Articles

Contemporary Japanese Culture: Perspectives from Kinfolk and Monocle Magazines

Sachie Banks[1]

Abstract

Japanese culture has been described in the East/West dichotomy in the field of anthropology and intercultural communication. Japan has been called a unique and different "Other" that is group-oriented, indirect, lacks critical thinking and self-expression. Some elements "missing" in Japan based on Western standards were often criticized or suggested for improvement. This article argues that two lifestyle magazines, Kinfolk and Monocle, published by creative teams in Portland and London, challenge such cultural labeling. They integrate Japan into the West, in which Japan is a comparable partner for exchanging practical ideas for living. Images and power relationships constructed by the West in relation to the East have begun to be restructured, as seen in these magazines.

1. Japan as Unique Other

"The Japanese were the most alien enemy the United States had ever fought in an all-out struggle." This is the first line of the Chrysanthemum and the Sword by Benedict (1967, p. 1), a pioneer in Japanese studies. The Japanese who maintained *on* and *giri* (obligations) and multifold paradox were beyond American common sense and expectations (Benedict, 1967). Japan emerged as a unique and distinct Other to the West and a number of anthropologists and intercultural researchers attempted to solve the mystery.

Japan's "high context-culture" tends to employ indirect communication styles and implicit understanding, which contradicts the American "low-context culture" where people directly express their intentions (Hall, 1976). The differences between high and low context cultures often create misunderstandings in business (Matsumoto, 1999) or dealing with silence (Varner & Beamer, 2011). Communication style could differ according to the cultural dimensions proposed by Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov (2010). They explored six dimensions of national culture: power distance, individualism,

---

[1]   Department of Media and Communications Bunkyo University

masculinity, uncertainty avoidance, long-term orientation and indulgence. East Asians who score low at "individualism" value group orientation, face-saving and meeting others' needs, while people in Europe and North America focus on self-independence and freedom (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010). Japanese who score high at "uncertainly avoidance," in which people feel uncomfortable with uncertain situations, tend to use a succinct style of communication (Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1988). Lower scoring countries, such as the U.S. and UK, prefer to use a more elaborate style of communication (Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1988). Americans are likely to feel much more comfortable disclosing themselves to others, compared with the Japanese (Stewart & Bennett, 1991).

Japanese non-verbal behavior was also discovered to be quite different from mainstream Western culture. Bowing (Hendon & Hendon, 1994), using a wider personal distance (Sussman & Rosenfeld, 1982) and a focus on social status (Guirdham, 1999) are the characteristics of Japanese greetings. Asian gestures are "lacking ambition and self-esteem," while Asians interpret European and American expression as "intrusive and aggressive" (Bennett, 2013, p. 67). The Japanese way of "masking emotions" may confuse a Westerner (Tannen, 2007, p. 155) and they tend to avoid eye contact, while eye contact is an important part of communication in the West (Varner & Beamer, 2011). Forms of discourse greatly differ between the East and the West, including the Japanese who value group harmony and in/out group relationships (Scollon, Scollon & Jones, 2012).

Japanese researchers also contributed to clarify the unique aspects of the culture, which were rare or never existed in the West. Doi (1973) discussed *amae*, dependence on benevolence of others, as a key component of the Japanese personality and social life. While a sense of dependence exists in other cultures, the concept of *amae* is deeply rooted in Japanese personal relationships and identity. Doi (1973) argued that nothing corresponds to *amae* in Western languages, which indicates the sensitivity of the Japanese toward *amae*. Nakane (1973) described the vertical structure of group orientation manifested in Japanese society. This organization in groups and personal relationships "stresses the unitary aspect and brings about numerous vertical schisms within the society," which radically differs from European social classes (Nakane, 1973, p.111). Torikai (1996) elaborated how the Japanese value "silence is golden" in many situations. When they communicate with Americans, who often feel uncomfortable with silence, they feel overwhelmed by continuous questions and the speed of turn taking.

As aforementioned studies demonstrated, Japanese people and culture were quite apart and contradicted Western norms. As Strauss (1996, p.582) argued, "Westerners have created and perpetuated the idea of a distant and mysterious Orient by emphasizing the most distinctive aspects of their own and Asian cultures while ignoring others that might suggest commonalities." Japan also needed to accept and adopt such a Western approach, in order to strengthen their national identity (Kubota, 2001). This image of Japan as a unique and distinct Other hasn't been challenged much, even after the country's postwar engagement with the world economy.

2. Japanese Attempts to Participate in the Western World

The Japanese have maintained a strong curiosity and interest in Western culture, which promoted modernization earlier than other East Asian nations (Doi, 1973). Catching up to the West, which seemed superior to them, was a long-term objective, before and after the war (Doi, 1973). The Japanese were eager to incorporate many aspects of Western culture, even though this could threaten national identity (Hitchcock, 1998).

As Christopher (1983) put it, Japan and the U.S. became the strangest couple in the world. Even though their backgrounds and social norms were completely different, Japan started modeling a lot of aspects of the U.S., which was willing to educate Japan. When the Japanese economic boom started pressuring the U.S., American businessmen tried to find out the secret of their success, while the Japanese declared they learned their techniques and strategies from the U.S. (Christopher, 1983).

Vogel (1979) analyzed Japanese success from the aspects of knowledge, government, politics, large companies, education, social welfare and crime control. Vogel (1979, p.27) concluded that a strong "group-oriented quest for knowledge" was the main driving force. The strategy to collect information was mostly borrowed from Western countries, but was most fully developed in Japan (Vogel, 1979). A high standard of education and long-term commitment and loyalty to one company also contributed to the development of the economy (Vogel, 1979). It was further argued that the U.S. could learn from Japan, instead of becoming eager to find out what unfair tactics Japan had used or underestimating them for a lack of originality (Vogel, 1979).

