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Toward a Theory of Cultural Translatability:

A Study of Business Communication between English and Japanese

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Abstract

Translation takes place when communication involves two or more languages. Numerous texts are translated on a daily basis in today's hyperconnected world. Yet, translations appear bizarre at times: More precisely, a translation does not always make sense to a target audience, even if it is linguistically accurate. Although many academic works discuss this kind of translation oddity, no theory or concept is available to explain it. This thesis identifies the lack of an established concept as its research problem.

To tackle the problem, this thesis proposes and tests the new concept *cultural translatability* and a diagrammatic framework, which is a tool to address the concept. They result from interdisciplinary review of literature and inductive analysis of it. Throughout this thesis, the deduction and the induction meet and mirror each other in research cycles, until the framework reaches theoretical saturation to support the proposed concept.

The new concept is distinguished from linguistic translatability and provisionally defined as the feasibility of translating cultural specificities from one society to another. A low level of translation feasibility is referred to as the issue of cultural translatability, which denotes the challenge of translating a culturally driven source text as-is, not the absolute level of untranslatability. The concept encompasses similar terms, such as *transplant*, *transfer*, and *transpose*, that describe the dynamics in translation.

The proposed framework is a simple yet versatile two-dimensional field which has three levels of economy, organization, and individual. Each level is structured to function with any relevant concept. Among available options, the dichotomy *Liberal Market Economy (LME)* vs. *Coordinated Market Economy (CME)* is adopted for the economy level to draw a geographical boundary. It corresponds with the research focus: LMEs' shared elements and the CME of Japan. English is the primary language in LMEs, and Japanese is the one in the CME. This thesis examines translations of texts that describe or involve business practice at the organization level, focusing on the language combination of English and Japanese. At the individual level are individuals' cultural values of preference, such as individualistic or collectivistic ways of thinking.

Each level has a linear continuum with two extremes of symmetrical opposites which capture the social realities of translation cases. The framework is necessary to address the proposed concept of cultural translatability, which is the simplest possible explanation for a phenomenon with nothing contextualized. It helps contextualize attributes of translation: for example, a textualized description of business practice in LMEs at the organization level. With its framework, the new concept helps explain a situation in which a linguistically adequate translation does not make sense to a target audience, even if it does linguistically and culturally to the translator.

This thesis's overarching contribution is the proposed concept and its framework. In doing so, this thesis advances several literature concepts, including cultural compatibility and cultural elasticity, that constitute the framework. Developed from an interdisciplinary approach, the proposed concept will be beneficial for future cross-cultural research and foster productive dialogue between business studies and language-related studies.

Declaration

This thesis is an original work of my research and contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at any university or equivalent institution and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

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Academic Contributions Made during Candidature

Publications

- Kitamura, K. 2023. Quality Fintech in the Context of the Japanese Main Bank System. In Khare, A. & Baber, W. W. (Eds.) *Adopting and Adapting Innovation in Japan's Digital Transformation*. Singapore: Springer Asia.
- Kitamura, K. 2022A. Ethical Compatibility of Socially Responsible Banking: Comparing the Japanese Main Bank System with the USA. *Research in International Business and Finance*, 62(2022), 101686.
- Kitamura, K. 2022B. Japanese Business Communication in the COVID crisis: A Study of Horenso and its Implications. In Khare, A., Odake, N. & Ishikura, H. (Eds.) *Japanese Business Operations in an Uncertain World*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Kitamura, K. 2021A. A Conceptual Framework of Cultural Competence: A Case Study of a Japanese Multinational in a Cross-National Context. *2021 AJBS Proceedings*, 1140-1171.
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I also appreciate all the advice and support I have received outside Monash University in the past two decades on the theme of cultural translatability and related topics. I was born and raised in Japan and, after finishing my undergraduate degree, I was employed in the banking sector for eight years. There I met an extremely inspiring mentor, Mr. Hisao Haraguchi, who taught me everything necessary to be a Japanese bank employee at one of the world's largest financial institutions in the 1990s. To learn how business works outside Japan, I decided to live abroad. I had a one-year study opportunity in New Zealand, moved to the USA, and received an MBA in international business. I then moved to the UK and completed my MA dissertation with the same theme of cultural (un)translatability in 2007.

Since then, the theme has become my life's work. This thesis is to develop the concept by incorporating what I have learned in the countries where I have lived. I moved back to the USA and worked again in banking for 13 years, specifically on the credit side with billions of financial facilities extended to well-known institutions. What struck me most was, however, not the size of the bank's balance sheet, but the distinctively different ways of doing business between LMEs and the CME. I was fortunate to have an opportunity to be a part UK resident and take on a research study with a British university, where I met Prof. Norman Flynn, my esteemed supervisor in my UK time. Without his unconditional support and continued encouragement, I would have given up on the concept. After leaving the banking sector in 2020, I started teaching for educational institutions, including Loyola University Chicago, where I learned about the joy of teaching. My appreciation goes on to my friends, colleagues, and students for their advice, support, and inspirations throughout my career and studies.

Fortunately, early versions of my research works, including this thesis's chapters, are published during my candidature. I am grateful to the editors, especially Dr. Anshuman Khare with Athabasca University, Dr. William Baber with Kyoto University, and Dr. John Goodell with University of Akron, for their advice and suggestions that helped me refine my ideas on the respective chapters. I am thankful to Dr. John Breen with University of London, SOAS (currently International Center for Japanese Studies) and Dr. Tetsuo Harada with University of Oregon (currently Waseda University) for their advice and support given during my master's studies and beyond.

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Notes on Style

This thesis follows the generally accepted rules in English for italicization (Waddingham, 2014). Japanese words are transliterated and italicized according to modified Hepburn system except for long vowels (aa, ee, ii, oo, and uu) to express Japanese words with English alphabets (rather than macrons). Exceptions are made for generally known words, such as Tokyo. Commonly used or frequently discussed terms, such as keiretsu, are exempted from italicization owing to their particularly frequent occurrence in this thesis.

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Chapter One: Introduction

This introductory chapter will outline the scope and boundaries of this doctoral thesis. It explains the aim of research, clarifies the research themes, and offers the working definitions of key terms.

1.1 Aim of the thesis

A myriad of communications take place between citizens of different countries in today's hyperconnected world. Numerous texts are translated on a daily basis and used for various purposes including but not limited to business and pleasure. Translated materials (target language text or "TT" hereafter) play an important role in conveying the contents. However, at times, they appear bizarre to an audience who does not speak the source language ("SL") and/or who has no knowledge of the SL text ("ST"). This issue poses the following question: Is there an item which is linguistically fully translatable into the target language ("TL") but culturally atypical to the TL culture ("TC")? What is considered normative in the SL culture ("SC") may not always be so in the TC. How can such incongruities be theorized in academic terms? This research project is a quest to find the answer to this question.

The issue is addressed in literature, but the answer remains elusive. In the field of translation studies, Catford (1965) talks about a possible distinction between linguistic and cultural (un)translatability. Linguistic (un)translatability is a relative notion concerning the ST, of which the TL has no formally corresponding feature, text, or item (Catford, 1965, p. 94). As for cultural untranslatability, Catford (1965, p. 101) writes "... what renders 'culturally untranslatable' item 'untranslatable' is the fact that the use in the TL text of any approximate translation equivalent produces an unusual collocation in the TL". Although this idea appears to make sense, Catford (1965) concludes that it would be, after all, a type of linguistic untranslatability. Bassnett (2002, p. 40) criticizes Catford as follows: "Catford starts from different premises, and because he does not go far enough in considering the dynamic nature of language and culture, he invalidates his own category of cultural untranslatability." Alongside this discussion, Bassnett and Lefevere (1990) propose the "cultural turn", which advocates an elevated emphasis on culture in translation. Many translation scholars have followed it (Venuti, 2004). Two decades later, Katan and Taibi (2021, p. 33) write, in the latest edition of the popular coursebook *Translating Cultures*, "...the traditional teaching of culture to translation and interpreting students, and to language students in general, has not focussed on culture as a shared system for interpreting reality and organizing experience (a possible definition for culture)". This observation summarizes how culture has been viewed to date: For language-related studies, culture primarily means tangible culture, such as art and literature, as discussed later in Section 2.1.1. This thesis focuses on the uncharted area of intangible culture: a shared system of thought for interpreting realities and organizing experiences. As Katan and Taibi (2021) point out, the possible category of cultural (un)translatability is left undefined in terms of the possible definition of culture. To the best of my knowledge, no such category is available in any academic disciplines¹. This thesis regards the lack of an established theory of the category as

¹ There exist a handful of publications with the term *cultural (un)translatability* inserted in their titles. However, none of them systematically discuss intangible culture enough to have a solid definition of cultural (un)translatability.

its research problem. The aim of this thesis is to substantiate the possible category by developing the concept of translatability into the new concept of cultural translatability to deal with intangible culture. For discussion purposes, a low level of cultural translatability is provisionally referred to as the issue of cultural translatability. This thesis is written for conceptual development, not to claim that “untranslatability” exists.

Literature suggests several points of departure for dealing with the research problem. Li (2005, p. 62) describes the fields of translation as follows: “Technical and business translation accounts for by far the biggest proportion of translation work in the world today”. Relating to this view, the discipline of international business has released vast research, much of which pertains to the issue of cultural translatability. Its major themes include cross-cultural management, which deals with how a multinational conglomerate conducts business in different countries across national borders. Many scholars have discussed the possibility of communicating, transferring, and transplanting a business practice from one country to another through translation. Japanese style management is an example. It has been a popular field of study across the world especially in the late twentieth century, which includes Japan’s economic growth period. Researchers and practitioners actively investigated Japan’s secrets for their economic success. Japanese business is a suitable area of research for the category for three reasons: 1) It is considered a rich source of scholarly research conducted over the decades, 2) business-related data are widely available in the English-Japanese cross-national context, and 3) business-related data are suitable for the research aim. The issue of cultural translatability inevitably calls for the need for interdisciplinary research. This thesis will treat business-related data as primary research samples.

Another field of study concerning the issue of cultural translatability is communication with the focus on culture, often referred to as intercultural communication (Jackson, 2014). Prior research on the subject appears to offer useful insights relevant to the theme. However, scholars point out that the field is fragmented and rather disjointed (Anderson, 2012). If so, the reason for the fragmentation may relate to the research problem found in translation studies. Neither of the fields have a theoretical framework that binds fragmented accounts concerning culture. This view suggests the need for a pivotal concept to address the issue of cultural translatability. This thesis aims to substantiate the new category and its framework to satisfy the need by focusing on business communication. If tested, they will benefit future research in and between those related disciplines mentioned above.

1.2 Research background

This section examines a pertinent example from sociolinguistics that helps understand the issue of cultural translatability and the concept *culturally driven specificities* that will be frequently used in this thesis. Noted in Kitamura (2018; 2009), Yamada (1992) discusses relevant topics on American and Japanese business discourse. Below is a Japanese proverb with an English translation of it. The ST and the TT metaphorically describe personal characteristics, quoted from her book (Yamada, 1992), followed by her comments:

- (ST) *Deru kugi wa utareru*
(Lit.) *sticks out nail AUX gets hammered PAS*

- (TT) The nail that sticks out gets hammered back in

For Americans, a strong individual is a better one, someone who can “stand on his/her own two feet”; someone who stands out as an individual. For Japanese, the proverb reflects how a group member should not stand out. In fact, translating the compliment in English, “She is a real individual!” to Japanese becomes an insult: “*Kosei no tsuyoi hito ne!*” (What a person with strong individuality!). This pejorative remark has the combined sense of: She is weird (different) and selfish (does what she wants without conforming) (Yamada, 1992, p. 33).

The set of Japanese and English proverbs exemplify the type of research samples that raise questions of cultural translatability. Yamada’s analysis says that, in Japanese culture, the nail (i.e., an individualistic person) gets hammered (e.g., criticized) because it violates some collective code of conduct unspoken yet shared in the society. If the English translation is used as-is, it can be inappropriate in the English-speaking countries where “the nail that sticks out” is usually “a better one” (1992, p. 33). The translated text is unlikely to be culturally congruous, while both texts are linguistically translatable to each other with no collocation oddness.

This Japanese proverb has been of interest to researchers, and recent studies (Mantello et al., 2021) support the incongruity that Yamada pointed out roughly 30 years ago. For example, Güngör et al. (2014) report on the different types of collectivist cultures of Japan and Turkey: in their words, the Japanese tend to “fit in” with a collective, whereas the Turks prefer to “stick together” as a collective. Alternatively said, the words *conformity* and *relatedness* represent Japanese and Turkish cultures, respectively (Güngör et al., 2014). According to Güngör et al. (2014), the following proverbs respectively exemplify Japanese and Turkish cultures: “The nail that sticks out gets hammered back down” and “The sheep that separates from the flock is devoured by the wolf” (p. 1374). In both cultures, being a member of a collective is part of their life, though types of collectives differ across collectivist cultures according to the literature. The Japanese type of collectivism is treated as collectivism in this thesis for discussion purposes. This thesis refers to linguistic items like the Japanese proverb with a culturally specific connotation as culturally driven. The opposite is referred to as culturally independent. Culturally independent texts do not raise the issue of cultural translatability: If there is an issue of translatability with a culturally independent text, it will be linguistic. Chapter Two will detail the terms.

The working term *culturally driven* is derived from literature. Strauss and Quinn (1997) refer to culture as “learned interpretation” that embodies “cultural meanings”. In their words, a cultural meaning is “the shared cognitive-emotional state that results when the mental structures of a group of people respond to typical objects and events in their world” (p. 15). Learned interpretation is “the typical (frequently recurring and widely shared aspects of the) interpretation of some type of object or event evoked in people as a result of their similar life experiences” (p. 6). Learned interpretation is publicly shared, as “meanings are established prior to the individual’s leaning of them” and “individuals do not discover or make up cultural meanings on their own” (pp. 16-17). The literature suggests that culture can be perceived as a set of regionally patterned ways of thinking, including beliefs and preferences. This statement is treated as the working definition of culture in this thesis. Chapter Two will further discuss the concept of culture.

The discussion above suggests that the term *society* can be alternatively expressed as a social group that shares the same value system of culture. This description is used as the working definition of the term *society* in this thesis. In the case of Yamada's sample, the proverb is used to discuss the American and Japanese societies. This thesis focuses on English-speaking liberal market economies or LMEs, namely, Australia, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, the UK, and the USA (Hall and Soskice, 2001). This terminology is not to claim that all LMEs are the same or to suggest that only English-speaking countries are LMEs. It is to clarify the scope of research: LMEs' shared characteristics, including the patterns of wealth creation. As for Japan, this thesis refers to it as the coordinated market economy or CME (Hall and Soskice, 2001). This thesis focuses on the country combination of LMEs and Japan and the language combination of English and Japanese. For terminology including *individualism*, this chapter will offer working definitions and clarify related concepts such as essentialism.

It should be noted that culture shared at the country level is one among many. For instance, companies have their own culture - corporate (or organizational) culture - which affects or even determines the decision-making process and/or the outcome (Lane, Maznevski, and DiStefano, 2009). Corporate culture is defined or described in many different ways, one of which is "a pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think and feel in relation to those problems" (Diamond, 2008, p. 277). Although this description shares much with the concept of learned interpretation (Strauss and Quinn, 1997) mentioned above, corporate culture is company specific: in other words, it is shared within the company and generally does not go beyond the corporate borders. It represents corporate character, not a societal one. Corporate culture is excluded from this research, which focuses on the country combination of LMEs and Japan and the language combination of English and Japanese. This research will investigate cultural values that are shared in the respective societies. Having reviewed the example, the following section will explain why the research theme is important.

1.3 Need for the new category of cultural translatability

An investigation into cultural values is important in social science, especially when research involves a theory in a cross-cultural setting. Babbie (2015) writes "Today, social theory has to do with what is, not with what should be.... This means that scientific theory - and, more broadly, science itself - cannot settle debates about values" (p. 10). "Values" in this quote correspond to cultural values of preference in this thesis. The quote explains that a regional belief cannot be treated as a theory especially in an international setting where cultural values can be different. Babbie offers an extreme example to make the point clear.

Science cannot determine whether capitalism is better or worse than socialism. We could determine scientifically whether capitalism or socialism most supports human dignity and freedom only if we first agreed on some measurable definitions of dignity and freedom. Our conclusions would then be limited to the meanings specified in our definitions. They would have no general meaning beyond that. (Babbie, 2015, p. 10)

In this example, “human dignity” and “freedom” can be culturally driven and defined in different ways. Different premises result in different results. For example, aside from the extreme dichotomy, prior research refers to Japan’s capitalism as “collective capitalism” (Hundt and Uttam, 2017) distinguished from that of LMEs. This differentiation is consistent with the LME-CME distinction (Hall and Soskice, 2001) rooted in the different definitions of “freedom” in business settings². Babbie offers another example with advice:

If we could agree that suicide rates, say, or giving to charity were good measures of the quality of a religion, then we could determine scientifically whether Buddhism or Christianity is the better religions. Again, our conclusion would be inextricably tied to our chosen criteria. As a practical matter, people seldom agree on precise criteria for determining issues of value, so science is seldom useful in settling such debates. (Babbie, 2015, p. 10)

This example is less extreme and probably easier to swallow for many. It explains that people, including scientists, seldom agree on regionally patterned ways of thinking, including cultural values of preference, that shape the outcome of social research. Consequently, an argument proposed as a “universally applicable theory” to all societies may not be workable in all societies because it is only tested with the cultural values of preference in the country/region of origin. Babbie (2015) warns “In fact, questions like these are so much a matter of opinion and belief that scientific inquiry is often viewed as a threat to what is already known” (p. 10). In academic terms, such a “threat” can be explained as an ecological fallacy (Neuman, 2006): an erroneous application of what is statistically or scientifically “true” in one society yet inconsistent with what is already known in another.

If tested, the possible concept of cultural translatability can be useful for testing an academic argument proposed as a theory. It can help evaluate whether the argument is a de facto theory or regional belief by analyzing its cultural translatability. If it raises the issue of cultural translatability, it is a regional belief, not a theory in an international setting. A theory needs to be culturally independent or capable of explaining culturally driven phenomena for being applicable to all societies. If the geographical boundary of applicability is clearly defined, it could be seen as a theory to explain observed realities and predict phenomena within the defined boundary. The concept of cultural translatability may serve as a tool to prevent a “threat” from occurring in international settings. It may also be interpreted as a cautionary note that the recognition of cultural values of preference is the first step for doing that. The following section will discuss foundational ideas for fulfilling the research aim.

1.4 Approach to the research problem

The preceding example (Yamada, 1992) offers five implications: First, it suggests that cultural translatability may be distinguished from linguistic translatability. The ST is linguistically translatable, but TT hardly makes sense in TC unless the ST connotation is transformed or omitted. From the Japanese standpoint, the ST connotation can be translated into English by rewriting (Lefevere, 1992): Individualistic personality is not a good disposition. The following also denotes the culturally driven connotation: Individualistic personality

² As a side note, economic anthropology focuses on the typology of economy with the integration of anthropological insights (Hann and Hart, 2011). The whole discipline supports the LME-CME distinction, as well as Babbie’s argument.

attracts negative attention. Linguistically speaking, these descriptions of the original sense have no grammatical errors, possibly attaining dynamic equivalence (Nida and Taber, 1969) in the English language. However, it is unlikely to attain naturalness (Nida and Taber, 1969) in target culture (TC) because, in many English-speaking countries, individualistic personality is considered a good disposition. This culturally driven connotation or “situational feature” in Catford’s words (1965, p. 102) gives a “cultural shock” yet no “collocational shock” to a TC audience. If the linguistically duly translated situational feature is culturally incongruous or even disagreeing in the TC, the ST can be deemed to raise the issue of cultural translatability. To tackle the research problem, this research will focus on the original sense for analyzing and unpacking its cultural components before any omission or manipulation takes place.

Second, the example points out the need of incorporating concepts relating to culture, such as individualism in the example, for addressing translatability of culturally driven items between societies. Yamada (1992) effectively presents her observation by comparing two cultures that exhibit distinct differences of cultural connotations embedded in texts. The opposite of individualism is often referred to as collectivism (Thomas and Peterson, 2017). A plain way of expressing collectivism is the primacy of collective interest over the primacy of individualistic interest when the interests are in conflict (Chen, Peng and Saporito, 2002): in other words, one option, not both.

The previous paragraph pertains to the important point of recurrence mentioned in the preceding discussion regarding culture: Learned interpretation is “the typical (frequently recurring and widely shared aspects of the) interpretation of some type of object or event evoked in people as a result of their similar life experiences” (Strauss and Quinn, 1997, p. 6). Using the preceding term *conformity* (Güngör et al., 2014), Japanese culture can be expressed as the primacy of collective interest of conformity. Literature says that, as a breakdown at the country level, individualism is generally high in the English-speaking countries, and collectivism can be found in parts of Europe and much of Africa, Latin America, and Asia (Livermore, 2015; Triandis, 2001), including Japan as a collectivistic society. The example (Yamada, 1992) is lucid because it expresses the typically shared way of thinking in the highly individualistic American society and that of the highly collectivistic Japanese society (Triandis, 2001) through language.

This thesis refers to typically shared ways of thinking as cultural values (Thomas and Peterson, 2017), which include similar terms including regionally shared values of preference and learned interpretations shared in regions. It differentiates commonly used cultural terms: *cultural value* and *cultural construct*. Cultural values - such as individualistic ways of thinking - constitute the systems of thought, often referred to as cultural constructs, such as individualism.

This thesis also uses the term *specificity*, which has a wider semantic field than the term *value*, to express anything specific to the society. For instance, cultural values and regionally specific practices, such as a collectivistic behavior in the example, are specificities. In Yamada’s example, Japanese collectivist behavior is a specificity.

Third, the example highlights the significance of continuity. Yamada’s work (1992) was published roughly 30 years ago. Cavusgil, Knight, and Riesenberger (2020) write that the cultural difference of individualism versus collectivism remains today: in other words, the cultural issue depicted in the example

has likely remained for at least for 30 years. Chronological comparisons of relevant works help to understand the continuity. The earliest evidence can be the origin of ecologies. To trace the origin of individualism and collectivism, Triandis (2001, p. 912) writes “For example, in ecologies where one makes a living by acting self-reliantly, as is often the case among hunters, there is greater emphasis on self-reliance and less emphasis on conformity than in ecologies that require conformity for survival, as is more common in agricultural societies”. Many early and recent studies support this historical link between the ecologies and the cultural values: for instance, Hayashi (1988) writes “Paddy cultivation is the fundamental determinant of Japanese culture” in his book *Culture and Management in Japan* (p. 86). Buggle (2020) reports on the agricultural origins of collectivist cultures that emphasize group conformity over individual autonomy with the focus on irrigation agriculture. In the case of Japan, rice cultivation began in the Yayoi period that spanned from 900 BC to 250 AD (Colcutt, 2022). The literature indicates that the dichotomy between individualism and collectivism has remained for centuries, while the degree of it - for example, how individualistic the majority of society is - can change. This thesis will first focus on the continuity of established practices that differ between countries to create the proposed framework. After proposing the framework, it will treat changes and reversions as supplementary data to locate the individual specificity. It will use individualism and collectivism as the primary constructs to probe other lines of cultural values since literature commonly points out their historical significance. The literature suggests that individualism and collectivism, among others, together characterize the system of values orientation in a specific culture. This thesis presupposes that all the cultural constructs are in a dynamic equilibrium and are interrelated with each other. Chapter Nine will discuss the interrelatedness of cultural specificities.

