

# **Knowing Japanese vs. Being competent in Japanese**

Peter Ackermann

(Lecture given at Hakodate Kokusai Kôryû Center, July 6, 2010)

## **1. Introduction: Why am I interested in this question?**

Working in a German speaking country with university students who want to learn about Japan, I must make it clear that unlike sociology, political sciences, or comparative literature - which also deal with Japan - we aim to approach the foreign culture through its language. That means we differentiate sharply between knowing *about* a culture and working ourselves *into* a culture.

Once students are aware that they are not supposed to "know", but "not to know" Japan and start out on the long process of entering into it through its language, they will ask whether it is worthwhile to invest huge amounts of valuable time and energy just for Japanese, which is "totally irrelevant" in the German speaking world. We must find answers to this. And we need to ask ourselves whether our academic institutions are really prepared to give us the necessary foothold.

Entering into a culture through its language means acquiring language competence. Competence, however, cannot be defined in absolute terms. It is a relative state in which we sense that we can go beyond all that is given and known. Knowledge is one of the elements of competence, but it is not competence itself. Competence is a bodily dimension; it is a motoric skill like riding a bicycle or playing the piano. It is a flow of energy and emotion that can only from time to time be checked through knowledge.

## **2. Elements of competence: Doing**

For us, Japan is an interesting culture in the sense that it presents many examples for the acquisition of competence as a motoric skill. When I studied in Japan in the 1970s I was often confronted with the expression *karada de oboeru*, i.e. learn with your body, don't remove yourself onto an abstract level, become one with what you are doing. I was aware of such learning processes from working with cattle and digging potatoes in a farming community in Switzerland, but was not prepared for them in educated circles I assumed were more oriented towards reflection.

This Japanese emphasis on the motoric aspect of learning influenced my general outlook on learning processes. Moreover, living in a family where I could observe the parent-child relationship on a daily basis often led me to wonder about the absence of clear-cut rules. Instead, parents would refer to the competence of a child in relative terms, indicating that "it had not yet reached a necessary level of judgment." Clearly, children were led gradually, not to "know" but to "feel" what was proper, while

the focus was not on rules but on imitation, not on results but on processes.

Later, when I was doing comparative research on learning processes in the service industry, I was truly startled at differences between European and Japanese instructions. Whereas the European side presented definitions and discussed the rules of being a sales person, or an employee at a railway company, the Japanese materials focused on bodily movement. "Without movement", they stressed, "things are dead". Movement, we should note, included speech, but not necessarily for the meaning of its words but for its power to signal life.

Cooking books are a particularly striking field of contrast. In Japan they invariably include detailed photographs of the moving and shaping of fingers, hands and arms as they bring forth the products. European cooking books by contrast in most cases just show the finished products, giving no indication of creative movement.

Clearly, acquiring competence in Japanese was not only practically but also conceptually a matter of appropriate movement, which also included movement of my tongue and voice bands, sometimes focused on language, sometimes on the pure performance of an utterance itself.

Movement is not an easy dimension to learn. It is linked to emotional involvement of the total human being and as such can go against what we have chosen to see as "ourselves", or been taught to see as rational. However, as any musician will know, an audience always hears what the performer feels. This nicely summarizes what competence is all about: Production of a flow of movement that is outside the immediate control of the performer but is perceived and interpreted by an audience.

PICTURES "MOVEMENT": SHAPING OF FORM AND RHYTHM



### 3. Elements of competence: Knowing

Learning to do something competently we soon discover that the underlying norms and values are of a much more arbitrary nature than expected. Norms and values need to be considered as the outcome of debates and even fights over long periods of time. In the end they have crystallized through the efforts of institutions (church, school, legal systems, family rules, those responsible for giving rewards, performing rituals and upholding taboos). Such institutions seek to remove norms and values out of the scope of uncontrolled change in order to secure them to fix group identity. Norms and values then usually disappear out of awareness. For us, therefore, acquiring competence in Japanese means we have to unearth knowledge about why norms and values are what they are.

