Differences in the Framing of Group Membership

Justin CHARLEBOIS

This paper is concerned with to what degree Japanese students are involved in American communities of practice. Through the analysis of contextualization cues and the frames they signal, it will show framing differences related to community of practice membership.

The initial findings suggest framing differences in the classification of communities of practice centered on attendance. In Japanese communities of practice, the group is expected to explicitly invite individual members to regular social gatherings. Members, in turn, have an obligation to regularly attend these group events, irrespective of personal desires. This contrasts with American communities of practice where individuals have more personal choice regarding attendance. This difference can make American communities of practice appealing to Japanese students. At the same time, because individual members are not specifically invited to attend social gatherings, Americans can appear cold and selfish from a Japanese perspective.

With the increase of globalization, successful intercultural communication requires that interlocutors understand specific aspects of other cultures that are different from their own and resist falling back on broad generalizations and stereotypes. Frame theory provides a method of identifying these differences and heightening peoples' awareness.

Key words: community of practice, contextualization cues, frame, obligations, expectations, deference, demeanor, referring terms.

Introduction

In recent years the number of Japanese students who are studying in the United States has significantly increased. Some Japanese are enrolled in language programs while others are in regular undergraduate or graduate programs. Irrespective of their length of stay, these students will experience either successful or unsuccessful intercultural communication. Questions arise relative to their experience, such as (1) what aspects of American college life are Japanese students participating in and (2) what influence does culture exert on their participation? These initial questions provide a foundation for the issues that will be discussed in this paper.

Group involvement can be a source of confusion, perhaps even frustration, for Japanese students studying in the United States. The communicative problems that can arise because of these differing expectations supercede language because Japanese students have a different set of expectations regarding group participation than their American counterparts.

This paper attempts to shed light on cultural aspects of the framing of "communities of practice" by Japanese students. A further goal of this paper is to demonstrate that the concept of frames is applicable to the study of intercultural communication.

I have found the following related to the framing of communities of practice: (1) Attendance in Japanese community of practice gatherings is expected regardless of personal desires. (2) Attendance in

American community of practice gatherings tends to focus around personal desires. (3) Japanese studying in the United States can feel like interlopers in American communities of practice due to framing differences.

In this paper, I first provide a theoretical overview of relevant concepts: community of practice, frames, and contextualization cues. Then, I discuss Goffman's (1967) concepts of obligations and expectations, both of which are relevant to the current study. Finally, I demonstrate through the analysis of student interviews that Japanese and Americans frame membership in communities of practice differently.

Theoretical Background

One way to view participation within American college life is through the theoretical paradigm of "community of practice." A community of practice is a group of people who through the passage of time share in the same set of social practices with a common purpose (Lave & Wenger, 1991). This group would mostly be known to each other through face-to-face interaction, and over time behavioral patterns would develop for entering novices and exiting seniors. Participation in a community of practice, as a minimum, involves one claiming the identity of a novice to that of an expert which entails a change in identity. Identity has been identified by Lave (1988) as theorized participation in communities of practice. Based on this definition of identity it can be concluded that while one may have a relatively stable social identity as a Japanese or American college student, male or female, membership in various communities of practice requires a change in identity to some extent.

Participants are simultaneously members of various communities of practice. For example, one is a member of a community of practice at work, at school, at home, or in communal events. While our membership in various communities of practice changes over time, so does the degree of membership within these communities of practice; naturally, for various reasons, individuals become more deeply involved in certain communities of practice versus others.

Communities of practice are not always conceptualized the same cross-culturally. This is particularly true in reference to the way in which people view aspects of involvement. Previous research has shown cultural differences in the concept of framing (Furo, 2002; Watanabe, 1993). In her study of political discourse, Furo shows how frames in American and Japanese discourse are different. Watanabe has shown that Americans and Japanese frame the speech event, group discussion, differently. The concept of frames is also of central importance to the current study.

