  
Daily Living**

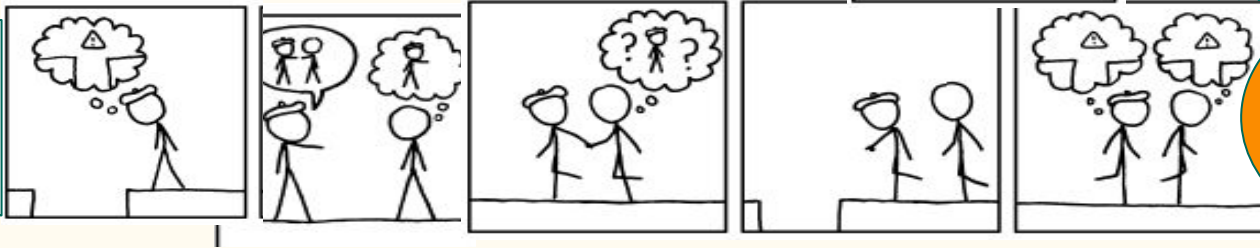
# Appropriate and Inappropriate Communication Connection

Divergent  
Communication  
Style



Miscommunication

Convergent  
Communication  
Style



Communication  
achieved

- Shared or divergent communication styles influence whether a conversation proceeds smoothly or by fits and starts.
- Determining appropriate and inappropriate interpersonal communication between cultures is the key to telling us where communication styles of different cultures converge and diverge. (Ramsey, 1979)

# Interpersonal Communication Style (America & Japan)

## America

- Pragmatic communication style
- Focused on the search for self
- Individualistic culture

(Ramsey, 1979)

## Japan

- Focused on harmonizing with people.
- Emphasis on a search for belonging and human connection (*ningen kankei*)
- Collectivist culture

(Ramsey, 1979)



# Cross-Cultural Conflict Example

- The term *anzuchi* (or, to backchannel) is the listener's use of short utterances, such as “oh” or “uh huh” in English or “hai”, “un”, or “aa” in Japanese.

## America

In America, such behavior would be seen as rude or impatient, as the person talking would believe their conversation partner is not interested in the conversation

## Japan

In Japan, this habit is seen as polite, as you are showing understanding of and interest in what the person is saying

(Hanzawa, 2012)

# Cross Cultural Settings

- Cross Cultural: “Relating to or involving two or more different cultures or countries.”

(Merriam Webster, 2016)

- **For our research we used two settings :**

Foreign language education  
classes in university  
students' HOME culture

Foreign language education  
classes in university  
students' HOST culture

# Foreign Language Education Laws and Curriculum

	America	Japan
Governing Body	American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL)*1	The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT)*3
Laws/ Foreign Language Requirements	Inconsistent requirements and laws and few states hold language requirement*2	The Basic Act on Education developed by MEXT in 2008, which is an action plan to foster English. In Japan, it is mandatory to learn English during grades 7-12.*3
Curriculum	The 5 C Standards:Guidelines NOT Curriculum {Communication, Culture, Connections, Comparisons, Communities}*4	Reading, Writing, Speaking, Understanding Intention*3

\*1(ACTFL, 2015) \*2(U.S. Department of Education, 2010) \*3(Kashihara, 2011) \*4(The 5 Cs : Standards. , 2015)

# Foreign Language Classroom Issues

- While schools teach the language such as dialog, they fail to teach the *interpersonal* aspects of a conversation.

## America

Even though students practice conversation dialogues, and communication is an important standard students still feel anxiety surrounding oral communication.

(The 5 Cs : Standards , 2015) (Koteková, 2013)

## Japan

In Japan, secondary school classrooms lack native English speakers, which makes it harder to learn casual conversation techniques.

(MEXT 2010)

# Communication Competency and Study Abroad

- “Study abroad helps students develop intercultural communication skills. Also students gained improved intercultural awareness.” (Schnickel, 2010)

Benefits of Study Abroad	Returning student agreement
<b>Personal Development:</b> Increase self-confidence and maturity	<u>96.5%</u>
<b>Intercultural Development:</b> Improved intercultural competency and personal bias recognition	<u>96%</u>  (Dwyer, 1999)

# Other Influences on Cross Cultural Communication I

- **Cultural Value Orientations:** How our own culture creates a lens or bias through which we make sense of human interactions and make decisions about appropriate communication. (Hofstede, 1991) (Ting-Toomey, 1999)

In our survey we aimed to explore:

- Is this cultural bias still relevant in the context of cross culture communication in the foreign language classroom (in host and home countries)?
- How does study abroad diminish cultural bias ?

Cultural Value  
Orientations



Cultural Bias

# Other Influences on Cross Cultural Communication II

America Cultural Value Orientations	Japan Cultural Value Orientations
<p><b>Short Term Orientation:</b> Personal respect, individual face saving</p>	<p><b>Long Term Orientation:</b> Hierarchical or vertical scale respect, collective “face saving”</p>
<p><b>Weak uncertainty avoidance culture:</b> Uncertainty is valued: Encourage risk taking, Conflict is positive</p>	<p><b>Strong uncertainty avoidance culture:</b> Uncertainty is a threat: Encourage being cautious, conflict is negative</p>
<p><b>Individualistic culture</b> Individual goals Individual emphasis Voluntary reciprocity</p>	<p><b>Collectivistic culture</b> Group goals Ingroup emphasis Obligatory reciprocity</p>

# Research Method

- Participants/ Subjects:
  - Total of 59 University Students (31 Japanese, 28 American)
- The Participants Should :
  - Have experience studying abroad in Japan or America
  - Have experience with foreign language classes in Japan or America
- Research Instrument:
  - Online Survey (Google Form):
    - English Survey and Japanese Survey



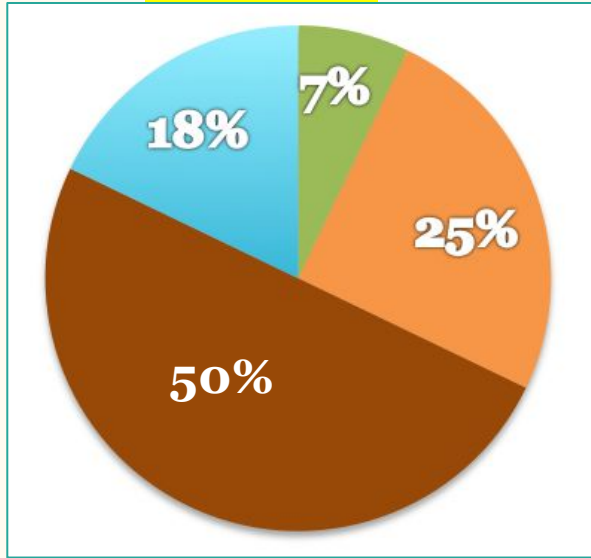
# Demographics: participant requirements

- All of our participants were either American university students who study Japanese or Japanese university students who study English.

