

# Foreigners and the Japanese in contact situations: evaluation of norm deviations\*

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## *Abstract*

*A considerable number of deviations from norms held by participants occur in intercultural contact situations. In the case of foreign (non-J) participants in Japan the number is currently increasing as more speakers join Japanese networks. The present paper examines the process through which deviations are evaluated. The paper accepts the importance of the principle of cultural relativism, but emphasis is placed on evaluation through “contact norms” (norms specific to contact situations), “shared norms” (norms of non-J participants shared by at least a part of the J population) and “universal norms”, though the establishment of the last category is not easy.*

## **1. Contact situations and acquisition**

The concept of contact situations (Neustupný 1985a, 2004a; Fan 1994; Marriott 2004) is central to the understanding of international relations. All generation of behavior and all management of behavior (Jernudd and Neustupný 1987; Neustupný and Nekvapil 2003) in contact between cultures take place within the bounds of contact situations. The sense of Japanese studies outside Japan can be seen primarily in clarifying the structures and processes within contact, not native situations. The study of native situations is important, but the study of contact situations is essential.

In contact situations a number of communication and interaction problems arise. They can be treated at the local level, by planning and implementing adjustment as the problems arise, or systematically. For decades, perhaps centuries, it has been assumed that the principal key to the systematic treatment of problems in contact situations is “language teaching”. However, within the present postmodern globalizing paradigm, the

expression “language teaching” is becoming obsolete. At least three points can be adduced here. Firstly, we know that what is at stake is not “language” but “interaction” in general: even in “language teaching” we must look at much more than just the traditional language, conceived as the sum of syntactic, lexical, phonological and graphical processes. Secondly, we have realized that such interaction competence is attained through “acquisition” in general, not just “teaching”. Thirdly, we must acknowledge that acquisition is a set of social, not just technical processes. One of the basic problems of traditional ‘introductions to language acquisition’ can be seen precisely in these three points.

With regard to the first point, it is necessary to note that interaction includes processes governed by three types of competence possessed by language users:

1. Grammatical competence (grammar, lexicon, phonology, graphemics, hereafter GR competence), as absolutized in contemporary language teaching;
2. nongrammatical communicative competence (“sociolinguistic” competence, hereafter NGC competence); and
3. sociocultural competence (hereafter SC competence).

The first two together constitute so-called “communicative competence”, but we should realize that, within the context of postmodern interaction, such communicative competence cannot simply be identified with correct use of grammar in “real” communicative situations. It is a much wider concept that includes a large number of rules systematized in Hymesian models of communication (Neustupný 1997). Furthermore, the acquisition of sociocultural behavior, which forms the input for interaction processes, cannot be relegated to another discipline, because SC is closely connected with NGC and GR, and because a discipline that would attend to the acquisition of SC does not in fact exist.

With regard to my second point above: the acquisition of some components of interactive competence takes the form of teaching, a process in which teachers apply a number of “teacher strategies” to induce acquisition. Traditional language teaching is a good example. In Modern (i.e., not Postmodern) societies, teaching has been overestimated as the most appropriate mode of acquisition. Today we know, however, that teaching in no way occupies such an important position. Although it is significant, there are equally significant acquisition modes such as selfdirected learning and natural acquisition. In language pedagogy, the former has been made particularly famous in the theory of learner strategies (Rubin 1987; Miyazaki and Neustupný 1999), and the latter, although traditionally the object of second language acquisition studies (Ellis 1994), is

gradually gaining more attention at present. In natural acquisition the process is directed neither by the teacher, nor the learner. It occurs “naturally” within a communicative situation.

My third point claims that the process of acquisition fulfils a number of social functions. Acquisition of Japanese is not simply a process that provides technical rules for communication and interaction in contact situations. The functions of acquisition, the social characteristics of participants, the socially relevant features of situations, the content of acquisition (e.g., gendered language) and other issues are often considered as lying outside the area of language acquisition. We must ask where acquisition stands vis-à-vis phenomena such as language rights, socioeconomic interests and power, and many others.