Frames can be traced to Bateson (1972) and contextualization cues to Gumperz and his work related to code-switching. Gumperz (1982) defines contextualization cues as, "signaling mechanisms such as intonation, speech, rhythm, and choice among lexical, phonetic, and syntactic options…said to affect the expressive quality of a message but not its basic meaning" (16). His research has shown that these subtle aspects of language, that may go unnoticed, can vary between interlocutors from different speech communities and lead to miscommunication. Whereas one speaker could use a contextualization cue such as intonation to signal a joke, a speaker from another speech community may not interpret the utterance in that manner. Tannen and Wallet (1993) have identified the concept of frame on two levels: (1) what the speakers mean to say during the moment of interaction; and (2) speaker's knowledge schemata which refers to their expectations about people, objects, events, and settings in the world. The second level of frame is of particular relevance to the current study because knowledge schemata are not always shared by interlocutors from different cultures. These two dimensions of the concept of frame are interrelated as the type of metamessages (Tannen, 1984; 1990) that one signals during the moment of interaction is influenced by knowledge schemata. Metamessages refer to the meaning behind the actual utterance. For example, an offer of help could signal the metamessage, "I care about you" or "I am more competent than you." While Tannen has cited gender as one influence on how metamessages are interpreted, culture is another. Different interpretations

of contextualization cues and the subsequent dissimilar framing of an interaction can be a potential source of miscommunication.

Goffman (1967) identified the concepts of obligations and expectations in social interaction. Obligations refer to how one is morally constrained to conduct him/herself and expectations establish how others are morally bound to that person. Goffman provides an example of how a nurse has an obligation to follow medical orders related to his/her patients and an expectation that they, in turn, will be cooperative.

If interlocutors from different cultures do not share the same obligations and expectations, the potential for misunderstandings is there. On the surface, it appears as though they understood one another, but it is possible that later they will discover that was not the case. Furthermore, relative to the current study, obligations and expectations can signal how members of a speech community frame group membership.

By closely examining the contextualization cues of speakers from different cultures and the frames they signal, potential sources of communication difficulties can be uncovered. Therefore, frame analysis both from cross-cultural and intercultural perspectives can make important advances toward understanding miscommunication.

The Data

The data collected for the current study is from tape-recorded, semi-structured interviews of three participants. While an interview schedule was followed, the purpose of the questions was to encourage the participants to share their personal experiences; therefore, they were encouraged to introduce topics and to shift topics away from the interview questions. The participants were all female (ages 22 through 26) and spent anywhere from seven months to four years at universities in the United States. After providing the participants with a definition of "community of practice," the following questions were asked:

(1) Please identify and describe various communities of practice that you belonged to while in the United States.
(2) Please describe what you did, in other words, what your role was within each group. How often did you attend meetings and spend time with the other members?
(3) Did you feel that you changed or acted differently within each group than you might have acted in Japan? Why or why not? What difficulties did you experience in joining?
(4) What would have made it easier for you to participate in each of these communities of practice you have identified? What could you have done to prepare for joining?

Through the analysis of these transcripts, differences in the framing of communities of practice by Japanese students were found. Examples of communities of practice identified include an exchange student group, a group consisting of Japanese students, Outing Club, and the school dormitory.

Japanese Communities of Practice and the Obligation of Compulsory Attendance

A noteworthy finding from the interviews was how these Japanese participants framed community of practice membership. Compared with their American counterparts, veritable differences on the constraints regarding attendance were found.

An initial response by Chiharu provides some initial clues regarding membership in Japanese communities of practice. As can be seen from the following excerpt, she identified personal question as a difficulty that she experienced in her Japanese community of practice. The deeper reasons for her discomfort are not revealed until later in our conversation.

[Excerpt 1]

71. Justin: What difficult parts were there for joining either one of these two groups?
72. Chiharu: Mmm so difficulty…in Japanese group I think…they are sometimes they have try to ask me private questions.
73. You know like Japanese people.

Specifically, her initial hesitation and subsequent pauses in line 72 serve as contextualization cues

signaling her discomfort with the Japanese community of practice.