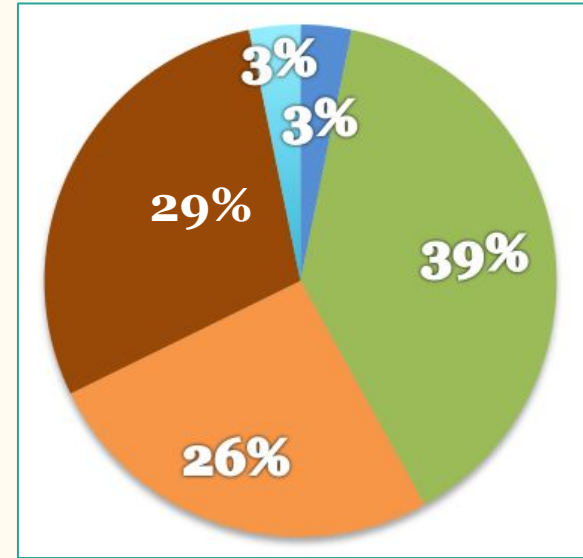


# Demographics: Year in College

America



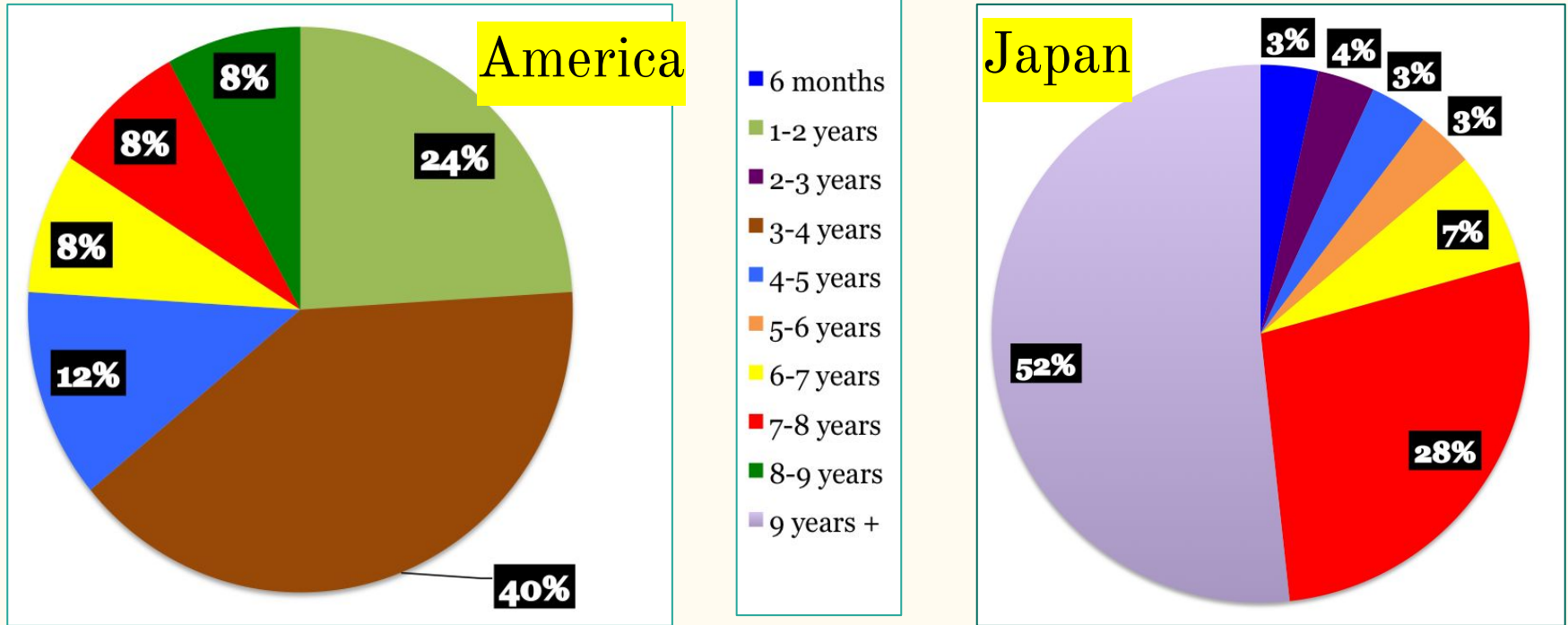
Japan



The majority of American's are 4th years college.

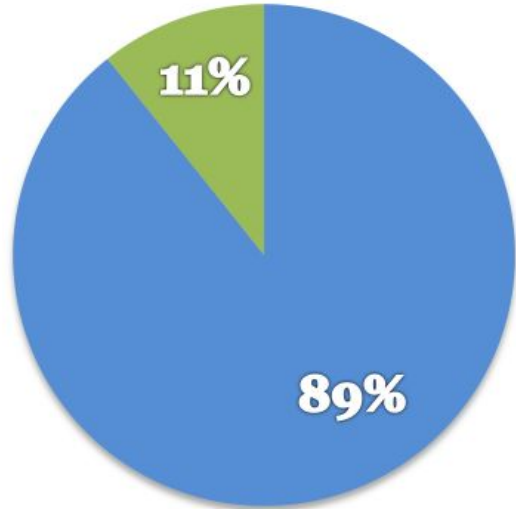
The majority of Japanese are 2nd years in college.

# Demographics: Foreign Language Experience



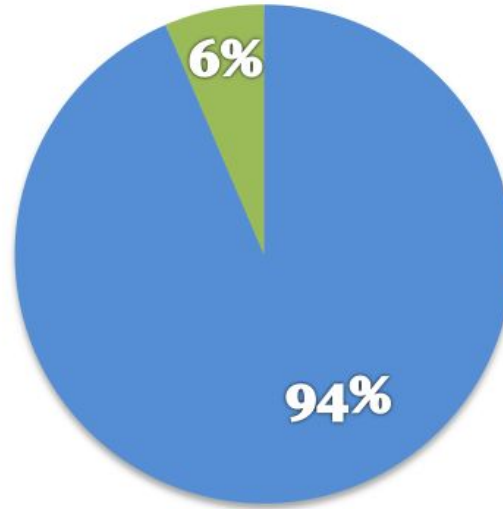
Japanese students on average have studied English longer than American's have studied Japanese. This is due to the schools being different. In Japan English is taught at the elementary school level as a foreign language while in the U.S. foreign language education is on the decline.