## **2. The problem of interaction today**

Our problem today is not to observe and conceptualize Japan. At present, the issue is not simply to understand but to interact. Of course, observation, conceptualization and comparison are useful. But, in order to interact, we must know directly what happens in the process of interaction and we must acquire competence to interact in contact, not in native, situations. The question of evaluation is essential in this regard: how do we and should we evaluate the behavior of others and of ourselves? Should we just say that everyone has the right to use one’s own norms, or should we require that different norms, those of participants who are “native speakers” in the situation, be acquired and applied? As mentioned above, with regard to GR the answer has traditionally been yes. Foreign GR competence has been widely acquired and used through language teaching and other modes of acquisition. However, the same cannot be said about NGC and SC (Kato 2002). What position should be assumed in those contexts?

It is important to realize that, in the past, most non-J participants who lived in Japan merely resided there, and were only marginally engaged in Japanese social networks. Hence, the issue of using and further acquiring competence to interact in contact situations with the Japanese was not a priority. This has changed in recent years and will change further in the future. Of course, we cannot forget about the cohorts of the Japanese who interact with other countries of the world.

For foreigners in Japan, all use and acquisition of Japanese norms of conduct result in interaction problems. An example that arose with ever higher frequency in the 1980s in the case of Australian, American and later also Chinese students was whether to use Japanese honorifics, both

so-called addressee honorifics (plain or *desu/masu* forms) and referent honorifics (*irassharu* against *iku*, etc.). On the part of some learners, honorifics were negatively evaluated, because they were perceived as increasing undue status distinctions. The learners had been told that teachers were “superiors”, and considered the use of honorifics to them, as well as to other addressees, as a case of flattery. They did not wish to communicate that they were inferior to anyone. In most instances the students simply did not understand what the honorifics were. But in some cases the communication of status did really take place. Should teachers have encouraged them to suppress their identity and to participate in such communication?

One of the frequent categories of problems is based on the principle *When in Rome do as the Romans do* or, in Japanese, *Go ni ireba go ni shitagae*. The implication here is that if a foreigner visits Japan, he/she should abide by Japanese norms, while, if a Japanese visits India or Sweden, he will honor Indian or Swedish expectations. The author, who worked at Japanese universities from 1993 to 2004, has often been told “This is how things are done in Japan”. For example, when minutes of meetings were not taken and/or undistributed, should he have told himself “This is how things are done in Japan” and refrained from any further attempts to change that behavior? Should young female foreigners in Japanese offices simply accept that it is female employees who serve tea to male ones?

As foreigners penetrate more and more into Japanese society, it will be increasingly important not to simply accept and acquire Japanese norms, but to carefully consider how to find and apply norms that are in some sense “correct” in the situation under consideration. In this respect Japanese studies cannot be said to have advanced very far.

### 3. The management model

In the study of interaction problems, I apply a variety of the language management model (Jernudd and Neustupný 1987). In my experience it is the only model which allows for an extensive analysis of the phenomena in question. The management model defines problems as commencing with deviations from norms; subsequently the deviations are noted and negatively or positively evaluated by participants, adjustment is sought and finally implemented. In other words, there are

- 1 norms (cf. Neustupný 1985b),
- 2 deviations from these norms,
- 3 the noting of deviations,

- 4 evaluation of noted deviations by participants,
- 5 design for adjustment, and
- 6 implementation of adjustment.

The stage of evaluation is crucial here. Problems in contact situations evolve from deviations from norms held by participants, and the evaluation of such deviations. Subsequently a particular adjustment strategy may be selected and implemented. This may involve the retention of existing arrangements or a change.

The management theory requires that we examine evaluation directly in individual micromanagement processes. In other words, we need to begin our enquiry by examining what happens in individual situations of contact, how subject X1 evaluated the behavior of subject X2 at a particular place and time. This type of evaluation is obviously of basic importance for behavior in contact situations.