In addition, her Japanese community of practice did not give her the amount of free time that she required. While up until this point it appears that her only objection is to the personal questions, an intrusion on her personal space, it becomes evident later that the source of her discomfort is her lack of personal time.

[Excerpt 2]

80. Justin: Uh, is there anything you could have done or anything that could have been done that would have made it easier for you to participate in these two groups?
81. Chiharu: Uh, in Japanese group I think they…um if they..give me more free time, yeah that would make me easier.
82. Justin: You felt that you had to go to these meetings?
83. Chiharu: Um sometimes.

Many parts of language (phonological, morphological, syntactic, and pragmatic) are closely related to both our own identities and our perceptions of others. The referring terms that one uses signals how one views his/her relationship with others. Likewise, the referring terms that Chiharu uses indicate her perceived relationship with members of the Japanese community of practice. Her usage of the referring term 'they' and subsequent use of 'make me easier' in line 81 are both linguistically marked. Marked forms are semantically and morphologically more complex than their unmarked counterparts (Lakoff, 2000). The present tense of many languages is unmarked while the past tense is marked. Marking suggests extra meaning. Chiharu could have chosen a passive construction such as, *If I were given more free time*, which is much more neutral. Similarly, she could have said something to the effect of, *That would make it easier*. Both of these constructions would shift the focus away from the actors. Chiharu's choice of focusing on the actors suggests that she viewed this lack of free time as a personal intrusion. Moreover, if she viewed the participation favorably she could have said, *We spent time together every week*. While at first glance which pronouns one uses may appear to be a matter of relative unimportance, the referring terms that one chooses have implications for how he/she views human relationships. Referring terms have been defined by Schiffrin (2002) as, "noun phrases that evoke a referent—a person, place or thing—that the speaker has "in mind" in such a way that a hearer may interpret (roughly) the same referent" (p. 316). Cognitive factors such as how familiar the speaker feels the hearer is with the referent is and social factors such as how the referent is situated within the discourse affect the speaker's selection of referring terms. The referring terms used by Chiharu provide insight into her relationship with the Japanese community of practice members.

These feelings of wanting more free time or personal space have been echoed by scholars as well. In her study of a factory in Tokyo, Japanese-American anthropologist Dorinne Kondo (1990) expresses how Japanese concepts of involvement can be almost suffocating by American standards. Kondo expressed her own privacy and free-time being constantly intruded upon by both her neighbors and other acquaintances through the visiting of her apartment or inquiring about her well-being. While her Japanese neighbors had good intentions, to an American, their concern had the effect of restricting her sense of freedom and privacy. Chiharu's interview suggests that even for some Japanese people these obligations appear to be stifling.

The next excerpt further attests to her perceived lack of free time which was manifested by having to attend social events. While Chiharu cites her personality as the reason for not being able to refuse her Japanese friends, this would not support previous research.

[Excerpt 3]

93. Justin: Is there anything you could have done personally to prepare to join either of these two groups?
94. Chiharu: Prepare? U:h…personally?

95: Yeah if I could say, "oh I don't feel like going out today."
96: I mean to Japanese group. I could say it would have made things easier.
97. But sometimes I couldn't say that.
98. Justin: Why?
99. Chiharu: Why?
100. Uh because of my personality

While it is probably true that Chiharu could not refuse the group as indicated in line 97, it is doubtful that her personality was the sole reason. The more plaguing question here is whether or not Chiharu could have been able to refuse their invitation, and still maintain her role as a member in that community of practice. Previous research, that may provide some insight into this issue, has focused on group membership within Japanese society.

Doi (1976) discusses the term *amae*. For Japanese people, group membership requires a delicate balance between indulging others and being indulged by others. Thus, when Chiharu's group attempted to indulge her by asking her to go out, she allowed herself to be indulged by accepting the invitation. This is not to say that the acceptance or refusal of the indulgence is a personal choice. Yamada (1997) has stated that one who does not know how to be interdependent is seen as too individualistic and regarded as selfish. A refusal of this act of indulgence by her Japanese community of practice could have been perceived as a personal affront. To use Goffman's terms, because Chiharu was a member of their group, she had an obligation to attend various social gatherings while the group was expected to invite her. This is the ritual nature of group membership for Japanese people. It is not a personal choice as Chiharu depicts it.