# Demographics: Study Abroad Country



America

■ Japan  
■ Other



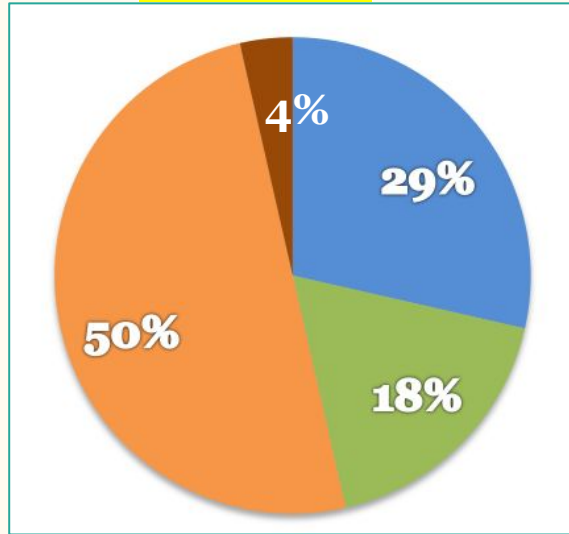
Japan

■ America  
■ Other

The high majority our students studied abroad in either America or Japan.

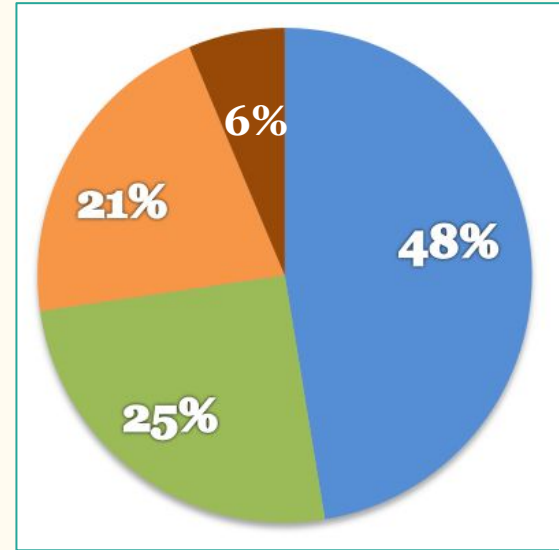
# Demographics: Time Studying Abroad

## America



- Yes I am currently studying abroad
- Yes, for one semester in the past
- Yes for one year in the past
- I have never studied abroad

## Japan



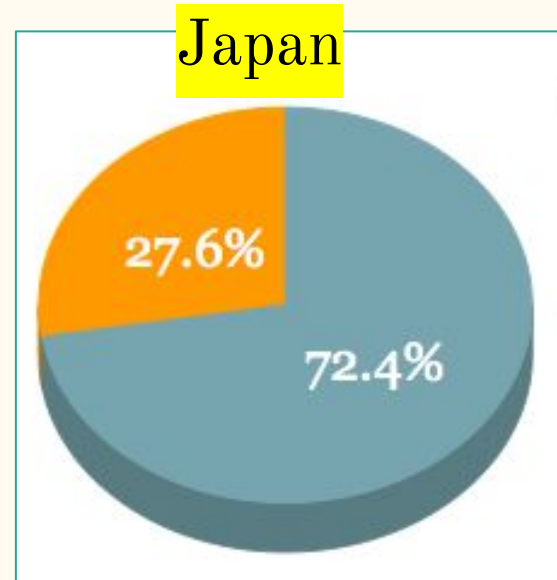
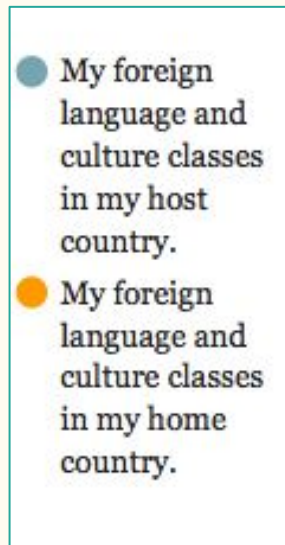
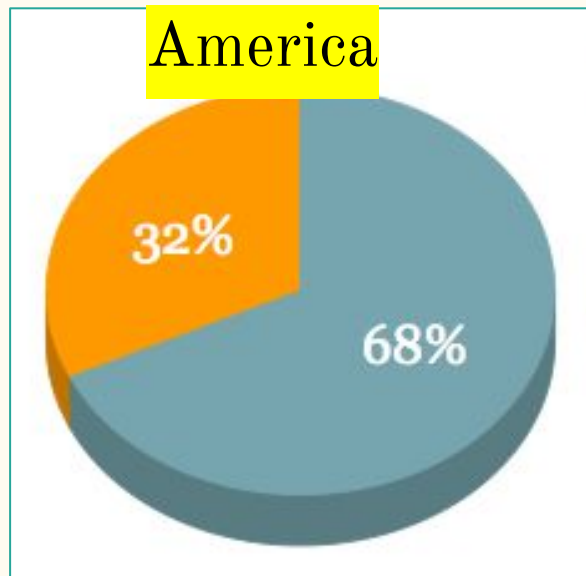
The majority of the Japanese students who answered were currently studying abroad. The majority of the American students who answered had already studied abroad in the past for at least one year.

# Results Of The Study

## Research Question 1

How does foreign language education affect students' perceptions of their ability to function in the target culture?