When, for instance, we begin to realize in Japan that structured movement and motoric skills are of surprising importance, is it useful to know what values underlie this (I will return to this point later). At the same time we also need to reflect on the reasons for our own surprise. This reflection will lead

us back to debates of the 18th and 19th centuries about governing "personality" from the brain and weakening the focus on the body. But also more recent factors play a role, not least the experiences of the 20th century, in which rituals and bodily aesthetics were central to anti-liberal ideologies from which thoughtful persons want to dissociate themselves. Thus the interest on bodily skills during steps and stages of development has been largely lost to concepts of a mature, "finished and competent personality" who is moved by free will and not by energy and circumstances. We need to realize how these ideas are emotionally rooted in Western cultures' debates about the individual in society, debates that grew out of the processes of the reformation, secularization, enlightenment, active rationality necessary for world dominance, or, more recently, critical views about national collectivism that led Germany into ruin. Most of these debates had only marginal importance in Japan.

Once we have observed, reflected upon and perhaps been forced to adapt to, patterns of identity differing from ours, we become aware that they are oriented towards some sense of specific overall order. This order can be the nation state, particularly when we consider its authority to unify educational values, enforce laws and regulations, or legitimize mechanisms of power and power control. As we know, these fields differ enormously from nation to nation, and in this sense we can indeed speak of Japanese, German, Swiss, French etc. systems of values. Moreover, the role of the national borders should not be underestimated, as they serve as boundaries for emotional involvement, following a logic which is as old as humanity itself: chaos outside, order inside.

The nation state, though, is not the only power that requires us to observe concepts of order: Thus Japanese companies, regions, groups, educational institutions, or spiritual organizations, have very distinct views about the order that must sustain their corporate identity. The concept of homogenous "Japaneseness", even high ranking Japanese officials concede today, was to a high degree the outcome of Japan's efforts to create an orderly and cooperatively oriented workforce in the 1960s. I may provokingly add that "Japaneseness" can also be seen as a joint product of Japanese and foreign intellectuals when the latter helped in establishing the classical frame of reference for "civilized nations" in the early 20th century, namely a canonized assortment of great personalities in art, culture and philosophy who can be associated with *ó* and also made use of to defend - a national spirit.

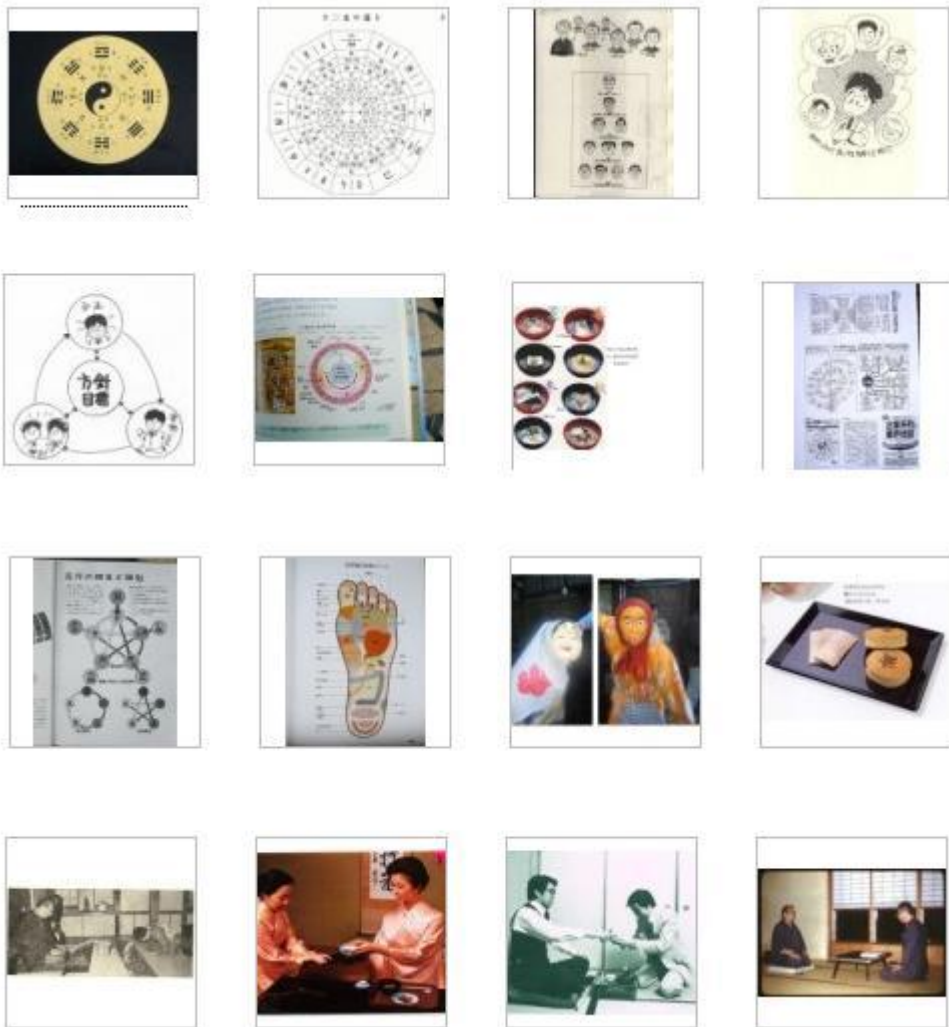
#### **4. Seeking frames of reference: The concept of order**