#### **4. Evaluation and the concept of relativism**

When deviation from the correct use of the accentuation of a word, an honorific form, or a social attitude is noted, it is evaluated by comparing it with norms held by participants in the situation. The question is whether it agrees with the norms or not. It can be hypothesized that such norms can be of four types:

- A native norms (i.e., native norms of one of the participants),
- B contact norms (i.e., norms considered appropriate in contact situations),
- C dual norms (norms of two systems, from which one system is selected), or
- D “universal” norms.

It should be noted that this is a preliminary classification which will be expanded on the basis of data analysis later in this article. Understandably, a number of other issues, such as the development of evaluation (evaluation changed after a period of time, cf. Muraoka 2001), or the differential strictness of evaluations (Fan 2003) in contact situations should be considered; however, this will be impossible within the framework presented here.

##### *4.1. Use of native norms*

The case under A, based on the belief that one’s own norms are correct (“ethnocentrism”), is the most traditional one, and it must be expected

that, in the future, it should mostly give way to more sophisticated evaluation principles. However, at this moment, it is still a very widely practiced principle: however, it is not frequently defended on the primitive basis that “my own system of rules is the correct one and it cannot be questioned”. Its defense is normally more sophisticated: one’s own norms are proclaimed “natural” or “universal”. The concept of savages, who do not behave according to (our) norms is based on this evaluation. To help a lady into her coat is a very particular norm, but it will be defended as the correct norm and its naturalness will be claimed. In contact situations, both sides often use evaluation according to their respective native norms. However, as far as GR competence is concerned, it is common that native norms (in our case, native Japanese norms) are positively evaluated by both sides. Foreigners in Japan, as well as their Japanese interlocutors, evaluate adherence to Japanese norms as desirable. To construct sentences, speak or write them in accordance with Japanese norms is seen as natural. In some languages, such as English, this is no longer the case, and various speakers of non-native English, from Asia and elsewhere, defend a partial application of their own norms which change the output of the GR processes and produce what are called other varieties of “Englishes”. A similar case was the principle common among Russian speakers of French before WWI and between the two wars, which required that they speak the language with a Russian accent (Roman Jakobson, personal communication). We should expect that a similar evaluation will, in the future, appear also in the case of foreign speakers of Japanese. As a matter of fact, recent research suggests that a similar attitude is already present in the case of some foreign students in Japan who consciously kept their acquisition of Japanese to the minimum necessary for communication (Neustupný 2004b: 14).

#### 4.2. *Use of contact norms*

Principle B is not a common knowledge. Marriott (1990, 1993) and, following her, Fairbrother (2000, 2003) have claimed that contact situations sometimes result in special norms that are applied only in contact situations. It seems that the phenomenon is more widespread than originally assumed. It covers all cases in which there are expectations of behavior that is supposed to be appropriate for foreigners or native speakers within contact situations, but not outside them. Such norms of the behavior of native participants include so-called “foreigner talk”, i.e., adaptations of native talk as used to foreigners (high volume of voice, grammatical and lexical simplifications, simplification of content, etc.). Norms of behavior

of foreign participants include expectations of deviations from native norms: such deviations not only occur but are supposed to be regular features of contact situations. The application of foreigner talk norms can be evaluated by non-J participants positively (“they improve comprehension”) or negatively (“they declass the foreigner”). Foreign participant norms can also be evaluated positively (“it is natural that a foreigner behaves like a typical foreigner”) or negatively (“he should have acquired native norms”). Acquisition beyond these contact norms is judged negatively. Positive evaluation is practiced by those who wish the foreigners to remain foreigners, either because they do not wish them to penetrate into native Japanese society or because they take psychological pleasure in meeting ‘foreigners’. In the acquisition of Japanese, the attitude that “foreigners are and will remain foreigners” plays an important role in acquisition. In this case, foreigners are not required or even advised to acquire Japanese norms. However, the position differs from C.

Contact situation norms are inevitable for the future of intercultural interaction. It should not be expected that interactants will be able to select an existing norm from among those that are already available in the cultures in contact. New norms will have to be created. For example, some accentuation rules (e.g., those of personal names) will be accepted as normative in contact situations while others may be not. Some honorifics may be normatively expected while others may not. And there may be no resistance to some J-like attitudes while others may be ruled out. To build up a repertoire of usable contact norms for non-J participants is an important task of Japanese studies.