Vogel (1979)'s argument was a new perspective after a time when the West had been dominating much of the global economy. The emergence of

Japan, in addition to the resurrection of Islamic power and a declining American economy, gave an impetus to the non-Westernization of the world (Beaucé & Polak, 1980). Japanese products, such as Toyota cars and Nintendo consoles spread around the world and became easily accessible. Japanese products have maintained their strength by presenting new trends of sushi (Bestor, 2009; Renton, 2006), anime and manga comics (McGray, 2002; Palmeri & Byrnes, 2004). McGray (2009) pointed out in his paper "Japan's Gross National Cool" that global cultural influence was another "Japanese superpower." Although political and economic strategies collapsed, cool Japanese pop culture would strongly influence the world (McGray, 2009). Movies like Gung Ho (1986) and Kill Bill (2003) also demonstrated how Japanese people and elements had become a part of the U.S.

Unique aspects of Japanese culture were still exaggerated in Western entertainment and mass media, which have continued creating the image of a distinct Other. "Thirty minutes over Tokyo" by The Simpsons (1999) and "Lost in Translation" by Sofia Coppola (2003) introduced elements that even local Japanese had never seen or experienced. Karl Pilkington in "An Idiot Abroad" (2011) only experienced extraordinary outings in Japan and Anthony Bourdain also introduced what was exotic about Japan. John Oliver on "Last Week Tonight" (2015) introduced the extraordinary passion for mascots. The character of Shoshanna in the trendy HBO show "Girls" (2015) talked about Japan as if it were a completely different planet. In addition to regular political and economic news, extraordinary news such as a Japanese female pop star shaving her head as an apology (McCurry, 2013, Feb. 1.; Michel, 2013, Feb.), often quickly spread abroad as if it were "Japan today."

People have been always attracted to exotic

foreign lands, and reporting the unique essence of Japanese culture can be rather humorous and thrilling. Recent globalization has brought a certain "sameness" across the world (McGrew, 1992), while people still strongly recognize belonging to the "national – ethnic – racial – tribal – religious" groups (Lindholm, 2008, p.143). Such an approach of focusing on an extreme aspect of Japan has continuously contributed to the image of the unique Other, which has been manipulated, judged and determined by the West (Pilling, 2014; Said, 1979; Strauss, 1996). Japanese products and innovations are highly respected but when it comes to accepting or following deeper aspects of Japanese culture, the distinct Otherness comes in. There is a significant difference between the ways in which Japan incorporated Western culture in their daily lives and in which the West approached Japan.

3. Unequal Cultural Exchange between Japan and the West

Linn, Lewis, Tsuchida and Songer (2000) examined why American students fall behind Japanese students in science after the fourth grade. They found that a lot of science activity structures in Japan overlapped those in model programs in the U.S. Japanese teachers even perceived their methods as hugely influenced by Western approaches. A Japanese long-term focus on collaboration and personal responsibility enabled students to develop respectful conversation, which promoted learning. While Linn et al. (2000, p.13) evaluated the Japanese approach, they also argued that "(i)t is questionable whether Japanese techniques such as highlighting and discussing students' erroneous predictions would be effective in settings where teachers hadn't worked to create a supportive, family-like classroom culture."

Kristof (1997), who was impressed by Japanese children's manners, tried to teach his child a "culture of shame" by imitating Japanese parenting. While he expressed how it worked for his child, he gave up because it was too much trouble. While Curry (2012) spoke highly of the Japanese elderly care system, she said "(t)he Japanese scheme was introduced at a time of relative financial and political stability and in a very different cultural setting," which may not work for the UK. Drucker (1971) likewise stressed that it would be impossible for managers in the West to imitate Japanese management policies, although consensus based decision-making or lifetime job security and productivity are worth learning.

While a lot of the opinions actually appraised Japanese customs and values, whether it could apply to the West was questionable due to "significant cultural difference." Of course, there have been contradicting opinions, such as Krugman (2014) arguing that when the Japanese economy faltered, the West criticized Japanese policies. A few years later, it turned out that the U.S. and Western Europe did worse than Japan, which implied that the West should consider Japan as a role model (Krugman, 2014). Nevertheless, Western approaches to Japan were fundamentally different from those of Japanese who have been eager to follow, incorporate, and reform many aspects of the Western culture and change their lifestyles accordingly.

Japan is one of a few non-Christian countries that celebrates Christmas. Probably a few Japanese have focused on its origins and historical meanings, they took the ideas from the West and made them into a big part of their life. Likewise, Japanese people regularly eat Western food as a part of their main meals. In 2011, it was reported that an

average Japanese family would spend more on bread instead of rice (Statistics Japan, 2011). Japanese chefs go to learn techniques in France and develop their careers (Best, 2014). Many of them bring their techniques back to Japan, and especially Tokyo, which now has the most Michelin stars in the world.

When Japanese scores fell in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), they sought solutions from the West. Finland, which had been highly ranked at PISA, quickly became a role model. The "Finnish Method" (Kitagawa, 2005; Morokuzu, 2009) which stimulates communication, imagination and innovation, received wide attention by educators in all levels and was incorporated in Japanese teaching methods.

Western education also hugely influenced the concept of a "good presentation" in Japan. Many textbooks for university students and business people emphasize the importance of eye contact, gestures and explicit conclusions with confidence (Mizuhara & Nishio, 2014; Wakiyama, 2015). These books don't suggest Japanese people should talk and behave like Westerners. They demonstrate that "good" presentations in Japan incorporate ideas inspired from Western communication styles, discussed in past studies (e.g. Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1988; Varner & Beamer, 2011). Barack Obama and Steve Jobs have been frequently named as good examples of presentations, in both Japanese and English. Few Japanese politicians or business leaders have become role models of presenters for Japanese people.

Politicians also employ the West in order to explain why Japan needs to change. One of the proposals of *Abenomics*, launched in 2012, encouraged women to participate more in the work place. This idea was inspired by data from the Global Gender Gap Report by World Economic Forum, suggesting that Japan is "far behind" from the West. Even 70 years after World War II, the prime minister still suggests changing the country to "catch up" with the West and "do better." It is difficult to imagine the president of the U.S. or the prime minister of the UK saying that they need to change their countries to "become like Japan." In this sense, Japanese approaches to the West and Western approaches to Japan seem quite different. Japan has obtained an "unnatural" membership in the West (BusinessWeek, 1995), although a certain distance has always remained.