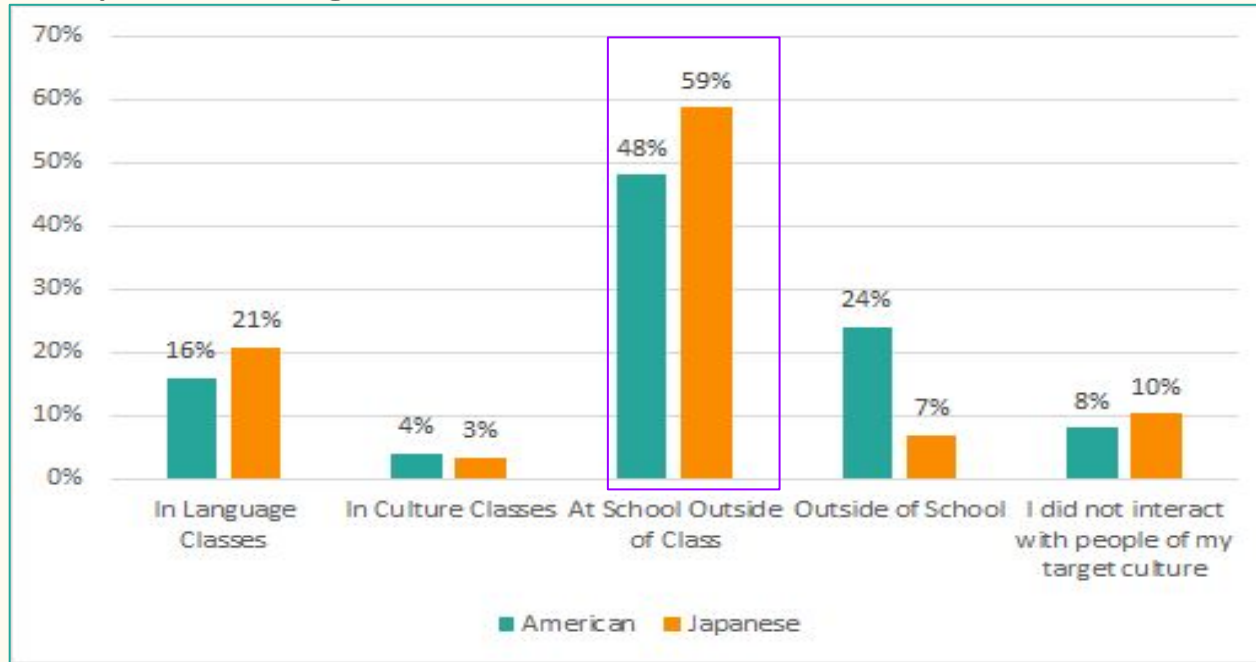
Which classes made you feel most comfortable and confident with your ability to communicate inter-culturally in your target language ?



The majority of the Japanese and American students stated that their HOST country's classes made them feel confident in their ability to communicate cross-culturally.

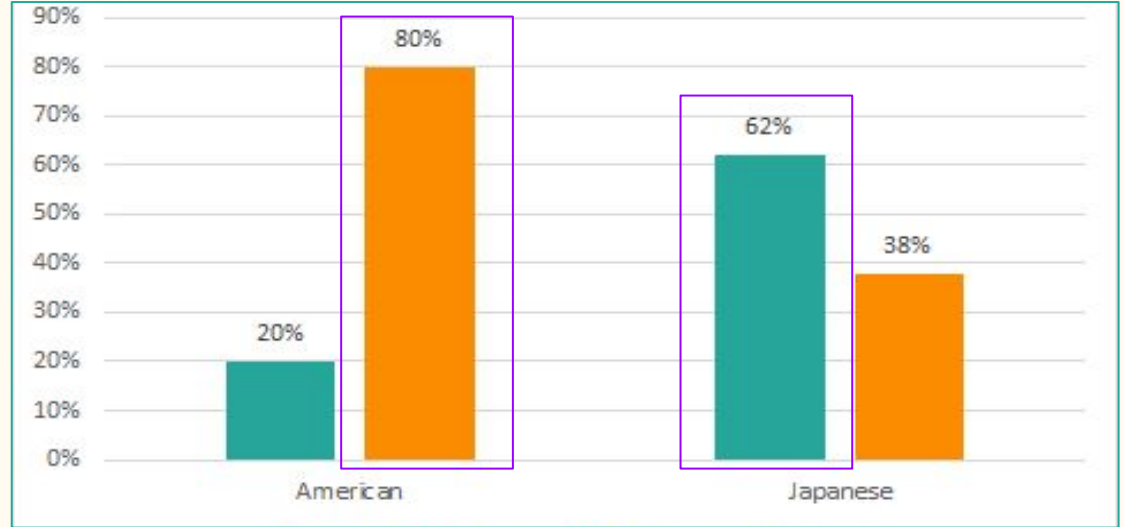


At your home university where did you most interact with people of your target culture?



At their home university majority of students interacted with people of their target culture at school but outside of class during club activities or at campus cafes.

During “outside of class, during club activities, or while at a school cafe,” at your home university which language did you use most?



American use English more than Japanese in their home country. Japanese surprisingly use more English than Japanese in their home country.

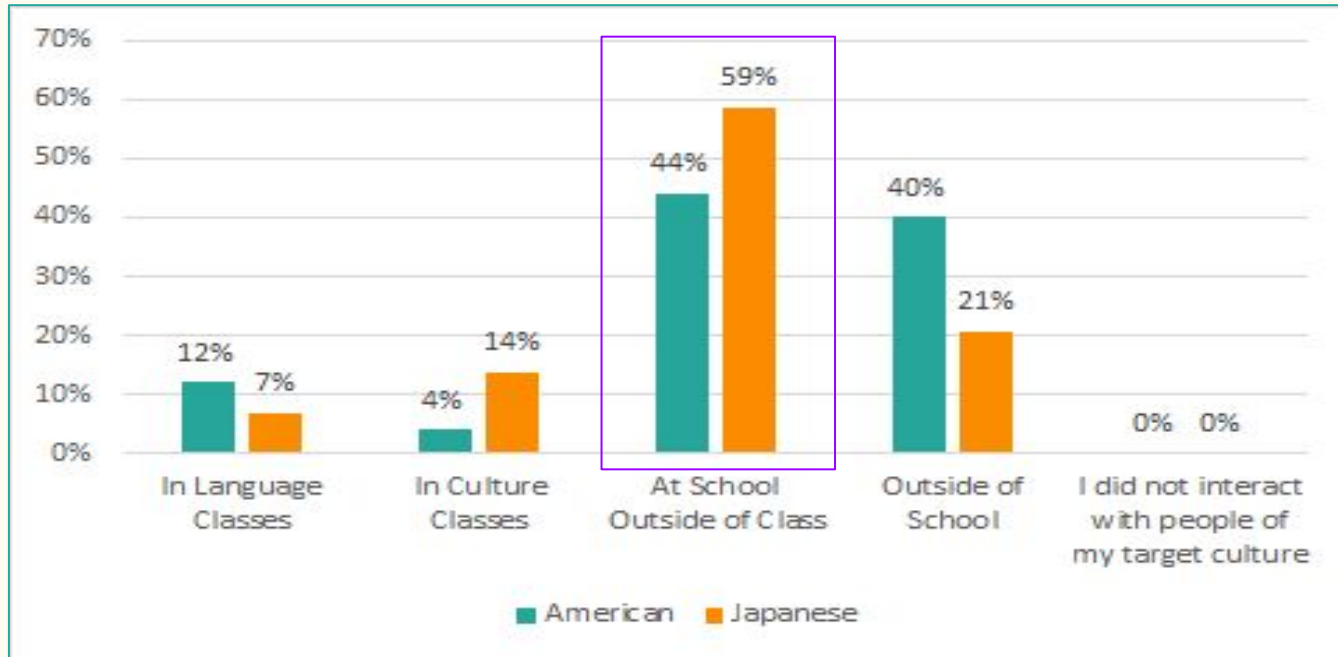
# Summary of Findings: Research Question 1

- Language classes in the host country had a greater influence on the student's ability to function in their target culture.
- However, students interacted with people of the target culture most outside of their language classes.
- Study abroad classes and not the home country foreign language classes, have a strong influence on student personal development concerning confidence in their target language.
- Japanese students are more likely to make an effort to use English at their home university.