#### 4.3. *Use of dual norms*

Principle C represents a case of simultaneous acceptance of norms from two different systems. Germans shake hands and Japanese bow: both of these norms are equivalent, and when principle C is accepted, their application is evaluated positively. Unlike in B, the norms applied here are native norms valid in individual cultures: under B, they were special norms relating to foreign participants in contact situations.

Cultural relativists who employ the evaluation C insist that participants’ own norms should not be applied; at the same time, they in fact believe that there are no universal principles according to which evaluation can be conducted. For example, in some societies, much of what Brown and Levinson (1987) called “negative politeness” is conveyed while, in other societies, such phenomena are rare. According to relativists, there are no criteria according to which the difference could be

evaluated. Or, in some cultures students smoke, in others they don't, and it is impossible to say whether one or the other should be evaluated negatively, i.e., whether one or the other is "wrong". On the other hand, universalists claim that such evaluation is possible. When the relativist position came into being, social scientists were proud of it. It helped the West after WWII to accept Asian cultures as equal to Western cultures. Let me note that multiculturalism is a branch of cultural relativism. Organizers of a certain conference in which the author participated at the end of the 1990s suggested that "cultural relativism" should be replaced by "multiculturalism". Of course, theoretically, multiculturalism can have universalistic features, for example, it can allow for the evaluation of individual cultures in contact. However, in its normal interpretation, multiculturalism has been taken to mean, intentionally or not, that different cultures are equivalent, possess the same intrinsic values, and should therefore be given the same status.

#### 4.4. *Use of universal norms*

I feel that the most urgent task of theoretical research for evaluation in contact situations is to develop the universal component of evaluation, namely D. The strategy here is that neither a native norm, nor a contact norm, nor dual norms, are appropriate: evaluation should be on the basis of universal principles. For example, one does not ask whether the treatment of female students in Japan should follow Japanese native norms, the ways female students are in fact treated in Japanese contact situations, or norms of the students' countries of origin. The suggestion is that there are some universally valid ways of treatment, that may or may not be honored in any existing society. Needless to say, universalism does not, as some people in the past believed, equal the assumption that the Anglo-American system of interaction competence represents in fact a universal component of behavior and should become the model for interaction of foreigners with the Japanese in contact situations.

I personally believe that the period of the unchallenged reign of relativism is over. Yet, when I commenced working on the topic of cultural relativism, I did not intend that relativism be abandoned. The progress of my empirical work has further confirmed that we cannot easily dispense with cultural relativism. I believe that, although restricted in its application, relativism will retain a considerable degree of validity in the future. We must learn how to live with both relativism and universalism<sup>1</sup>.



## 5. The Japanese case

How does this translate into the contact situations of non-J participants in Japan? People (J or non-J) who live in Japan pass daily through a considerable number of management processes in which they note that norms they possess have been violated (i.e., that deviations have occurred), and they may or may not evaluate. In empirical data from actual interactive situations, it is possible to find patterns that are more varied than the simple four-fold division A–D presented in section 4: (1) no evaluation, (2) evaluation with no reference to a particular culture, (3) evaluation with the use of the subject's norms, (4) evaluation on the basis of "universal" norms, (5) evaluation on the basis of shared norms and (6) evaluation on the basis of global norms. This article confirms that deductively established models may undergo change under the pressure of empirical data. Most of the data quoted in this paper have been collected in the course of working on other projects. However, quite a few examples derive from a survey of non-Japanese members of staff at a private university in Japan conducted in 1999. I am grateful to XY, who kindly arranged for my interviews, but have decided not to disclose his name because this would reveal the identity of the university as well as the identity of individual respondents. In any case, the data I have been using here is limited and can only result in model building, not in drawing final conclusions.