Research on Japan does seem to confirm the existence of a fairly stable concept of geometrical order as the basis for all human and social organization. The use of closed circles as charts to picture anything that functions in an orderly fashion is ubiquitous in Japan today as it was in the past. This

implies that if everyone and everything is tied into a circle that integrates all individual elements and organizes them into successions of receiving and producing, then this will guarantee the flow of energy that nourishes and maintains life. This concept reflects the Daoist (*Onmyō gogyō*) notion of bipolar units (*yin* and *yang*, receptive and productive units), which are held in motion by cosmic energy (*ki*), and it still both actively structures and passively reflects basic normative concepts in modern Japan.

The aspect of energy is central, and here we see why movement is so crucial a value: Both the geometric tables showing the cyclic nature of things, as well as, for instance, old medical charts, focus on the fact that parts are tied into a system in which energy is given and returned. No matter if instructions for adaptation to the seasons, the layout of temple grounds, processes of decision making and information sharing, or the concept of time and life cycles, everything reflects the pattern of the closed circle through which nurturing energy must flow. In medical terms, the foot sole and the belly ó for instance - form a circle because they must reciprocally sustain each other.

PICTURES: "CIRCLES" AND THEIR CORE UNITS, RECIPROCAL RELATIONSHIPS



The histories of differing concepts of order need to be understood so as to become aware of the fears that arise in a culture if order is disregarded. These fears are existential ones. They are expressed in the form of reprimands, sanctions and taboos we have to expect. In Japan, fears will surface if we don't observe the rules linking complementary units (myself and the other) sustaining the flow of give and take in circles. In Europe on the other hand we cannot undo our history, in the course of which the notion of a mechanistic universe was replaced by the personalized one of a creator God (*zennōkami*).

As an afterthought, we may mention that when systems bring about success and enable important segments of society to attain a more comfortable life, they are interpreted as tradition and wrapped in rituals trying to prevent them from changing. This has been the case during Japan's economic miracle, which was sustained by the notion of closed cyclic systems of order (between companies, or within company units). The keenly perceived threats to this notion have sparked one of present-day

Japan's main debates about order.

This brings us back to the question of competence in Japanese. Competence requires bodily acting, and this needs to be done in accordance with emotions relating to, and bodily movement within, temporal and spatial order. We can speak of this order as a choreography that has been devised to keep fears low and rewards high. That this kind of competence is practically unachievable for us is a point I will return to later.