For the research aim, this thesis will propose a framework structured to have the widest possible applicability capable of illustrating culturally driven specificities at any given point of time. Part Two will examine the origin and continuity of business practice to date and present how the proposed framework illustrates changes and reversions of continued business practice. It will identify watershed events that have significant impacts on the continuity of business practice, rather than periodizing (or limiting) the history of Japanese style management. The identification of watershed events will help discuss changes and reversions by comparing pre- and post-watershed business practices.

Fourth, the example suggests the need for geographical boundaries for discussion. Thomas (2016, p. 35) warns “multiple cultures can exist within national borders, and the same cultural group can span many nations”. A representative case of multiple cultures can be the USA, which mostly consists of immigrants and their descendants from a long-term perspective. This thesis regards that certain cultural values in a country with cultural diversity are generally stabilized in the long run over generations. Acknowledging that the country boundaries and the language boundaries are not identical, it uses the country boundaries for discussion. There are reasons for this approach: It is efficient and effective since most research works adopt the country boundaries for cross-cultural research. For example, the term *national culture* is still widely used and researched (Livermore, 2015). The country borders usually equate with the legal and/or regulatory borders that have major impacts on international business (Cavusgil, Knight, and Riesenberger, 2020). The

example (Yamada, 1992) compares the learned interpretations of collectivism and individualism, both of which are the archetype of national culture in Japan and the USA, respectively.

Finally, related to the first point, the example suggests that the issue of cultural translatability is not purely linguistic. The concept of individualism, among other intangible constructs, is hardly considered a linguistic concept. It can be dangerous to insist from the outset that the possible category is purely linguistic. This thesis incorporates cultural concepts to tackle the research problem, which entails the need of going beyond the narrow focus on words or texts. To do so, it analyzes not only an individual-level cultural value of preference, which is the primary unit of analysis, but also business practice interrelated to the unit of analysis. It examines textualized communications associated with culturally specific practice. The following section will present a trial framework to illustrate the categorized levels. By going beyond the individual level, the framework contextualizes the cultural value of preference - for example, an individualistic way of thinking - behind words in texts. This approach does not reject the idea that a linguistic item can be perceived as a clue to the unit of analysis. This type of multi-level investigation is performed through coding analysis of culturally driven specificities contextualized in the proposed framework. This thesis looks at what a corpus, such as a set of linguistic items, cannot always tell us: “language processing in the mind behind the use of a common pattern” (Jones and Waller, 2015). A well-known book on the subject is *The Silent Language* (Hall, 1959), which is an early groundbreaking work on the unspoken codes of conduct in Japan. Discussed in Section 3.6, the unspoken codes of conduct often govern individuals especially in societies with high-context communication culture yet tend to be lost in translation because they are not verbalized. Intangible values of preference can be made observable when they are contextualized (Cooke, 2018). Methodologically, the type of qualitative investigation that this thesis performs is referred to as interpretive phenomenological analysis or IPA (Smith and Osborn, 2003) detailed in Chapter Four. This method can effectively analyze data for uncovering the unspoken values of preference. The discussion here supports the idea that the issue of cultural translatability is not purely linguistic. The idea implies that the possible category will no longer be confined within language-related studies, if they exclude cultural concepts as discussed in this thesis.

This thesis is interdisciplinary by nature. It is closely associated with international business, Japanese studies, and communication-related studies, broadly conceived, including language and culture. It is selectively drawn from translation studies for fulfilling the aim of research. As such, this thesis follows the generally conventional research orientations in the closely associated disciplines.

The preceding discussion suggests that a text can be open to interpretation. A linguistically adequate translation does not always make sense to a target audience, even if it makes sense culturally and linguistically to the translator. With hindsight, this statement summarizes the issue of cultural translatability. In translation studies, the concept of translatability is generally understood as a relative notion that deals with two elements: linguistic structure and meaning (Hatim and Munday, 2019). This thesis does not focus on the former that can be referred to as linguistic translatability (Brisset, 2010). It focuses on the latter that can be perceived differently (Meyer, 2015). To be inclusive, the concept of translatability encompasses similar

terms, such as *transplant*, *transfer*, and *transpose*, that describe the dynamics in business-related translation (Chidlow, Plakoyiannaki, and Welch, 2014).

Related to the preceding discussion is the knowledge of foreign culture. It is natural for anyone to have no or little knowledge of disparate culture. For example, the preceding discussion over collectivist culture between the Japanese and the Turks (Güngör et al., 2014) may not make much sense to those who are not familiar with collectivist cultures (Thomas and Peterson, 2017). This thesis refers to it as lack of mutual knowledge, which is applicable to any audience including researchers. This lack may be attributable to the absence of and/or difficulties in accessing a pool of knowledge shared across the source and target cultures; it may also reflect an audience's lack of willingness to understand and accept foreign culture. It has turned out to be the biggest challenge for this thesis, yet the recognition of it has helped structure this thesis in a balanced way to analyze the data and present the findings from the perspectives of LMEs and the CME.

Also related are the capabilities to function efficiently across cultures: for example, intercultural communication skills in business settings. If tested, the proposed model will be capable of illustrating this ability. Chapter Three will review literature regarding the ability.

Based on the preceding discussions, the research problem can be explained with generic words intended for the widest possible audience: No theoretical framework appears to explain why communication can fail between societies due to differences of regionally shared ways of thinking aside from linguistic differences. To tackle the research problem, as detailed in Chapter Three, this thesis hypothesizes the concept of cultural translatability as the feasibility of translating a culturally driven specificity from one society to another. This hypothesis is intended to represent the very nature of the concept. It results from interdisciplinary review and inductive analysis of literature. It is accompanied by the proposed framework, which is a tool to contextualize what is explained by the concept. To test the hypothesis, Chapter Four posits the following research question:

Main Research Question: What are the factors that affect the feasibility of translating culturally driven specificities from one society to another?

To generate answers to the Main Research Question, Chapter Four places the following sub-questions that look at LMEs and the CME by level:

Research Question 1: What typical Japanese business behaviors are incongruous in Liberal Market Economies?

Research Question 2: What cultural values explain the typical Japanese business behaviors?

Research Question 3: What cultural values explain why such behaviors appear incongruous in Liberal Market Economies?

Part One (Chapters Two-Four) will explain how this thesis arrives at the research questions. Chapter Four will also explain how to gather and analyze data to answer the research questions. In summary, this thesis focuses on cultural driven texts, including business case narratives and textualized interview data, and performs IPA as mentioned earlier. IPA is used to understand “how participants are making sense of their personal and social world” (Smith and Osborn, 2003, p. 53). To explore what makes sense culturally, this thesis analyzes cultural values of preference by interpreting culturally driven data and surrounding contexts through coding analysis, which is also known as template analysis (King, 2004). This approach intersects case study research, in which the researcher explores a bounded system and reports a case description (Creswell, 2013). In this thesis, the term *culturally driven data* means data that are attributable to cultural constructs, such as individualism. This thesis collects the type of textual data from databases available to the public, including the library system, by using select keywords presented in Chapter Four. Consisting of or related to prevalent literature concepts, search keywords are set to focus on culturally driven data and to exclude culturally independent data. The list of search keywords has grown as research has progressed. Chapter Nine shows the post-research list of search keywords. Having outlined the approach to the research problem, the following section will present a trial framework to show how categorized levels look like.

1.5 Trial framework of cultural translatability

This thesis aims to establish a functional foothold that addresses the issue of cultural translatability in English-Japanese business communication. For this aim, it will craft and test a simple yet versatile theoretical framework to encompass multiple viewpoints. Literature offers clues to how to set up a foothold: Newmark (1987, p. 7) says “Translation has been instrumental in transmitting culture”. Language is indeed “a direct reflection of cultural specificity”, and “the challenge to the translator is to perceive terminologies as vehicles of a culture [...]” (Hatim and Mason, 1989, p. 237). Language can be a vehicle that carries cultural specificity, rather than a part of it. For discussion purposes, this thesis perceives culture and language as two independent yet tightly linked systems. This link is discussed in translation studies: Sin-wai (2004) writes “A school of translation believes that as there is unity between thought and language, translation is possible” (p. 243). This “unity” is widely discussed besides translation studies: for example, “compatibility” in communication studies and “embeddedness” in business-related studies. This thesis refers to the link of unity as an intrinsic connection between cultural values and linguistic items. Chapter Two will further discuss these terms. Based on the literature ideas, Figure 1 illustrates the possible concept of cultural translatability depicted in the preceding example (Yamada, 1992).

Figure 1 presents the degree of cultural translatability as the “degree of cultural difference shown through language” for ease of understanding³. They are considered theoretically synonymous with each other since the degree of cultural difference is postulated to reduce the feasibility of translating a cultural specificity from one society to another. The example’s culturally driven Japanese proverb is shown as a collectivist behavior at the practice level. The black dots at the end of the horizontal lines represent the

³ All figures are created by the author unless otherwise specified.

extreme sense of specificity: extreme individualism at the left ends and extreme collectivism at the right ends. Figure 1 assumes that the ST has its culturally driven connotation sitting at Point c (lowercase c) in real terms leaning towards the extreme level of collectivism. The ST makes perfect sense linguistically and culturally to the SC receptor located at Point C (uppercase C) with their SC value of preference shared in the society. The ST and SC can be deemed culturally united with each other, shown as “intrinsic connection” in Figure 1. This connection means that the ST’s culturally driven connotation and the receptor’s SC value of preference mirrors each other. The translator renders a TT, a linguistically fine translation in English, keeping the ST connotation intact at the level of Point c, arguing that being individualistic is not a good personality. Moving onto the TC (left-hand) side, let’s assume for discussion purposes that the TT is intended to signify the SC way of thinking (appropriate to SC) regardless of receptor location. Shown as “little or no connection” in Figure 1, the culturally driven TT sitting at Point c is unlikely to sound socially natural to a TL audience located at Point B in TC. It perhaps depends on the context, but generally it does not because the majority of the receptors in TC believe that being individualistic is a good personality trait as their individualistic norm. The distance between Points B and C represents the degree of cultural difference between the shared values of preference in real terms. The TT is likely culturally incongruous as-is to a TL audience as the TT denotes the shared collectivistic value inscribed at the level of Point C, made intelligible through translation staying at Point c to a TL audience standing at Point B in the actual setting. Chapter Two will review the underlying concepts that supports the trial framework in its entirety.

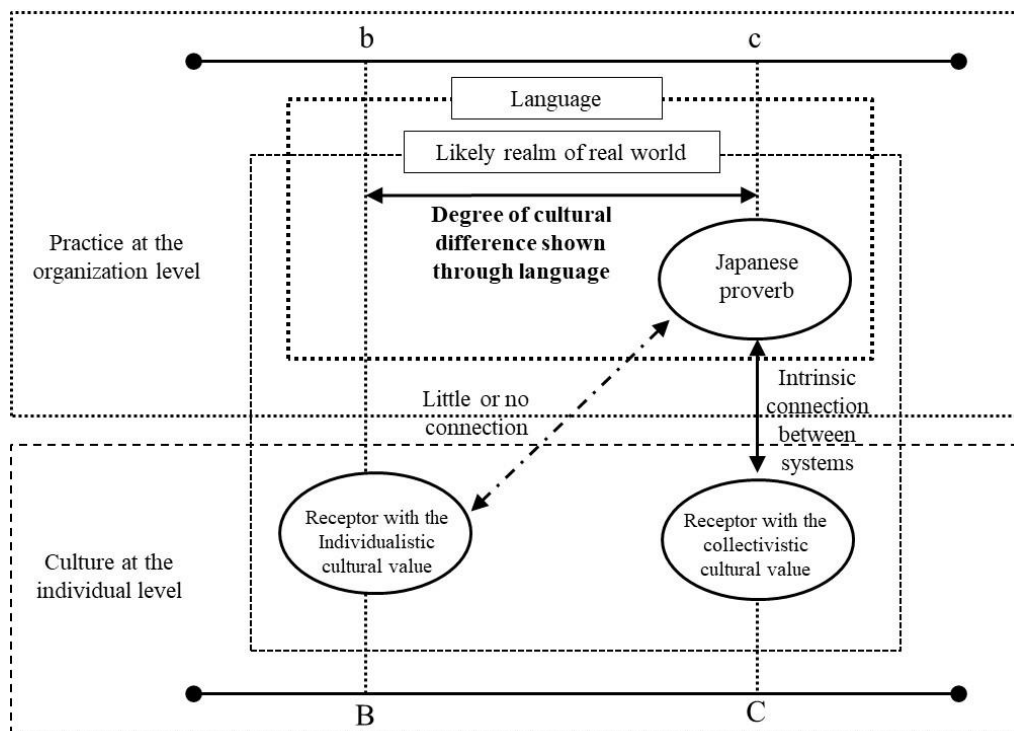


Figure 1: Example illustrated in a trial framework

The pilot analysis above suggests that the trial shows a probable level of feasibility. A multi-level framework is helpful in explaining the complexity of culture by breaking it down into levels. To better

understand the organization level, Chapter Two will examine Arm's-Length Contractual Relation ("ACR") and Obligational Business Relation ("OCR") (Sako, 1992). Having two extremes is vital not only for theoretical consistency across the levels as explained in Chapter Two but also for mitigating the most challenging issue of lack of mutual knowledge. The extremes are likely to serve as an effective explanation and help by contextualizing culturally driven specificities.

Having introduced the trial framework, the following section will offer an overview of Japanese business. It will be a concise survey of Japanese style management, where business communications take place, for a better understanding of the field before proceeding to Chapter Two. Also, it will help readers who are unfamiliar with Japanese business.

1.6 Overview of Japanese business

Japanese and American management is 95 percent the same and differs in all important respects.

Takeo Fujisawa, Cofounder, Honda Motor Corporation (Adler, 2000)

The quote talks precisely about this thesis's focus. Fujisawa is the one who established and managed what is called American Honda Motor Company today. What differs between Japanese and American management, if not extinct, may no longer exactly be five percent. However, the five-percent portion with "all important respects" should be meaningful for this research. In the late twentieth century, the portion was a popular field to study worldwide. Many academics, practitioners, and policy makers carried out research on the portion that included continuous improvement (kaizen), just-in-time manufacturing, lifetime employment, the form of keiretsu, and the main bank system (collectively "Japanese style management" or "Japanese business practice") that Chapter Two will explore. Some of them are transferred to LMEs: for example, some elements of kaizen and just-in-time manufacturing. After Japan started facing the major economic downturn, the flow of management ideas has reversed (Jacoby, 2005). Management studies seem to resemble fashion, which changes according to what is popular, rather than what matters in the society. In business-related studies, economic growth tends to be a deciding factor of popularity. This thesis presupposes that the five-percent portion still matters to the Japanese today as it characterizes the CME of Japan, which is, in Hall and Soskice's words (2001), "the result of strategic interaction among firms and other actors" (p. 8).

Okazaki and Okuno-Fujisawa (1999) begin their authoritative book *Japanese Economic System and its Historical Origins* with the following summary of the five-percent portion in Fujisawa's comment:

A number of characteristic features serve to differentiate Japan's present-day socio-economic system from its counterparts in the West, particularly those of the Anglo-Saxon countries. One is the relationship between corporate ownership and its management: Japanese management is directed to benefit employees rather than shareholders. Another feature is the long-term nature of relationships within firms, as demonstrated in the lifetime-employment system, pay based on seniority, enterprise-based labor unions, and so on. Long-term relations between different firms are also important, as seen in the main bank system, the subcontracting system, or in relations among affiliated firms in keiretsu groupings.... A further feature is the close-knit relationship between government and private-sector firms, seen in official control through administrative guidance or via industrial associations or similar business organizations. (p. 1)

This quote is cited to have a general understanding of Japanese style management, not to assert that all Japanese companies follow it as explained in the excerpt. There are many variations, depending on company size, management preference, and so on. Okazaki and Okuno-Fujisawa's argument primarily concerns Japan's major organizations, typically listed/public companies, that determine the nation's economic climate. Their point is not to say that all Japanese companies exhibit Japanese style management but to focus on Japan's managerial pattern, which is diffusedly yet commonly shared across all major organizations.

In the fields of Japanese-related business studies, mainstream research predominantly focuses on Japanese style management shared mainly among large corporations, rather than small and medium-size enterprises (SMEs). The reason is simple: It makes the most sense for the widest possible audience. The shared patterns among large companies are most influential and powerful generally in any societies to varying degrees, depending on their values of preference, including learned interpretations that determine how attractive to be employed at a large organization. In Japan, SMEs account for roughly 70% of employment (De Zoysa and Takaoka, 2019) but do not overturn Japanese style management. SMEs are highly fragmented and diverse in character. Many of them tend to be either followers of large corporations or remain culturally independent. For instance, De Zoysa and Takaoka (2019) report on corporate social responsibility performance of Japanese SMEs: "Despite the recent exponential increase in corporate interest regarding CSR in Japan, the focus of CSR has mostly been confined to the scope of large firms" (p. 460). Notable Japanese executive managers include Kazuo Inamori, the founder of Kyocera Corporation. Inamori passed away in 2022. Until then, he regularly held a management seminar that attracts 9,000 executives, most of which are SME owners and managers (Taniguchi and Redmond, 2015). Inamori is only one example of many who do the same in Japan (Taniguchi, 2015). Because of those interactions, there is no clear-cut line between management styles in Japan. Chapter Two details Japanese business practice.

Learmount (2002) supports the first point of corporate governance: Japanese style management generally, not absolutely, prioritizes employees over shareholders relative to LMEs. Subsequent research also supports this diffused prioritization: for example, Buchanan, Chai, and Deakin (2014) report "Confrontational shareholder activism of the kind practiced by American and British hedge funds in Japan during the 2000s failed to gain acceptance from Japanese investors and managers or to alter the internal focus of corporate governance practices in Japanese firms" (p. 296). This finding should appear unique or even astonishing from the viewpoint of an LME business audience who are unfamiliar with Japanese style management. This knowledge gap is referred to as the lack of mutual knowledge as mentioned earlier. This thesis wishes to fill the gap to a possible extent.

1.7 Thesis structure

This thesis consists of ten chapters and a glossary of terms. Chapter Two and the rest are clustered into three parts: Parts One, Two, and Three. Part One consists of three chapters to perform three tasks in an orderly manner: 1) Chapter Two reviewing relevant literature to build a theoretical foundation, 2) Chapter Three crafting a framework based on the foundation, and 3) Chapter Four explaining the research methodology and

data collection. Part Two presents the collected data and conducts analysis. This thesis examines four functional and/or industry sectors. Each of Chapters Five, Six, Seven, and Eight reports on the findings by sector. In Part Three, Chapter Nine discusses the research implications, followed by concluding remarks in Chapter Ten.

This PhD project is carried out with three principles regarding the treatment of different scholarly viewpoints: equitable, inclusive, and balanced. These basic ideas have made Part One selectively choose prevalent concepts supported beyond the disciplinary borders. As such, the new category of cultural translatability, as well as the proposed framework to address it, is structured to embrace opposing viewpoints: for example, emic (insider) and etic (outsider) views.

Generally, opposing viewpoints tend to cause lack of consistency or unanimity in academia. For example, in translation studies, it is generally understood that anything is translatable (Fengling, 2017). By contrast, in the field of business, it is generally understood that culturally driven specificities are hardly translatable as-is when the culture gap is wide. Meyer (2015), a professor at INSEAD Business School, writes a Harvard Business Review article titled *When Culture Doesn't Translate* which speaks of itself with the reason behind: "People in different countries react to inputs differently, communicate differently, and make decisions differently". To discuss the theme with opposing views, Part One focuses on the disciplinary strengths for including symmetrical opposites. Part Two maintains research integrity in the sense that this thesis never manipulates collected data. Part Three retains inclusive approaches to address and/or reconcile the gap.

Part One

Chapter Two: Theoretical Foundation

This thesis aims to establish a functional foothold that addresses the issue of cultural translatability in English-Japanese business communication. Chapter Two will explore relevant literature supporting the creation of a framework. It will first examine literature concepts that justify the framework's structure. It will then review literature concepts that will constitute the framework.

2.1 Fundamental concepts

This section will review literature concepts concerning culture available in anthropological studies, business studies, and language-related studies. This thesis does not limit the academic fields to be studied, but it will draw selectively on concepts from those disciplines for explicating culturally driven specificities and crafting a robust model.

2.1.1 Definition of culture

Leeds-Hurwitz and Stenou (2013, p. 10) write in their UNESCO publication "Culture is that set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of a society or social group, encompassing all the ways of being in that society; at a minimum, including art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions, and beliefs". This definition is considerably holistic, and its semantic field is extraordinarily wide. While so, it provides good ideas on the concept of culture. This thesis regards culture as an overarching system that regulates human activities including communication through language.

Language-related studies appear to adopt a holistic definition of culture for discussing how to communicate across cultures. For instance, David Katan's much cited book *Translating Cultures* defines culture as "a particular civilization at a particular period" (2004, p. 26). This definition is borrowed from Collins English Dictionary (CED, 1991) for the following reason: "defining it (culture) delimits how it is perceived and taught" (Katan, 2004, p. 26). Katan's book is comprehensive especially about the theme of how to translate cultural specificities without defining the term *culture*. Katan (2004) concludes "Culture, in fact, is not a factor but rather the framework (the context) within which all communication takes place" (p. 324). Katan's works, including more recent ones (Katan, 2018), are generally based on this conclusion after revising different types of culture. This thesis will not strictly follow the idea that culture is not a factor, because it unnecessarily confines the notion of the term *culture*. As examined later in this section, literature suggests that culture can be a factor and/or a framework depending on how it is defined. Numerous business-related works discuss culture as an influential factor to drive different ways of doing business between countries (Stahl and Tung, 2015).

The preceding UNESCO definition is helpful but rather impractical for research because it contains too many themes for a single project. One way of setting a boundary is to differentiate culture in the broader sense from culture in the narrow sense as is often suggested in literature. In translation studies, Snell-Hornby (1995, p. 39) quotes Hymes (1964) to detail the distinction: "Culture is here not understood in the narrower sense of man's advanced intellectual development as reflected in the arts, but in the broader anthropological sense to refer to all socially conditioned aspects of human life". In business-related cultural studies, there is a

parallel that agrees with the preceding view: “In most Western Languages ‘culture’ commonly means ‘civilization’ or ‘refinement of the mind’ and in particular the results of such refinement, like education, art, and literature. This is culture in the narrow sense” (Hofstede, 1991, p. 5). For the broader sense, Hofstede quotes the following well-known anthropological consensus definition: “Culture consists in patterned ways of thinking, feeling and reacting, acquired and transmitted mainly by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiments in artifacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e., historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values” (Kluckhohn, 1951, p. 86). Hofstede (2001, pp. 9-10) treats culture as “the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another” which is, in his own words, “a shorthand definition; it implies everything in Kluckhohn’s more extensive definition above”. Many researchers adopt Kluckhohn’s definition or similar (Thomas and Peterson, 2017) or otherwise paraphrase it for their research, keeping the central element of being regionally patterned value systems.