### 5.1. *No evaluation*

Firstly, some deviations are not evaluated at all. Subject S2 (Anglo-American, 7 years in Japan) noted that another foreigner walking on a footpath narrowly escaped being hit by a bicycle. She noted but did not evaluate the incident. This was not "normal" for her but, as she said, "it does happen". The whole management process can be schematized as follows:

Norm:	Traffic is safe
Deviation:	Danger from traffic
Noting:	Present
Evaluation:	Nil; none of (a)~(d) apply
Adjustment plan:	Nil
Implementation:	Nil

This attitude can be contrasted with another non-J subject S12 who reported, as a summary of his experience at another Japanese university,

that the use of bicycles is a life hazard. He evaluated this as a feature of Japanese culture and claimed that this represents disregard for the value of individual life. A number of J speakers commented on the situation on the same road as normal. In comparison with this subject, S2's refusal to evaluate is significant. We should expect that subjects in some cases will not evaluate and that the process closes at the stage of "noting". (The fact that participants in a situation note but do not evaluate is well known from other analyses of the language management process.)

### 5.2. *Evaluation with no reference to a particular culture*

In some management processes evaluation takes place, but it is 'local' evaluation, which *explicitly* makes no reference to cultural frames. For example, subject S3 reported that the evening meal served in a restaurant was too sweet. The management process can be shown as follows:

Norm:	Taste of dishes is important
Deviation:	Dish too sweet
Noting:	Present
Evaluation:	Negative
Adjustment plan:	?
Implementation:	?

S3 categorically refused any relationship with the fact that this occurred in Japan: the meal was too sweet that evening in that particular restaurant. The evaluation is D or A disguised as D. Similar instances were reported in Asaoka's (1985) study of Australian tourists in Japan: when a coffee was not hot enough, this was evaluated negatively. However, in Asaoka's study, the deviation was assigned to a *Japanese* setting, it was considered a consequence of Japanese culture.

### 5.3. *Evaluating with the use of the subject's norms*

A non-J subject (born and educated in USA) who was teaching at a Japanese secondary school wrote to me:

Although I have only been in the Japanese schools for one and a half years, I have to call your attention to the thousands of glazed-over eyes, to dull reactions to our requests for creative or on-your-feet thinking. And while the United States certainly has its own problems and while I have never taught in the United States, I

have been a student. And what I remember — lively classes, library work, creative writing, debates — is vastly different from what I see here. I believe these are valuable things.

What we can see here is an undisguised application of the teacher's own norms: school work should be developed around discussion in class, library work and other forms usual in the USA. The writer simply states that Japanese schools are wrong (students do not behave properly), while the US schools are correct. The management process has run as follows:

Norms:	School work should be like in the USA
Deviation:	Different pattern of school work
Noting:	Present
Evaluation:	Negative, strategy A
Adjustment plan:	Negative attitude
Implementation:	Own emotions; reporting to others

I am not passing a judgement here on what is correct or what is not. The important point within the context of this article is that a management process takes place.

The majority of evaluations in contact situations may belong to this type. If unchallenged, the simplicity of this approach may remain unnoticed. If questioned, the subject often attempts, *ex post*, to defend the universality of his/her judgement. The teacher in the above example may have attempted to prove that his position was correct (for example, by comparing the standard of graduates with some US-like schools in Japan, cf. 5.5 below), but this did not happen in the case under consideration.

Evaluations are not always negative (Neustupný 1996). We know that non-J participants often evaluate components of Japanese traditional culture (which do not agree with their own norms) positively. Again, the issue is not whether such evaluation can be considered valid on the basis of some "objective" criteria. What matters is that it is made, and is made through the application of the non-J evaluator's norms alone. In my data, S7 (Asian, knowledge of Chinese writing, 3 months in Japan) claimed that Japanese newspapers were very interesting. This evaluation was based on a comparison with the newspapers of his own country, not on any genuinely universal principles.

#### 5.4. *Evaluation on the basis of contact norms*

As mentioned in a previous section, behavior of foreign participants is sometimes negatively or positively evaluated because it agrees or does

not agree with norms (expectations) participants place on behavior in contact situations. This category has not appeared in my data, perhaps because the non-J participants interviewed did not possess an awareness of the existence of these norms.