Japan as a cultural superpower (McGray, 2009) has influenced the world and people are proud of their traditions and uniqueness, such as hospitality (Nicol, 2015). However, there has always been an attitude of taking ideas from the West for "improvements." Combined with Western pressure towards the Orient (Said, 1979), this has continuously created unequal power structures between Japan and the West.

4. Critical Analysis for Cultural Labeling

Regarding women's participation in work place, the OECD Employment Outlook (2014) shows concern for a lack of opportunities in Japan. While it is important to develop women's careers, the argument overlooked a fact that housewives are highly respected in Japan. According to a national survey conducted by Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare in 2013, about 34% of women want to be housewives, while about 20% of men wanted their partners to be housewives. The top two reasons for this were described as housework and raising children are more important than working (61.4%) and supporting a husband is a wife's role (29.3%). Another survey conducted by Sony Life Insurance Co. (2015) revealed that about 61% of

housewives were satisfied with their lives, while 48.7% of women with jobs felt satisfied. It is questionable whether Japan should be evaluated as "far behind" the West without considering differences in people's values and social norms.

In education, East Asian students are often perceived problematic from Western teachers due to a lack of participation and critical thinking (Atkinson, 1997; Ellwood & Nakane, 2009; Kubota, 1999). Scholars have argued that "passivity implies negligent attitude toward learning" (Miller, 1995, p.32) and talking is a process of empowering students and constructing deeper understanding (Cameron, 2000). East Asian educational achievements as shown in PISA and the ability to learn through silence is often overlooked. Although true cultural integration is that both parties accept each other and maintain both cultures (Berry, 2006), this does not always occur when East meets West.

On hosting the Tokyo Olympic Games in 2020, concerns inside and outside Japan have been centered on a lack of English skills. It was argued that the "insular" culture the focuses on grammar instead practical skills needs to change (Wittmeyer, 2013). When the UK hosted the London Games, a lack of foreign language proficiency by British people (Tinsley, 2013) was barely discussed. English as an "international" language, is "different" from Japanese. This has created an image that someone who cannot speak English should work harder, while English speakers without foreign language skills would rarely become a subject of nation-wide discussion.

Edward Said (1979, p.2) explained this unequal power balance by asserting the existence of Orientalism developed by the West. He argued, "Orientalism expresses and represents that part culturally and even ideologically as a mode of discourse with supporting institutions, vocabulary, scholarship, imagery, doctrines, even colonial bureaucracies and colonial styles. The discourse was constructed not only because Europeans in the 19th century "discovered" the Orient, but also because the Orient accepted to be made as Oriental as they were weaker than the West. This created a "flexible *positional* superiority, which puts the Westerner in a series of possible relationships with the Orient without ever losing him the relative upper hand" (Said, 1979, p.7). Until the current era, Orientalism has been constructed again and again by "general cultural pressures that tended to make more rigid the sense of difference between the European and Asiatic parts of the world" (Said, 1979, p.204).

Kubota (1999) also stressed that the uniqueness of Japanese culture was an example of such Western attitudes toward the Other, which was constructed under colonial discourse over the years. The discourse aimed to separate Japan as a unique Other, while the Other accepted this strategy as a way to reestablish Japanese identity under Westernization. This power structure was employed for the defense of the U.S. in contrast to the East in the field of education (Kubota, 2001).

In the 1980s and 90s, U.S. schools were in a crisis without adequate abilities to compete with Europeans and Asians, particularly in mathematics and science (Kubota, 2001). A number of studies suggested American classrooms were "passive, docile, and compliant rather than active, creative and autonomous students" (Kubota, 2001, p. 19). Some researchers and political leaders started defending U.S. schools by arguing that their practices promoted "problem solving and critical thinking," compared to Asian schools that were "rigid, authoritarian, brutal, and oriented toward exams and memorization" (Kubota, 2001, p.21).

When U.S. schools were the center of discussion, they were problematic and required improvement, containing similarities with Asian classrooms. When it was contrasted to Asian education, "they suddenly became closer to the ideal," which is superior to inferior Other (Kubota, 2001, p.26). Other scholars support this view by pointing out that passive learning style without critical thinking can be also observed among mainstream American students (Kumaravadivelu, 2003) and a very few undergraduates participated in an introductory science course (Fritschner, 2000).

Even though Japanese products and food are global, certain Otherness, distinct from the West has remained. It was embedded in an unequal power balance in the political, educational and social context, in which "imagined" West has been superior to the "constructed" Other.

This study argues that a new movement of cultural exchange and integration has challenged the existing structure. It celebrates a collaboration of new ideas for living, which cannot be simply categorized by the East versus West framework. This study utilized two lifestyle magazines, Kinfolk and Monocle, as examples of such dynamism of cultural participation and argues how it explores a new possibility of a structured Other.

5. The Magazines

Kinfolk was founded in 2011 in Portland, Oregon and is a slow lifestyle magazine that "explores ways for readers to simplify their lives, cultivate community and spend more time with their friends and family" (Kinfolk). It has international contributors from around the world. Monocle was launched in 2007 in London as a magazine that proposes new ideas for global affairs, culture, design, etc. The creators "believed there

was a globally minded audience of readers who were hungry for opportunities and experiences beyond their national borders" (Monocle).

Both magazines have published at least one issue that focused exclusively on Japan (Kinfolk 2013; Monocle 2015). Nathan Williams, editor of Kinfolk, wrote "(t)his issue is a glimpse of Japan through *Kinfolk* lens; it highlights what we love about this unique country." The volume explores values, skills and recipes that are the basic parts of the beautiful simple lifestyle.

Both magazines include topics regarding Japan in almost every issue. The special Japan editions will be examined in this study in order to narrow the focus of analysis. This study argues why the approaches taken by these magazines are different from the existing cultural discourse in the East/ West framework.