Kluckhohn’s time-honored definition resonates with prevalent works beyond business-related cultural studies. In anthropological linguistics, Foley (1997, p. 108) offers a general view of culture: “Culture is a mental system which generates all and only the proper cultural behavior.” This is considered a plain yet useful description of culture that agrees with most of the definitions widely supported across different disciplines. In anthropology, culture is often discussed as learned interpretation (Strauss and Quinn, 1997). Learned interpretation has historical durability that results “not only when the public world is recreated by enactment of the schemas each generation has learned, but also when one generation intentionally transmits its values to the next” (Strauss and Quinn, 1997, p. 111). These make culture - regionally patterned cultural value of preference - durable⁴. In this thesis, culture is defined as a system of thought consisting of cultural values of preference.

Culture as defined in this thesis can be referred to as intangible culture (Leeds-Hurwitz and Stenou, 2013, p. 26). Culture in the narrow sense (Hofstede, 2001; Snell-Hornby, 1995), which includes art and literature, is regarded as tangible culture. This intangible/tangible distinction is for ease of understanding: This thesis primarily uses the term *cultural values of preference*.

Although this thesis adopts the idea of intangible culture for discussion, it never means to undervalue the significance of tangible culture, which not only includes frequently used terms such as a socio-cultural object (Hatim and Mason, 1996, p. 18) but also pertains to the category of linguistic (un)translatability. There are many valuable works available in language-related studies. For instance, Newmark (1987, p. 81) provides useful approaches, such as transference. Examined earlier, Katan’s work (2004) also offers many helpful ideas on translating tangible culture. Pedersen (2011) discusses tangible culture in detail in the context of television subtitling. Cassin et al. (2014) orchestrate a substantial work, *Dictionary of Untranslatables*, which is a massive compilation of difficult words to translate between European languages, including English, with their original focus on French. These works share the diffused focus on lexical

⁴ This durability is also discussed in intercultural communication. There is a long-standing concept *linguaculture* (Friedrich, 1989) or *languaculture* (Agar, 1994), originally proposed in the German-speaking areas of Europe in the late eighteenth century (Hannerz, 1992). The terms explain the characteristics of culture in a consistent manner with this thesis’s definition of culture: a system of thought that is publicly shared and carried over in a society (Risager, 2020).

differences to deal with tangible culture. This diffused focus seems to explain why no concept or theory is dedicated to intangible culture. This thesis differs from the prior works in that it distinguishes intangible culture from tangible culture upfront and focuses on intangible culture. This statement is to clarify the focus, not to say that intangible culture is not interrelated to tangible culture. They can influence each other especially when business practice is seen as tangible culture.

In business-related cross-cultural studies, cultural values of preference are also referred to as social norms (House et al., 2004). In translation studies, prior studies discuss a related concept: translation norm (Toury, 1995), which semantically overlaps *social norm*. There is an issue with the one in translation studies: “While the literature on the subject is substantial, there is no unanimity on terminology or on the exact distinctions as regards the cluster of concepts that includes norms, conventions, rules, constraints, and so on” (Hermans, 1999, p. 80). Likewise, Snell-Hornby (2006) comments on Schäffner (1999), which contains open debates on the topic *Translation and Norms*: “What possibly strikes the reader most [...] is again that this is an issue not of content, fact or even perspective, but one of the varying use of concepts” (p. 78). Hatim (2001) criticizes: “The literature on the subject was extremely confused, and many contradictory normative models were in circulation” (p. 70). This thesis refers to the type of self-created “confusion” as the definition problem, which is not specifically with the term but in general. It is present in many academic disciplines and not necessarily negative, as it can be part of the process of honing the definition. For discussion purposes, this thesis looks at a plain description: Bartsch (1987, p. 76) defines the term *norm* as the social reality of correctness notions (quoted in Chesterman, 1997, p. 54). This generally agrees with the preceding working definition of culture adopted in this thesis.

There is another term *cultural translation*, which also suffers the definition problem. Conway (2012) writes in *Handbook of Translation Studies* “Cultural translation is a concept with competing definitions coming from two broad fields, anthropology/ethnography and cultural/postcolonial studies” (p. 21). Conway (2012) points out “For anthropologists, foreign cultures are carried across to domestic readers in textual form..., while for cultural studies scholars, what is carried across is not so much culture as it is the people who leave their place of origin and enter a new locale, bearing their culture with them” (p. 21). For discussion purposes, this thesis uses the term *cultural translation* to refer to the act of translating, or a translation of, a culturally driven specificity as defined in Chapter One. To mitigate the definition problem, Chapter Three offers a framework to encompass different or opposing views as complementary alternatives.

There is an emerging academic field called cultural linguistics, which engages directly with the concepts of culture discussed above. Sharifian (2017) describes it as “a recently developed discipline with multidisciplinary origins that explores the relationship between languages and cultural conceptualizations” (p. 2). According to Sharifian (2017), cultural conceptualizations include cultural schemas, cultural categories, and cultural metaphors (p. 2). These definitions generally correspond to the one adopted to investigate culture in this thesis. Although cultural linguistics does not appear to focus on translatability, the proposed concept of cultural translatability may fit the field based on the shared terminology of culture. Having examined the related terms and disciplines, the following section will discuss alternative viewpoints to look at intangible culture.

2.1.2 Alternative approaches to examine culture

There's this wonderful Chinese proverb that a fish can't see water. And it's very hard for us to see ourselves unless we step out of ourselves and look back afresh.

Gillian Tett (McKinsey & Company, 2021)

This quote talks about this chapter's theme: alternative viewpoints. It is cited from McKinsey's interview with Gillian Tett, the Financial Times markets and finance columnist and US managing editor. Tett is an award-winning financial journalist and anthropology PhD. Their interview includes Tett's advice on how CEOs can embrace lessons from anthropology, one of which reads "musings from anthropology help... to recognize that other people do not think like you" (McKinsey & Company, 2021). This advice makes sense, as CEOs tend to fall into the trap of believing that others have the same mentality as them. Tett concludes "And it is so important in today's globalized world to recognize that it's simply not true" (McKinsey & Company, 2021). The Chinese proverb is quoted to explain the "trap" in a concise way. Stepping out of self and looking back afresh will help to recognize something that is taken for granted. It is easy to say but hard or even disturbing to do (Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars, 1993) in translational and cross-national settings. For fish, water is taken for granted. For humans, that includes own cultural values. The previous section has mentioned the concept of lack of mutual knowledge to point out the knowledge gap between self and others.

There is a set of concepts that correspond to Tett's advice: the emic and etic perspectives, which respectively represent, in simple terms, the insider and outsider views. Kenneth Pike, an American linguist, coined the terms during the 1950s. The concepts have gained popularity and are widely used in various disciplines, including anthropology. The two perspectives are originated from two approaches to language: "phonemic analysis of the units of meaning, which reveals the unique structure of a particular language, and phonetic analysis of sound, which affords comparisons among languages" (Noorderhaven, Koen, and Sorge, 2015, p. 9). This set of perspectives are important for this research to review literature concerning culture. Academic researchers describe a single specificity, for example "water" in the preceding quote, different ways. Consequently, the same research subject is differently reported often in opposing ways in academia. This section reviews alternative approaches to culture for setting directions of research. This thesis encompasses opposing findings generated by emic and etic research: Opposing findings are possible, even natural, depending on the research subject. Wherever literature discussions are in conflict, this thesis will identify an appropriate unit of analysis and the viewpoint that makes better sense than another for this research. Its standpoint agrees with Tett's advice given to CEOs.

This thesis perceives culture as a set of regionally patterned values of preference, including beliefs and learned interpretations. Literature provides alternative approaches to conceptualize and examine culture. Table 1 is developed from prior studies to summarize the approaches, all of which are useful for specific purposes. The positivist and critical views are alternatively referred to as etic approaches or an outside view (Noorderhaven, Koen, and Sorge, 2015). These views primarily report on the unit of analysis from the

outsider perspective. The positivist views have their salient characteristic of comparing cultures based on comparable constructs (Claes, 2022). Representative examples of comparable constructs are individualism and collectivism. The interpretive and postmodern views are referred to as emic approaches, which focus on a single construct or context (Claes, 2022). An emic view is alternatively called an inside view (Noorderhaven, Koen, and Sorge, 2015) that focuses on the insider perspective based on the researcher’s understandings.

	Positivist approach	Interpretive approach	Postmodern approach	Critical approach
Typical unit of analysis	Socially shared units by the majority	Socially specific units	Socially specific units	Socially shared units by the majority
Primary purpose	To identify majority views by comparisons	To explain individual interpretations	To describe individual contexts	To describe the most powerful views in a specific context
Example	Individualism and collectivism	Individual interpretations of the word <i>contract</i>	Context analysis of a Brazilian who is late for a meeting	<i>The Orient</i> constructed by the West
Positive outcomes	Useful for finding majority views generally shared in a society	Useful for reporting on findings/views through the lens of individuals	Useful for reporting on context-specific findings through language	Useful for explaining views of powerful researchers on someone else
Negative consequences	Do not address individual differences	Do not necessarily address majority views	Do not focus on majority views	Do not focus on viewpoints of the weak in the context

Table 1: Alternative approaches to analyzing culture (developed from Claes, 2022)

It can be instructive to examine an example for demonstrating how the emic and etic viewpoints make a difference. Moore (2005) reports, in her book *Transnational Business Cultures*, on German multinational businesses in London, England. Moore’s book is useful for knowing how multinational companies with German-led management operate in the UK. While Moore’s work explicates the fusion of British and German cultures through the emic lens, it does not focus on British culture shared by the majority of local professionals in the British society. As such, Moore’s work is useful when an audience wishes to learn about the specific part of blended culture shared by the specific segment of German or German-British professionals. If a non-EU audience, who has little knowledge about European business, wishes to learn about typical British business culture, the best resource is etic literature regarding British culture shared by the majority in the UK. The proposed framework is capable of illustrating a generally common business practice in British culture. It can also illustrate a hybrid German-British business practice that stands between the two extremes of German culture and British culture. The two extremes can capture the reality of hybrid culture in different contexts.

It is well known that there exists no perfect method to research culture, which is an extraordinarily wide concept (Thomas and Peterson, 2017). Due to this nature, none of the alternative approaches alone serves all conceivable purposes. However, all the approaches have their own strengths to examine a specific part of culture. This thesis will make best use of the views by adopting a two-step combined approach: First, this thesis will create a framework to address majority views of comparable constructs reported from positivist projects. Chapter Three will carry out this task through a review of literature. This thesis will then

examine individual data from insider perspectives. The latter step encompasses the emic views and identify the gap between the individual view and the majority view for best locating the individual view illustrated in the proposed framework.

The two-step approach is necessary for three reasons: First, this thesis aims to substantiate the potential category of cultural translatability, which is to serve as many relevant views as possible. A single-step approach does not fulfill the aim. If the unit of analysis is a specific part of culture, the best practice for researchers is to clarify the aim of research, specify the unit of analysis, and choose the appropriate approach to it. The findings of such projects are useful for the scope of research, but their applicability is inevitably limited to the predetermined scope of culture. For instance, in the preceding example of Moore's work, the unit of analysis is the specific segment of German business in England. Moore's findings are applicable to the specific segment but not pertinent to the British style management shared by the majority in England. Any single approach comes with the chosen approach's weakness, which is a flip side of the strength. Another approach's strength can help to mitigate the weakness. This thesis does not criticize any views for their weakness but combines their strengths to generate mutual benefits necessary for the research aim.

Second, the positivist approach is central to this research because it pertains to the working definition of culture in this thesis. As discussed earlier, this thesis treats the term *culture* as publicly shared ways of thinking, including beliefs, learned interpretations, and preferences in the respective regions. Among the alternative approaches, the positivist approach focuses on publicly shared views as units of analysis more than any others. Since the findings from the positivist views - symmetrical opposites of cultural constructs - correspond to the definition of culture in this thesis, they will constitute the proposed framework.

Finally, other alternative views cannot be disregarded because they pertain to the use of the proposed framework. For example, the interpretive and postmodern approaches prioritize individual interpretations over learned interpretations generally shared publicly in the society. If supported, the possible category of cultural translatability will be used to explain all individual interpretations. The proposed framework will be structured to explain individual interpretations of publicly shared specificities, such as culturally driven business practices.

This thesis retains the emic and etic perspectives and regards them as complementary in the sense that both of which help to understand the knowledge gaps between various academic disciplines: for instance, the one between language-related studies and business-related studies pointed out at the outset. Language-related studies, which are to teach how to express culture through language, have not focused on the widely adopted definitions of cultural constructs developed in business-related studies (Katan and Taibi, 2021). Business-related studies are often driven by the positivist approach (Thomas and Peterson, 2017), while language-related studies tend to prefer to use the other approaches to culture (Claes, 2022). The interdisciplinary debate seems to hinge on the difference of what unit to analyze for the given purpose of research. The difference of preference appears to stand behind the knowledge gaps that this thesis attempts to fill.

2.1.3 Debates on social categorization

There are debates on the term *national culture* (House et al., 2004)⁵, which is relevant to the emic-etic dichotomy. Generated from etic research, “national culture” is extensively supported in the business-related disciplines. Besides business studies, most publications in relevant academic mediums, such as the *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, support the existence of national cultures that manifest the majority views. On the other hand, emic research investigates a specific part of culture possibly different from the shared unit by the majority. To defend their approach, some emic research tends to criticize the concept of individualism/collectivism, asserting that it is a stereotype that does not address individual differences. It certainly does not, because that is not what it does in the first place. Cultural constructs can be used as helpful tools to understand foreignness unknown or unfamiliar to an audience, not to measure individual differences within a society. Despite the usefulness, the categorization of society is occasionally criticized as essentialism. National culture is a debated concept as it helps in classifying individuals as members of a given society while essentializing social categories can be the basis for stereotyping and prejudice (Bradley, 2018). This debate has much in common with the emic-etic distinction. The concept of essentialism is used to criticize social categories generated from etic research. Naturally, it has gained popularity among emic scholars who shy away from categorization. Fischer (2011, p. 769) offers a useful clarification for the debate: “It is important to note that essentialist beliefs are not stereotypes. Essentialist beliefs are related to stereotypes but are not identical. Stereotypes are beliefs about the qualities of specific groups, whereas essentialist beliefs provide information about the nature of social categories (including culture) in general.” As Fischer clarifies, it is primarily a matter of how to use the information, rather than the information itself. Categorization is the advancement of data science though it requires sensible handling. A widely supported example of this kind of advancement is Henri Tajfel’s seminal work *Human Groups and Social Categories* (1981).

As explained earlier, this thesis will adopt a two-step combined approach: 1) It will first create a framework based on etic research findings, so that 2) the framework will encompass the emic views. To perform meaningful analysis, this thesis will identify the gap between the individual view and the majority view for best locating the individual view illustrated in the proposed framework. The following section will explain how and why this thesis has arrived at the framework’s structure.

2.2 Rationale for the framework structure

Chapter One has offered a trial framework of cultural translatability. It has a multi-level structure (vertical feature) with two extremes of a linear continuum (horizontal feature). This section will detail the rationale for the framework’s structure.

⁵ Following the literature, this thesis regards national culture as a set of nationally distinct cultural traits, such as individualism and short-term orientation, reviewed in Chapter Three. This definition aligns with the research focus and does not reject other ways of using the term: for example, “Australian culture” as the country’s national culture.

2.2.1 Intrinsic connection that binds the levels

The body of literature across the disciplines supports this thesis's presupposition that the three levels of individual, organization, and economy are interconnected with each other. This interconnectedness is important because it represents the notion of being culturally driven. For example, Arie de Geus (2002) writes of the concept of an entity's persona, originally coined by a well-known German psychologist, William Stern, who developed the intelligence quotient (IQ) formula: "To Stern, each living being has an undifferentiated wholeness, with its own character, which he called the *persona*" (p. 84). To explain the concept, de Geus (2002) introduces a vertical ladder that William Stern drew in 1919: The ladder has five levels, namely *Deity/Divinity/Godhead* being on the top row, followed in descending order by *Nation, Tribe, Family* and *Individual* placed on the lowest row, each of which is "a persona in its own right" (p. 87). As de Geus writes the concept as "persona (identity)" in his book, the closest colloquial expression of persona can be identity, though they may not be semantically identical. Borrowing Stern's ladder, de Geus illustrates a company (for example Royal Dutch/Shell discussed in his book) using a ladder with seven levels, namely *Society* being on the top, followed in descending order by *Corporation, Company, Division, Work Group, Team* and *Individual*. Discussed in Chapter One, regionally specific values of preference can be deemed as descriptions of the persona of society. This thesis adopts a three-level structure with the economy, organization, and individual levels to describe the whole for the research aim. This three-level structure is essentially a simplified ladder that Stern and de Geus explicate. Across the levels, each entity, an individual or an organization for example, has its specific characteristics, constructing its persona. At the individual level is the persona that includes collectivism in the case of Japan. In other words, collectivism shows as the salient characteristic of the individual-level persona of Japan, as it permeates at the individual level in the society. Their concept of a ladder is referred to as intrinsic connection as introduced in Chapter One.

Prior studies provide many theories that support the concept of intrinsic connection. In the business-related field of corporate governance for example, Williams and Zumbansen (2011) write about the concept of embeddedness, which is helpful in conceptualizing the connections between the three levels aforementioned. To explain *embeddedness*, Williams and Zumbansen (2011, p. 8) first borrow the following well-known quote with respect to "a sociological and institutional perspective to bear on a fundamental observation":

Markets are embedded within the social and political systems in which they arise. Thus, the markets cannot be considered free-standing institutions outside of a society, as the 'free market' often had been, and still is in some contexts. Rather 'the market' must be understood as an embedded institution that manifests the social and political values of the society in which it is embedded, including the professional and transnational networks that affect the market, even as it develops its own logic and values. (Granovetter, 1985, p. 481-510)

This 30-year old quote still attracts many academic interests perhaps because it provides something critical today. Following the quote, Williams and Zumbansen (2011) offer their observation:

One implication of this view is that corporate governance reforms cannot be considered in isolation from a thorough understanding of the social and cultural context in which companies arise, and in conjunction with a thorough understanding of the complementarities between companies, corporate

governance systems, and the political and institutional frameworks in which companies operate. (p. 8)

Williams and Zumbansen appear to have borrowed Granovetter's work in order specifically to discuss corporate governance, but Granovetter's implication appears broader than that. The shared part of their arguments can be that institutions and markets are embedded in a society and manifest social values, and that is why those cannot be discussed in isolation from social values. The concept of embeddedness supports the layout of this thesis to capture cultural values (social values in Granovetter's words), business practices (including corporate governance at institutions), and social systems (including markets). The levels are intrinsically connected as mentioned above. Business practices cannot be discussed without a thorough understanding of cultural values at the individual level. Culturally driven variants exist because some of the societies' values of preference differ across societies. The concept of embeddedness is expressed as intrinsic connection between the three levels in this thesis.

In the field of communication, there is a widely supported theory *diffusion of innovations* ("DOI") (Rogers, 2003) that shares much with the concept of intrinsic connection. Although originated in communication studies, DOI is frequently used across academic disciplines. The concept of diffusion can be described as "the process in which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among the members of a social system" (Rogers, 2003, p. 5). An innovation can be "an idea, practice, or object that is perceived as new by an individual or other unit of adoption" (Rogers, 2003, p. 12). An innovation can be any new specificity: for example, Rogers (2003) discusses the STOP AIDS program, which was a set of activities, as an innovation carried out in San Francisco in the late twentieth century. The DOI framework consists of the following five attributes of innovations: (1) relative advantage, (2) compatibility, (3) complexity, (4) trialability, and (5) observability. Among these, compatibility is defined as "the degree to which an innovation is perceived as being consistent with the existing values, past experiences, and needs of potential adopters" (Rogers, 2003, p. 15). This thesis adopts the attribute of compatibility and refers to it as cultural compatibility, which is tailored to work with intangible culture. It can be understood that an innovation of organization-level practice can be communicated and eventually implemented in another society if it is culturally compatible with individual-level cultural values. The terms *culturally compatible* and *intrinsically connected* are interchangeably used in most cases as they have many overlapping connotations. However, their connotations are not perfectly identical: Cultural compatibility represents the relationship between specificities, whereas intrinsic connection signifies the connectedness between specificities.

The concept of cultural compatibility suggests that cultural specificities are classified into at least two levels: 1) the behavioral level where various types of behaviors are observable and 2) the individual level where regionally shared values of preference belong. The former encompasses culturally driven behaviors, and the latter is grounded in cultural values. Chapter One has analyzed a sample proverb (Yamada, 1992) by level. These two levels will be the focused fields of the proposed framework. The different types of specificities are connected but need to be discussed separately for aligning with the definition of culture. Chapter Three will examine cultural concepts in detail. The behavioral level is referred to as the organization

level as this research focuses on organizational behavior. The link between the levels is referred to as intrinsic connection as mentioned earlier. An individualistic behavior and individualism, which is the regionally shared value of preference, are intrinsically connected to each other for mutual existence in target language culture (TC).

The same connection exists in source language culture (SC): A collectivistic behavior and collectivism are intrinsically connected in Japan, thereby making a collectivistic behavior “correct” and/or “natural” (Nida and Taber, 1969) in the nation. The intrinsic connection signifies the notion of cultural appropriateness in equilibrium. The terms *intrinsically connected* and *culturally driven* are interchangeably used in most cases as they have many overlapping connotations. However, their connotations are not perfectly identical: Multiple levels can be *intrinsically connected*, whereas specificities can be *culturally driven*. This research treats regionally shared values of preference, which are intrinsically connected with other levels, as culture. The concept of intrinsic connection has substantial overlaps with widely supported theories, including “compatibility” (Rogers, 2003) and “embeddedness” (Williams and Zumbansen, 2011) across academic disciplines that agree with the working definition of culture adopted in this research. Chapter Three reviews and integrates the relevant concepts into the proposed framework.

The multi-level structure with intrinsic connection helps to clarify the concept of culture. Prior research tends to focus on either level, often mixing them up, consequently ending up with having less clarity and/or consistency with the preconditioned definition of culture. This thesis regards culture as a set of cultural values: regionally patterned ways of thinking, including beliefs, learned interpretations, and preferences. Individual-level specificities without the intrinsic link are not considered culture: for instance, being strong willed. Some research appears to treat it as individualism, but it is a personality trait that is not a learned interpretation shared publicly in a society. It does not have any intrinsic connection with any culturally driven business practices. This clarification helps this thesis exclude such irrelevant notions.