Goffman's terms of deference and demeanor are also particularly relevant to Chiharu's interview. Deference refers to the appreciation an individual shows to another. There are two main forms of deference: avoidance rituals and presentation rituals. Avoidance rituals refer to those forms of deference where an actor keeps him/herself at a distance from the recipient. For example, in American society one would not ask a personal question such as one's age. Goffman provides an example based on his own research in psychiatric wards. When a poor patient declined an offer to go on an outing, feigning a lack of interest, the other patients accepted this at face value, knowing full well that the actual reason was she did not have a suitable coat. A second main type of deference is that of presentation rituals. These are ways in which people show others that they are not an island all by themselves but part of a group. A simple example is a greeting, compliment, or invitation. Chiharu's Japanese community of practice inviting her to join in an activity is an example of a presentation ritual. In a situation such as requesting a favor from someone, an avoidance ritual would be more appropriate. An example is, "I know that you are very busy, but would you please write me a recommendation letter?" Because of the Japanese honorific system, it is clear that avoidance rituals are an important aspect of the society. However, based on both my data and previous research, particularly related to the concept of *amae*, it seems that presentation rituals also play an important role within Japanese society. Both presentation and avoidance rituals are forms of deference, thus they are both aimed at respecting the individual. While Chiharu felt that her personal space was being infringed upon, the Japanese group was attempting to respect her; perhaps Chiharu was expecting an avoidance rather than a presentation ritual. The point remains, however, that no matter which ritual the group used, if Chiharu had declined she would have risked exhibiting poor demeanor.

Demeanor refers to the elements of the individual's behavior conveyed through his/her actions or manner of dress, which conveys to others the presence or lack thereof certain desirable qualities. In contemporary American society, someone who displays proper demeanor has attributes including discretion and sincerity, self-control and poise. Most importantly, however, is that good demeanor is what is required of an actor if he/she is to be relied upon by others as an interactant in social occasions. By giving or withholding deference to others, an individual

expresses good or bad demeanor. To illustrate the interrelationship between deference and demeanor, Goffman gives the example of a patient bathing before seeing his/her doctor to show him/her deference. The patient is also presenting him/herself as a clean, well demeaned person.

These concepts came into play in Chiharu's interview. The Japanese group showed her deference by asking her to join various activities (presentation ritual) she in turn exhibited good Japanese demeanor by accepting. She was viewed by the group as having good demeanor because of her regular participation. If she had rejected their invitation, this aberrant behavior would not show good demeanor on her part. In this case, a judgment could be made that she is too individualistic and thus selfish, both attributes that are evaluated negatively within Japanese society. The concept of amae suggests that it is important to put the group's desires over that of the individual for the Japanese. Furthermore, it appears that the way the Japanese view both deference and demeanor is different from that of Americans.

This theme of mandatory attendance of group activities was also present in Kayoko's interview. In this first excerpt, Kayoko is discussing the ease in which she could enter an American community of practice, in this case, the campus Outing Club.

[Excerpt 4]

54. Kayoko: But I think compared to other groups like a fraternity or many causal groups, so we get, we had a meeting once per week, but there's nobody pressure you to join the meeting.
55. Then, on weekends, if we go on that trip we can go, but if we have something to do we don't have to go.
56. Justin: Okay.
57. Kayoko: I like that style because in Japan if we organize, if we belong to some organization we have to u:m attend the meeting or join, so that's why I like that style, so if I'm busy I didn't go.

Both Kayoko's usage of the phrasal modal 'have to' and subsequent stress on 'have' serve as contextualization cues which signal the way Japanese people frame community of practice membership and support Chiharu's comments. She contrasts this with the American style in lines 54-55 which does not have this stipulation of mandatory attendance.

However, the interviews diverge in that Kayoko attests that she did not feel as though it was an actual organization. This is demonstrated in the next excerpt.