6. Kinfolk Magazine Vol. 8 (translated as Japan Edition Vol. 1), 2013

What is most striking about this volume is that they introduce Japanese professionals, food and recipes, shops, values (Japanese proverbs), places and culture in the context of "open international space." They describe unique aspects of Japan, yet these were embedded in a somewhat universal context, in which readers cannot draw a clear line on whether it is Japan or the West. Even though the magazine introduces a unique profession like family seaweed business on a small island in Japan, the concept of their lifestyles and what has been inherited over generations could be applicable anywhere around the world. Readers can connect what is unique about Japan in their daily lives overseas. There is a unique harmony, where these people, products and photographs represent their voice beyond the East/West boarders. The three

aspects of the magazine: people, ideas for life and harmony of cultures, will be analyzed as follows.

6. 1 People in Kinfolk

The magazine introduces generally two types of Japanese people. The first kind is professional and has experiences abroad. The second kind does something traditional with new ideas and their own lifestyle. No matter where their lives are situated in Japan or overseas, the common scheme, "slow simple life" is observable behind their lives, from which readers can receive universal ideas for living. It is not clear whether the people in the magazine are well known or influential. However, the collection of their lifestyles sends a strong message across cultures.

Food director Yuri Nomura, who studied in London and owns a restaurant in Harajuku, has her own philosophy. She visits a place and tries to understand the regional culture and the ways farmers produce food. She values relationships between a farmer, a chef and a consumer based on trust and respect. "This is how we should appreciate food," she noted (p.10). She was inspired by Terence Conran, Alice Waters and her mother who was also a chef. What she learned from overseas is utilized to improve her life in Japan, while her project and approaches towards food in Japan sends messages abroad. Yumiko Sekine, a linen designer owns a shop in Shimokitazawa, also pursued her passion in her career. Her family always enjoyed welcoming foreign friends and guests to their house. This experience led her to the outer world and she found linen in Lithuania. Her intercultural identity and career are just like what this magazine represents for. Her products, "(u)seful, simple and durable," (p.42) inspired by overseas experience as well as her childhood in

Japan are the items that make a house a "home."

Ryota Aoki also exchanges ideas between Japan and overseas as a young potter. He suggests that inheriting spirit of the past is more important than copying the shape of traditional pottery. With influence from English potter Lucie Rie and a number of visits abroad, he wants to bring a new spirit to Japanese pottery. His goal is to become a top Japanese potter whose name will remain over many generations across cultures.

Although Akikado Tsuji did not study or work abroad, what his family produces on the tiny island of Shinojima, Aichi prefecture, is connected to people outside his community. His family business has dealt with a wakame farm over generations, which is deeply rooted in his self-sufficient lifestyle and the local nature. His family collects this "gift from the ocean" by hand and carefully prepares it for cooking. Wakame prepared by Tsuji family is cooked and eaten by people around the world, such as his long-time friend Mayumi Nishimura also from the island, who is well known as a personal chef to Madonna.

The magazine also introduces diverse people connected to Japan. From the young to the elderly, Asian to European, incredibly diverse people come to the small Japanese grocery store Arigato in the center of hectic London. The message the magazine tries to deliver is not simply that Japanese food is popular in London. They put it as "the comfort food of home" (p.32), which diverse people seek for various reasons. "Arigato offers comfort," as the writers described, this concept of "comfort food" is shared not only by the Japanese people living in London, but also by many others from various backgrounds. Japanese food has become a universal symbol, where people can find their own "comfort."

This kind of intercultural harmony is also observable in many other photographs. For

instance, a woman doing *ikebana* is not a middle-aged Japanese lady in a kimono, but a woman with brown hair and a white sweater. Many Japanese men in the photographs have beards, unlike typical Japanese *salary men*. A man pouring green tea wears a white shirt and black pants. The magazine introduces Japanese uniqueness. However, they do so without taken-for-granted cultural labels. They challenge traditional images constructed by the West and represent a new and somewhat neutral image of Japanese culture that contains a mixture of East and West.

6.2 Ideas for life

Old proverbs and traditional techniques are sometimes overlooked in our busy modern lifestyle. What is particularly unique to one culture may not be applied to another culture. Kinfolk magazine does not claim readers should follow Japanese philosophy or change their lifestyles based on Japanese values. Instead, it suggests that we can "borrow ideas" from Japan for better living. *Ikigai* and *mottainai* are the "time-tested concepts from Japan to create a better life and be a better soul" (p.22). Even an old proverb like *deru kui wa utareru* (the stake that sticks out gets hammered down), which is contradicting to the independence valued in the Western countries (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010) becomes an idea for living through Kinfolk lens. As they call it, "(k)eep calm and carry these Japanese proverbs close at hand to live well and gain wisdom" (p. 77). It is not a question of which is superior. The idea from Japanese proverbs may give a useful hint for some everyday occasions anywhere around the world.

Similarly, production and consumption of wasabi is rooted in Japanese tradition. The writers ask, "what can we learn from a wasabi farmer?"

and bring this unique element of Japan to a universal space. They suggest "(t)hat the old ways are often still the best ways; that building on nature's blueprint can yield the best results; that patience is worthwhile; that secret defenses sometimes protect the strongest flavor" (p.36).

Even Japanese people may forget about traditional concepts like *ichi-go ichi-e* or mono no aware in their daily lives. They may struggle to explain *wabi sabi*. Kinfolk reminds us how these concepts can be useful with family and friends, for a simple and comfortable life. These concepts crossed writer Rebecca Payne's mind when she was spending a Monday night with her younger sister. Many people may spend a night thinking about work. As she argued, however, "(i)chi-go ichi-e reminds us to be mindful, but also to be present, so we may be moved by the natural combinations of factors at play in any moment: people, food on the table, the weather outside" (p.74). *Mono no aware* also shares this view, indicating that "the most beautiful moments of life come right after the moment ends" (p.74). She continued that *mono no aware* reminds us to "love now. Act now. Be here now. Invite our friends over, and stay up late. Because this time, this opportunity, this season will soon pass. Bask here while it is still possible" (p.75). This traditional Japanese concept can be delivered to any contemporary cultures, which challenges the East/West framework.