### **5. Maintenance of order: Competence in handling emotions**

Emotion can be understood as a system of signals that seek to protect us and indicate dangers and needs, without which physical and social survival would not be possible. We need such things as fear, anger, jealousy, shame, happiness or sadness; they have the duty to maintain our well-being. Emotions can be violent, but basically they have a warning or threatening function, rather than a destructive one.

Controlling emotion - dressing it in socially acceptable garb - however has played a huge role in balancing complex societies with their innumerable interdependencies. The workings of emotion as a vital system of signals on the one hand, and the rules of emotion control on the other, make choreography of movement highly complex both to perform and to interpret. In modern Western societies with their strong link to the nation and with it (at least until recently) to national armies, and their history of cementing a mathematical understanding of rationality as precondition for a better life, control of emotions became one of the key concepts for being a good citizen.

What about Japan? In Japan too we can occasionally feel the effects of emotion control as it was devised for service to the nation. How far suppressing emotion (until suddenly exploding) ó a pattern typical for drill-oriented education ó is a norm is difficult to say. However, I do not believe that reference to national service goes very far towards understanding emotion in Japan.

Here again I think it important to reflect on Japan's concept of the universe and its order as based on complementary bi-polar elements kept in a flow of motion. This world view is not geared to national goals, but to the maintenance of life itself. It is with this in mind that I assume Japanese culture to have developed its views on emotion: Emotion as an integral part of being human can neither be subdued nor blocked, but demands shaping so that it works in a productive, not a destructive way.

In a field study on interaction at hair salons in the Kansai region, Iida Miki vividly describes the workings of this kind of emotion. Politeness, she shows, is neither linked to sympathy nor empathy

but has a productive function, operating through shaped movement in form of an uninterrupted exchange of requests and confirmations that integrate activities into a flow (*nagare*), regulated by an order of precedence (*yûsen jun-i*).

The understanding of life as a mechanism holds true in Japan not only for social structures but basically also for one's own bodily self: Energies must nurture, not destroy physical balance, and therefore they must be channeled. Buddhism, the central source for traditional techniques for maintaining health in Japan, has for centuries spoken about enlightenment (or non-attachment) in the sense of retaining inner energy by not letting emotions sap them away. To put it simply: Uncontrolled emotions are thought to leave you a victim to illness or just looking a fool.

If the Buddhist views, which in a broad sense we can call medical, are absent in Europe, then what definitions have shaped the emotions we carry into the Japanese field? Why, for instance, do we tend to interpret our emotion *ó* after all a signaling system - as personal and not public property? Or why do societies differently attach specific values to emotions (e.g. bourgeois European society to love, or Japanese society to *kawaii*)?

Doing research on the emotion of fear some startling differences came to light in a joint seminar with Japanese and Swiss students. Self-awareness, and thus also fear, was a concept the Swiss students could not dissociate from Christian faith - staunch atheists still referred to religion as a kind of protective super-dimension, albeit a rejected one. The Japanese participants on the other hand made no reference to religion but tended to see protection as the function of the dead. They gave answers like, "My ancestors protect me; I talk to my dead grandmother at the house altar (*butsudan*) when I feel miserable." Asked, "Do you fear death?" one participant stressed, "The living need to pray for the dead," while for another one the parents were the focus of attention: "When I am dead I just cease to exist, though as long as my parents live I am obliged to them."

We can conclude that self-awareness, who I am and why I am, and thus also what I fear and how I fear, are decisive factors shaping emotion and emotion control and therefore the communicative impact we have on others.

## **6. The micro-level: The arena for competence**

Competence means taking interest in persons, it means climbing down into the uniqueness of micro levels. Competence will invariably lead to the discovery of unique individuals giving unique responses drawing on what they have culturally learnt. This uniqueness means that if I am competent in Japanese I go into an encounter with the explicit intention of finding out, of approaching, of

adjusting myself, of zooming in.