Organization-level specificities without an intrinsic link are not culturally driven either. This condition is based on the idea that regionally shared values of preference, sometimes referred to as national culture (Thomas and Peterson, 2017), are to be distinctive enough to have an intrinsic link with nationally specific systems. This research refers to any economy and organization-level specificities, which are not intrinsically linked with individual-level culture, as culturally independent, as opposed to culturally driven. For example, a business practice, which is remote from or irrelevant to the cultural constructs such as individualism, is culturally independent. Many small businesses tend to be culturally independent: selling flowers at an independent retail store, offering a dry-cleaning service, and so forth. Independent and/or family-owned small business entities, so-called mom-and-pop businesses, tend to be more culturally independent (or less culturally driven) than large companies. Chapter One has reviewed Fujisawa’s comment on the five-percent portion that differs in all important respects between American and Japanese management (Adler, 2000). As Okazaki and Okuno-Fujisawa (1999) explicate, the five-percent portion matters in institutional settings, in which strategic interactions take place among large firms and other actors in the case of Japan (Hall and Soskice, 2001). This description not only clarifies the terms *culturally driven* and *culturally independent* but also serves as an additional explanation of this research’s focus: culturally driven specificities. Culturally

independent practices are generally uniform across the world as they are not driven by (or linked with) regionally shared values of preferences that make country differences. Culturally independent specificities are out of research scope in this thesis. Having explained the vertical connection between the levels, the following section will discuss the horizontal feature: two extremes of a linear continuum embodied at each level.

2.2.2 Two extremes to compare two types of societies

This chapter has earlier reviewed a Chinese proverb that Gillian Tett discussed (McKinsey & Company, 2021). It explains that stepping out of self and looking back afresh will help recognize something taken for granted by comparing two perspectives: self and others. This recognition is relevant to cultural translation not only because a translator can put forward their own perspective, which drives their orientation in translation activities, but also because a target audience may have their perspective, which may differ from the translator's. For example, there is a culturally driven Chinese word, *guanxi*, which is usually translated as *relation* or *relationship* into English. An international education consultant, Crehan (2016) offers the following caution regarding English translations of the word:

Guanxi is commonly translated as 'relationship' or 'connection', but neither of these terms really cover its pervasiveness and complexity. *Guanxi* is fundamental to Chinese culture and describes a network of mutually beneficial relationships that can help you in your personal life or business. (p. 169)

This quote provides five ideas: First, the English words *relationship* and *connection* do not precisely represent the semantic field of the Chinese word that fundamentally signifies individuals' lives in China. The quote suggests there be no exact English equivalent to convey the Chinese sense: in other words, it can raise the issue of cultural translatability, the degree of which is not absolute but relative depending on the setting. Second, related to the first point, the concept may be difficult to comprehend for individuals with no exposure to it. One may need to spend a reasonable time in China (or "stepping out" to China in Tett's words mentioned above) to know exactly how *guanxi* helps with their way of life. Third, *guanxi* is in general a shared way of thinking in China. This point supports the working definition of culture in this thesis. Fourth, these three points boil down to this research's biggest challenge: lack of mutual knowledge on all culturally driven Japanese words to varying degrees. Finally, the quote offers ideas on the issue of cultural translatability. The English word *relationship* or *connection* does not convey the pervasiveness and complexity of Chinese relationship and connection because LMEs do not have the same type of pervasiveness and complexity. These points concern the different ways of life as to how collectivistic they are.

Perhaps the "different ways of life" above are stereotypical ones in the respective societies, yet they have been influential enough to have shaped the semantic fields in the languages. In business-related cultural studies, many scholars have conducted research into different ways of doing business, using a common metric capable of being generalized and compared across societies (House et al., 2004). Their research delivers outcomes often as cultural constructs that can be expressed as sets of two extremes of a linear

continuum, such as individualism vs. collectivism (Thomas and Peterson, 2017). This comparative approach with the etic view can elaborate on Crehan’s discussion: There is no LME/English equivalent to *guanxi*, but the English word *relationship* suitably represents the LME way of life. This section explains why the horizontal feature - two extremes of a linear continuum - is necessary as a constituent of the proposed framework to deal with culturally different orientations.

The horizontal feature is adopted for five reasons. First, it effectively works with the emic and etic perspectives discussed earlier. Majority views, or social categories in the preceding section’s essentialist discussion, do not always address individual views but can help with individual views that are generally hard to be located. Unlike individual views, majority views are expressed with a common matrix, for example, a linear continuum of individualism and collectivism. A linear continuum can capture individual emic perspectives in contexts by locating them on it between the extremes.

Second, it can illustrate different approaches to cultural translation. In the field of international business, there is a well-known framework called EPRG model, which is useful for systematically organizing different approaches to cultural specificities. Perlmutter (1969) originally proposed it as EPG model with three managerial orientations: ethnocentrism, polycentrism, and geocentrism. Wind, Douglas, and Perlmutter (1973) added regiocentrism to the model later. It is widely used to discuss strategic approaches to various business activities, including international human resources and international marketing, that involve different cultures: typically, one from a home country and another from a host country (Cavusgil, Knight, and Riesenberger, 2020). These countries generally correspond to a source-language society and a target-language society in a translation setting. The following is developed from EPRG model (Wind, Douglas, and Perlmutter, 1973) with reference to cultural values of preference:

	Ethnocentrism	Polycentrism	Regiocentrism
Definition	Oriented towards cultural values of preference in home country	Oriented towards cultural values of preference in host country	Oriented towards (cultural) values of preference shared in a specific region
Underlying belief	Primacy of source-language culture which is considered best in context	Primacy of target-language culture which is considered best in context	Belief in workable strategy for similarities shared among countries in the same region
Example of cultural specificity	Japanese expatriates enforcing Japanese ways of doing business in LMEs	LME multinational letting Japanese employees get a job done in Japanese ways in Japan	Standardized practice adopted in EU (European Union)
Example type	Culturally driven	Culturally driven	Culturally driven or independent
Expectations	Source-language culture conveyed as-is	High level of translation translatability in target-language society	Source-language culture conveyed as-is
Possible consequences	Low level of translation feasibility in target-language society	Source-language culture distorted or lost in translation	Low level of translation feasibility outside region

Table 2: Alternative orientations developed from EPRG model

This developed EPRG model (Table 2) is tailored to cultural translation. Geocentrism is excluded because it is generally irrelevant to this thesis. It presupposes the capability of establishing and managing “global

standardization” (Cavusgil, Knight, and Riesenberger, 2020) as the best approach: for instance, an airline’s frequent flyer program. Such a standardized specificity is assumed to be culturally independent in this thesis, though a culturally driven specificity may be involved when it is operated. Culturally independent specificities alone are immune from the issue of cultural translatability as they are generally independent from cultural values of preference.

Among the three orientation types, ethnocentrism and polycentrism are particularly relevant to this thesis’s focus: business communication between English and Japanese. It involves distinct cultural gaps between source-language and target-language societies: for example, high individualism and high collectivism. Regiocentrism is likely not applicable to cultural translatability since it focuses on marginal cultural gaps or culturally independent specificities. It is, however, kept in Table 2 for the sake of better understanding: It explains why LMEs have shared business practices.

The dichotomy of ethnocentrism and polycentrism relates to emic-etic, but they are not the same concepts. For example, a translator can translate a text that contains emic accounts, but the translated text may be oriented towards either ethnocentrism or polycentrism, depending on how it is translated. In this thesis, ethno/polycentrism is primarily used for understanding the translator’s approach to translation⁶. Emic/etic can be used to discuss any actor’s orientation: an actor described in text, the translator, and the target audience. With a linear continuum of two extremes, the proposed framework can help the researcher capture their orientations that stand between them.

Third, the horizontal feature suits the scope of research. The two extremes can be understood as two polar ends of symmetrical opposites (detailed in Chapter Three) that can represent LMEs and the CME of Japan in the extreme sense. This structure is suitable for analyzing a translation from two different perspectives. In a translation setting, a translator may see their ethnocentric translation as appropriate, for example. However, it may appear differently in target language culture if a target audience is driven by locally appropriate values of preference. It may even appear to be a “threat” to “what is already known” (Babbie, 2015).

Fourth, the horizontal feature can visualize the change of cultural specificity as a movement on a linear continuum between two extremes. For example, cultural translation can influence and change a business practice. A type of positive influence can be “global learning” (Hill, 2022), which refers to the common idea in the field of international business: “Valuable knowledge does not reside just in a firm’s domestic operations; it may also be found in its foreign subsidiaries” (p. 514). It can take place through translation and make a CME practice more of LME, and vice versa. This thesis regards it as cross-cultural learning, based on its focus on culturally driven specificities. The scope of the literature term (Hill, 2022) includes culturally driven and culturally independent specificities, whereas the term *cross-cultural learning* does not primarily deal with culturally independent specificities. Built on the literature explanation, the term may be rephrased

⁶ Translation studies has corresponding concepts: domesticating and internationalizing (Venuti, 2013) that respectively refer to ethnocentric and polycentric approaches. Venuti’s concepts are useful for translation, but this thesis uses EPRG model, which is comprehensive.

as follows: valuable knowledge on culturally driven specificity not only resides in a country of origin but also migrates to another through learning. Chapter Nine will discuss cross-cultural learning in detail.

Finally, the horizontal feature acts as a bond for the framework to integrate the grounded elements of the adopted concepts for theoretical coherence. As mentioned earlier, the proposed framework will have the individual, organization, and economy levels. For the economy level, this thesis adopts a well-known work from the field of political economy: liberal market economies (LME) and coordinated market economies (CME) as mentioned earlier (Hall and Soskice, 2001). For the organization level, it adopts a widely supported framework that has the same structure of a linear continuum with two extremes: Arm's-Length Contractual Relation ("ACR") and Obligational Business Relation ("OCR") from Sako's groundbreaking study (1992). Despite being reported in 1992, Sako's research appears to be most cogent among other works carried out in the last few decades. This chapter will examine ACR-OCR, adopt it as LME-CME practice at the organization level of the proposed framework, and test the current validity of ACR-OCR against samples. LME-CME and ACR-OCR will be integrated into the proposed framework based on the horizontal feature and the theoretical commonality between LME and ACR and between CME and OCR. The framework will have cultural values that are grounded in the individual level.

2.2.3 Framework features

The horizontal feature equips the framework with three useful features. First, it helps recognize the absence of a precise equivalent in cultural translation. The preceding example (Yamada, 1992) implies that the issue of cultural translatability materializes when a target culture does not have a precise equivalent but the opposite of it as seen in the dichotomy of individualism and collectivism. This thesis refers to such a dichotomy of opposites as a set of symmetrical opposites. The word *symmetrical* is chosen because it duly describes the polar ends of a spectrum. For example, at the individual level are extreme individualism and extreme collectivism. One end can be described as a mirror image of the other, rather than an asymmetrical opposite. If cultural accounts explain the reason why the "closest equivalents" are in fact culturally opposite between the respective societies, they will clarify the issue of cultural translatability. The horizontal feature of a linear continuum with two extremes is the best structure to represent two opposite specificities. A culturally unique specificity is unlikely translated as-is when it is brought to express specificity that does not exist in another society. The reality is not absolutely binary but relative and dynamic. The framework's feature captures regional specificities generally leaning towards either extreme: for example, extremely individualistic. In Yamada's example, a collectivistic behavior is relatively closer to the extreme of collectivism and not easily translatable as-is to the American society.

Second, related to the first point, the horizontal feature enables the framework to capture the dynamic nature of culturally driven specificities that can change over time (as discussed in Section 2.2.2). For example, a collectivist behavior can change, though it tends to stay collectivistic, rather than individualistic (Cavusgil, Knight, and Riesenberger, 2020). The model's feature captures changes of regional specificities as shifts leaning towards either extreme on the linear scale. The example of the Japanese proverb (Yamada,

1992) is considered culturally appropriate in Japanese because the collectivist behavior and the majority view of collectivism have shifted side to side but stayed on the collectivist side of the linear scale.

Finally, related to the previous point, the horizontal feature is useful for recognizing and analyzing the continuity of cultural specificity mentioned earlier. In the example, the Japanese proverb is deemed to have historical durability staying on the collectivist side. This thesis regards it as the continuity of cultural specificity. The continuity is accompanied by changes and reversions as mentioned above. The horizontal feature shows the continuity as specificity staying on one side being relatively closer to one extreme. This statement is regarded as the working definition of continuity in this thesis.

With the vertical interconnectedness and the shared horizontal feature, the proposed structure encompasses the emic and etic views as complementary tools for the research aim. From the positivist standpoint, it integrates this research's key concepts: cultural specificities, their intrinsic connections, and their continuity with changes and reversions. Prior research indicates that the dichotomy between individualism and collectivism has existed for centuries (Bugle, 2020) since the emergence of hunter gatherers and agricultural tribes as the earliest evidence (Triandis, 2001). In the case of Japan, collectivistic business practices have remained for the last few centuries to varying degrees. Their continuity has been made possible not only because business professionals made decisions based on their collectivist values of preference, among other factors, to sustain their business practices, but also because their business practices have functioned as incubators of cultural values, from which business professionals learn and reaffirm their cultural values. In other words, not only have cultural values influenced their business practices, but also business practices have helped cultural values remain for generations. Individualism and collectivism are constructs created by humans to make sense of observed social behaviors, but at the same time, social behaviors instill cultural values in humans who learn through OJT (on-the-job training) that includes culturally driven practices. The existence of intrinsic connection, which is part of the nexus of the levels, supports the durability of culturally driven specificities.

On the other hand, it is dangerous to assume that all culturally driven practices have equally strong durability enough to keep their continuity. Some of them may have changed, for instance, from being collectivistic to individualistic. A well-known example in the business field is Nissan Motor Co., Ltd., which exhibits much less "Japaneseness" (Sugimoto, 2014) than before, triggered by their cross-national alliance with Renault. The alliance has recently become unstable following the 2018 arrest of Alliance chairman, Carlos Ghosn. Nissan currently has a Japanese CEO, Makoto Uchida. This CEO change may make Nissan revert to more of a CME entity in the long run. Cultural specificities are dynamic: some are prone to foreign influence, while others are not. Those who have changed may bounce back somewhere close to the original position, and others may remain changed. The alternative approaches, other than the positivist views, are suitable for such changes on a case-by-case basis.

The contrastive discussions suggest that a durable specificity is not likely to disappear nor transform overnight, while significant events like Nissan's international alliance can make changes. Culture is not everything in the business sector, but culturally driven elements are not explainable without cultural accounts. Culture is not the sole determinant but can function as an influential driver alongside culturally

independent factors, such as changes of regulations, technological advances, and economic ups and downs. Culturally driven practices and culturally independent practicalities are dynamic and together shape the economies, such as LME and CME. Different paradigms exist because the world is not homogeneous. The proposed approach of combined viewpoints will bring multiple benefits to cultural research. Most notably, it establishes possibly the most comprehensive viewpoint by not discarding the accumulated knowledge of culture but bridging the different views available in academia.

The body of literature in business studies supports the interconnectedness between the individual, organization, and economy levels. For example, between the organization and economy levels (Thelen, 2009). This thesis presupposes that the three levels are connected not only because cultural values tend to drive individuals' decisions that determine institutional actions, but also because individuals tend to learn from institutional actions. The economies are the aggregate results of institutional actions (Hall and Soskice, 2001). This assumption of vertical integration is not to claim that all decisions are culturally driven but to point out that there exist culturally driven decisions and practices that make the cross-national differences.

This section has examined literature concerning the vertical interconnectedness of the levels and the horizontal feature of two extremes of a linear continuum, before crafting a framework of cultural translatability. The following section will review literature on each level in detail before proceeding to Chapter Three, which will contextualize LME-CME.

2.3 Ensemble of social specificities

The proposed framework will have a three-level structure, namely individual, organization, and economy. The three levels are chosen as the focused elements for the aim of research. The individual and organization levels will constitute the main field of analysis, where culturally driven specificities come in play. The economy level will be used to specify the respective societies. Each level has two extremes of a linear continuum, which is the shared theoretical feature among the literature concepts adopted. Two extremes will be, for example, individualism and collectivism at the individual level. This section will detail each level for a better understanding of it.

2.3.1 Economy level: LME and CME

In the field of political economy, Hall and Soskice (2001) provide rich samples and meaningful discussions over the variety of capitalism, which is a type of persona of society as mentioned in Section 2.2.1. Hall and Soskice (2001) provide two paradigms of political economies: liberal market economies (LMEs) and coordinated market economies (CMEs). In LMEs, “firms coordinate their activities primarily via hierarchies and competitive market arrangements”, and “market relationships are characterized by the arm’s-length exchange of goods or services in a context of competition and formal contracting” (Hall and Soskice, 2001, p. 8). LMEs are defined as Australia, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, the UK and the USA (Hall and Soskice, 2001), all of which are, culturally speaking, individualistic societies (Thomas and Peterson, 2017). As for CMEs, Hall and Soskice (2001) write “In contrast to LMEs, where the equilibrium outcomes of firm behavior are usually given by demand and supply conditions in competitive markets, the equilibria on which

firms coordinate in CMEs are more often the result of strategic interaction among firms and other actors” (p. 8). CMEs include Japan and certain continental European and Scandinavian countries (Hall and Soskice, 2001), all of which are relatively less individualistic societies than LMEs, culturally speaking (Thomas and Peterson, 2017).

Hall and Soskice (2001) make a positive contribution, but it is occasionally criticized for their oversimplified typologies. Campbell (2010, p. 102) writes:

Many critics of the varieties of capitalism approach have argued that it oversimplifies institutional reality. Real-world national political economies are in varying degrees complex institutional hybrids. They consist of a variety of interrelated institutions, some typical of liberal market economies and some typical of coordinated market economies.

Nevertheless, many scholars perceive the LME-CME typology as prevalent and useful. For example, Deeg (2010) adopts it to discuss the linkages between financial systems at the organization level and behavioral patterns at the individual level, acknowledging that the studies of comparative institutional theories of capitalism generally presume up to six types of capitalism (pp. 313-314).

The literature suggests that the LME-CME typology is still prevalent though has its weakness of being oversimplified. This weakness can be a flip side of strength, promoting a good understanding of LME-CME with ease of presentation. It can be mitigated by treating each of the LME and CME paradigms as two extremes to capture a multi-dimensional spectrum of possible types of institutional theories. The LME-CME extremes may not capture all types of political economies around the world, but the taxonomies can be treated as extremes of a linear continuum. Most importantly, LME and CME together encompass the scope of this research to substantiate the issue of cultural translatability. This thesis will make constructive use of the prevalent model of LME-CME.

This thesis adopts LME-CME for three reasons: First, it gives shape to LME (English-speaking) and CME (Japanese) societies at the economy level. The definitive features of the paradigms are “the arm’s-length principle” for LME and “strategic interaction” for CME. These keywords are essentially “water” in the Chinese proverb “A fish can’t see water” introduced in Chapter Two. For example, the arm’s-length principle is highly taken for granted in LMEs that LME business professionals tend not to notice the fact the LME application of the arm’s-length principle works only in LMEs unless they step out of LMEs and look back afresh (McKinsey & Company, 2021). This description is not to assert that CME does not follow the arm’s-length principle but to explain that CME’s application of the principle differs from LME.

Second, LME-CME connects the economy and organization levels. It is actor-centered, in which actors can be individuals, firms, or governments. Hall and Soskice (2001) see companies as “the key agents of adjustment in the face of technological change or international competition whose activities aggregate into overall levels of economic performance” (p. 6). Institutional employees, typically managers, at the individual level make corporate decisions to drive firms at the organization level, and economic performance, which is viewed as part of the economy level, is more of the aggregate results of firm activities.

Finally, LME-CME has the horizontal feature of two extremes (which are LME and CME) of a linear continuum as explained earlier. Based on the feature, LME-CME will be used as part of the proposed

framework in this thesis. Having reviewed the economy level, the following section will move down the societal ladder to the organization level, where business practices stand.

2.3.2 Organization level: ACR and OCR

The body of literature offers rich discussions over business practices observable at the organization level. Notably, Sako (1992) provides a useful framework entitled Arm’s-Length Contractual Relation (“ACR”) and Obligational Contractual Relation (“OCR”). Sako conducted a comparative study between British and Japanese business practices in the electronics industry, focusing on British buyer-supplier trading relationships (defined as ACR) and Japanese buyer-supplier trading relationships (defined as OCR). Sako’s work is considered groundbreaking in the sense that it introduced the five-percent portion (quoted in Section 1.6) to the LME of the UK and generally European societies. This thesis adopts ACR-OCR to contextualize the organization level, on which Sako focused in her research project. Table 3 is a summary of its grounded elements.

Akin to LME-CME, ACR-OCR has two extreme ends of a continuum to capture any variants of the social realities sitting between the extremes discovered in the electronics industry in the UK. This structure is discussed as the horizontal feature of the framework of cultural translatability earlier.

ACR	OCR
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involving a specific, discrete economic transaction with an explicit contract, which spells out before trading commences each party’s tasks and duties in every conceivable eventuality, as far as human capacity for anticipation allows. • Unforeseen contingencies to be settled by resort to some universalistic legal or normative rules. • All dealings to be conducted at arm’s and length, to avoid undue unfamiliarity, with neither party controlled by the other. • An easily available option of seeking an alternative trading partner when a contract comes to an end. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involving an economic contract covering the production and trading of goods and services. • Embedded in more particularistic social relations between trading partners who entertain a sense of mutual trust. • Transactions taking place without prior agreement on all the terms and conditions of trade because of the above underpinning. • An incentive to deviate from the tasks and duties spelt out in a contract and do more than is expected by the trading partner: Such an incentive results from expectations that the act of goodwill will lead to a similar response from the trading partner.

Table 3: A summary of the ACR and OCR patterns (adopted from Sako, 1992, p. 9-10)

As presented, the OCR transaction patterns appear contradictory from the ACR standpoint, and vice versa. If a buyer and their supplier agree on and strictly follow the ACR pattern for instance, the OCR pattern is no longer an option. In the extreme sense, those patterns are mutually exclusive. Sako (1992) begins her book with an important clarification: “It cannot be presumed that there is one single characteristic pattern of buyer-supplier relations in Japan and another in Britain” (p. 2). ACR is not intended to assert that all British buyers and suppliers, without exception, equally exhibit all the ACR characteristics. By the same token, OCR never represents all Japanese buyer-supplier relations. Figure 2 is an attempt to illustrate the discussion:

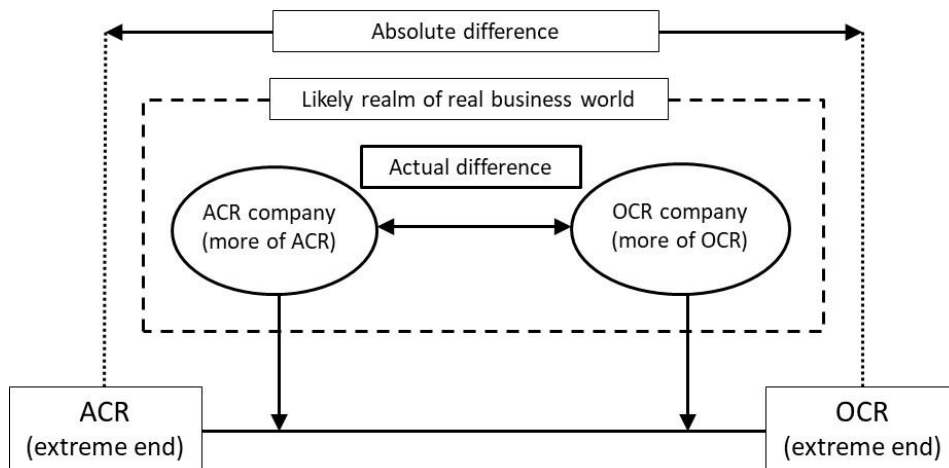


Figure 2: ACR-OCR illustrated

As presented, ACR and OCR are “constructed to capture complex variations in buyer-supplier relations” and “best thought of as lying at the ends of a continuum” (Sako, 1992, p. 2). Both Britain and Japan have “a range of actual trading patterns which lie on the ACR-OCR continuum” and in practice “the modal Japanese inter-company relationship is more OCR than the modal British one” (Sako, 1992, p. 15). ACR and OCR are the extreme ends to capture complex corporate variations sitting somewhere between the ACR and OCR ends in the real business world.