## Research Question 2

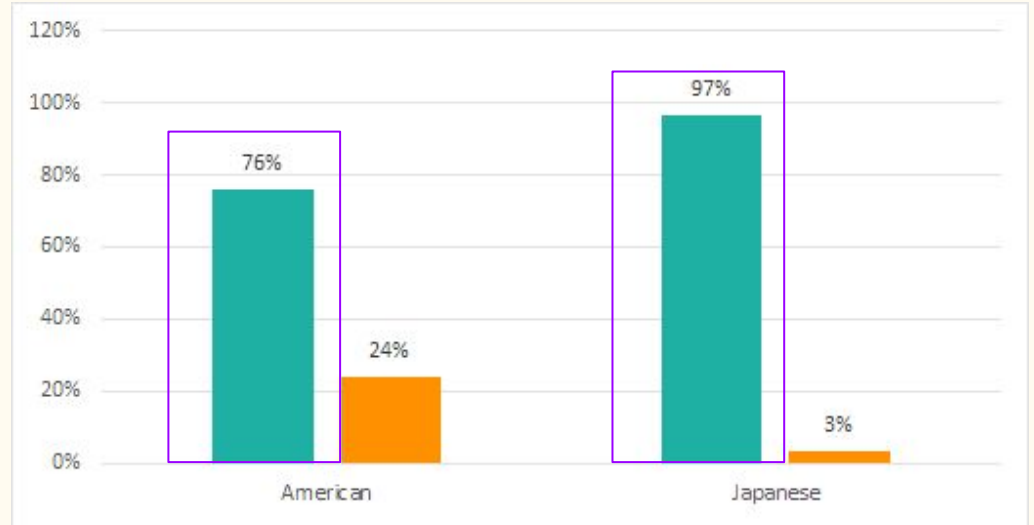
What areas of cross cultural competency can be enhanced by study abroad that would not be found in the foreign language classroom?

At your host university where did you most interact with people of your target culture?



At their host university majority of students interacted with people of their target culture at school but outside of class, for example, during club activities or at campus cafes.

During “outside of class, during club activities, or while at a school cafe,” at your host university which language did you use most?

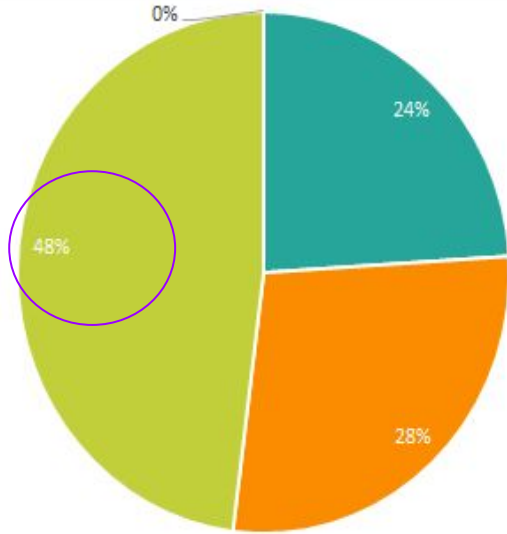


Both Americans and Japanese students use their foreign language more in their study abroad country.

The places I learned about cultural taboos Japan/America were...

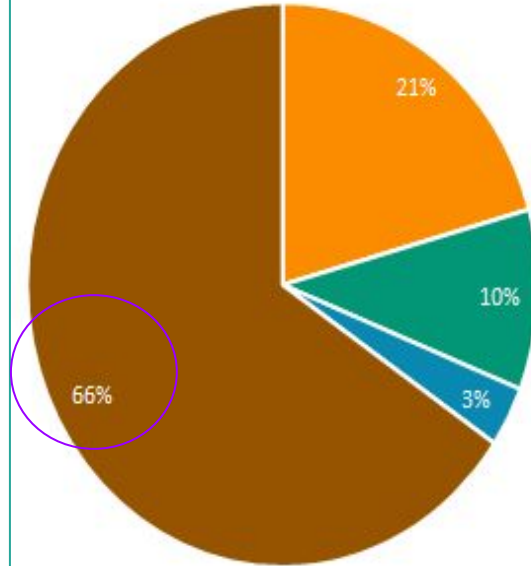
## America

- In language and culture classes in America
- In Language and culture classes in Japan
- Outside of the classroom in Japan
- Outside of the classroom in America



## Japan

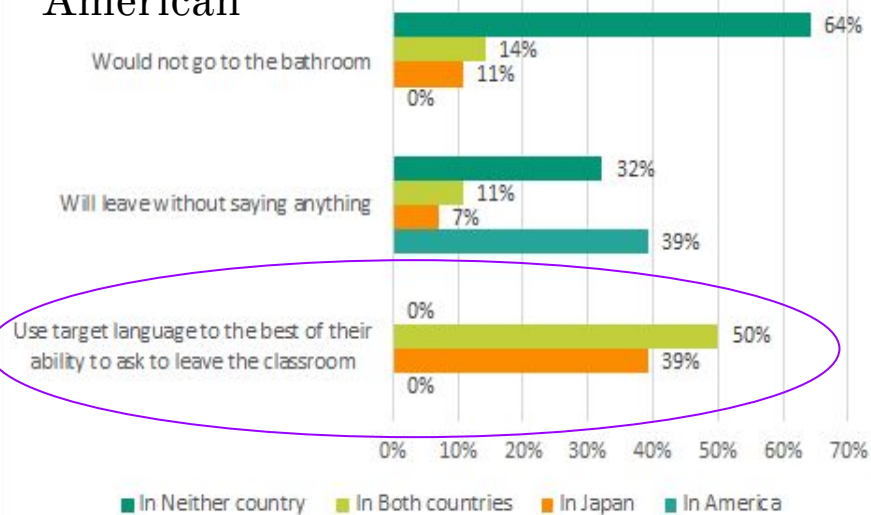
- In language and culture classes in America
- In Language and culture classes in Japan
- Outside of the classroom in Japan
- Outside of the classroom in America