Recently, a student described the uneasiness felt by not being considered a unique individual in the following way: "Once I came to Germany I realized I was Japanese. If I were in Japan I would not be Japanese, I would be from Kansai, from Nara, and in the end I would be just myself, Mariko." How should we do justice to Mariko? With knowledge about Japan, about Kansai, about Nara, or about Mariko herself? Obviously we need all levels, but if the goal is to communicate with Mariko, this means using competence not just to apply knowledge but to manage conjecture and feedback.

Conjecture and feedback lead to shared knowledge. Yet on the way to shared knowledge we encounter many hurdles, two of which have not been given enough attention, namely 1. Implicit beliefs; and 2. Untrained patterns of communication.

### 1. Implicit beliefs

When Mariko described herself as Japanese in Germany, she felt that how she presented "self" with its flows of rhythms and movements was not what Germans could give feedback to and interpret to her satisfaction. This was not a matter of vocabulary or grammar, it was a matter of sounds and rhythms, of organization and sequence of ideas, and this in turn reflected the assumptions about what she believed the other understands. Competence, we can thus say, is heavily dependent on personal patterns of belief.

Crossing the divide between Germany and Japan I am often reminded how difficult it is to fathom people's implicit beliefs, assumptions and expectations. At the same time I myself am making matters worse by using a mixture of implicit and explicit communication. What information do I omit, assuming it to be known? What makes me suddenly slow down or insert pauses? Reflecting other people's beliefs when communicating is a topic a few studies in phonology have undertaken, as the structure of our sounds and rhythms is one important level on which we differentiate between what we think is known and what we think is new for the recipient.

### 2. Untrained patterns of communication

When we strive for foreign language competence we need to confront the fact that we are not all trained in the same way to use language. The other side may be better or less well trained in specific communicative techniques. Rules of turn taking are one example, and so are topic evading techniques, showing or hiding authority, or being open or secretive about ignorance. Some techniques are shaped on a national level through fostering and rewarding certain types of action but frowning on others. In one society argumentative forms of communication may be trained, whereas

elsewhere they may not be, so that arguments and counter-arguments will in the end lead to fury and chaos.

Silence is one important factor influencing our implicit assumptions. In the rural villages of Switzerland, silence indicated dedication to work. It was neither a signal of distress nor of disinterest, or even of shirking responsibility. Competence here means knowing how to be silent. But this may be very different from traditions elsewhere, particularly among the better educated. Here European communicative training is deeply rooted in the arts of debate as they were fostered in the 19th century. Just looking at this one example, we may puzzle about what competence might be needed for the silent group to share in communication with the group trained in argument.