Sako (1992, p. 10) writes of two dimensions which capture the essence of ACR and OCR relationships, namely “the degree of interdependence and the time span for reciprocity”. These two dimensions explain each set of the ACR-OCR dichotomy described in Table 3. The concept of interdependence is defined as “a situation in which the actions of one trading partner decisively affect the fortunes of, and opportunities and constraints faced by, the other partner” (Sako, 1992, p. 10). Examined further in Chapter Seven, transactional dependence (Sako, 1992, p. 11) describes the extreme patterns of interdependence between the manufacturers and the component suppliers. “ACR is characterized by a low degree of actual perceived interdependence, while OCR is characterized by heavy interdependence” which is underpinned by the existence of “goodwill trust” (Sako, 1992, p 10). Because the high degree of interdependence is non-existent in the extreme sense of the ACR pattern, it may be difficult to understand for those who are not familiar with the OCR pattern due to the lack of mutual knowledge. Cited from Sako (1992), the following explanation on goodwill trust helps to fill the knowledge gap:

What underpins heavy mutual dependence as an acceptable, even preferred, state of affairs is the existence of ‘goodwill trust’. ‘Goodwill trust’ is a sure feeling that trading partners possess a moral commitment to maintaining a trading relationship. It may manifest itself in not taking unfair advantage of one’s circumstances (for which shared principles of fairness exist) and in offering preferential treatment or help whenever the need arises. (p. 10)

Goodwill trust is a “sure feeling” because it is a shared cultural value of learned interpretation beyond the corporate boundaries among the Japanese (OCR individuals) that Sako interviewed during her research. Sako (1992) explains the other dimension, the time span of reciprocity, as follows:

In ACR, exact reciprocity is expected within each contract duration. In OCR, the principle of give-and-take is looser, so that exact reciprocity may be achieved, if ever, only over a very long time. The greater specificity and underlying calculation involved in reciprocal activities in ACR are a reflection of the reluctance of ACR traders to accept a favor which they feel they cannot return in the near future. In contrast, OCR traders feel that mutual indebtedness or obligatedness at any time is a normal state of affairs which sustains a relationship. (p. 10)

The salient feature of the OCR pattern is that the cardinal principle is not a legal contract but unspoken codes of conduct. Indeed, Table 1 is filled with the ACR and OCR descriptions, all of which can raise the issue of cultural translatability.

Sako does not incorporate cultural studies into her work because ACR-OCR focuses on the organization level. However, her two dimensions are exactly the cultural constructs of individualism/collectivism and time orientation (Thomas and Peterson, 2017). Subsequent research (Wuyts and Geyskens, 2005) investigates the cultural constructs of collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, and power distance in the business context of contract drafting, associating their model with ACR-OCR findings (Sako and Helper, 1998). It is striking that Sako's descriptions on her two dimensions equate with the two cultural constructs. It means that the whole ACR-OCR research argues that the two sets of cultural dimensions drive the ACR-OCR pattern differences, as Sako concludes that all ACR-OCR differences of the trading patterns are eventually ascribed to them. To reiterate, the concept of goodwill trust is a relative notion to portray the OCR extreme. Not all the Japanese individuals have the same value of preference to the same extent.

Sako's two dimensions support the intrinsic connection between the organization and individual levels. Firms have preferred styles, such as ACR and OCR, characterized by corporate decisions that professionals (or individuals) make at the individual level. Perhaps more precisely, firms are the reflections of individuals' business decisions (Ketkar et al., 2012), some of which are driven by their individual beliefs that include to Sako's grounded findings of two dimensions.

This thesis adopts ACR-OCR as the organization level of the proposed framework for three reasons: First, ACR-OCR helps to link the organization and individual levels as discussed above. ACR-OCR has the conceptual strength of linking the levels. Second, ACR and OCR articulate LME and CME, respectively. Sako (1992) offers useful accounts of firm activities. No other work better describes the patterns of wealth creation than Sako, particularly that of the CME of Japan since the release of Sako's research in 1992. Finally, ACR-OCR has the horizontal feature of two extremes (which are ACR and OCR) of a linear continuum explained in Chapter One. This feature is vital for capturing relative and dynamic specificities. Having reviewed the conceptual commonality between ACR-OCR and LME-CME, this thesis refers to ACR-OCR as LME-CME practice for streamlining the terms hereafter. This thesis will propose a framework consisting of literature concepts, all of which have the horizontal feature for theoretical coherence.

ACR/OCR can be understood as an "ecosystem", which has become a popular word in academic circles. Originated in the field of biology, it refers to "a bounded system (a physical space) populated by different species connected by complex processes of resource exchange and conversion" (Westney et al., 2022, p. 7). Westney et al. (2022) propose a relevant term *translation ecosystem* to refer to a bounded

system, such as a multinational corporation, which exhibits the dynamics of translation. Their argument supports the application of ACR/OCR, for example, an ACR organization that uses a translation of OCR business instructions. The proposed framework can be understood as a translation ecosystem.

2.3.3 Individual level: cultural values of preference

Many scholars in business-related cultural studies have carried out research into individual-level cultural values. Their research is typically etic with a common metric capable of being generalized and compared across societies (House et al., 2004). Having a common metric is vital not only because regional values of preference differ in complexity (Triandis, 2001) but also because it helps an audience to understand foreignness by comparing themselves with others. Researchers usually report their outcomes as cultural constructs or dimensions: typically, sets of two extremes of a linear continuum (Thomas and Peterson, 2017). Before reviewing the cultural constructs available in literature, this section will examine the primary reason for being in business as an overarching goal in the business sector because it helps understand the big-picture view of the individual-level persona discussed earlier in this chapter. de Geus (2002) provides the following two types of personas:

There are in fact two different types of commercial companies in existence today, distinguished by their primary reason for being in business. The first type is run for a purely “economic” purpose: to produce maximum results with minimum resources. This sort of “economic company” is managed primarily for profit.... The economic company is not a work community. It is a corporate machine. Its sole purpose is the production of wealth for a small inner group of managers and investors. It feels no responsibility to the membership as a whole.... The second type of company, by contrast, is organized around the purpose of perpetuating itself as an ongoing community.... Return on investment remains important. But managers regard the optimization of capital as a complement to the optimization of people. The company itself is primarily a community. (pp. 100-103)

de Geus (2002) suggests that the two types - the first type (of economic company, “LME-purpose” hereafter) and the second type (of community company, “CME-purpose”) - represent LMEs and the CME of Japan in the extreme sense, respectively. This thesis treats the two types as two extremes of cultural constructs of a linear continuum to capture individual variations.

The quote above (de Geus, 2002) makes three useful contributions: First, the LME-type purpose elaborates on the construct of individualism. A well-known work on the shared values of preference is Milton Friedman’s doctrine, which states that companies have a single responsibility of maximizing profits (1962). Many recent publications (Luyendijk, 2015) support the current validity of the doctrine in LMEs. This interpretation is not to claim that all LME-type actors equally have the highest level of the LME-type purpose but to explain that they generally exhibit it to varying degrees.

Second, it helps to understand the CME-type purpose, as well as the cultural construct of collectivism. The notion of a “work community” or a company as “an on-going community” in the preceding quote seems to require an additional explanation, as the meaning is naturally unclear to individuals who are only familiar with the LME purpose. Culturally speaking, a CME-type company has the primacy of collectivistic interest

of the purpose of perpetuating itself as an ongoing community. Abegglen (2006) offers the following explanation of a CME-type company, *kaisha* in Japanese:

Apart from the inherent interest in companies so long-lived, we can take all these time-tested survivors to be testimony to the fact that the *kaisha*, and not simply family-owned ones, are communities with the objective of perpetuating themselves. These are not simple collections of physical assets to be bargained over, bought and sold. These are social organizations that seek a long life on behalf of the well-being of all of their members. (p. 13)

This quote is not to assert that all CME-type companies are never sold but to describe the CME extreme. The Japanese buy and sell companies for strategic reasons, but that is not what Abegglen explains. The CME sense of a company differs from the LME sense, which tends to perceive a company as pure collections of physical assets to form a place for employees to work and receive pay in an efficient manner as explained much in classical LME business literature.

One way of perceiving the CME sense is to examine the concept of identity at the individual level: The Japanese tend to see their employer as a major constituent of identity. Chapter Three will explain the concept of Japanese identity inseparable from their collective. At the organization and higher levels, the CME-type purpose of existence applies to various industrial groups (or personas examined earlier) beyond companies to varying extents. Each of the CME-type conglomerates, including the *keiretsu* groups mentioned in Chapter One, is also a diffused form of a CME-type community that consists of subsets of communities, depending on the group's character and/or culture. For example, the Mitsubishi group generally has more solidarity/unity than the Mitsui group at the conglomerate level. *Keiretsu* can be defined as a Japanese tight-knit conglomerate with member affiliates bound by ownership networks, personnel flows, and expectations of mutual assistance (Dow, McGuire, and Yoshikawa, 2011), historically organized around the CME-purpose.

Finally, it supports the concept of intrinsic connection across the levels. Individuals make corporate decisions, which direct the firms, based on their local regulations, institutionally specific rules, and individual decision determinants, including the LME and CME-type values. The economies are the aggregate results of the corporate activities in the respective societies. The theme of CME business was a popular field of research in the late twentieth century. For example, many studies have examined *keiretsu* profitability and their conclusions corroborate each other: long-term security and the lack of strong profitability (Hoshi and Kashyap, 2001). Miyashita and Russell (1994, p. 197) similarly write "Keiretsu membership may provide only acceptable levels of profitability, but it offers very high levels of security", after examining two famous studies (Caves and Uekusa, 1976; Nakatani, 1984), which altogether covered a 22-year period between 1961 and 1982, reporting the same conclusion: *Keiretsu* affiliation does not lead to higher profitability for member firms. Cultural values do not determine everything, but their effects cannot be ignored. To reiterate, no type is superior to another, but it is a matter of preference. LMEs and CMEs have different purposes of business that have made different lines of historical developments. The reciprocal connection between the levels should not be underestimated as it shapes management style that results in specific outcomes.

This section has reviewed the LME and CME patterns by level with the focus on the big-picture view of the individual-level persona. The wealth creation patterns appear at the economy level. Culturally driven practices reside at the organization level. Cultural values of preference are grounded in the individual level. Each level has two extremes of a linear continuum that will help compare the LME and CME ways of life.

In summary, this chapter has introduced key literature to build a theoretical foundation by offering the working definition of culture, clarifying the different viewpoints of culture, and rationalizing the structure of the proposed framework. In doing so, it has explained the three levels of individual, organization, and economy and the interconnectedness between them. Having discussed the framework's basic structure, the following chapter will contextualize it with cultural specificities.

Chapter Three: Toward a Framework of Cultural Translatability

Chapter Three will perform three tasks: 1) reviewing relevant concepts, 2) conceptualizing the idea of cultural translatability, and 3) crafting a framework. Chapter Two has provided the basic structure of the proposed framework, focusing on the vertical and horizontal features. To contextualize the basic structure, this chapter will review literature concepts concerning Japanese society, Japanese style management, and Japanese culture, offering comparative analysis of their symmetrically opposite LME counterparts. These sets of symmetrical opposites can constitute LME/CME extreme patterns and help better understand the framework, which addresses the proposed concept.

3.1 Viewpoints in the studies of Japanese business and Japanese society

Chapter Two has discussed the emic and etic perspectives that can confront each other. The same debate exists in the study of Japanese society. The debate can be broadly categorized into two: one that adopts the etic view and another that opts for the emic view. Emic research may be further categorized into two: one that focuses on internal variations and another that investigates shared elements within the Japanese society often reported in etic literature. This section will clarify this research's position by critically reviewing relevant literature.

Early prominent researchers include James Abegglen, Michael Yoshino, and Peter Drucker, to name a few, who introduced Japanese society and Japanese style management in English. In this thesis, early and influential literature is referred to as classical literature. Classical literature was or has been mainstream in the field. The term *early literature* means one written early that researchers generally view as old. Citing Abegglen (1958), Yoshino (1968), Cole (1971), and Dore (1973), Beechler et al. (1996, p. 3) write of the following critical differences found in Japanese business as compared to their LME counterparts: “more frequent use of consultative decision-making practices, higher frequency of communication, lifetime employment, long-term planning horizons, generalist career paths, quality control circles, and implicit informal control mechanisms”. Early researchers had their mission to explain Japanese style management, which was largely unknown to LMEs at that time, to an LME audience in English. Early researchers resorted the most effective approach to explain the findings of foreignness with clarity, making comparisons of respective business practices generally shared by the majority as common metrics between the Americans and the Japanese - what is called etic today. That is why classical literature argues that the Japanese are relatively “more” frequent use of consultive decision-making practice than LMEs. This argument represents early researchers' standpoint. With the easy-to-understand metrics, their mission has been successful but come with research limitations that may be deemed as negative consequences: It has made an LME audience perceive that the Japanese are homogeneous as presented in the etic literature, which does not focus on internal variations within Japan.

However, with hindsight, classical literature adopted the appropriate viewpoint that made sense to an LME audience. If they reported on Japan's internal variations as their major findings, their work would have been out of focus and made less or little sense, and consequently their mission might not have been

successful. These interpretations on classical literature support the following three points: 1) it is important to choose an appropriate approach for the purpose of research and not to discredit another, 2) the author's cultural values of preference make text culturally driven and come out through text, and 3) cultural values take effect on the construction of otherness. If LME business practices preferred more frequent use of consultive decision-making practice than the Japanese, classical literature would have said "less" frequent use of consultive decision-making practice, instead. Literature works manifest the authors' cultural values of learned interpretations. In fact, many academic works can be treated as evidence for the existence of national culture. The authors are not necessarily aware of their cultural values shining through text. Own cultural values are typically taken for granted and unnoticed as exemplified by "water" in the Chinese proverb introduced in Chapter Two.

Several decades later, alongside the popularity of the emic-etic perspectives, some research has started working on the neglected side - the reality that the Japanese society consists of homogeneous and diverse elements, just like other societies. Classical literature has already introduced comparisons of societally shared aspects between Japan and LMEs, but Japan's internal diversity is less known to an LME audience. For instance, the following quote is cited from a recent emic book in Japanese studies:

To reiterate the main points of the discussion: this book attempts to take issue with two types of monoculturalism that have long pervaded studies of Japanese society. First, it explicitly challenges descriptions of Japan as a culturally homogeneous society with little internal variation and contests the view that Japan is 'uniquely unique' among advanced industrial societies.... Second, it wishes to be sensitive to Japanese emic concepts as well as established etic notions of the social sciences... (Sugimoto, 2014, p. 36).

Although Sugimoto (2014) uses the terms *emic* and *etic* to show their acknowledgement, the book's overarching point is to present its emic findings of Japanese subcultures that differ from the etic literature traditionally introduced to an LME audience in English, as it "explicitly challenges" the existent literature. Sugimoto makes a good contribution concerning Japan's subcultures and diversified elements that are "internal variations" in the quote. This contribution is meaningful because it explains what the etic literature did not. It uncovers the diversity that coexists with the generally shared elements within Japan from the lens of Sugimoto.

On the other hand, Japanese studies, including business-related subjects, continues releasing research to examine generally shared elements within Japan. Chapter One has offered an overview of Japanese style management (Okazaki and Okuno-Fujisawa, 1999). Recent research confirms the continuity of some of the Japanese business practices initially reported in classical literature: for example, Japanese style corporate governance (Learmount, 2002), Japanese style employment (Olcott, 2009), and Japanese style corporate alliance (Shimokawa, 2010). As mentioned earlier, Japanese business communication was initially reported in classical literature with the etic perspective: more frequent use of consultative decision-making practices and higher frequency of communication (Beechler et al., 1996). These characteristics are vividly present today across most industry sectors regardless of organization size, according to recent research (Masuda,

2014; Nihon Keizai Shimbun, 2020). Their findings indicate the continued existence of generally shared elements in Japan. In other words, not all contents in classical literature are outdated.

Many recent findings, as well as classical literature, suggest that the shared elements within Japan are unique particularly from the viewpoint of a non-Japanese audience. This standpoint also makes sense, though some argue that the Japanese are not unique. There are three possible reasons why literature provides opposing arguments: Researchers have 1) different purposes of analysis, 2) different units of analysis, and 3) different/opposing cultural values. All these differences come out through text. This thesis considers that both viewpoints stand because they make sense for the respective purposes of analysis and viewpoints. Japan is unique for some and not for others, applicable to researchers and audiences. Some units of analysis have shared character, and others do not.

This section has explained this research's position towards classical and recent literature. Classical literature is not necessarily outdated but helps to identify the continuity of specificity with the assistance of recent literature. Recent studies exhibit two lines of development: uncovering internal variations within the Japanese society and reporting on what is generally shared within the society. The former is driven by the emic perspective possibly with some resistance to the etic perspective. The latter retains the same focus as classical literature with the etic perspective. Both are relevant to this thesis, which is to create a framework based on etic research's findings for performing emic analysis. With the assistance of classical and recent literature, the following section will review Japanese style management.

3.2 Japanese style management

Chapter One has offered an overview of Japanese style management based on the literature (Okazaki and Okuno-Fujisawa, 1999). Written from the Japanese authors' etic perspective, it describes generally shared practices especially among large companies influential in Japan. It is useful in the sense that it discusses what etic research typically examines to make comparisons of socially shared elements with the LME counterparts for better cross-national understanding. Important to note is that the comparisons here are relative, not absolute nor binary: The literature is not intended to show internal variations. Not all Japanese companies equally adopt the Japanese systems to the same extent.

According to the literature, Japanese style management includes three systemic types of Japanese business practices - the system of long-term employment, the main bank system, and the Japanese form of corporate alliance (generally known as keiretsu). Long-term employment is referred to as membership-type employment in this thesis as explained in the following section. These organization-level practices, which among others signify Japanese style management, are interrelated to form the country-level collective. This collective is colloquially referred to as "Japan, Inc." in classical literature (Miyashita and Russell, 1994). The term *Japan, Inc.* is coined in LMEs to express the cohesiveness of the collective of Japan. This thesis primarily focuses on the three systems for three reasons: 1) it is a good starting point to examine recent changes and reversions to date, 2) it helps to trace the origin of Japanese style management, and 3) many cross-national business communications take place around them. As mentioned earlier, this section offers

general descriptions of the systems. Part Two will discuss their changes and reversions of business practice after creating a framework that helps illustrate them.

3.2.1 Keiretsu

In Japanese, the word *keiretsu* usually refers to tight-knit conglomerates. There are two types of keiretsu: horizontal and vertical (Dow, McGuire, and Yoshikawa, 2011; Hoshi, 1994). Vertical keiretsu usually means a series of subcontractors organized under a principal manufacturer: for example, Toyota, Honda, and Hitachi. Horizontal keiretsu refers to a group of large firms in diverse industries: for example, Mitsubishi, Mitsui, and Sumitomo. Vertical keiretsu tends to focus on their main lines of businesses, such as automobiles and electronics, with related operations, including consumer finance that promotes automobile sales (Kosaka et al., 2020). Horizontal keiretsu has longer history than vertical keiretsu and operates across various industry sectors. Some of the horizontal keiretsu groups have existed for several hundred years. Their early form is known as *zaibatsu*, described often as the privately owned prewar combines (Miyashita and Russell, 1994), each of which has a rich history. As for the Mitsui Group for instance, the Mitsui Public Relations Committee (2022) narrates the group's history: The Mitsui Group originated around the beginning of the 17th century and how they evolved in their early times. Then after the end of World War II in 1945, the 15 largest *zaibatsu* groups, including Mitsui, were forcibly dissolved and the groups' assets were seized (Miyashita and Russell, 1994, p. 32). Despite the forced dissolution, the Japanese reinstated the collectives as keiretsu groups. One important characteristic of keiretsu is that there is no legal contract to bind keiretsu affiliates. Instead, the following three ties bind keiretsu affiliates: "ownership networks, personnel flows, and expectations of mutual assistance" (Dow, McGuire, and Yoshikawa, 2011, p. 301). As reviewed in Chapter Two, this thesis refers to keiretsu affiliates' expectation of mutual assistance as goodwill trust (Sako, 1992). The body of literature says that the three ties are specific to the CME of Japan, and none of them are observable in LMEs.

3.2.2 Membership-type employment

Since the 2010's, two relatively new terms, namely *job-type employment* and *membership-type employment*, have started attracting attention in the Japanese media and Japan-focused literature (Tsuru, 2021). No precise definitions of the terms appear available, but literature commonly uses *job type* and *membership type* to refer to the LME and CME employment patterns, respectively. To explain the job type, Asuyama (2021, p. 3) writes "...people usually apply for a position with a detailed job description, and only desired internal transfers occur". For the membership type, "By contrast, in Japan, new graduates usually apply for a company, and not for a position" and "Usually, no detailed job description is provided, and regular employees are frequently transferred to other positions regardless of their interests" (Asuyama, 2021, p. 3). The literature suggests that the job type can be described as the employee's commitment to the job position, whereas the membership type can be their commitment to the employer⁷. This thesis treats this description as

⁷ The word *employer* in this thesis refers to an LME/CME organization with job-type/membership-type employment.

its working definitions of the terms and adopts the terms for discussion purposes. The literature points out the following sets of symmetrically opposite LME-CME practices: commitment to the job position/employer, explicit/no job descriptions, and desired/mandatory transfers. This thesis will investigate them as culturally driven specificities.

This thesis uses the adopted terms because they corroborate many prevalent concepts. Notably, the term *membership* pertains to what constitutes social identity in Japan (discussed in Section 3.4). The job type and the membership type correspond to the LME and CME patterns, respectively. LME employment is characterized by contractual commitment in fluid labor markets (Hall and Soskice, 2001). This characteristic upholds the preceding description of job-type employment (Asuyama, 2021) quoted from their recent research. By contrast, Japan's membership-type employment is characterized by employees' non-contractual yet reciprocal commitment to their employers (Ono, 2010). Akin to keiretsu, Japan's employment system typically involves no legal contract made between employers and their employees.