Likewise, Louisa Brits talks about a traditional hand-dyeing technique in Japan. The technique was generated from wisdom for living with nature and inherited from one generation to another. "The longevity of craft reminds us that good design has no boundaries. It speaks a universal language that's understood through different generations and cultures all over the world," she said (p. 66). Her message also contributes to the scheme of this

9

magazine. While she was focused on Japanese handmaid indigo dyeing, this art craft stands somewhere beyond national or cultural boundaries. Although this technique may be particular to Japanese culture, it was described as one of the examples of beautiful human heritage, rather than a distinct matter that can be only shared by the Japanese.

6.3 Harmony of cultures

Another amusing aspect of this magazine is that many cultural elements collaborate, inspire each other and represent new forms of originality. It is seen in the *matcha* (green tea) photograph taken in the frame of denim cloth, not a tatami mattress (p. 110). A man holding a grilled fish is not wearing a fisherman outfit or kimono, but modern white shirt (p.113). The magazine described green tea farmers' particular attention to details, patience and great care in their products. Instead of claiming that it is the uniqueness only to Japan, they find commonness with winemakers, saying "(i)n the same manner as a winemaker, the tea producer now becomes an artist" (p.108).

One of the recipes introduced in the magazine is "cherry blossom macarons with black sesame," which is a combination of the flower of Japanese symbol and representative French sweets. Another recipe, *hakusai no tsukemono* (salt-pickled napa cabbage), is a typical Japanese traditional home cooking. When photographed with lemon, red radish and herbs, it somehow looks like an international food (p.130). These presentations of food and recipes appear to have a mixture of Japanese tradition with Western influence, which gives fresh impressions to readers. It challenges constructed images on Japanese culture, like *matcha* in tatami rooms and cherry blossoms used

with Japanese sweets, and proposes another dimension of tradition.

The favorite coffee shops that they talk about were definitely influenced by Western taste. Nevertheless, this shows a new aspect that is uniquely situated in Tokyo. Coffee, a product from a foreign land, was developed and attached originalities in the context of Tokyo culture. Tsutaya in Daikanyama is also an international space. With a lot of foreign books and diverse customers, the store looks as if it were simply Westernized. The logo plate written in Kanji (蔦屋), however, shows an essence of Japanese culture, which collaborates with many cultures.

7. Monocle Magazine Vol. 9, "Japan Special Edition," 2015

Monocle has a more descriptive and opinion-centered format. In 2015, the magazine suggested that Tokyo is the most "livable" city in the world, followed by Fukuoka and Kyoto ranked 12th and 14th amongst many cities in the West. What is most unique about this magazine is that it reports on Japan from diverse angles, which even local Japanese may not recognize in their daily lives. They critique, love and respect Japan with a great focus on details. It is amusing that such diversity of Japan is embedded in the diversity of the world like a puzzle piece. They introduce tradition and culture unique to Japan, but these are lined up with other unique parts of the world. They portray an image of Japan as their "friend," with whom they can exchange both constructive advice and generous applause. Two key characteristics of the magazine: diversity within diversity and a pipeline for global cultural exchange, will be discussed in the following section.

7. 1 Diversity within diversity

One of the charms of this magazine is it focuses on various aspects of Japan within its own framework. The writers introduce most well known examples of Japanese pop culture such as manga, films, idol groups and Studio Ghibli. However, these are lined up with other aspects of Japanese culture that readers may often overlook, such as Yomiuri Newspaper, which has the largest circulation in the world, music instruments made by Roland and Technics and the gentlemen's book "Japanese Dandy."

Instead of talking about the most popular manga, they focus on Shueisha within a framework of Japan media as a number one selling company. Mascots, supported by the Japanese love for cutesy and cartoons, have been introduced in a similar manner. Rather than emphasizing how odd or unusual it is to observe a whole nation attracted to cuddly mascots, the magazine describes how those mascots were made and how much effort people put into them.

Comments regarding Shinzo Abe are not only about politics. They talk about what he was wearing or what hairstyle he had as a representative of the country. The importance of women in the work place to the Japanese economy is also discussed. Instead of arguing how far Japan is "behind" from the West, they introduce Japanese women who have been playing leading roles in big enterprises, with a focus on their personalities and passion for the future. All of such "slightly different" takes on Japanese people and products are eye opening and engaging.

The magazine covers politics, economy, international affairs, food, people, traditional skills and new changes. They formulate various opinions including things that do not frequently receive attention in Japan. The magazine gives a spotlight to the lives of Japanese Brazilians and their intercultural identities. They also discuss a movement for military exports to Australia and the UK and awkward attempts to get a seat on the UN Security Council without forming strong allies with neighbors. Traditional indigo dyeing professionals in Tokushima and worldwide eyeglass industry in Sabae, Fukui are also explored into details. Not only Tokyo and Osaka, but also Fukuoka attracts readers from its beauty.

Mitsubishi pencils are too familiar in Japanese everyday lives and people may not pay extra attention. But the magazine respects their effort for caring great into details, saying "(t)he digital age hasn't made the Japanese any less obsessed with great stationary" (p.95). They noted that Japan is a "tough crowd to please" and professionals' "pursuit of perfection" made these high-quality products (p.95).

Another aspect of Japan that they introduce is "a particular item of fresh produce or a unique craft" that can be found anywhere around the country (p.127). As they put it, "(r)egional identities were strong and further hardened by Japan's extraordinarily diverse topography" (p.127). Such diversity and particular regional cultures may exist in any other countries. Yet, they emphasize its strength and beauty as, "one of the most surprising things about crafts in modern Japan is that those links with the past – long since dissolved in most industrialised countries – remain largely intact" (p. 128).