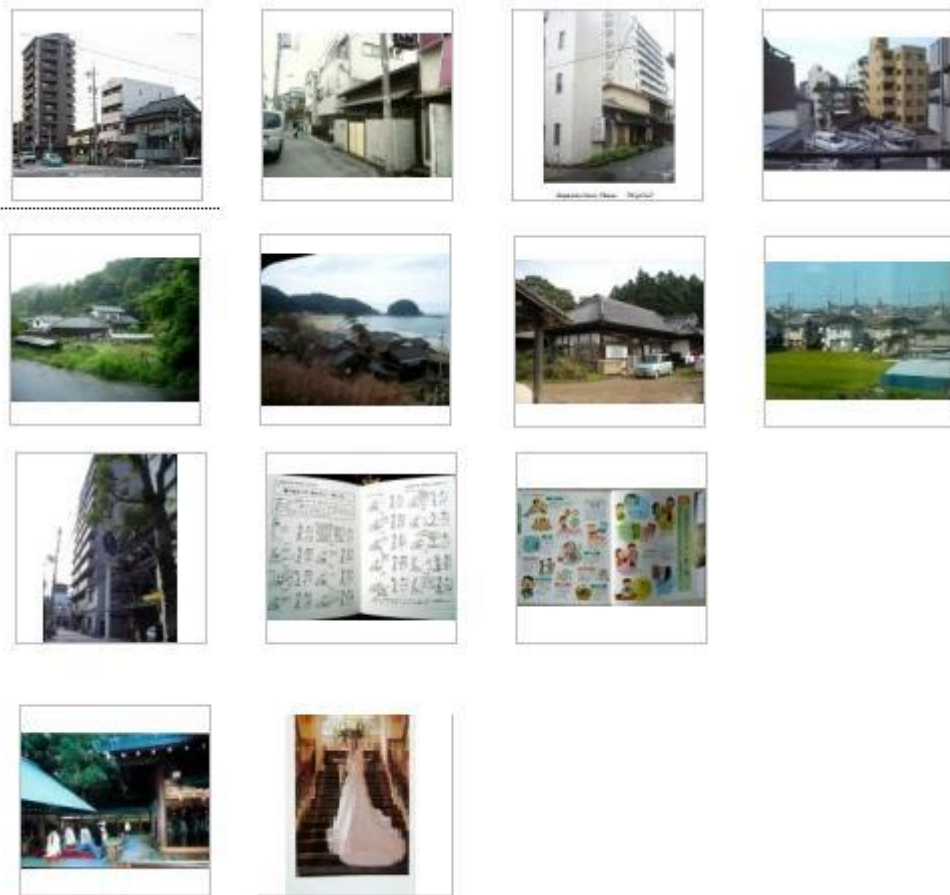
In Japan, we need to look carefully at many distinct situations - micro-levels - on which distinct competences will have been trained. For instance, though Japanese is often thought to be roundabout and allusive, in fact it can be sharp, fast and direct. I had to observe this at many meetings in which German scholars participated. None of us, even when using our own language, were up to the Japanese demand for clear and crisp speech. The problem was that we were not competent in determining the micro-level we were on, namely the world of the Japanese company, based as it is on intricate and extensive circle oriented training processes, and we were also not competent in instantly analyzing, and judging the supreme value of, constellations, for example of who is giving whom valuable time.

Finally, also regional and social aspects must enter into our consideration of how competence is brought about. Suffice it here to mention that exchange students from Japan brought up in homes ó often in rural regions - with much natural conversation going on are often more competent at finding interfaces between our two cultures than students brought up under the pressures of many a city family.

### **7. Competence in a continuously changing world**

Competence needs to accommodate difference ó individual, regional, generational or social class difference - and it also needs to accommodate change. I can't just sit down and learn competence, as the moment I do so the world I am learning it for has already changed. But competence includes historical knowledge so we can fathom the most drastic changes and the on-going and irreversible processes these have triggered.

PICTURES "CHANGE"



If we look at Japan with historical knowledge, it comes as a shock to see the many profound changes that have occurred alone since the 1970s. In the 1970s (at the latest) a remarkable split makes itself felt between reality and normative values. The normative values produced by the elder generation reflected the mid-1960's effort to create a cohesive loyal and profit oriented Japanese workforce. Yet in the 1970s a younger generation finds itself in a world that is different to that of the early '60s and technically providing new possibilities. Quite particularly, this new generation was discovering many new ways for escaping into closed, private, secretive worlds.

In the 1970s the housing environments, and linked to these, socialization processes, entirely changed. Homes became air-conditioned, doors and windows were shut, and youths got their individual rooms and electronic equipment. Public spaces and, above all, the streets filled up with traffic and other dangers. With drastic shortages of manpower increasingly both parents took up jobs, and as the education system became more and more geared to the standards of an affluent society the young generation faced increased pressure to pass examinations into high-level institutions just at an age where they were emotionally busy turning into adults. Obviously, all this led to complex individual biographies caught between social norms and private worlds.

From 1990 on it was the financial crisis which had a sweeping effect on norms and social structures. Just the fact that employment rates suddenly sank to very low levels meant that life course planning and the orderly flow of instruction and information from older to younger broke down. The terrible railway accident of 2005 had its roots in just these problems. Moreover, large scale outsourcing of jobs meant that employees ceased to be members of company circles. An employee put it this way to me: "In what language register do I address the man in charge of my working place if he is no longer my boss? My boss is the man at the temporary employment company."