In Japanese, there are in fact two terms *shuushin koyoo* (lifetime employment) and *chooki koyoo* (long-term employment). The former means being employed by a single employer until retirement, which can be the archetype of membership-type employment. The latter represents the longevity in employment resulted from the Japanese practice that employees less ordinarily move from one company to another than other societies (Vogel, 2006). Important to note is that not all employees are employed under the system of lifetime employment, yet Japan's average employment tenor is much longer than LMEs (Kambayashi and Kato, 2016; Ono, 2010). Excluding part-time workers, the average number of years that salary workers have been with their current employer has in fact kept increasing gradually in Japan from slightly less than 10 years in 1976 to roughly 13 years in 2020 for the last 45 years according to government research (Japan Institute for Labour Policy and Training, 2021). A newspaper company releases a list of the top 100 Japanese listed companies in order of the average years of employment: All the top 15 companies have more than 23 years of employment tenure (Toyo Keizai, 2021). This information is only the tip of iceberg built on the continued preference of membership-type employment in Japan. This thesis uses the term *membership-type* for clarity as it is more precise than other terms in that membership is the core element that makes long-term employment or lifetime employment.

As for the origin of the Japanese pattern, Okazaki and Okuno-Fujisawa (1999) write that the Japanese employment system emerged during depression era during the 1920s, so that the employers did not lose skilled workers (p. 7). Abegglen (1958, p. 11) wrote of the Japanese employment practice as "the critical difference: a lifetime commitment" in his book, which first introduced it to an LME audience in English. According to Abegglen (2006), his original concept of lifetime commitment was translated into Japanese and then later translated back in English to the term *lifetime employment*.

3.2.3 Main bank system

The Japanese banking system is often referred to as the main bank system ("MBS"), which is "appropriately analyzed as an especially intensive manifestation of relationship banking" (Aoki and Patrick, 1994, xxi). The term *main bank* in general refers to the closest relationship bank(s). In the MBS context, a main bank

typically means one within a corporate group, which can be keiretsu reviewed earlier. In other cases, a main bank has established long-term banking relationships with SMEs (The Small and Medium Enterprises Agency, 2016). The concept of a main bank is best understood as “a financial institution that keeps money flowing to a group of industrial concerns” (Miyashita and Russell, 1994, p. 43). The argument here is not to claim that a main bank exists exclusively for their group but that the MBS takes it into account (Sakawa and Watanabel, 2021). Regarding the emergence of the MBS, Teranishi (1994) suggests the wartime period around 1939. Gotoh (2020) writes of Japan’s gradual shifts made from capital market-based to bank-centered during the 1930s and 1940s. Chapter Nine will discuss changes of cultural specificities in detail.

Akin to keiretsu and the employment system, the main bank system typically involves no legal contract made between banks and their clients. Important to note is that not all institutional borrowers have a main bank, but this thesis focuses on the shared banking system as reported in the recent and classical literature. Having reviewed the salient characteristics of Japanese style management, the following section will examine historic events that might have significantly influenced them.

3.3 Watersheds in the history of Japanese business

Literature suggests that the following five events are, among others, most significant for Japanese business in relation to the focus of research: 1) Meiji Restoration in 1868: The major political event that ended the Tokugawa Shogunate and restored the Emperor of Japan. Japan started adopting technologies developed outside Japan that led to the rapid industrialization, which created the foundation of Japanese business. 2) The Great Depression in the 1930s: Alongside Japan’s wartime economic system, Japanese business started to exhibit what is called Japanese style management today, changing its market-based economic system built as a result of Meiji Restoration (Okazaki and Okuno-Fujisawa, 1999). 3) The surrender of Imperial Japan in 1945: All the keiretsu groups (f.k.a. zaibatsu at that time) were forcibly dissolved soon after the end of WW II. 4) The Big Bang in the 1990s: The Japanese government made a series of legislative changes to internationalize the Japanese financial system. It loosened the regulations in such a way that the revisions allowed foreign financial institutions to enter Japan. This event has affected the Japanese main bank system. 5) The lost decade(s) in the 1990s and the 2000s: Japan’s long-term economic recession lasted for at least a decade. Many Japanese companies gave up on long-term employment, especially lifetime employment. These watersheds can be illustrated as Figure 3:

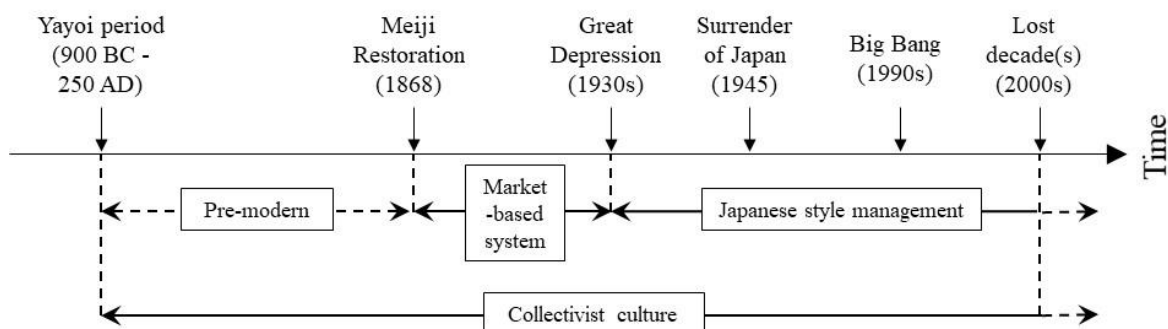


Figure 3: Historical development of Japanese style management and culture

There seem to exist three critical points about the development of Japanese business: 1) Meiji Restoration encouraged Japan to create their market-based system, which was more of today's LME pattern. Japan's early LME-like system existed for at least several decades from the late nineteenth century to the 1920s, which was when the system started to change into today's CME pattern (Okazaki and Okuno-Fujisawa, 1999). 2) Japanese style management was the one that successfully made an economic turnaround in the postwar period between the 1950's and the 1960's and achieved well-known subsequent growth in the 1970's and the 1980's. 3) Japanese style management, if not extinct, has been present in a dynamic equilibrium for nearly 100 years.

Historical research discusses why Japan had a market-based system immediately after the Meiji Restoration. According to Ohtsu and Imanari (2002), "The Meiji Restoration was really a coup by which young, lower-class samurai came to occupy a position of power in the name of emperor. They vigorously imported and successfully transplanted Western institutions to make Japan rich and strong" (p. 38). Ohtsu and Imanari (2002) discuss roughly when Japanese style management started to take shape but does not provide the definitive reason(s) why it emerged. However, there are helpful clues: Gotoh (2020) writes in his recent book *Japanese Resistance to American Financial Hegemony* "I argue anti-liberal, anti-free market social norms were created and promoted by the administrators of the 1940 system, and consented to by subordinates such as labor and SME owners, contributing to a management-labor alliance against capitalists (mainly international and domestic shareholders) as well as the formulation of keiretsu" (p. 9). According to Gotoh (2020), Japanese style management has remained for a century because of "systemic support" defined as "dominant elites' support and protection of subordinates in exchange for loyalty and obedience, which is exemplified by broad-ranging domestic social relations in Japan such as the main bank system, lifetime employment, and long-term subcontracting between large firms and SMEs" (p. 12). This thesis postulates that this type of systemic support is an example of culturally driven specificity that has existed not only at the government of Japan but also across the levels to varying degrees in the whole society. Based on the body of literature, the whole picture of Japanese style management can be described as the socially organic result of the multifaceted forces of religious and philosophical values of preference, education contents, collective cooperation between the government and private sectors, and political and business leaders' beliefs that altogether guided the Japanese to blend LME style management into the Japan's business sector.

The type of "systemic support" that Gotoh points out in fact existed during the pre-modern era before the Meiji Restoration: for example, a Japanese popular play *Chushingura* (The Treasury of Loyal Retainers, their translation) produced in 1748 is a vivid example of "Japanese loyalty" (Beck and Beck, 1994, p. 24). In the play, it appears as systemic support between masters and warriors. In today's world, it appears as systemic support between elite managers and subordinates as Gotoh (2020) reports. Early literature uses the term *company loyalty* to refer to it in the context of Japan's employment pattern: "Company loyalty stems from the system of lifetime employment and the strong tradition of groupism that pervades all aspects of Japanese society" (Tung, 1984, p. 33). The term *groupism* or its synonym is frequently used (Taplin, 1995) to refer to the cultural construct of collectivism. Expressed differently, all the literature concepts corroborate

each other and support the continued existence of Japanese style management with changes and reversions. A diffused yet pervasive level of systemic support is observable not only between dominant elites and subordinates at the policy-setting level but also between managers and team members at the practice level across business sectors regardless of organization size. Based on the body of literature, “systemic support” can be explained as a type of mutual support between individuals who share the same cultural values of preference (large power distance for example), *giri* (Japanese moral duty examined in Section 3.4), and social identity (also examined in Section 3.4) in the collectivistic context: for example, membership employment. There has been no major change in the sense that the culturally driven concept of systemic support has remained for the past three centuries. What have changed are the settings where individuals play.

Perhaps the 100-year history of Japanese style management can be seen differently, depending on the interpretation. Historically speaking, 100 years may be considered relatively short. On the other hand, Japanese style management can be considered durable as it has lasted for generations. Taken together, it is safe to say that the majority of decision-making individuals have supported the systems at many organizations in the business and government sectors, despite the series of influential events and the impacts of foreign forces that would have had significant impacts on Japanese style management.

3.4 Japanese identity

David Livermore, a PhD in international education, as well as a specialist of cultural intelligence (CQ), writes about individualism and collectivism:

Individualism versus collectivism is, at its core, a difference in identity. From an individualist perspective, if a decision affects you, you should be the one to make it. Individualism is the norm in countries such as the United States..., whereas collectivism is the norm in most of Asia.... From an early age, collectivists are taught never to be the sore thumb that stands out because the sore thumb gets chopped off. Bringing honor to one’s family and blending in with society is what is most highly valued. (Livermore, 2015, p. 101)

In this quote’s context, the word *identity* is culturally driven and relating to self-image and/or self-positioning in social settings. This type of identity is much discussed as social identity in psychology and related fields. Originally proposed by Henri Tajfel (1981), social identity refers to “a person’s sense of who they are based on their group membership(s)” (McLeod, 2019). This thesis adopts this description as the working definition of the term *identity* for discussion purposes. The word *identity* in this thesis refers to the concept of social identity unless otherwise specified. It constitutes the individual-level persona (examined in Chapter Two) and characterizes culturally driven specificities sitting at higher levels. Social identity theory talks about intergroup behavior, such as in-group (us) and out-group (them). Social identity theory, Livermore’s discussion above, and the definitions of individualism and collectivism (that Part Three will examine) conceptually corroborate each other for their validity.

In the preceding quote, Livermore points out the pervasiveness of collectivism in Asia. Regarding the generally shared element of social identity across Asian minds, Fam, Yang, and Hyman (2009, p.393) write “... a Chinese would identify him/herself as a subset of a society whose life centers on passive acceptance of

fate determined by the surrounding community and nature”. Their explanation suggests that an individual’s identity is inseparably attached to the group or community, rather than the self. Furthermore, individuals are dependent or interdependent on the collective, even regarding one’s fate. This thesis considers that these literature descriptions explain the diffused notion of Japanese identity that has tacit commonality across Asian minds. In the case of Japan, “the group or community” in the quote is typically the employer and their group, such as keiretsu examined in this chapter (Kondo, 1990). Social identity - the notion of who the employer is in Japan - is an influential part of their lives, and that is why the Japanese are highly status conscious (Yoshimura and Anderson, 1997). This thesis uses the concept of membership-type employment to refer to Japan’s employment pattern. This concept is adopted because the term *membership-type* precisely represents not only what makes Japanese employment longer than LME employment but also what constitutes Japanese identity as explained by the concept of social identity.

For the sake of understanding, Fam, Yang, and Hyman (2009, p. 393) explain the LME values: “In contrast, a Westerner would identify him/herself as a separate entity whose life centers on self-reliance, equality, and a personally managed mode of living”. Their discussion describes LME social identity as relatively more independent from the group or community, to which they belong in the respective societies.

In relation to Japanese identity, Gillespie (2009) discusses the following five Japanese philosophical values: 1) *Wa* (harmony as the closest English translation) as the primacy of the group, 2) *kata* (process) which prioritizes how over why, 3) *kaizen* (continuous improvement) as the impetus to flawless quality, 4) *muga* (self-restraint or self-denial) as other-focused, and 5) *bun* (status or hierarchy) as the norm that rank confers respect and elicits commitment. These Japanese values of preference are deemed to have religious and philosophical roots historically shared with China for nearly 2,000 years (Heisig, Kasulis, and Maraldo, 2011). All those cultural values and Japanese identity are interrelated to each other to varying degrees and collectively form “Japaneseness” (Sugimoto, 2014) across the levels in quasi-equilibrium.

Another constituent of “Japaneseness” is *giri*, which refers to the Japanese moral duty. It is so pervasive that it influences Japanese business behaviors across industry sectors. To explain the concept, Davies and Ikeno (2002, p. 95) quote the following:

Giri... does not have an equivalent concept in English [although in Japan it is considered] the most valued standard in human relationships: master-subordinate, parent-child, husband-wife, brothers and sisters, friends, and sometimes even enemies and business connections. If pressed to define it, *giri* involves caring for others from whom one has received a debt of gratitude and determination to realize their happiness, sometimes even by self-sacrificing. (Gillespie and Sugiyama, 1996, p.150)

In short, *giri* can be described as diffused social obligation of equal-value exchange. As Gillespie and Sugiyama (1996) note, this cultural value of preference can be frequently seen in any social settings, including business, in Japan and Japanese communities outside Japan to varying degrees.

The concept of *giri* is extensively supported and introduced in different ways according to the context. For example, Chapter Two has reviewed the concept of goodwill trust: “a sure feeling that trading partners possess a moral commitment to maintaining a trading relationship” (Sako, 1992, p. 10). This “sure feeling” is grounded in the individual level in the sense that business professionals make business decisions to maintain

their firms' trading relationship based on *giri*. Examined in Section 3.3, the concepts of "Japanese loyalty" (Beck and Beck, 1994) and "systemic support" (Gotoh, 2020) are also types of *giri*. They are named differently, depending on the researchers' analysis in the respective disciplines. It seems to be historically rooted in Confucianism (Davies and Ikeno, 2002), which may be a possible reason why it is so widespread in Japan, and it does not exist in LMEs.

Historical research explores how Japanese leaders took on (and off at times) Confucian values in the past 2,000 years. Ohtsu and Imanari (2002) write "... if Confucian values positively affect business performance, it is through the actions of a "princely" or "superior" employee who has the following attributes": harmony, hierarchy, benevolence, loyalty, and learning (pp. 39-40). These philosophical values correspond with the preceding descriptions of "Japaneseness". The literature concepts of Japanese values and Japanese identity commonly reflect collectivism. This thesis postulates that philosophical values and social identity are intertwined with each other.

Because the shared notion of social identity has a very long history in Asia, it has influenced language use too as reported in across academic disciplines, including business-related cultural studies (House et al., 2004). It is well known that one's cultural orientation influences one's choice of first-person pronouns. For example, in the Korean language, its grammar allows to use both first-person singular *nae* and plural *wuri* possessive pronouns as a first person singular possessive pronoun (Na and Choi, 2009). Na and Choi (2009) conclude "We found that collectivistic Koreans preferred to use *wuri* as a first person singular possessive pronoun more than Korean individualists did" (p. 1497). Many studies support the idea that the word *we* is used to refer to individuals' identity in collectivist cultures typically more than the word *I*. Indeed, the Japanese hardly use the word *I* in most everyday conversations and communications (Na and Choi, 2009). Recent studies support classical literature: "Languages in which the word *I* is indispensable for understanding" in individualist societies vs. "Languages in which the word *I* is not pronounced" in collectivist societies (Hofstede, 2001, p. 237). To reiterate the disclaimer, it is not to force rigid essentialism but to offer general guidance for understanding the foreignness.

This section has discussed Japanese identity in relation to social identity, which refers to "a person's sense of who they are based on their group membership(s)" (McLeod, 2019). This "group membership" is a wide concept. For example, Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars (1993) write of a deep structure of beliefs as "the bedrock of national identity" in their book about varieties of wealth creation (p. 4). While the quote refers to cultural values at the individual level, LME/CME can also be a type of membership at the highest level of wealth creation. In other words, LME/CME can be seen as a constituent of social identity. This interpretation supports the concept of intrinsic connection across the levels in this thesis.

This chapter has so far reviewed Japanese-specific concepts to build a theoretical foundation for the research aim. The issue of cultural translatability consists of two terms *culture* and *translatability*. To have a better understanding of each, the following sections will review the terms separately. As for culture, this section has reviewed Japanese identity as social identity, which is intertwined with Japanese values of preference. Chapter Two has examined the concept *persona*, which encompasses social identity and cultural values in respective societies, and behaviors driven by those factors. At the individual level, the *persona*

represents the society's character generally shared among individuals in the society. To explain societal character, researchers use cultural constructs, including individualism and collectivism, to discuss cultural values of preference: for example, individualistic/collectivistic ways of thinking. The cultural constructs together represent the society's character, which is the persona at the individual level. The remaining part of this chapter will first offer an introductory review of societal character and cultural constructs. After establishing the knowledge foundations, it will craft a framework for this research.

3.5 Historical development of studies of culture

Chapter One has defined the term *society* as a social group that shares the same value system of culture. This section elaborates on the value system by critically reviewing literature. Chapter Two has introduced William Stern's ladder, consisting of five levels of personas (de Geus, 2002). Until recently, the persona at the individual level - what matters in each society and how it differs between societies - was a highly popular research subject. In the 1990's, a team of 170 scholars worked together to "increase available knowledge that is relevant to cross-cultural interactions" in a ten-year research project named GLOBE (House et al., 2004, p. 3). Their project reported nine dimensions of cultural values based on responses of about 17,000 managers from 951 organizations in 62 societies throughout the world (House et al., 2004). There are several important antecedents for their work: most notably, Edward T. Hall and Geert H. Hofstede. Hall was a renowned anthropologist, who passed away in 2009. His academic works, which talk about culture from various angles including time, space, and communication, are still widely quoted. Hall is generally considered a founding scholar of the field of intercultural communication (Rogers, Hart, and Miike, 2002). Hofstede, who passed away in 2020, pioneered research into cultures of more than 50 countries. Before the publication of Hofstede's first book *Culture's Consequences* (1980), cross-cultural management was not a well-defined academic area (Holden, 2014, p. 187). Hofstede coined the terms *national culture* and *cultural dimension*. Cultural dimensions are alternatively referred to as cultural constructs in this thesis. Cultural constructs are basically two extremes of a linear scale for capturing and comparing the regionally shared ways of thinking between them. This thesis regards this structure as the horizontal feature that binds the adopted concepts to create a framework. After Hofstede's works gained popularity, Schwartz (1992), Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997), and the Project GLOBE (House et al., 2004) carried out similar research with the same aim: to substantiate the cultural constructs, reporting new paradigms of cultural constructs in addition to Hofstede's (Steers, Sanchez-Runde, and Nardon, 2010). All those works (the "major projects") reports some form of individualism and its opposite, collectivism, as the grounded findings (Thomas and Peterson, 2017).

Recent works on the subject tend to synthesize the cultural constructs reported in the major works. For instance, Livermore (2015) summarizes the overlapping constructs of various cultural models as the following ten sets of the extremes: individualism vs. collectivism, low power distance vs. high power distance, low uncertainty avoidance vs. high uncertainty avoidance, cooperative vs. competitive, short term vs. long term, low context (direct) vs. high context (indirect), being vs. doing, universalism vs. particularism, neutral vs. affective, and monochronic vs. polychronic. Each of them represents a linear model of

dimension with two extreme ends of constructs to capture the dynamic realities. Commonly identified in the major projects, the ten types of cultural constructs are considered reasonably grounded elements of the findings generated from a massive number of questionnaire responses across the world. The cultural constructs are used to describe the extreme senses and do not equally represent all individuals in the respective societies.

The concept of national culture has been supported and criticized. Most criticisms typically question the following points: the existence of national culture, the relevance of national culture to business practice, and/or the methodological validity of cultural research. Williamson's study (2002) evaluates a much-cited criticism that denies all the three points described in Hofstede's works. This criticism appears odd in the first place because it only contends Hofstede among all the major projects, which share the same methodology. It criticizes Hofstede's five assumptions for research and claims that the failure of even one of the assumptions would invalidate Hofstede's dimensions. Although Hofstede's research is not flawless, the criticism is problematic (Williamson, 2002) because Hofstede's five assumptions pertain to the research limitations potentially applicable to any social research concerning culture. The criticism's confusions "arise from the omission to distinguish between errors of logic within the standards of the functionalist paradigm in which Hofstede chose to do his research, and constrains from choosing this paradigm" (Williamson, 2002, pp. 1373-1374). Williamson explicates that the major projects have carried out what researchers can do, and the criticism discusses what researchers cannot do. In other cases, some researchers assert that Hofstede's work is methodologically flawed, often based on already declared disclaimers.

With respect to culture, there is no perfect method to measure it because it is a construct (Jones, 2007). No research project is perfect or shares the same questionnaires or samples. The research results vary naturally, depending on the contents of the questionnaire and the number of valid responses generated in specific contexts. That is why cultural models differ by researcher. Research findings in any organization-level contexts are generally beneficial for refining the cultural constructs reported in literature. National culture and other types of culture, such as corporate culture mentioned in Chapter Two, can take effect during the decision-making process at organizations when the decision is cultural. Cultural values shared within a society can be researched at the organization level as done so by many projects.

It is instructive to reiterate that all cultural models in circulation are individually crafted attempts to measure the relative, not absolute, cultural differences and naturally they appear to contain consistency and inconsistency. The cultural models are not exhaustive in the literature as always disclaimed (Kim et al., 1994). By focusing on the research limitations, the criticisms of cultural studies tend to overlook the simplest yet the most important outcome that all the major research projects conclude that cultural values of preference differ country by country. While no two research results are identical, there is a general commonality between the research outcomes to attest to the shared, grounded constructs. Many studies have examined strengths and weaknesses of Hofstede's models and reviewed criticisms of it. They typically provide the same observation that Hofstede's works are not flawless, but their major arguments are useful for cross-cultural research (Jones, 2007). Steers, Sanchez-Runde and Nardon (2010) offer a good summary for the future: "... while the use of cultural dimensions is certainly useful, it should only be considered the

beginning of a more detailed study” (p. 57). As mentioned earlier, recent works on national culture tend to synthesize the cultural constructs reported in the major works. This trend is considered a reasonable development. This thesis does not attest to every single detail in the major projects but borrows the grounded findings among the models supported in the body of literature.

There is an academic term *qualitative meta-synthesis* (Walsh and Downe, 2005) that helps better synthesize the early and recent developments of studies of cultural constructs. To explain the technique of meta-synthesis, Finlayson and Dixon (2008) quote the following ancient Buddhist parable about several blind men who attempt to describe an elephant:

On feeling the trunk, one proclaims it to be rather like a snake: while another, on feeling the ear, explains it is more like a fan: yet another, upon touching the legs, describes the beast as tree-like, and so on. Each makes valid and relevant claims in relation to the elephant but only when the findings of all contributors are combined does a clear image of the animal emerge (Ireland, 1997, quoted in Finlayson and Dixon, 2008, p. 2).

This quote well illustrates the technique and helps to recognize the importance of it. The elephant in the quote exemplifies a society’s character, though intangible, that consists of interrelated cultural constructs. The animal’s body parts differ in shape and size but together constitute the whole: for example, persona at the society level. The cultural constructs will help envisage the big picture of national culture. If an audience is completely unfamiliar with the elephant, it is said to be the absolute lack of mutual knowledge in this thesis.

