

Research Plan

- **3. As an international student in Sendai, what are the main challenges you face in terms of cultural adaptation? How do you navigate these challenges while pursuing your studies?**

Statement of the Problem

1. Why choose this topic? (About challenges that International Students(ISs) are facing)

A: International students are facing much culture shocks, for example:

a: many ISs cannot speak Japanese language; b: have communication difficulties with local society even with their advisers not only because language but also culture differences

B: Many challenges that international students face are very hard to overcome. (They get little concern and little support from university and community)

2. Why choose Tohoku area and Tohoku University

Tohoku University is one of the seven biggest universities in Japan, it is acknowledged as the 1st place in Japan (Times Higher Universities ranking, 2023), and it is the main university in Tohoku area that receives a big quantity of international students (2145 now), from the five continents. On the other hand, Sendai is one of the most important cities in the Tohoku area, despite the fact of that, it could be described as not so much diverse, quite conservative not so much open to foreigners, full of traditions, locals usually don't speak English or other foreign language. Although Tohoku University is claimed one of the Japanese universities with international and multicultural programs, most of its students complain or some of them withdraw their programs. This apparent incongruence could be related with the cultural barrier that students have to deal with daily.

GAP

Gap1:

There are research concerning about this issue in universities located in big city–Tokyo area. However there are big differences between big cities and regional area like Tohoku area which has been mentioned in last part.

Gap2:

The lack of studies about international students who come from countries having small foreign communities in Japan like Peru, African countries (there are research about Asian countries like China..)

Gap3:

Lack of knowledge about resilience mechanisms and circumstances linked to successful international students and main barriers that potential not successful international students coped with, in Tohoku University.

GAP

Gap4:

Few studies about culture adaptation related to gender and religion.

The lack of exploration about relationship between expectation and adaptation of culture shock

Gap5:

Lack of analysis about the influence of the weather conditions or changes on those conditions in the adaptation of international students, as a potential factor that worsens or facilitates the cultural adaptations.

Gap6:

The lack of qualitative research about mechanisms of adaptation among ISs.

Research Question

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1. Is the culture adaptation of students in small communities different from one in big communities?
2. Do gender and religion affect the culture adaptation?

Gleymang:

3. Are there principal factors such as size of communities or place of birth that affect the cultural adaptations, or are there other no well known factors that might affect the adaptation such as weather conditions or level of expectations?
4. What are the main mechanisms to get a successful adaptation when you are international student in Tohoku University?

AN:

5. How are the ISs who from non-Asian countries living in tohoku area overcome the culture shock?
6. What are the influence factor that hinder ISs to adapt local lives, and promote their adaptation?

Combine: How factors such as gender, ethnicity, community stock, expectations, religion might have influence on the cultural adaptation of international students from in Tohoku University, and what are the main mechanisms to cope with the cultural shocks?

Research Question

How factors such as gender, ethnicity, community stock, expectations, religion might have influence on the cultural adaptation of international students in Tohoku University, and what are the main mechanisms to cope with the cultural shocks?

Methodology

Critical realism: it is possible to assume there is general cases which can be applied for international students in general, but also it is feasible to admit that there are special cases in which some circumstances could be unique.

(use theory inductively and deductively)

Qualitative methodology

Theoretical lens

*Acculturation Theory (for interview guide making and analysis)

*Hofstede' Cultural Dimensions Theory (for interview guide making)

*U-Curve Theory (Analysis and interview guide)

Methodology

Small theory suggestions

1- Acculturation Theory:

Value and Maintain
Host Culture

YES

NO

Value and Maintain
Native Culture

YES

NO

Integration

Assimilation

Separation

Marginalization

Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions



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Power Distance Index (PDI)

High: Acceptance of a hierarchical order in which everybody has a place and which needs no further justification.

Low: People strive to equalize the distribution of power and demand justification for inequalities of power.

PDI

Individualism versus Collectivism (IDV)

Individualism: As a preference for a loosely-knit social framework

Collectivism: Tightly-knit framework in society.

IDV

Masculinity versus Femininity (MAS)

Masculinity: Preference in society for achievement, heroism, assertiveness and material rewards for success.

Femininity: Stands for a preference for cooperation, modesty, caring for the weak and quality of life.

MAS

Uncertainty Avoidance Index (UAI)

High: Maintains rigid codes of belief and behavior and are intolerant of unorthodox behavior and ideas.

Low: Societies maintain a more relaxed attitude in which practice counts more than principles.

UAI

Long Term Orientation versus Short Term Normative Orientation (LTO)

High: Pragmatic approach, they encourage thrift and efforts in modern education as a way to prepare for the future.

Low: Societies prefer to maintain time-honored traditions and norms while viewing societal change with suspicion.

LTO

Indulgence versus Restraint (IND)

Indulgence: Societies that allow relatively free gratification of basic and natural human drives related to enjoying life and having fun.

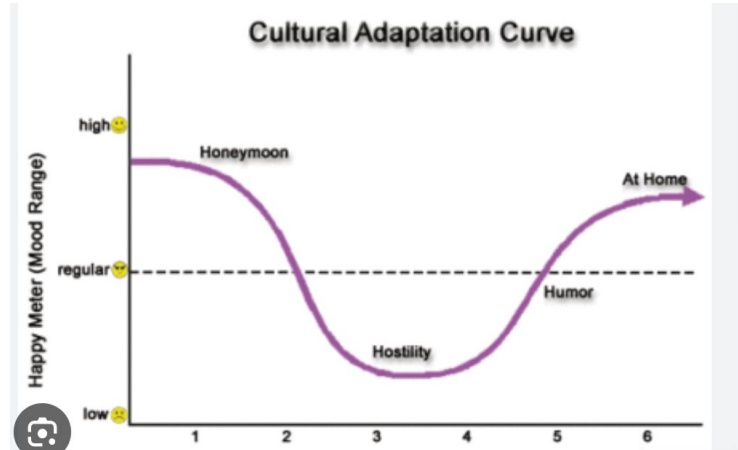
Restraint: Societies that suppress gratification of needs and regulates it by means of strict social norms.

IND

Small theory suggestions

U-Curve Theory:

The U-Curve Theory suggests that individuals experience a pattern of **emotional ups and downs when adapting to a new culture**. This pattern resembles a "U" shape, with phases of initial excitement or honeymoon, followed by a dip in the form of culture shock, and then gradual recovery and adjustment.



Small theory suggestions

Ecological Systems Theory:

This theory looks at how individuals interact with different levels of their environment, from individual to societal, and **how these interactions influence their experiences**. You could use this framework to explore how international students' experiences are shaped by their personal characteristics, their relationships with others, and the broader cultural and institutional contexts in Japan.

Social Identity Theory:

This theory focuses on how people categorize themselves and others into social groups based on shared characteristics. **You can examine how international students in Japan form their identities, cope with feelings of "otherness,"** and establish connections with both fellow international students and local Japanese individuals.