[Excerpt 5]

86. Justin: So do you feel like you changed or acted differently when you were in these different groups; differently than you would have acted in Japan?
87. Kayoko: Uh I think uh…I didn't have to go there, so I didn't feel it's like organization.
88. But I think if I belonged something in Japan maybe I feel more obligation to attend the meeting or to join, so I like the way in the States…yes.

This excerpt seems to suggest some conflicting feelings for Kayoko. Membership in American communities of practice is paradoxical in nature for her; while she likes the American style of community of practice membership, she does not feel as though it is an actual organization which she expresses in line 87. Kayoko seemingly identifies the concept of "organization" as involving mandatory attendance.

While Kayoko seems to understand and enjoy the American style of community of practice membership, her internalized concept of membership continues to influence her as displayed in the next excerpt. Seemingly she wants to adapt to the American style of group membership, but due to internalized notions of group membership she is unable to do this.

[Excerpt 6]

92. Justin: Did you experience any difficulty in joining?
93: Kayoko: Uh but when I didn't attend, I feel um should I go today or like eh ISA [International Student Association] you know many, I know the member so it's the same in Japan too.

I wonder if they feel bad if I don't go

there.

Unlike her American counterparts, Kayoko worries about the feelings of other group members when she does not attend. Although this was expressed slightly differently by Chiharu, a connection can be drawn. Chiharu knew that she would not be fulfilling her obligation to the group if she did not attend the social events, risking her demeanor. In line 93 when Kayoko mentions knowing the members, this suggests that she is worried about her demeanor; in other words, how she appears to the group.

To conclude this section, consistent attendance, regardless of personal desires, is a requirement to be a member of a Japanese community of practice. The above discussion has suggested that differences in the framing of group membership could be sources of intercultural miscommunication. This will become clearer in the proceeding discussion.

American Communities of Practice and Voluntary Participation

There appears to be differences in the framing of participation in communities of practice by American students. Both Chiharu and Kayoko mentioned feelings of expected attendance concerning group membership. They both seemed to have unsettling feelings regarding this. Chiharu did not mention any involvement in a community of practice whose membership consisted largely of American people. Kayoko, on the other hand, mentioned that while she does like the American style of group participation, she worries about the other members if she does not attend. Maiko's interview sheds additional light on this matter.

Maiko was a member of the dormitory community of practice. This type of community of practice is quite different from both the Outing Club and the global living dormitory that Kayoko lived in. While there were other exchange students on her floor, the dormitory consisted mainly of American students. Furthermore, unlike Outing Club where one only experiences a community of practice at certain times and under certain conditions, in a dormitory one is a member 24 hours per day. In Outing Club, activities are structured, thus providing multiple opportunities for different students to interact. In a dormitory environment, while there may be occasional floor meetings and activities, for the most part students need to seek out opportunities to foster relationships with others. Initiating these relationships can be difficult for anyone who is new to the dormitory. In the case of exchange students, this is magnified due to cultural differences and apprehension about speaking English.

An American's view of a community of practice appears to be individualistically oriented and can be uninviting and isolating to a Japanese. This is evidenced by the following excerpt where I asked Maiko about her role in the dormitory community of practice.

[Excerpt 7]

74. Maiko: Uh the role it's like…it's like u:h…it's like community which is not very close with each other because I just attend the meeting, the floor meeting and actually I didn't got friends there a lot.

75. Justin: OK.

76. Maiko: We just talked, but not so closely just say how are you or something.

It appears that there was not much of a sense of community on her floor, that students pursued their own interests and did not feel any type of common bonds as indicated on line 74. While this could be the case in Japan as well, Maiko's comments here are significant for two reasons. First, she did identify this as a community of practice, so clearly she was expecting some type of relationship with her other floor members. On line 74, she indicates an expectation of making friends there. Secondly, even though this type of environment would lend itself to people being more individually-oriented, it appears that Maiko was not expecting this. This is further evidenced in the next excerpt in response to my question regarding difficulties joining any of these groups. Maiko immediately cites the dormitory which leads me to probe her further.