All the descriptions of diversity make it questionable whether the Japanese are always under the pressure of collectivism and group harmony, with passive attitudes and a lack of creativity and critical thinking. There are organic and innovative aspects of Japan, just like those

that the West claims to have. As Jay pointed out, "Japan ranked highest in the global tally as the most creative country while conversely Japanese citizens largely do not see themselves. Tokyo ranked as the most creative city – except among Japanese – with New York ranking second," based on Adobe research project, State of Create in 2012 (p.60). Furthermore, even though the magazine discusses what is unique about Japan from diverse aspects, these are not amplified and separated from the rest of the world. Rather, they situate Japan as a part of diversity in a bigger picture. Reports on a Japanese footballer in Europe and Japan-Germany trade exchange are presented next to stories on airlines between Tehran and Istanbul, political movement in Valencia, an election in Estonia and renovation of train in Belgrade. An art fair in Tokyo is introduced along with an interview with art director in Hong Kong and an auction in Munich. A design shop in Kyoto and lacquer products in Tokyo are recommended with a table made by Ruth Aram in London, while a Japan inspired craft shop in Notting Hill and lamps made by Rubn in Sweden are on the same page.

The narrow focus of the issue is Japan, while it is designed in the bigger picture of uniqueness and trendy topics from all over the world. Editors treat Japanese as their "peers," who are not distinct and unreachable, along with many other nations. This approach is quite different from those only focusing on the extraordinary aspects, without seeing Japan as a piece of world diversity.

7.2 Magazine as a pipeline for global cultural exchange

Another appealing feature of Monocle's Special Japan Edition is its attitudes of connecting Japan and the West, through which people can learn from each other or exchange constructive advice. Editor Tyler Brûlé suggests "a clever Japanese company could set up a chain of schools in the West to teach some simple life skills and manners that seem to no longer be a part of basic parenting" (p.218). In the meantime, he proposes teacher-exchange programs, through which young generations in Japan can learn how to present to large audience, discuss problems and negotiate by saying "no" with pleasure.

He speaks highly of a Japanese "obsession" of being perfect, pursuit of details and dedication, which has produced a number of high-quality service and everyday products. This attitude can be seen in the JAL or ANA service culture and crews' behavior as well as on Japanese TV. Some of these, as Brûlé argued, may appear to be a "part of the national psyche of falling into line and following process." But, "I'd call it a good business opportunity that the rest of the world needs to seize hold of" (p.218). Fiona Wilson on "Fashion Police" (Issue 80, Vol. 8, 2015) also introduced a lesson from the Japanese fashion trailer Beams to a global audience. "Shopping in Japan: essential etiquette" (p. 75) suggests, look for the umbrella bags at the entrance on rainy day, take your shoes off to use fitting room, wear "face-cover" cloth to avoid make-up smears on clothes, place money or card on the small tray provided, wait for the staff to put additional plastic bag on the already wrapped package on rainy day, and enjoy being escorted to the door and having the bag handed to you (p.75). All of these processes are often criticized as time-consuming, not eco-friendly or meaningless to foreign shoppers. Wilson suggests that this culturally unique etiquette should be followed and enjoyed, as it is a part of Japanese value sets. Being different or uncommon in the West does not mean it should be disregarded.

The Japan Special Edition also explores the tie between Japan and the West, by presenting their commonness. Brûlé points out that "it's not hard to imagine Japan as the Italy of the Pacific: comfortable, chic, bursting with culture, handy with a football and a world leader in a variety of industrial sectors" (p.33). It is also similar that these two nations have "stiflingly bureaucratic, a carousel of government, confused policies and a glorious sense of decay," although they maintain both "oddly blissful disposition," which makes countries look more stable than they really are (p.33).

Reports on Kuramae, East Tokyo, with young creators remind us what happened in the East End in London or Brooklyn in New York. These younger generations have been attracted to the affordable rents and opening opportunities to start their own business. This movement has started changing the atmosphere of Kuramae with an emergence of cool restaurants, cafes and designers' shops that did not exist in this old town. It may lead to rise in property values in East Tokyo. Whether it is good or bad, what is happening in Japan can be also observable in the West. The word "declined economy" is often associated with the image of Japan and the revolution of a town initiated by younger generations is discussed in the context of London and New York. From the distant angle that Monocle presents, those labels are not particular to one country, but appear to prove a certain commonness around the world, no matter where it is in the East or the West.

Fashion photographs also demonstrate a linkage and harmony between the cultures. Models as well as their fashion appear to be somewhat universal. A man of generic nationality is wearing a jacket and shirt from Western brands, while holding a Porter bag. In the photo shoot 'Street

Smarts – Tokyo," a woman is wearing a pearl necklace and a ring by Mikimoto, taking a cab in Tokyo, with a coat by APC (p.179). All of the collaboration sends a vivid message that there is no clear line between the imagined dichotomy. Integration of cultures and elements from various parts of the world uphold an emergence of new styles, new ideas and new opportunities. This is the message that Monocle magazine delivers to the readers, beyond the Western claim of being superior and a distinct Otherness associated with Japan.

8. Discussion and Conclusion

This study employed two magazines, Kinfolk and Monocle, as examples of new cultural perspectives that challenge taken-for-granted East/West cultural labeling. The magazines highlight Japan, showing its uniqueness and discussing their findings. However, how they present the information in the art of these magazines is embedded in a universal framework, in which Japan is fused in the life of the West and the stream of global diversity. Japanese daily lives and customs may be different from the rest of the world on the surface, but the underlying ideas of such practices can be applied to anywhere around the world.

As Kinfolk demonstrated, the typical images of green tea, cherry blossoms and *ikebana* attached to Japan have been dissolved and reformed into new forms with an inspiration from the world. Collective values and traditional concepts like *ichi-go-ichi-e* no longer belong only to Japan. It could be applied to socializing with family and friends in any other international context. Japanese tradition is now also maintained by those who have traveled overseas, been influenced and bring their new identities and skills. Lastly, even a small and

particular practice that appears to be only unique to Japan has a significant connection with people outside their community. It also reminds us that people in the digitalized busy urban lifestyle can receive ideas for living from their practice rooted in the nature and human relationships.

Through talking about diverse aspects of Japan in the diverse context of the world, Monocle also challenges the image of a distinct and unique Other. They dig into Japan much further than manga and anime, from military exports to the stationary industry. It builds a new image of Japan that is not one-dimensional. The diversity within Japan is contributing to the diversity of the world, where norms and values continue to be different, yet exchanged, stimulated, and evolve on the same platform. The uniqueness of Japanese people and culture does exist, such as an obsession for perfection and practicality. However, what is happening in Japan can be observable even within Western society. On their platform, Japan is a part of global community; no longer a distinct Other. They propose a new formation of cultural exchange and open discussion, where both Japan and the West can influence each other.