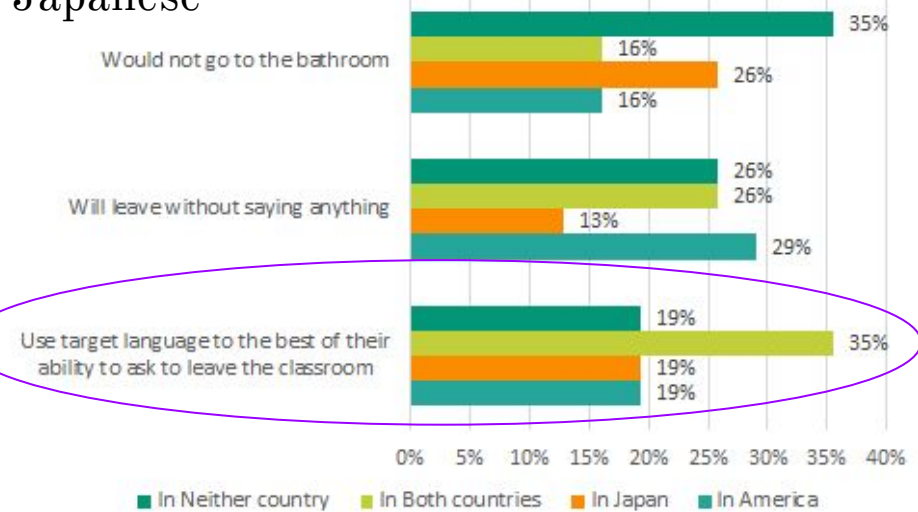
The majority of American students learned Japanese cultural taboos in Japan and outside of the classroom. The majority of Japanese students learned cultural taboos about America in America and outside of the classroom.

# What a student would do upon needing to go to the restroom during class:

## American



## Japanese



The majority of Americans (89%) when in Japan and (54%) of the Japanese students when in America, would ask permission to go to the bathroom, which shows a learned cultural behavior by both sets of students.



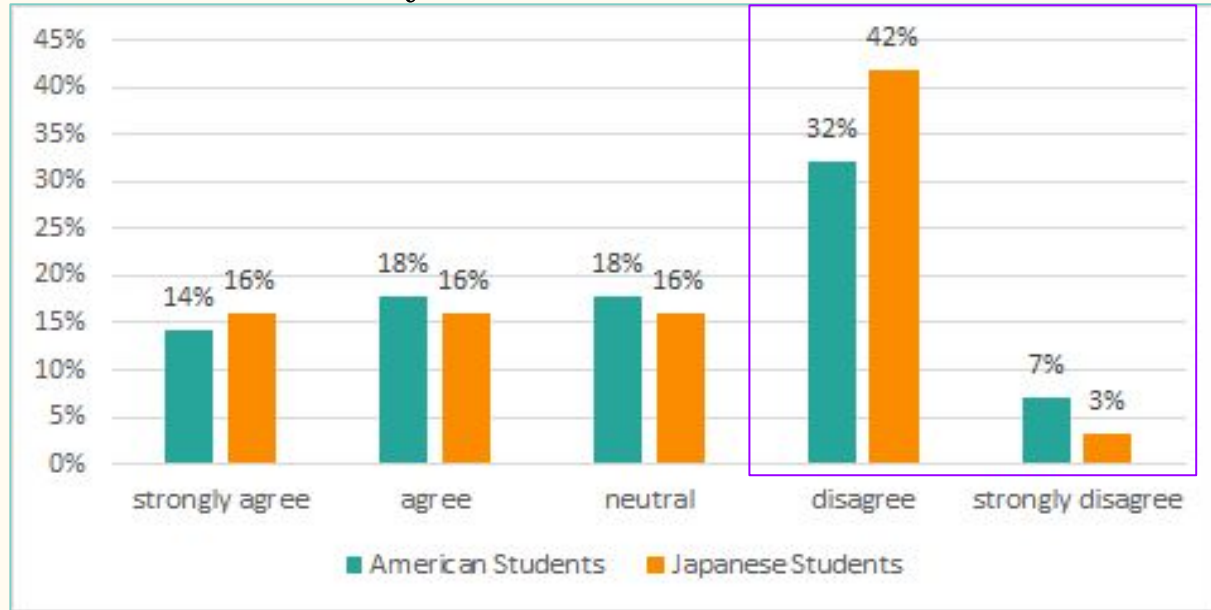
# Summary of Findings: Research Question 2

- Study abroad improves cultural competency because students learn behaviors and taboos by practice.
- Even though students answered that host *classes* made them feel most comfortable with their language, other responses show that most of their learning was done *outside of the classroom*.
  - Our survey suggests that a problem with Japanese language classrooms in Japan for American students is minimal opportunities interpersonal communication with native speakers.
- In cross-cultural situations Americans are less likely to use Japanese outside of Japan. Whereas Japanese students are more likely to use English in both America and Japan .

## Research Question 3

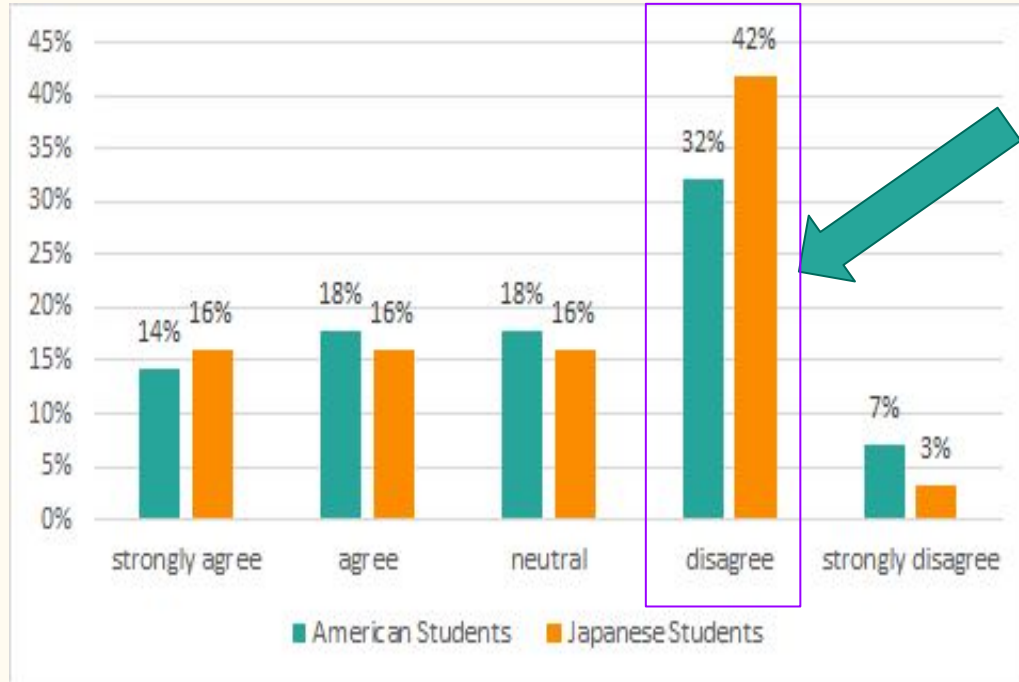
In what way does cultural bias affect student's perception of appropriate interpersonal communication?