The change of inner worlds does not necessarily go hand in hand with the change of outwardly visible worlds. Thus in Japan of today we should look beneath the surface to understand that the wide-spread tendency of clinging to ritual is subjectively often perceived as a way to stay in the system and should not be understood just as "tradition." And what will we discover if we look beneath the surface of Japan's huge baby-boom generation as it is now seeking new forms of identity after retirement? Then there are the debates of the young generation who sense that "efforts are not rewarded" (*mukuwarenai*), and who seek their goals in life accordingly. Such debates are very lively on the internet, and we should take note of this, since it stands in contrast to a seeming lack of spontaneity in face-to-face relationships. Typically, internet debates in Japan are hard to decipher, as their writing style is very in-group oriented. Somehow we will have to come to terms with this in the future.

Acquiring language competence is tracing a moving target. We are learning for a field that is in constant change, but also for a field in which we are tempted to make interpretations that may be very wrong, e.g. as in the case of rituality. Seen from this angle, it makes sense that scholars of communication in Europe have come to measure competence above all as an attitude, which can be mirrored in an autobiography of how we grapple with, and then reflect on, intercultural encounters.

### **8. Can multi-cultural persons ever become competent?**

Every human being is fundamentally multi-cultural, having a mother and a father. However, tolerance for multi-culturality of whatever kind varies, depending on what aspects of it are felt to be a threat. In Western Europe, some but not all levels of society consider non-Europeans as a threat, others non-Christians, others people from the Balkans. Switzerland will widely consider German communication patterns as a threat, not only recalling long past notions of a mono-cultural and mono-lingual empire, but also because of the sometimes crushing effect of German assertion and eloquence.

Working with students who are not native German speakers in an academic context I witness daily how their status as outsiders sits squarely in the way of all the nice words about integration. What is the problem? I will make two points here: 1. Competence in several languages basically leads to a decrease, not an increase in self-confidence. The more you can picture someone else's, the more you begin to be objective about your own world. However, where do such multi-cultural persons fit in in a world which demands the type of self-confidence typical of mono-cultural persons? 2. Multi-culturality as emotional and therefore also bodily behaviour that has been learnt outside dominant groups and may not be interpretable to them is subject to dangerously high levels of intolerance. This is because dominant groups may increasingly see it as a nuisance and a burden in their race for survival in the stress of rankings and assessments.

Communication patterns of persons with multi-cultural background will often lack clear signals of emotion, particularly when the language used has not been learnt together with its appropriate emotions. This is the case when one or both parents speak a language, or even just a dialect, that differs from that of the social context. In Germany, this phenomenon of strange or absent emotionality can be easily observed among persons who are fluent in German but whose language at home may be Turkish.

Sensitive Japanese research has shown that multi-culturality frequently lies at the root of emotion-hiding strategies. Once a person senses conflicts of emotion (should I get angry or shut up? should I say something even though I know I can't get my point across? should I support this idea even though I know my mother would scold me for it? should I isolate myself from the peer group I have really felt at home in?), then he or she will often try to adapt to the dominant culture by hiding whole facets of any other culture and even eliminating traces of contact with it from biographical memory. This happens particularly often in the case of younger persons for whom every single day counts on their way to becoming adults. Missed days and years of learning the culture of your peers sets you apart from them (and from their dating and mating patterns), and this will very possibly help erase from awareness what has been learnt in any outside society but at the same time leave a hole that cannot be filled.

We could now turn to look at Japan and observe its use or non-use of the potentials of multi-cultural persons. However, here I will merely pose one question: If persons from outside (these can be complete outsiders or Japanese who have acquired competences from the outside) develop communicative competence in Japanese, then are they not running into a hopeless situation in which language and emotionality are not properly linked? This will inevitably lead to a lack of thrust, and with no thrust, a person will be considered irrelevant, or even a nuisance by dominant groups in any

culture.