Although only a glimpse of such new cultural phenomena has been discussed in these magazines, it may become more significant and strengthened in the near future. The West has been taking the role of opinion leaders, decision makers and judges for Others until now. This power structure has already started to be restructured in new forms of discourse and presentations. Real globalization and a global community has finally started emerging, after decades and decades of one-way cultural labeling through colonial discourse.

The definition of "new" could be up for debate. What this study saw through the magazines might have been already happening in the human history.

Nevertheless, Kinfolk and Monocle have been pioneers in bringing this awareness to a wider audience that isn't necessarily researchers and professionals. Readers can start seeing the world differently while looking at the magazines. New forms of discussion don't have to start from theory-based studies and research on Japanology. The magazines have been and will be playing key roles in expanding such cultural exchange.

References

Atkinson, D. (1997). A critical approach to critical thinking in TESOL. *TESOL Quarterly*, 31, 71-94.

Avery, K. et al. (Writers), & Perota, J. et al.(Directors). (2015). Episode 13, Season 2 [Television series episode]. In T. Carvell et al. (Producers). *Last week tonight with John Oliver*. New York, NY: HBO.

Beaucé, T. & Polak, C. (1980). *Jyaponichudo* [La Japonitude]. Tokyo, Japan: Saimaru Shuppankai.

Bender, L. (Producer), & Tarantino, Q. (Director). (2003). *Kill Bill* [Motion picture]. United States: Miramax, A Band Apar & Super Cool ManChu.

Benedict, R. (1967). *The chrysanthemum and the sword*. Cleveland, OH: Meridian Books.

Bennett, M. J. (2013). *Basic concepts of intercultural communication* (2nd ed.). Boston, MA: Intercultural Press.

Berry, J. W. (2006). Contexts of acculturation. In Sam, D. & W. Berry (Eds.), *The Cambridge Handbook of Acculturation Psychology*. (pp. 27-34). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Best, I. (2014, Sep. 26). The vogue for Japanese chefs in French Kitchen. *The Financial Times.* Retrieved from http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/7001f030-41eb-11e4-b98f-00144feabdc0.html

Bestor, T. C. (2009, Nov. 19). How sushi went global. *Foreign Policy*, 54-63.

Blum, D. (Producer), & Howard, R. (Director). (1986). *Gung ho* [Motion picture]. United States: Paramount Pictures.

Businessweek (1995, Apr. 9). Japan's new identity. *Bloomberg Business*. Retrieved from http://www.bloomberg.com/bw/stories/1995-04-30/japans-new-identity-cover-story-apr-dot-10

Cameron, D. (2000). *Good to talk?* London, UK: Sage Publications.

Cary, D & Greaney, D. (Writers)., & Reardon, J. (Director). (1999). Episode 23, Season 10, Thirty minutes over Tokyo [Television series episode] In L. J. Adamson (Producer), *The Simpsons*. Los Angeles, CA: Fox.

Christopher, R. C. (1983) *Japaniizu maindo* [The Japanese mind]. Tokyo, Japan: Kodansha.

Coppola, F. F. & Coppola, S. (Producers), & Coppola, S. (Director). (2003). *Lost in translation* [Motion picture]. United States and Japan: Focus Features, Tokushinsha Film Corporation, American Zoetrope & Elemental Films.

Curry, N. (2012, Jun 11). Low cost and high quality integrated care: what can we learn from Japan? *The Guardian*. Retrieved from http://www.theguardian.com/social-care-network/2012/jun/11/integrated-care-learn-from-japan

Doi, T. (1973). *The anatomy of dependence*. New York, NY: Kodansha International.

Drucker, P. F. (1971). What we can learn from Japanese management. *Harvard Business Review, March Issue*. Retrieved from https://hbr.org/1971/03/what-we-can-learn-from-japanese-management

Dunham, L. et al. (Writers), & Dunham, L. et al. (Directors). (2015). Episode 10, Season 4, Home Birth [Television series episode]. In. J. Apatow et al. (Producers), *Girls*. New York, NY: HBO.

Ellwood, C. & Nakane, I. (2009). Privileging of speech in EAP and mainstream university classrooms: A critical evaluation of participation. *TESOL Quarterly*, 43, 203-230.

Fritschner, L. M. (2000). Inside the undergraduate college classroom: Faculty and students differ on the meaning of student participation. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 71, 342-362.

Gudykunst, W. & Ting-Toomey, S. (1988). *Culture and interpersonal communication*. Newbury Park, CA: SAGE Publications Inc.

Guirdham, M. (1999). *Communicating across cultures*. Hampshire, UK: Palgrave.

Hall, E. T. (1976). *Beyond culture*. New York, NY: Anchor Books.

Hendon, D. & Hendon, R. (1994). *How to negotiate worldwide*. Aldershot, UK: Gower Publishing Limited.

Hitchcock. D.I. (1998). *Ajiateki kachi to amerikateki kachi* [Asian values and the United States]. Tokyo, Japan: Keio Gijyuku Daigaku Shuppankai.

Hofstede, G., Hofstede, G. J. & Minkov, M. (2010). *Cultures and Organizations* (3rd ed.). New York, NY: McGraw Hill.

Kinfolk (2013). *Discovering new things to cook, make and do*. Volume 8. Portland, OR: Kinfolk Magazine.

Kitagawa, T. (2005). *Finrando mesoddo nyumon* [Introduction to Finish method]. Tokyo, Japan: Keizaikai.

Kristof, N. D. (1997, Aug. 31). Introducing a child to the culture of shame. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/1997/08/31/weekinreview/introducing-a-child-to-the-culture-of-shame.html?_r=0

Krugman, P. (2014, Oct. 31). West needs to learn lessons from Japan. *Chron*. Retrieved from http://www.chron.com/opinion/outlook/article/

Krugman-West-needs-to-learn-lessons-from-Japan-5861899.php

Kubota, R. (1999). Japanese culture constructed by discourses: Implications for applied Linguistics research and ELT. *TESOL Quarterly*, 9-35.