How much do you agree with the following: When conversing in my foreign language I have a tendency to take risks on sensitive subject matter, grammar and new vocabulary ?



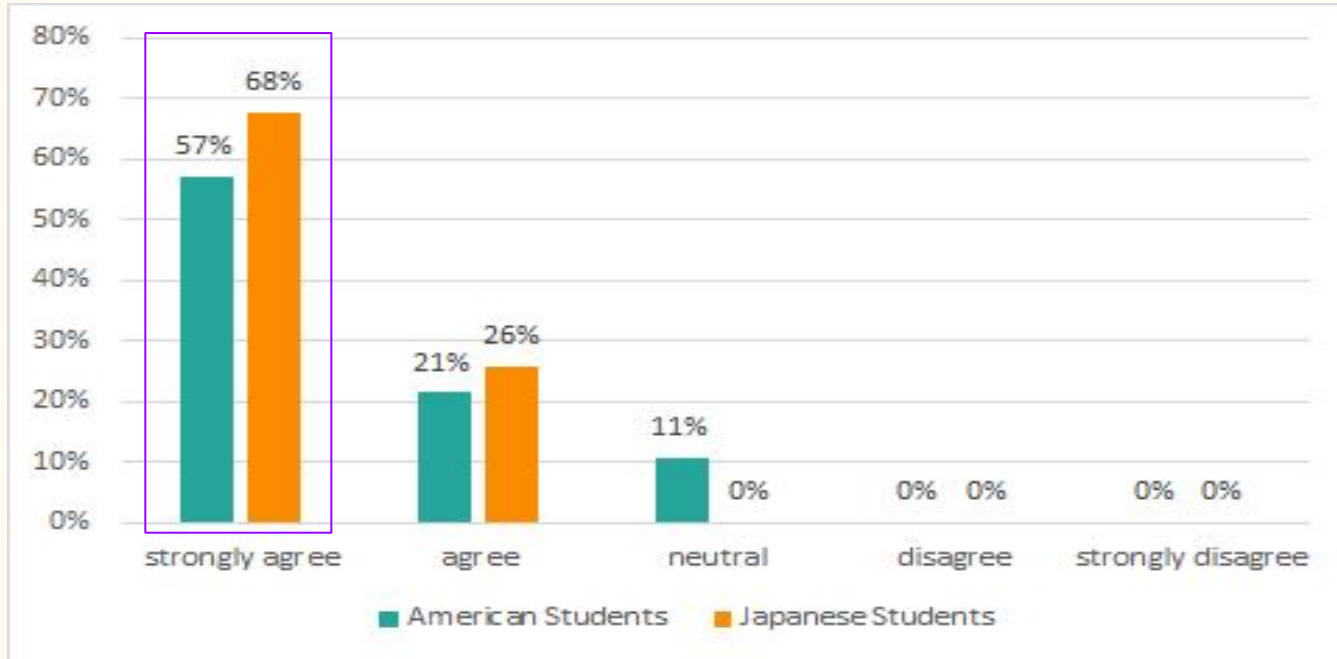
Both Japanese and American students disagreed with the statement concerning one's willingness to take risks when it comes to sensitive subject matter, new vocabulary or grammar.

# Further Analysis: Risk taking concerning cross-cultural communication.



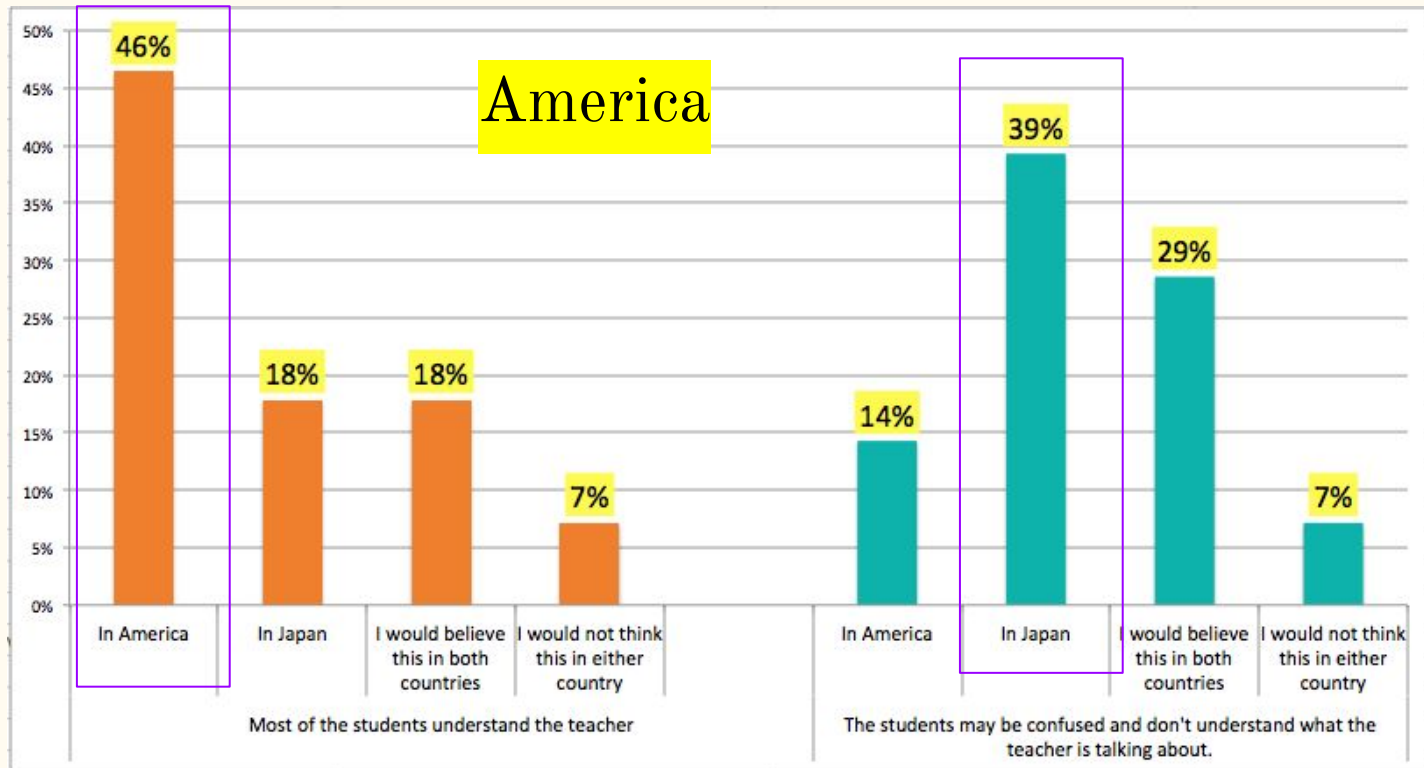
- Hofstede states that American culture encourages risk taking.
- However we found in the context of cross cultural communication that both American and Japanese students DO NOT want to take risks when speaking in their target language.