However, does Japan with its techniques of integrating differences into circles not possess an effective system of counter-balancing processes of shutting out weaker members of a group? A glance at many ritual events in schools and organizations shows that Japan is traditionally very aware of the mechanisms of creating entities, and doing this not through debate, but through aesthetics of form and rhythm. Probably, however, this truly integrative system cannot effectively be applied to adults, who bring with them much higher levels of self-awareness and call for consideration of what they define as "(intellectual) self", and not only motoric self. Can adult persons then, bringing with them other communicative systems, ever acquire competence in Japanese?

### **9. Conclusion: Institutional perspectives on language competence**

To conclude my thoughts on "being competent in Japanese" ó and not just "knowing Japanese" ó we should reconsider its pedagogic implications. Can anything be done to advance competence, particularly in the case of adult persons rooted in other systems?

Much will depend on what goals we set. It might, for instance, be enough first to develop receptive competence and just listen and observe. This eternal urge for activity ó reflecting, of course, our status raising techniques ó should lead us to take seriously basic research strategies in cultural anthropology with its emphasis on observation. Naturally, a high level of receptive language competence is a prerequisite for productive observation, but we should not be dazzled by over-ambition to appear totally competent.

Another goal worth thinking of is reward. What can I expect if I use Japanese? Maybe, if I am a person with multi-cultural background who tends to hide essential facets of my personality for fear of sanctions, then I should abandon the idea of "understanding Japan" and seek integration only among persons with similar experiences, i.e. in Japan's most international segments of society.

Yet the goal may indeed be full participation in a Japanese world, and by this I mean being inwardly willing and prepared to face any unforeseen communicative situation. Then, however, we need to carefully consider the steps to attain the necessary competence: How long could it take me? What intermediate goals must be established first? Who are the people who could give me positive feedback? What strategies will I have to use to bring myself into the contexts I most urgently need to participate in? Moreover, I have to take my time to learn to read and write fluently. You can't be a member of a culture essentially rooted in written communication ó just as our own cultures are too -

without participating on this level. Both in Europe and Japan norms, styles and debates are governed by what is written.

Our goal should also be defined in emotional terms: Letting oneself be stimulated by the obvious fact that the better you get the more you realize how you are falling short. Why not adopt the standpoint of research and see *not knowing* as a challenge?

The goal should not only be formulated in relation to Japan, it should also have methodic implications which can be applied to the dynamics of human contact in general. It is a challenge that competence is not only a cognitive dimension but also and mainly a bodily one, doing something effectively beyond the level of reflection, like piano playing. Thus competence depends as much on effort as on "feeling", and it is therefore always relative, linked to impacts and feedback from outside.

Being a member of a German faculty, and welcoming a fairly large number of students from Japan, what both interests and worries me is the role of our academic institutions to deal with these aspects of competence. Only success in unforeseeable and unique circumstances in which a productive and a receptive side make a win-win experience can provide a sense of competence. Moreover, competence can make use of, but it does not focus on the general and abstract (speaking to the wind, as it were); it focuses on concrete encounters, worlds or narratives, and on both the spoken and the written level.

It is necessary for our institutions to foster, to protect and to legitimize the steps towards competence in the face of pressure from dominant groups who make impossible demands for performance, achievement and results ó and also call for concentrating language learning on English. We need stronger frameworks to make clear that learning Japanese in Europe or German in Japan is not an alternative to learning "more useful" languages, but something fundamentally different: it is the acquisition of competence in handling the concrete dynamics of cultures woven into their histories of intellectual debate and affective patterns of dealing with them. This competence, moreover, must be defined as a basic human competence that is applicable to any situation demanding empathy with persons communicating in a language they have not been socialized in.

A more systematic approach would be welcome to establishing frameworks of learning based on awareness of feedback, blending of narratives, and bodily and affective self. This requires not only a synchronic but also a diachronic perspective, which considers how people have been socialized into cultural discourses that are quite arbitrary and depend much on the specific fears faced over long

periods of time, and takes note of the systems of sanction and reward organized to produce social players who will help deal with such fears. Looking at Japan, surely the most valuable thing to teach anyone setting out to gain competence is to slowly learn to fathom concrete, individual lives through what they say and write. But for this we need to take more care of arenas where all sides can join.