[Excerpt 8]

142. Justin: What specifically was difficult about the dorm?
143. Maiko: Cause I couldn't know…I could not know friends very well…I kind of felt the distance…

This contrasts starkly with both Kayoko and Chiharu's interview. Especially in the case of Chiharu who expressed her unsettled feelings about Japanese involvement. Whether Maiko was conscious of it or not, perhaps she was longing for that sense of reciprocal involvement that seems to be a part of Japanese group membership; she had the expectation that others invite her to socialize.

In this next excerpt we see evidence that suggests exclusion by some members of the dormitory. I ask Maiko if there was anything that would have made it easier for her to participate in any of the communities of practice. Once again, she immediately cites the dormitory followed by a lack of time to become acquainted with the other members as the main reason, but then the following exchange occurs:

[Excerpt 9]

159. Maiko: (laugh) In especially at the dorm like only I could see about them just they were drinking all the time when I see, so I kind of felt like why (laugh).
160. Justin: Yeah, yeah.
161. Maiko: Like of course in the dorm they cannot drink, but…I cannot help like sometimes people want to drink.
162. Justin: Yeah.
163. Maiko: But as far as I know they drank every night in one room, not everyone but some people in that floor so I didn't like that at all.
164. That's why I kept distance…that's why I couldn't feel that good (laugh).
165. Justin: You don't like drinking?
166. Maiko: I cannot drink (laugh).
167. I cannot drink, but I ya know I don't care if people drink but not like that way (laugh).

This ritual of nightly drinking seems to reflect how Americans view their membership in the dormitory community of practice. For them, the dormitory is a place where they can gather and socialize with their friends if they choose to; they do not feel a need to make efforts to include all of the dormitory members. Unlike in Japanese communities of practice, there is no expectation that more senior members initiate any type of relationship with novices entering. This type of difference in expecations and coupling obligations can be a source of frustration as indicated by Maiko's interview. Kayoko did not have this experience because in Outing Club the organization is required to keep participation open to everyone. The American students are not necessarily purposely excluding other members from this nightly ritual; the way in which Americans and Japanese frame community of practice is different.

From a Japanese perspective, Maiko seems to have expected more of a sense of community. At first glance, it appears that the drinking itself was what bothered her particularly with her emphasis on 'all' in line 159. However, she elaborates further on line 163, expressing her disapproval of the fact that not everyone was allowed to partake in this nightly ritual. In line 167 she states that while she does not mind that they drink, it is the way in which they drink that bothers her; only certain members on the floor were partaking in this ritual. Perhaps from her perspective, this exclusion of some members of the group is very foreign and would not occur in a Japanese community of practice.

This is a clear example of how differences in the framing of group membership can lead to intercultural misunderstandings. Perhaps from a Japanese perspective, the American's behavior appears very selfish; it clearly violates the *amae* concept as well as obligations and expectations. The Americans, however, do not frame involvement in the same way. Analogous with Kayoko's portrayal of the Outing Club, these students see their membership in the dormitory community of practice as belonging to themselves; thus, they do not feel a need to include other floor members in this drinking ritual.

The living environments of both Chiharu and

Kayoko were different from Maiko who was living with mainly Americans. Chiharu lived in an apartment with another Japanese student. Kayoko lived in a dormitory specifically designed with the purpose of promoting global living. The residents were international and exchange students or American students who expressed a desire to live in that type of dormitory and agreed to take part in activities promoting such an environment. It is not unlikely that Kayoko formed bonds with other international students due to their shared study-abroad experience. Moreover, the American students living there understand that they are required to participate in activities to promote the goals of the residence hall. This living environment is quite different from the one Maiko lived in because it promoted communication with international students. With this in mind it is not surprising that Maiko had an entirely different perception of American communities of practice than Kayoko did.

Differences in the conceptualization of Japanese and American “self” have been drawn in the literature as well. According to Maynard (1997), *jibun* refers to the portion given to self. The Japanese self is the portion that belongs to the individual while the rest belongs to society. Unlike Americans who tend to view self and society as opposing entities, Japanese view self and society as interactive and complementary. Americans, on the other hand, tend to value the dignity and autonomy of the individual very highly.