How much do you agree with the following: When speaking to people, it is important to make the conversation as harmonious as possible.



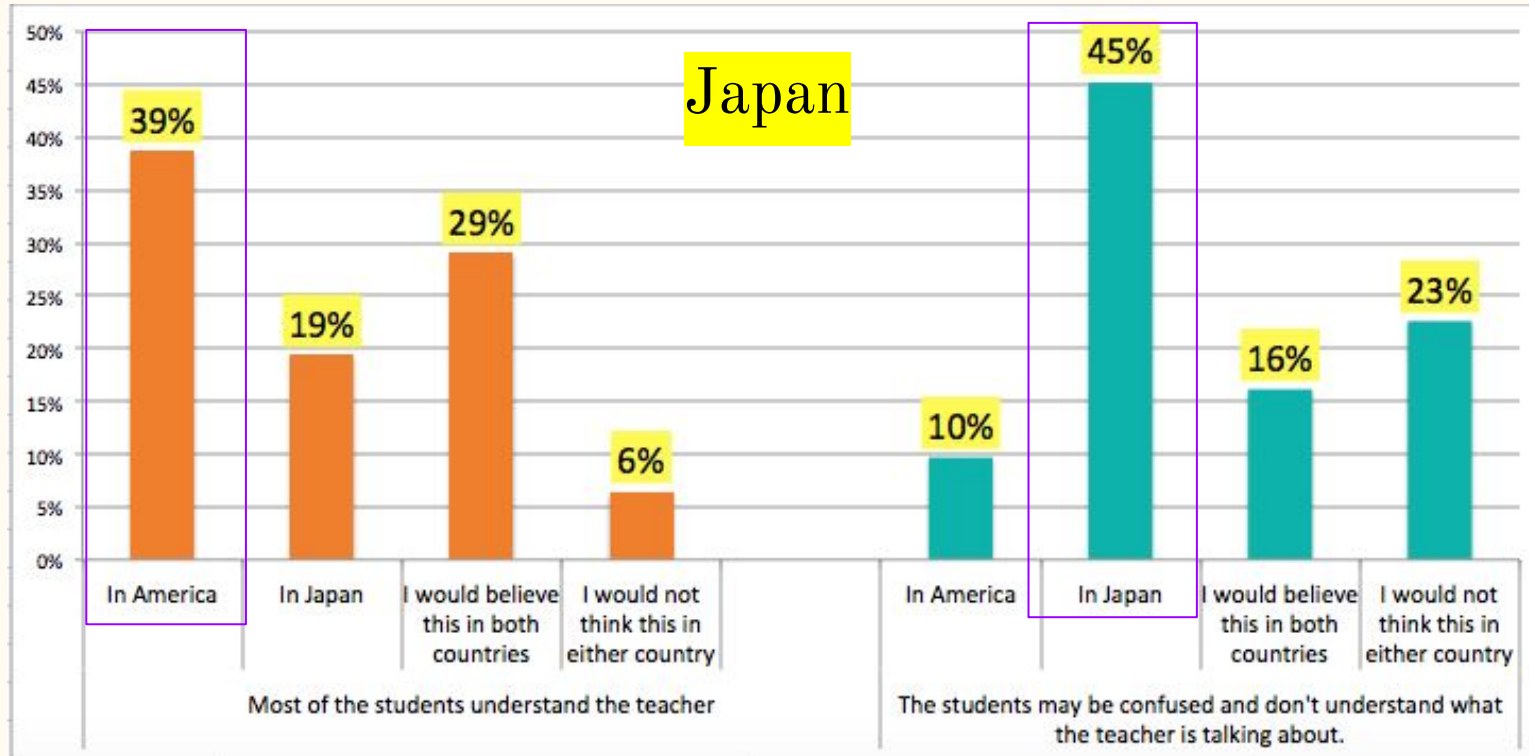
American and Japanese students feel that it is important to make the conversation as harmonious as possible when speaking to people of your target language.

Do the students understand the teacher? You are in foreign language class and your teacher is explaining a concept and many people are 'grinning and nodding'.



Americans answered that the students understand the teacher in America and the students may be not understand the teacher in Japan.

Do the students understand the teacher ? You are in foreign language class and your teacher is explaining a concept and many people are 'grinning and nodding' .



Japanese students answered the same as American students in the previous slide .

# Summary of Findings: Research Question 3

- Most of our data disproves Hofstede's research concerning playing it safe and risk taking cultural differences.
- Japanese do not care as much as Americans in regards making mistakes with sensitive subject matter.
- Americans are more likely to play it safe in regards to language learning overall.
- Both sets of students understand the concept of aizuchi (grinning and nodding) in the context of Japanese or American cultures. In America, the content is transferred when one grins and nods but it is not transferred in Japan.
- Both American students' and Japanese students' cultural bias did not affect their communication styles.



# Conclusion

- Foreign language classes in one's' home country lack language immersion, which we think makes practicing a target culture's appropriate behaviors, such as taboos, more difficult.
- The students are more confident in their language ability because of their study abroad classes.
  - They learn how to discuss delicate subject matter, cultural behaviors and taboos more easily.
  - However, they are not interacting with people of their target culture within the foreign language classroom.

# Conclusion

- Japanese students were more likely to practice conversational English when they felt inferior in their target language.
- Americans, on the other hand, were less likely to practice conversational Japanese when they felt inferior in their target language.
- Surprisingly the differences in communication style between Japanese and Americans that we anticipated did not come about in our research.
- We believe that home country foreign language classrooms are missing interpersonal and cross-cultural aspects in communication.
  - Ideally, there should be more interaction between language learners and native speakers in home country classrooms.

# Limitations of The Study

- The Japanese students studied English longer than the American students studied Japanese. This may be why Japanese students showed more confidence.
- Our survey had specific requirements for the students. Therefore our results do not apply to all students and classrooms.
- We need to find updated research on cultural biases and communication styles because Hofstede's and Ramsey's research is not from this decade.
  - Which would influence other survey questions we would like to ask.

## Future Study

- We would like to include more cultures and communication styles, so that our research could influence more people.

Thank you for listening !

Questions ?

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