A similar but different case is the claim of a participant that norms other than simply native norms should be accepted in contact situations. The author has, for example, claimed at a Japanese university in the late 1990s that non-J approaches to administrative procedures, preferred by non-J members of staff, should be taken into consideration by the university. The claim was against the straightforward application of Japanese norms and did not aim at such norms being replaced by foreign non-J norms. Neither did it propose any “universal” norms. The claim was simply to reach a compromise between the J and non-J patterns.

### 5.5. *Evaluation on the basis of dual norms*

No clear example has been present in my interview data. Is this because these cases are in fact rare or because they are not easily reported? Typical is the case when non-J participants accept taking off their shoes inside a Japanese house — for those who do not possess a similar rule in their own culture. The pattern of management is:

Norm:	(1) Take off shoes inside (Japan) (2) Leave shoes on inside (Australia)
Deviation:	(potential) Leave shoes on in a Japanese house
Noting:	Present
Evaluation:	Negative. Pattern C (dual norms)
Adjustment plan:	Take off shoes
Implementation:	Implemented

The difference between this pattern and the A pattern is that under A the second norm is not considered. In the case of cultural relativism (C), it always lurks in the background as the discarded possibility.

### 5.6. *Evaluation on the basis of “universal” norms*

Evaluation can also be based on principles which not only the participants but also researchers would classify as universal. For example, there is a set of principles called “natural human rights” that include among others the right to life, prohibition of torture and slavery, freedom of

religion, freedom of movement and association, etc. Principles such as nondiscrimination or the right to a clean, natural environment may also find a place in this category.

These principles are problematic. First, the overwhelming evidence of human experience suggests that they are not universal at all. For example, the right to life is routinely ignored in terrorism, wars or through capital punishment. Such behavior is not necessarily negatively evaluated. Secondly, prescriptively speaking, we do not know where the principle comes from. Why should there be no discrimination? In other words, why should the principle of nondiscrimination take precedence over other principles of interaction?

It is not impossible to claim that many so-called “universal” principles are norms established by particular societies and simply provide a disguise for them. The degree of difference between this category and the previous one (application of the subject’s own norms) remains to be established.

It will be of interest to see in what way these “universal” norms are manifested in actual interaction. It has been pointed out above that the universal disguise could be implied in the case of the US teacher who evaluated school work in Japan. There have been no other examples in my data.

The hesitant attitude assumed towards universal evaluations should not be taken to mean that the author rejects the principle as such. On the contrary: he believes that further attempts should be made to identify cases that may be described as universal. Resistance to sex discrimination may be a universal principle, although in that case we may have to accept many others that do not run through the whole history of humankind.

### *5.7. Evaluation on the basis of shared norms*

A somewhat different case is evaluation based not only on our own norms, but at the same time on norms of the target (in our case, the Japanese) society. In other words, we can defend a negative (or positive) evaluation on the basis that a part (or the whole) of the target society also adheres to the same norms. This makes norms used in evaluation easily identifiable and the ensuing evaluation is often considered “universal” by the network that shares the norms. One example is the norm that older infirm passengers on public transport are given seats by younger passengers. The form of the management process is as follows:

Norm:	(1) Seats to be conceded to older persons (non-J) (2) Seats to be conceded to older persons (part of J)
Deviation:	A young passenger does not concede the seat
Noting:	Present
Evaluation:	non-J — negative on the basis of A or D J — negative, on the basis of A or D
Adjustment plan:	?
Implementation:	?

Note that the evaluation may be based on the norms of individual participants, not necessarily on universal norms.