The results of previous research relate to the current study as well. We clearly see in Chiharu's interview that only part of her self is truly hers as she discusses her feelings about wanting more free time from her Japanese community of practice and inability to express those feelings due to obligations. While Kayoko positively evaluates the American style of group participation where ‘self’ seems to belong almost entirely to the individual, she still has internalized ideas about the Japanese *jibun*. For example, unlike an American, Kayoko worries how other members of the community of practice would feel if she does not attend a social event. Maiko experiences this to a stronger degree because she is able to experience a community of practice where she can witness how Americans view ‘self’: no part of it belongs to society.

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated framing differences in American communities of practice by Japanese international and exchange students. The analysis of the participants' interviews about Japanese communities of practice revealed that the individual has an obligation to the group to attend social gatherings regardless of personal desires. If one refuses invitations by the community of practice, he/she runs the risk of being characterized as selfish and not possessing appropriate demeanor. The analysis of participants' interviews related to membership in American communities of practice disclosed that individuals are not obliged to attend; in other words, attendance seems to be based on personal interests. One can attend social gatherings at will in accordance with his/her own desires and in no way be seen as lacking good demeanor. The analysis of Maiko's interview, in particular, suggests that Japanese students do not necessarily feel comfortable with the style of participation in American communities of practice. This study suggests that members of American communities of practice do not make specific efforts to include other members which can induce feelings of isolation and loneliness for Japanese. In Japanese communities of practice while the individual has an obligation to regularly attend social gatherings, the community of practice, in turn, is expected to invite the individual to these gatherings. In this way, Japanese communities of practice members are able to mutually recognize the feelings of each other. The community of practice recognizes that the individual is a member of that group, and the individual acknowledges that by accepting the invitation.

My analysis has shown that some aspects of frames are culture specific. This has implications for intercultural communication. For instance, the finding that Japanese community of practice membership requires consistent involvement could potentially pose a problem for Americans living in Japan. Because Americans are not accustomed to these

implicit requirements, they could unknowingly create an impression to the Japanese of not having good demeanor. This concept of expected participation is very foreign to many American people. Moreover, even if they are aware of this expectation of regular attendance, in practice it may be difficult for them. At the same time besides viewing the person as lacking good demeanor, this may serve as another reason supporting the commonly held belief that Westerners are unable or unwilling to adapt to Japanese culture. Japanese sometimes regard certain aspects of their culture as inaccessible to outsiders. Iino (1996) has referred to this as "restricted culture" and she gives the example of many Japanese not expecting Westerners to be able to eat natto. There is the risk of a similar belief developing here along the lines of Japanese not being able to participate appropriately in American communities of practice. While Americans can be very friendly and helpful especially if one shows initiative, they could appear uncaring, even selfish, from a Japanese perspective due to differing expectations and obligations. It is especially difficult for foreign students to show the initiative that is required to enter American communities of practice.

In conclusion, the current study has shown cultural differences in the concept of framing communities of practice. It also demonstrates that through the careful analysis of contextualization cues, and the subsequent frames they imply, can serve as a basis for the identification of causes of miscommunication between people from different cultures. Finally, the notion of frames, allows researchers to connect people's knowledge schemata at the global level about concepts such as group membership with their communicative behaviors at the moment of interaction. The former has a constant influence both on individuals' behaviors and on their interpretations of the interaction in progress.

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Appendix: Transcript Conventions

Transcription conventions follow those used in Schiffrin (1987).

. falling intonation followed by noticeable pause (as at the end of declarative sentence)
? rising intonation followed by noticeable pause (as at end of interrogative sentence)
, continuing intonation: may be slight rise or fall in contour (less than "." or "?"); may be followed by a pause (shorter than "." or "?")
! animated tone
… noticeable pause or break in rhythm without falling intonation (each half- second pause is marked as measured by stop watch)
- self interruption with glottal stop
: lengthened syllable
italics emphatic stress
CAPS very emphatic stress