National culture is considered stable but not static. Today, many discuss globalization and convergence, suggesting that globalization tends to promote standardization. Japanese culture and Japanese style management might have changed under the force of globalization. On the other hand, many still argue that cultural difference remains as the overriding issue (Cavusgil, Knight, and Riesenberger, 2020) despite the rhetoric of convergence. The cultural constructs are in a dynamic equilibrium, which is alternatively referred to as the homeostasis of society (Nisbett et al., 2001). Chapter Nine will discuss changes and reversions that explain why the overriding issue remains in the context of cultural translation. Having examined the development of studies of culture, the following section will examine five cultural constructs that characterize the LME and CME personas.

3.6 Cultural constructs

Chapter Two has mentioned cultural constructs, including individualism and collectivism. This thesis adopts cultural constructs as its primary tool to analyze culturally driven specificities. As discussed previously, Livermore (2015) summarizes the overlapping constructs of various cultural models as ten sets of extremes. This thesis will primarily focus on the five most relevant constructs that have a relatively greater cultural difference than others between LMEs and Japan: individualism/collectivism (“I/C”), uncertainty avoidance (“UA”), short term (“ST”) and long term (“LT”) orientation, power distance (“PD”), and high/low contexts of communication (“HCC/LCC”). ST/LT orientation is alternatively referred to as time orientation in literature.

The five sets are chosen for three reasons: theoretical robustness, relevance, and reasonableness. First, they are the grounded elements across the major projects. While termed differently, they are commonly reported not only in business-related cultural studies but also across academic disciplines. This chapter has examined Sako's ACR-OCR model and her two dimensions - the degree of interdependence and the time span for reciprocity - that capture the essence of ACR and OCR relationships. Sako's two dimensions are conceptually equivalent to I/C and ST/LT orientation, respectively. Sako's research and the body of literature in cultural studies corroborate each other in terms of the two dimensions. This interdisciplinary concurrence supports the constructs' appropriateness. Second, they suggest distinct cultural differences between Japan and LMEs: for example, Japan is relatively collectivistic, while LMEs are relatively individualistic. The greater the difference is, the more the combination is likely to raise the issue of cultural translatability. Finally, five is reasonable and not too much for a single research project. Not only is it reasonable enough to test the proposed framework, but also there is no need to examine more than the five influential constructs, considering the interconnectedness of cultural constructs (discussed in Chapter Nine). Country-level culture consists of cultural constructs that vary in distinctiveness, effectiveness, and strength. Some of them are available in literature, while there may exist undiscovered ones. The five sets of constructs are interrelated to each other to characterize the reasonably substantial part of the respective systems of culture.

For cross-national comparisons, cultural dimensions may be expressed in a two-dimensional map. Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2012, p. 36) use two crossed axes of their two dimensions (individualism/communitarianism and universalism/particularism) in a two-dimensional analysis. This thesis, however, uses the simple linear models for the sake of simplicity and theoretical cohesiveness.

3.6.1 Individualism and collectivism

Among the chosen sets of cultural constructs, individualism/collectivism (I/C) is considered the paradigm, discussed in almost all major research projects, as well as many non-academic books to introduce cultural shocks in general. House et al. (2004) found more than 1,400 articles published in the last 25 years and numerous books devoted exclusively to the dimension at the time of their publication. Thomas and Peterson (2017) describe the terms: "Individualism refers to the tendency to view each person as independent of others and to be more concerned about the consequences of a person's actions for that person alone" whereas "collectivism refers to the tendency of a society to view people as interdependent with selected others who are part of stable groups, such as a kinship group" (p. 50). Literature commonly explains that kinship groups have a high level of significance in China, and employers are the most significant groups in Japan (Güngör et al., 2014). As quoted earlier, Livermore (2015) writes that I/C pertains to a difference in social identity. In fact, I/C concerns in-group (us) and out-group (them) that social identity theory explains. Chen, Peng, and Saporito (2002, p. 571) offer the following comprehensive description about I/C:

The cultural dimension of I/C is particularly appropriate for specifying human opportunistic propensity because it offers insight into culturally conditioned views of self-identity (Markus and Kitayama, 1991) and the primacy of self versus group interest seeking (Parsons and Shils, 1951), both of which affect individuals' cognitive, affective, and behavioral orientations toward others (Markus

and Kitayama, 1991). Individualists define the self as autonomous and independent, whereas collectivists define the self as interconnected and interdependent with significant others of various groups. Furthermore, when individual and collective interests are in conflict, individual interests have the primacy in individualist cultures whereas collective interests have the primacy in collectivist cultures (Triandis, 1995).

This quote suggests a useful clarification: For research, it is important to identify what individualistic or collectivistic interest is being examined: in other words, the unit of analysis. For example, Chapter One has discussed the different collectivistic cultures of Japan and Turkey: Japanese culture has the primacy of collective interest of conformity in employment, whereas Turkish culture has the primacy of collective interest of relatedness in employment.

The quote above points out the logical feature of cultural constructs: When I/C interests are in conflict, the individualistic and collectivistic options are mutually exclusive. When an individual chooses to conduct one culturally driven type of transaction, they cannot adopt the other simultaneously if it is mutually exclusive. The logic applies to any culturally driven frameworks, including Sako’s ACR-OCR patterns that this chapter has examined earlier. For instance, if a buyer chooses an ACR transaction with an explicit contract, which states before trading commences, each parties’ tasks and duties in every conceivable eventuality, then the other - an OCR transaction taking place without prior agreement on all the terms and conditions of trade - is no longer an option. This exclusivity exemplifies the reason why the issue of cultural translatability arises in cross-national settings. For this reason, this thesis adopts the horizontal feature of a linear continuum with two extremes to capture cultural specificities as explained in Chapter Two. The feature is suitable for finding cultural accounts to explicate the possible reason why the closest equivalents of source text are symmetrically opposite between the respective societies.

Culturally driven options have been frequently discussed in business-related cultural studies. The following sets of individualistic and collectivistic options are excerpted from prior research (House et al., 2004):

<u>Extreme individualism</u>	<u>Extreme collectivism</u>
Individual goals take precedence over group goals.	Group goals take precedence over individual goals.
People emphasize rationality.	People emphasize relatedness with groups.
Individuals have more social interactions, but interactions tend to be shorter and less intimate.	Individuals have fewer social interactions, but interactions tend to be longer and more intimate.
Individuals make fewer distinctions between in-groups and out-groups.	Individuals make greater distinctions between in-groups and out-groups.
Employees develop short-term relationships, and change companies at their own discretion.	Employees tend to develop long-term relationship with employers from recruitment to retirement.
Organizational commitment is based on individual’s rational calculations of costs and benefits.	Organizational commitment is based on expectations of loyalty and in-groups attitudes.

Note: Although this table presents two extremes, it is important to recognize that these constructs present a continuum and that, furthermore, there is also within-culture variation (abridged from House et al., 2004, pp. 454-459).

All the sets of symmetrical opposites raise the issue of cultural translatability when they are mutually exclusive. The quote corresponds to prior studies examined in Section 1.6 regarding Japanese style management: for example, “the long-term nature of relationships within firms, as demonstrated in the lifetime-employment system.... Long-term relations between different firms are also important, as seen in

the main bank system, the subcontracting system, or in relations among affiliated firms in keiretsu groupings” (Okazaki and Okuno-Fujisawa, 1999, p. 1). As for employment, the set of the descriptions at the bottom precisely explains why the CME of Japan has the practice of long-term employment. Quoted above, the dichotomy placed at the top discusses goals in a professional setting. In LMEs, individual’s goals and their levels of achievements are paramount. On the other hand, Japanese style management typically regards business management as managing teams or groups. In fact, this thesis’s findings include the concept of a job description as a culturally driven specificity that raises the issue of cultural translatability: Japanese companies hardly use job descriptions, which are vital for HR management in LMEs.

Chapter One has specified this thesis’s focus: the country combination of Japan (collectivist culture) and LMEs (individualist cultures). Figure 4 illustrates this research’s scope:

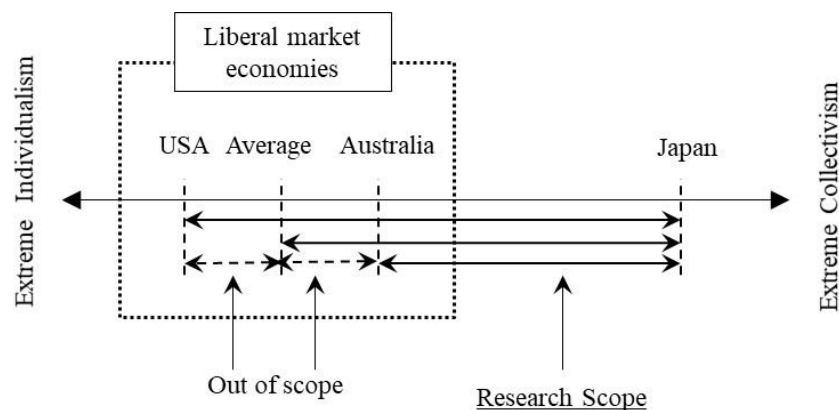


Figure 4: Research scope (developed from Kitamura, 2020, p. 125)

Figure 4 exhibits the scope of this research and is not drawn to scale. The USA and Australia are shown as examples of two ends within the LME realm for presentation purposes only: for example, the UK, which is not shown above, may be less individualistic than Australia. No perfectly accurate research is available to place all LMEs in order of individualism. As mentioned earlier, the point here is that the shared elements of the major research projects agree that LMEs are predominantly individualist societies. Triandis (2001) suggests that the difference within LMEs is marginal for research to investigate the much greater difference between individualistic and collectivistic societies. This view supports the scope of this research project. This thesis presupposes that, at the organization level, social systems are shaped to prioritize the primacy of individualistic interest, which is valued more than collectivistic interest in LMEs.

3.6.2 Time orientation

The cultural construct of time orientation pertains to perspective on time often discussed with two sets of constructs: 1) monochronic vs. polychronic and 2) short-term vs. long-term orientation. Edward T. Hall (1959) was the first to show how conceptions of time and space differ across societies. Hall’s monochronic-polychronic dichotomy is widely used today (Livermore, 2015). LMEs are generally considered monochronic cultures that emphasize the separation of personal life and work life and tend to adopt a linear approach to time: one task at a time (Livermore, 2015). The CME of Japan is more of a polychronic culture

where people's personal and work lives are generally intertwined with the emphasis on multitasking (Livermore, 2015). Another set of constructs are named differently in literature: Long- versus short-term orientation or LTO (long-term orientation) in Hofstede (2001), future orientation in the GLOBE project (House et al. 2004), time/work patterns (Steers, Sanchez-Runde, and Nardon, 2010), and so forth. In short, the construct represents "the extent to which you are willing to wait for results and rewards" (Livermore, 2015, p. 114). Short-term (ST) oriented cultures, including LMEs, put "emphasis on immediate outcomes (success now), and long-term (LT) oriented cultures, including Japan, put "emphasis on long-term outcomes (success later)" (Livermore, 2015, p. 115). GLOBE introduces it as "the degree to which individuals in organizations or societies engage in future-oriented behaviors such as planning, investing in the future, and delaying individual or collective gratification" (House et al., 2004, p. 12) and defines it as "the extent to which members of a society or an organization believe that their current actions will influence their future, focus on investment in their future, believe that they will have a future that matters, believe in planning for developing their future, and look far into the future for assessing the effects of their current actions" (p. 285). All major works share the same points, which have to do with the focus either on the present or the future. Livermore (2015) introduces his own observation:

Once I was reading an article in a Singaporean newspaper that reported on new health care legislation that had just been approved. The initial implementation, the article said, would begin in about ten years. I imagined that if people in the United States, a very short-term oriented culture, learned that the U.S. federal government had approved legislation that would begin rolling out in a decade, most of them would think that was ludicrous. But for Singapore, where there's a longer time orientation, such a time frame is acceptable. (p. 114)

The quote can be self-explanatory for many. In its context, power distribution across the society may also be a cultural difference, which is discussed in the following section.

3.6.3 Power distance

The cultural construct of power distance can be described as "the amount of distance that is expected between leaders and followers" (Livermore, 2015, p. 104). Similarly, GLOBE defines it as "the degree to which members of an organization or society expect and agree that power should be stratified and concentrated at higher levels of an organization or government" (House et al., 2004, p. 12). Steers, Sanchez-Runde and Nardon (2010, p. 57) refer to it as power distribution with two extremes, "hierarchical" and "egalitarian". This thesis adopts the term *power distance*, most frequently used to refer to the construct. For Hofstede (2001), it is "the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations expect and accept that power is distributed unequally" (p. 98), in which institutions can be "the basic elements of society like the family, school, and community; 'organizations' are the places where people work" (p. 28). Described differently, the construct pertains to the concept of power, which can be "the potential to determine or direct (to a certain extent) the behavior of another person or other persons more so than the other way around" (Mulder, 1977, noted in Hofstede, 2001, p. 83).

The prior studies say that Japan is generally high in power distance, and LMEs are commonly low in it. Reviewed earlier in this chapter, Japan's membership-type employment serves as an example of large power distance. The Japanese companies, especially listed/public or large ones, regularly transfer their full-time employees from a position to another within the corporate network regardless of employee interests (Asuyama, 2021). This transfer exhibits the large power distance between the human resources (HR) and the employees. With authoritative power, the HR management gives one-way order to the employee. Relatively less power is distributed to the employees who cannot say no to it. For example, if it is to move from Japan to the UK, the employee must move regardless of their will. If it is to move to the marketing department from the planning department, the employee must do so, even if they do not want to.

The prior studies suggest a reasonable level of correlation between high individualism and small power distance (or high collectivism and large power distance). Combined with these, loosely speaking, individualistic societies have more of egalitarianism, and collective societies exhibit hierarchical distribution of power in respect of the cultural dimension at the individual level. In other words, power is distributed perfectly equally across individuals at the LME extreme, whereas power is bestowed on personnel at or near the top of a hierarchy, such as an organization or a business line in a company at the CME extreme. This idea here is not to argue that LME leaders have no power: They have a large amount of power. The concept of power distance has to do with the distribution of power, not the amount of it. This thesis focuses on how power is distributed at LME and CME business organizations, rather than how much power there is. Cultural constructs do not equally apply to all cross-cultural settings.

3.6.4 Uncertainty avoidance

According to House et al. (2004, p. 603), US organization theorists Richard M. Cyert and James G. March (1963) first introduced the term *uncertainty avoidance* to discuss an organizational phenomenon, and later Hofstede (1980) conceptualized it as a cultural dimension. Since then, the concept has been widely discussed in social science literature. This thesis borrows the following description as its working definition:

“Uncertainty avoidance is the extent to which you are at ease with unknown, unpredictable outcomes” (Livermore, 2015, p. 107). LMEs are oriented towards low uncertainty avoidance (“tolerant of uncertainty”), and Japanese culture is relatively highly uncertainty avoidant (“avoidant of uncertainty”) (Livermore, 2015).

Despite its academic popularity, the concept calls for caution that the literature definitions of “uncertainty” do not appear uniform, and as a result, the uncertainty avoidant societies do not agree to each other in literature (Venaik and Brewer, 2010). Lane, Maznevski, and DiStefano (2009) write that the construct can be defined as “the degree to which people in a country prefer structured over unstructured situations” (p. 91). *Structured situations* mean “those in which there are clear rules as to how one should behave” and “these rules can be written down, but they can also be unwritten and imposed by tradition” (2009, p. 91). Their definition is derived from classical literature and suggests that rules make an unstructured or uncertain situation less uncertain, regardless of the form of rules, written or unwritten. House et al. (2004, p. 602) write “uncertainty avoidance involves the extent to which ambiguous situations are threatening to individuals, to which rules and orders are preferred, and to which uncertainty is tolerated in a

society”. While this description seemingly aligns with the original definition (Cyert and March, 1963), GLOBE defines uncertainty avoidance as “the extent to which members of collectives seek orderliness, consistency, structure, formalized procedures, and laws to cover situations in their daily lives” (House et al., 2004 p. 603). This deviates from the mainstream definition, which has been used in other major works in cross-cultural studies⁸. Because of this divergence from the mainstream definition, GLOBE’s research outcomes cannot be meaningfully compared with other major research projects. This thesis adopts the mainstream idea that what uncertainty makes less uncertain does not have to be written.

Livermore (2015) writes that cultures with low uncertainty avoidance, including LMEs, put “emphasis on flexibility and adaptability”, whereas cultures with high uncertainty avoidance, including Japan, put “emphasis on planning and predictability” (p. 109). “Planning” in this quote appears to require an additional explanation because it is commonly used to manage businesses in LMEs and Japan. In LMEs, management primarily means management of individuals. LME managerial frameworks need to be flexible enough to accommodate individuals’ variances: For example, LMEs use job descriptions to recruit employees and manage task duties. In Japan, management primarily concerns management of collective groups (Hofstede, 2001). People prefer to use collectively structured frameworks, including Japan’s “periodic hiring system” (Froese, Sekiguchi, and Maharjan, 2018), in which new graduates ordinarily join their employer on April 1. Job descriptions are not predominantly used in Japan. For task duties, their communication framework (horenso that Chapter Five will examine) requires frequent status updates for collective decision-making.

Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars (2000) propose a related dichotomy: universalism vs. particularism. In a universalism culture, rules, codes, laws, and generalizations are prevalent, whereas in a particularism culture, exceptions, circumstances, relations are prioritized (2000, p. 13). Their examples include the fact that USA has “22 times as many lawyers per capita as Japan” (Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars, 2000, p. 20). LMEs tend to have relatively more written rules, such as code law and business contracts that spell out every conceivable scenario (Cavusgil, Knight, and Riesenberger, 2020; Sako, 1992) than the CME of Japan. Written rules are culturally compatible with individualism as they help regulate individually different interpretations respected in individualist cultures. In contrast, the CME of Japan tends to have relatively more unspoken codes of conduct. The dimension of universalism/ particularism supports the validity of the construct of uncertainty avoidance: High particularism is generally synonymous with high uncertainty avoidance. This thesis uses the term *uncertainty avoidance* for its popularity.

3.6.5 High vs. low context of communication

Edward T. Hall first classified cultures as high context and low context (1976). LMEs are typically low-context cultures that rely on elaborate verbal explanations, putting emphasis on explicit communication

⁸ GLOBE claims what uncertainty makes less uncertain is written, for example, formalized procedures and laws (House et al., 2004). GLOBE’s pen-and-pencil questionnaire asks the respondents whether the rules are written or not: “In this society, societal requirements and instructions are spelled out in detail so citizens know what they are expected to do” (2004, p. 619). This questionnaire does not measure the cultural dimension in the same way as did other major cross-cultural studies. In collectivist cultures, including Japan, their collective codes of conduct for reducing the uncertainty of behavioral patterns are hardly spelled out (Sako, 1992; Taplin, 1995).

(Cavusgil, Knight, and Riesenberger, 2020). In low-context cultures, “the mass of the information is vested in the explicit code” (Hall, 1976). The CME of Japan has a high-context culture that emphasizes nonverbal messages, including silence, and perceives communication as a means to promote harmonious relationships (Cavusgil, Knight, and Riesenberger, 2020). In high-context cultures, “most of the information is already in the person, while very little is in the coded, explicit, transmitted part of the message” (Hall, 1976). This explanation aligns with the previously discussed constructs: uncertainty avoidance and individualism/collectivism. In Japanese uncertainty-avoidant culture, the collective codes of conduct for reducing the uncertainty of behavioral patterns are hardly spelled out. Those codes are shared within the collectives. Japanese culture has the primacy of collective interest to abide by the unspoken codes of conduct. The literature suggests that the cultural constructs are interrelated to each other.

This section has reviewed the select cultural constructs pertinent to the LME-CME dichotomy. As mentioned earlier, this thesis treats the cultural constructs as two extremes of a linear continuum to capture the social realities that may raise the issue of cultural translatability. The cultural constructs are the descriptions of modal types that do not represent every single individual.

3.7 Cultural difference

As examined above, the literature suggests that LMEs exhibit high individualism, short-term orientation, and low uncertainty avoidance: Japan has high collectivism, long-term orientation, and high uncertain avoidance. These cultural constructs are interrelated and characterize the respective societies. Figure 5 illustrates the hypothetical distributions of the respective societies in terms of I/C:

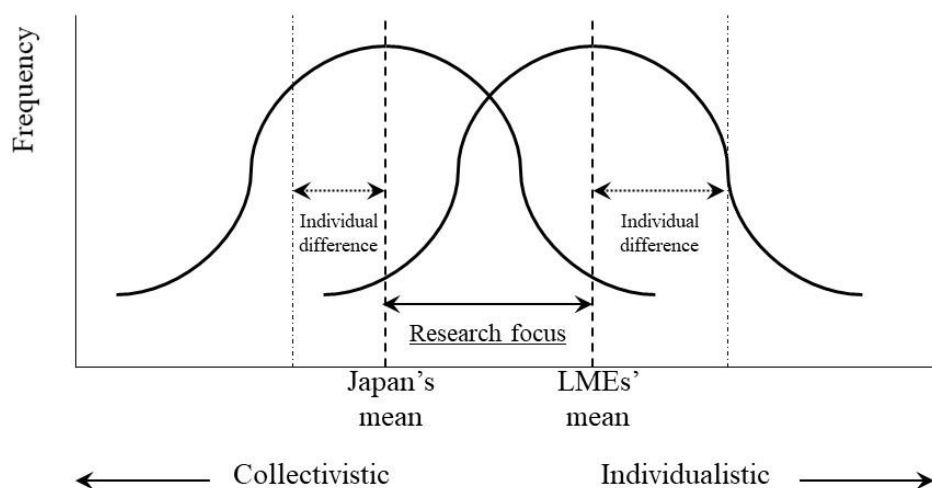


Figure 5: Hypothetical distribution of Collectivist and individualist cultures (developed from Thomas and Peterson, 2017, p. 51, Figure 3.3 Hypothetical Distribution of Individualism-Collectivism Scores)

The cultural constructs do not address internal variations shown as “individual difference” in Figure 5. To reiterate the important cautionary note, the cultural constructs only describe the general dispositions and are not to judge all individuals (Williamson, 2002). Individuals are different even in one society, and their ways of thinking or preferences are not as binary as the clear-cut dichotomy of the extremes. The regionally

patterned way of thinking is a relative notion. This thesis focuses on the difference between the average values for creating a framework of cultural translatability that will help examine individual differences.