The sharing of norms may be due to areal similarity. Areal similarity means that there are shared norms (for example, concerning various features of tertiary education between J, Taiwan, Korea, China), and these norms become the base of evaluation, whether negative or positive. Secondly, there may be functional similarity, for example, when identical negative/positive evaluations are rendered by a J university teacher and a non-J teacher, both of them happy or unhappy with their job. Perhaps the most important similarity occurs when a section of Japanese society belongs to the same paradigm as non-J participants. Some paradigms are considered older (e.g., the modern paradigms) while others are more recent (e.g., the post-modern paradigms). When a negative evaluation of Japanese culture on the basis of nonadherence to a postmodern principle, such as the principle of maintaining a healthy environment by not smoking, is shared by a large section of Japanese society, the evaluation loses the character of being simply the application of the non-J participant's own norms. In this case, we do not have a "universal" principle, but a principle that is shared within the universe of societies that share the norm.

In other words, the commonality of norms thus becomes a condition for deviating from relativism and approaching universalism. If such commonality does not exist, we must attempt to create it, by convincing our partners that they should change their norms. Obviously, if we wish to do that, a considerable degree of awareness with regard to the management process is needed.

### 5.8. *Evaluation on the basis of global norms*

All societies in the present-day world are subject to pressure to accept certain shared norms because we all belong to the global society. What are the candidates for global norms? Note that global norms are not universal norms: they are just norms shared by societies that belong to the

global network, and they will not necessarily be accepted with enthusiasm by all members of those networks. Are they norms of the developmentally most recent socioeconomic paradigms, the US, Canada, Australia, Europe, or simply norms of societies that are socioeconomically dominant? The global society is hierarchically arranged, and so are the candidates for global norms. In the area of GR, English language norms have more or less established themselves as global norms. The same trend can also be seen in NGC behavior, though other than native English norms (such as norms of topics, form of communication acts, etc.) are still vigorous. SC rules have been strongly affected in the institutional sphere, but in other areas (such as “ways of thinking”) independence from English still exists. We should be attentive to the extent to which such norms have been and will be used in evaluating Japanese behavior by non-J participants in Japan.

## **6. Conclusions**

Firstly, we should not assume that the problem of evaluation in contact situations can be solved in a simple way. One of the basic propositions of the management theory is that few problems can be solved without residue. This seems to be true of the issue of evaluation in contact situations. Also, we should bear in mind that the process and results of evaluation are necessarily a matter of degree. Here, as elsewhere, we must abandon the YES/NO logic.

Secondly, the existence of contact situations reminds us that the non-J position will frequently become a position of contact norms. One cannot ignore the fact that behavior should not obey the norms of one of the participants and totally ignore the other. All participants must be taken into consideration.

Thirdly, this attitude should not be used to swing the pendulum back to cultural relativism. Cultural relativism is in crisis. We should continue searching for universal principles.

Fourthly, the existence of shared norms and the development of global norms (as globally shared, rather than universal norms) require our careful attention. The problem of differential interest and power should not be forgotten here.

Fifthly, a note should be added concerning the role of interpretation of behavior. Interpretation is a non-management (“generative”) process that necessarily precedes management. When interpreting facts, we tend to use the rules (and norms) of our own culture. Non-J interpretation is often simply wrong because, for example, it is based on insufficient data and

their incorrect interpretation. We can claim, prescriptively, that any input into evaluation should be checked against errors of this type.

Sixthly, the preponderance of relativism is a Modern trend (Stein 1995), while universalism is Postmodern. This confirms that one day, when the Postmodern paradigm is superceded, universalism may be relinquished.

In the process of the acquisition of interactive competence for contact situations, the question of evaluation of behavior is of great importance. In the future, candidates for interaction in contact situations will evaluate more and more. They will not only ask for teachers' recommendations, but also ask what is the correct thing to do. The principle "when in Rome do as the Romans do" no longer applies universally. People look for a more universal basis of their interaction in contact situations.

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## Notes

- \* The author is grateful to Saukuen Fan and Harold Rowe for comments that greatly assisted him in improving the text. Needless to say, I alone am responsible for omissions and possible errors.
1. Harre and Krausz (1996) use "absolutism" as the antonym of "relativism". I wonder whether this is a felicitous selection, since, for many, "absolutism" implies a negative evaluation.

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