Kubota, R. (2001). Discursive construction of the images of U.S. classrooms. *TESOL Quarterly*, 35, 9-38.

Kumaravadivelu, B. (2003). Problematising cultural stereotypes in TESOL. *TESOL Quarterly*, 37, 709-718.

Lindholm, C. (2008). *Culture and authenticity*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing.

Linn, M. C., Lewis, C., Tsuchida, I. & Songer, N. B. (2000). Beyond Fourth-Grade Science: Why Do U.S. and Japanese Students Diverge? *Educational Researcher*, 29, 4-14.

Majumdar, K., Campbell, L., Yee, R., Johnson, J. & Green, B. (Directors). (2011). Episode 7, Season 2, Japan [Television series episode]. In R. Gervais et al. (Producers), *An idiot abroad*. London, UK: Sky Corporation.

Matsumoto, D. (1999). *Culture and psychology* (2nd ed.). Boston, MA: Wadsworth Publishing.

McCurry, J. (2013, Feb. 1). Japanese pop star shaves head in apology – for night with boyfriend. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/feb/01/japanese-pop-star-apology-boyfriend

McGray, D. (2002, Jun. 1). The other superpower. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from http://www.theguardian.com/books/2002/jun/01/featuresreviews.guardianreview14

McGray, D. (2009). Japan's Gross National Cool. *Foreign Policy*. Retrieved from foreignpolicy.com/2009/11/11/japans-gross-national-cool/

McGrew, A. (1992). A global society? In S, Hall, D. Held & T. McGrew (Eds.), *Modernity and its futures*. (pp. 61-102). Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

Michel, P. S. (2013, Feb. 18). A pop star shouldn't shave her head in shame for having a boyfriend. *The Atlantic*. Retrieved from http://www.theatlantic.com/sexes/archive/2013/02/a-pop-star-shouldnt-shave-her-head-in-shame-for-having-a-boyfriend/272907/

Miller, T. (1995). Japanese learners' reactions to communicative English lessons. *JALT Journal*, 17, 31-52.

Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (2013). *Annual Health, Labour and Welfare Report, Study of the aspirations of young people*. Retrieved from http://www.mhlw.go.jp/english/wp/wp-hw7/dl/summary.pdf

Mizuhara, M. & Nishio, N. (2014). *Purezentation gairon* [Introduction to Presentation]. Tokyo, Japan: Jusonbo.

Monocle (2015). Issue 81, volume 9, March 2015. London, UK: Winkontent Limited.

Morokuzu, M. (2009). *Finrando kyoiku seikou no mesoddo* [Successful Finish method]. Tokyo, Japan: Mainichi Communications.

Nakane, C. (1973). *Japanese society*. Singapore: Tuttle Publishing.

Nicol, C. W. (2015, Feb. 28). *Omotenashi* – Japanese hospitality? *Japan Times*. Retrieved from http://www.japantimes.co.jp/life/2015/02/28/environment/omotenashi-japanese-hospitality/#.VmPXdHd3x8d

Palmeri, C. & Byrnes, N. (2004, Jul. 25). Is Japanese style taking over the world? *Bloomberg Business*. Retrieved from http://www.bloomberg.com/bw/stories/2004-07-25/is-japanese-style-taking-over-the-world

Pilling, D. (2014, Mar. 17). Why is Japan so... different? *Foreign Policy*. Retrieved from http://foreignpolicy.com/2014/03/17/why-is-japan-so-different/?wp_login_redirect=0

Renton, A. (2006, Feb. 26). How sushi ate the world. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from http://www.theguardian.com/world/2006/feb/26/japan.foodanddrink

Said, E (1979). *Orientalism*. New York, NY: Vintage Books Edition.

Scollon, R., Scollon, S. & Jones, R. H. (2012). *Intercultural Communication: A Discourse Approach* (3rd ed.). Oxford, UK: Blackwell.

Sony Life Insurance Co. (2015). *Jyosei no katsuyaku ni kansuru chosa* [Survey on women's participation]. Retrieved from http://www.sonylife.co.jp/company/news/26/nr_150326.html

Statistics Japan (2011). *Kakeichosa*. Retrieved from http://www.stat.go.jp/data/kakei/gaikyo/index.htm

Stewart, E. C. & Bennett, M. J. (1991). *American cultural patterns*. Boston, MA: Intercultural Press, Inc.

Strauss, D. (1996). Reconsidering Japanese-American relations. *American Literary History*, 8, 582-595.

Sussman, N. M. & Rosenfeld, H. M. (1982). Influence of culture, language, and sex on conversational distance. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 42, 66-74.

Tannen, D. (2007). Conversational signals and devices. In J. Monaghan & J. Goodman (Eds.), A *Cultural Approach to Interpersonal Communication* (pp.150-160). Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

Tinsley, T. (2013). Languages: The state of the nation. *British Academy, Alcantara Communications*. Retrieved from http://www.ucml.ac.uk/sites/default/files/pages/160/State_of_the_Nation_REPORT_WEB.pdf

Torikai, K. (1996). *Ibunka o Koeru Eigo: Nihonjin wa naze hanasenaika* [English beyond cultures: Why can Japanese people not speak English?]

Tokyo, Japan: Maruzen Kabushiki Gaisha.

Varner, I. & Beamer, L. (2011). *Intercultural communication in the global workplace* (5th ed.). New York, NY: McGraw Hill.

Vogel, E. F. (1979). *Japan as number one: Lessons for America*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.

Wakiyama, S. (2015). *Textbook for presentation* (3rd ed.). Tokyo, Japan: Nikkei BP.

Wittmeyer, A. P. Q. (2013, Sep. 13). With the Olympics coming to Tokyo, will Japan finally brush up on its English? *Foreign Policy*. Retrieved from http://foreignpolicy.com/2013/09/09/with-the-olympics-coming-to-tokyo-will-japan-finally-brush-up-on-its-english/