The preceding discussion on culture as a relative notion suggests that a cultural difference may be expressed as a relative difference between two extremes, similar to other concepts reviewed so far. Based on this interpretation, Figure 6 illustrates a cultural difference:

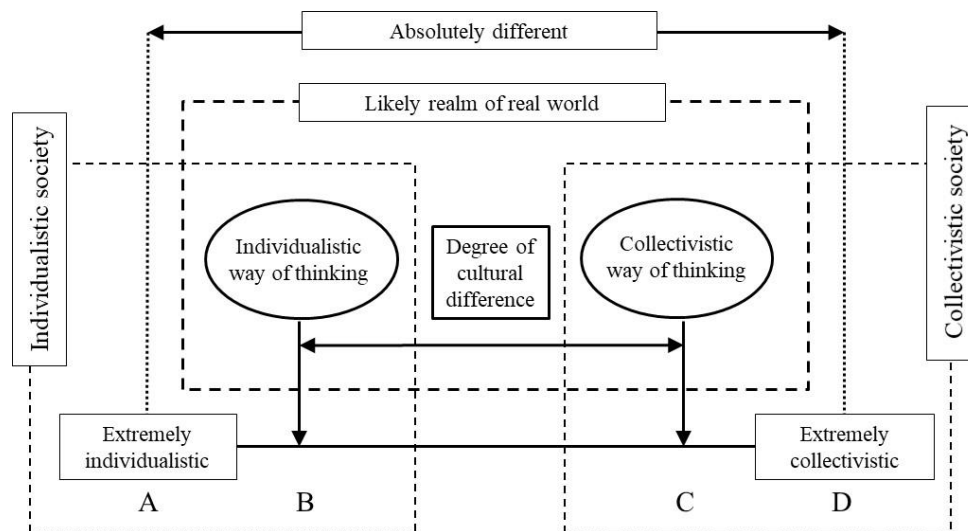


Figure 6: Theoretical framework of cultural difference (adopted from Kitamura, 2018, p. 69)

Figure 6 has the two extreme ends at Points A and D that represent absolute individualism and collectivism, respectively. Any culturally patterned ways of thinking at the level of Point A are theoretically absolutely disparate to the receptor standing at Point C or, rather obviously, to the end at Point D. Points B and C are where the individualistic and collectivistic individuals stand at in real terms, respectively. The distance between Points B and C represents the actual cultural difference, which is this research’s working definition of the term *cultural difference*, and alternatively denotes the degree of cultural difference. Conversely, if Points B and C sit at the same point, the receptors have a zero cultural difference regarding the cultural construct. For example, if a Japanese national and an Australian national happen to have the same degree of individualism, they have no cultural difference with respect to the cultural construct, standing at the same point between the extremes. Any translators, communicators, and receptors may sit at the same point or stand apart, depending on the degree of cultural difference.

Depending on the context, disparate ways of thinking may trigger miscommunication or misunderstanding in language activities even between individuals with a high level of linguistic capability. If such disparate ways of thinking are shared in the respective societies, they are likely to raise the issue of cultural translatability. This assumption agrees with the presupposition mentioned at the outset: the need for cultural accounts that explain sets of symmetrically opposite specificities.

The preceding discussion may raise a related question: What if two societies have the same index value or a marginal difference, for example, of individualism? They are probably unlikely to have a cultural conflict associated with individualism, depending on the specificity and the parties involved. Theoretically

speaking, if there is absolutely no cultural difference between the specificity and the parties involved, culture causes no issue in cultural translation. This thesis presupposes that the issue of cultural translatability arises only when there is a cultural difference enough to trigger it. If the issue of translatability occurs in a setting with zero cultural difference, the issue will be linguistic. Having explored cultural concepts, the following section will move onto the concept of translatability.

3.8 Translatability

Hatim and Munday (2019, p. 15) describe the term *untranslatability* as “a relative notion”, and it “has to do with the extent to which, despite obvious differences in linguistic structure (grammar, vocabulary, etc), meaning can still be adequately expressed across languages”. For this purpose, “meaning has to be understood not only in terms of what the ST refers to or even implies, but also and equally significantly, in terms of such factors as communicative purpose, target audience and purpose of translation” (pp. 15-16). Their definition contains two factors: linguistic structure and meaning. This thesis does not focus on linguistic structure. This category of translatability is referred to as linguistic translatability (Brisset, 2010) and more pertinent to corpus analysis mentioned earlier. This thesis focuses on *meaning*, which has to do with cultural values of preference behind the text (Jones and Walker, 2015). This thesis borrows the preceding description of translatability (Hatim and Munday, 2019) as a constituent of the proposed category of cultural translatability. This definition encompasses similar terms, such as *transplant*, *transfer*, and *transpose*, for discussion purposes. Those synonyms may better describe a cross-cultural practice depending on the context, but the term *translatability* serves best as a foundation of the proposed category.

In the preceding definition (Hatim and Munday, 2019), “equally significant factors” include those often discussed in translation studies: a specific need (Hatim and Mason, 1989, p. 12) or text purpose for translation (cf. skopos - see for instance Vermeer, 2004, pp. 227-238), difficulty in establishing objectified quality assessment (Hatim and Mason, 1989, pp. 4-5), variance in translators’ textual competence, receptors’ comprehensibility and mutual knowledge (Neubert and Shreve, 1992, pp. 53-65) and so on. The discussions can be summarized as three important points: 1) specific needs and/or purposes for translation, 2) quality assessment, and 3) mutual knowledge. All of these are specific to the translation setting. Based on the findings, Chapter Nine will develop the factors that affect cultural translatability.

In the field of international business, there is an underdeveloped term *cultural elasticity*, which is possibly related to translatability with respect to culture. In early research, Smith and Smale (1982) studied on the term (or “index” in their words) that “quantitatively indicates how rates of participation may be expected to change when certain economic and sociological characteristics in the population change” (p. 27). Recent research is revisiting the concept: For instance, Drejer et al. (2019) propose a “cultural elasticity model” to address the development of new business models. Their study is not necessarily cross-cultural but may be understood as an attempt to explain how a new practice is translated from one society to another and eventually adopted in target audience in a specific context as the characteristics of that audience change. Prior research suggests that receptivity to new ideas, such as business models, can change as the makeup of audience change. Chapter Nine will develop the term with the findings.

The preceding arguments have the shared idea, discussed from different angles, that translatability is relative, depending on the translation setting. Perhaps one cannot express untranslatability as a definitive numerical value. Researchers may be able to generate, for example, a statistical result of 80% translatability on an ST, but it is not universally applicable to all translation settings that involve the ST. There are countless variables taking effect to varying degrees. To deal with the relative nature of (un)translatability, the following simple linear model may be useful.

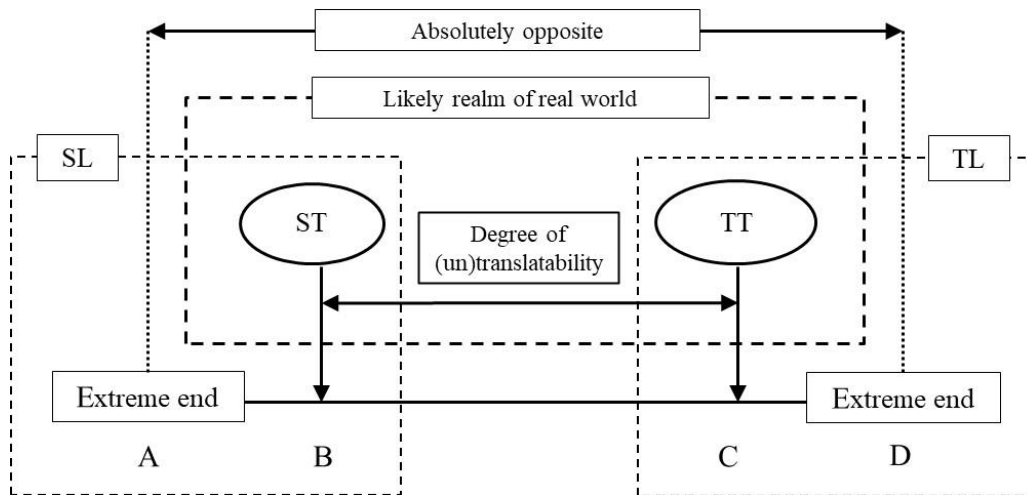


Figure 7: Theoretical framework of translatability (adopted from Kitamura, 2018, p. 61)

Figure 7 has the two extreme ends at Points A and D, each of which is assumed to represent a symmetrical opposite in the extreme sense shown through text. The extreme sense can be understood from each perspective: one standing at Point A and another at Point D. From the perspective of Point A, the extremely opposite connotation (Point D) raises the issue of cultural translatability at the extreme level in theory. The idea here is to create a theoretical structure, not to claim that all individuals have the same interpretation. From the perspective of Point B, the other extreme end (Point A) raises the same issue. This linear structure is chosen not only because it accommodates the relative nature of translatability, but also because it is the shared theoretical feature across concepts adopted to support the framework. This theoretical consistency is vital and makes the category of cultural translatability functional. Two extreme ends of a continuum can capture any variants, as long as the variant is functional with the definition of the pertinent extreme. Sitting at Point A, the ST is theoretically absolutely untranslatable to any receptors which use the TL. Point B is where an actual ST is at in real terms in the translation setting. The distance between Points B and C represents the actual untranslatability, which can alternatively be referred to as the degree of untranslatability. Any language is assumed to have the extreme: On the TT side, Point D denotes the extreme sense of the TT. The two extremes represent the ends of a spectrum of possible degrees of untranslatable texts. Some STs may be closer to Point A than Point B, meaning a higher degree of untranslatability to the receptor at Point C. Others may be so to the TL side, depending on the ST or the “equally significant factors” (Hatim and Munday, 2019, p. 15) in the translation setting. With the two extremes, the model can capture a

spectrum of untranslatable texts with different degrees of untranslatability. This research will test the theoretical functionality of the model.

Pym and Turk (2001, p. 273) write “Translatability is mostly understood as the capacity for some kind of meaning to be transferred from one language to another without undergoing radical change”, though “debates ensue when one tries to specify what kind of ‘meaning’ is involved”. In actual translating, translators may manipulate, rewrite (for rewriting, see Lefevere 1992, p. 9) or even omit an untranslatable ST, so that it eventually becomes translatable and acceptable (for acceptability, see for instance Bell, 1991, 167; Neubert and Shreve, 1992, p. 69ff.). To focus on the original meaning embedded in an ST, an untranslatable item in this research means an untranslatable ST as it is before manipulation or omission takes place. For terminology, this thesis will refer to the concept of (un)translatability as *translatability* (as opposed to *untranslatability*), considering the relative nature of translatability. This clarification is to avoid the unintended misconception that culturally untranslatable texts are definitively untranslatable.

3.9 Cultural translatability

Chapter Two has reviewed relevant literature by level and examined the concept of intrinsic connection that binds the levels (vertical connection). This chapter has reviewed literature by theme. All the concepts exhibit the horizontal feature of a linear continuum with two extremes of symmetrical opposites (horizontal characteristic). Based on these premises, the following two-dimensional framework (Figure 8) combines the literature concepts.

Although the economy level can be placed on top of the organization level, in Figure 8, the economy level is simplified and used to separate the respective societies for ease of presentation. Any specificity - a culturally driven practice at the organization level or a cultural value at the individual level - can be used as a source text illustrated in Figure 8 (of translatability) in the previous section. For this specific research, this thesis will focus on the organization level by applying samples of business practices to the proposed framework. By doing that, this thesis tests the validity of the framework, which represents the possible concept of cultural translatability.

At the broadest level, a theoretical concept can be seen as part of the typology of theory. Literature offers several categories of theories, such as grand theory, middle range theory, and grounded theory (Bryman, 2004). Most scholars seem to reject grand theories perhaps because grand theories operate at a more abstract and general level (Bryman, 2004). Silverman (2010) even defines grand theory as “a term used by Mills (1959) to describe highly abstract speculation which has little or no use in research” (pp. 434-435). Middle-range theories include structural functionalism, symbolic interactionism, structuration theory, and so on. This research’s approach pertains to grounded theory with the focus of empirical enquiry (Bryman, 2004).

The possible concept of cultural translatability is posited as a theory. The term *theory* is “used in a variety of different ways, but its most common meaning is as an explanation of observed realities” (Bryman, 2004, p. 5). Noting Kerlinger and Lee (2000, p. 9), Gray (2009), describes the term as “a set of interrelated constructs (concepts), definitions, and propositions that present a systematic view of phenomena by

specifying relations among variables, with the purpose of explaining and predicting phenomena”. These qualities can be prerequisite for a theory.

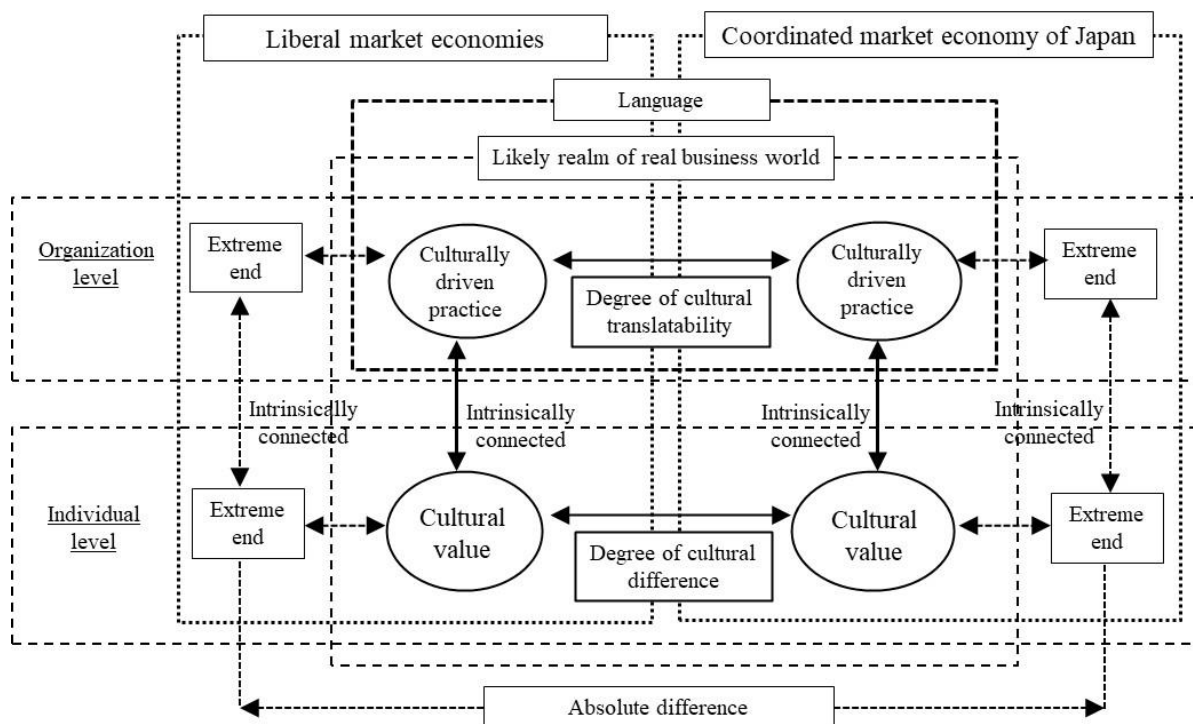


Figure 8: Theoretical framework of cultural translatability

Cultural translatability consists of two parts: culture and translatability. As for the concept *translatability*, Sin-wai (2004) writes that it refers to “the possibility of translating from one language to another” (p. 243). This corresponds to the prevalent definition: “the extent to which it is possible to translate from one language to another (Hatim and Munday, 2004, p. 351). By developing these succinct descriptions, this thesis describes the concept of cultural translatability as the feasibility of translating cultural specificity from one society to another. This provisional description serves as a working definition of the possible concept. This thesis treats it as a hypothesis and tests it against samples.

The notion of “feasibility” is not absolute but relative. The possible concept has the same relative nature as the concept of untranslatability (Hatim and Munday, 2019). This thesis proposes and tests cultural translatability as its original concept, but it can be alternatively seen as a variant or derivative of the concept *translatability*. When viewed this way, it has a strong theoretical foundation underpinned by the generally grounded theory *translatability*. The next chapter will discuss research questions to test the hypothesis.

The proposed framework is not to argue that cultural miscommunication is inevitable between societies but to consider how to communicate better across societies. This research does not presuppose that all culturally driven texts are untranslatable. This thesis will equitably examine translated and untranslated cases. Partially translated data will explain translation strategies in cross-cultural settings. The possible concept of cultural translatability is intended as a theoretical tool for positive and constructive use to help identify cultural differences for business translation. The idea of positive cross-cultural scholarship follows

the current direction of research in international business (Stahl and Tung, 2015). Having posited the framework, the following section will examine concepts that affect the degree of cultural translatability.

3.10 Cultural competence

The previous section has hypothesized the concept of cultural translatability and put forth its framework to be tested in this thesis. The framework consists of culturally driven specificities across levels, each of which may affect the feasibility of cultural translation. A major factor can be the translator and/or the receptor's (hereafter "actor's") ability to understand culture: in particular, "foreign" cultural constructs. The ability to function well in different cultures has been of interest to many researchers. The frequently used terminologies include *cultural competence* (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 2012), *cultural intelligence* (Thomas and Inkson, 2004), and *biculturalism* (LaFromboise, Coleman, and Gerton, 1993). Described differently, the basic idea of cultural ability appears widely discussed. This thesis uses the term *cultural competence* for discussion purposes, though it does not reject other commonly used definitions⁹. To have a reasonable understanding, this section will review relevant literature before moving on to the next chapter.

Hicks (2003) offers a review on the historical antecedents of the cultural ability in the context of global education in the UK and North America. According to Hicks (2003), in the 1960s, James Henderson et al. at the University of London Institute of Education coined the terminology world studies as "shorthand for recognition of the need for a global dimension in the curriculum" (p. 266). In the 1970s, Robin Richardson directed the World Studies Project, which organized educational conferences in the UK mainly for secondary teachers and NGO educators promoting world studies (Hicks, 2003). Richardson's Framework for exploring global issues (1976) consisted of four elements, namely values, background, action, and problems, all of which interrelated with each other (Hicks, 2003). As the World Studies Project was becoming a mainstream form of research in the UK, educators in the USA started developing frameworks and systems for global education. Hicks (2003) names Anderson (1968), Becker (1975), and Hanvey (1976) as influential authors. Hanvey's work *An Attainable Global Perspective* consists of five elements: perspective consciousness, "state of the plant" awareness, cross-cultural awareness, knowledge of global dynamics, and awareness of human choices (1976). Since then, scholars and researchers in social science, including cultural studies, have developed relevant concepts on cross-cultural subjects over the last half-century. While expressed differently, one important commonality emerges among various concepts and frameworks: the ability to handle foreign specificities in a cross-cultural setting.

As reviewed above, the basic idea of cultural ability is widely discussed. Thomas and Inkson (2004) refer to it as cultural intelligence: "In its broadest sense, cultural intelligence is the capability to interact effectively with people from different cultural backgrounds" (p. 62). A possible measure of cultural

⁹ In this thesis, "cultural competence" means "cultural competence for translation". In translation studies, several models of translation competence are available: for example, PACTE, TransComp, and EMT, all of which are developed in Europe (Quinci, 2023). These models are rather remote from this thesis. All of them contain the term *culture* but none of them integrate intangible culture nor distinguish it from tangible culture. However, all the models share "a general consensus" that "the mere possession of linguistic knowledge in two or more languages does not imply TC (translation competence)" (Quinci, 2023, p. 4). This shared element corresponds to this thesis's position: Cultural competence can be discussed in terms of ownership and application.

intelligence is cultural quotient (“CQ”), coined following the common psychologists’ concept intelligence quotient (“IQ”) and another emotional intelligence quotient (“EQ”) (p. 16). Agreeing on the relevance between cultural intelligence and emotional intelligence, Earley and Mosakowski (2016) argue “A person with high cultural intelligence can somehow tease out of a person’s or group’s behavior those features that would be true of all people and all groups, those peculiar to this person or this group, and those that are neither universal nor idiosyncratic” (p. 2).

Cultural intelligence may be interpreted as the ability to be bicultural, similar to the notion of a bilingual. LaFromboise, Coleman, and Gerton (1993) review past literature and summarize the theoretical ideas on cultural acquisition in five types: the assimilation, acculturation, alternation, multi-cultural, and fusion models, all of which describe “the psychological processes, social experiences, and individual challenges and obstacles of being bicultural” (p. 395). LaFromboise, Coleman, and Gerton (1993) emphasize the alternation model, “which posits that an individual is able to gain competence within two cultures without losing her cultural identity or having to choose one culture over the other” (p. 395). Their discussion supports the idea of cultural ability, though they seem to focus on the process of being bicultural.

Vora et al. (2018) write in their recent paper about multiculturalism with the focus on the individual level, summarizing relevant literature works available in the fields of psychology, management, marketing, anthropology, and sociology. Based on their interdisciplinary analysis, Vora et al. (2018) define multiculturalism as “the degree to which someone has knowledge of, identification with, and internalization of more than one societal culture” (p. 506). Their tridimensional definition is similar to the preceding models in LaFromboise, Coleman, and Gerton’s work but is more tailored to international business.

In business-related cultural studies, Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2012) provide comprehensive discussions over national culture and useful definitions of the term *cultural competence* and related concepts. Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2012) offer a precaution, introducing varying definitions in circulation: “It could be a motive, a trait, a skill, an aspect of a person’s self-image or social role, or a body of knowledge that a person uses” (p. 352). Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2012) also point out the language difference between American and British English: While the terminology cultural competency is commonly used to refer to a set of skills or more of “What you know” in American English, cultural competence, which denotes behaviors or more of “What you do” is typically used in British English (p. 352). This thesis borrows the term *cultural competence*, which includes cultural competency, as cultural competence can be the act of applying cultural competency in a cross-cultural setting. This thesis does not reject other pertinent discussions and definitions of the cultural ability, as they help to understand the concept.

In language studies, similar terms are discussed: for example, Byram (1997) defines intercultural competence in terms of objectives: attitude (curiosity and openness), knowledge, skills of interpreting and relating, skills of discovery and interaction, and critical cultural awareness. Byram does not explicitly define the term *culture* in his discussions on intercultural competence, but his descriptions appear to correspond with other disciplines in general.

Cultural competence can also be discussed in terms of ownership and application for cultural translation. In a translation setting, any involved party can be assumed to be culturally competent: for

example, the translator, target audience, manager who commissions the production of translation, and/or the reviewer. They may be knowledgeable about the source and target-language culture to varying degrees. Chapter Nine will elaborate on cultural competence in light of the research findings.

This chapter has posited the provisional definition of cultural translatability as the hypothesis and created its framework with cultural specificities, after examining relevant concepts that may affect the feasibility of cultural translation. The next chapter will explain how to test the hypothesis.

Chapter Four: Research Methodology and Data Collection

Chapter Three has placed the hypothetical concept of cultural translatability that refers to the degree of translating cultural specificity from one society to another, followed by the trial framework to illustrate the concept. This chapter will offer methodological justifications for this research, present the research questions to test the hypothesis, and explain the procedure for data collection.

4.1 Research design

Chapter One has placed the initial presupposition that this thesis needs to investigate the cultural values behind the behavior described in textual data, going beyond the narrow focus on words or texts. There are two commonly known general paradigms of enquiry - inductive discovery (induction) and deductive proof (deduction) - available for the type of investigation. Deduction starts with a universal view to analyze samples; in contrast, induction begins with samples to arrive at a universal view (Gray, 2009). These approaches are not mutually exclusive: Most researchers are flexible and use both approaches at various points in research (Neuman, 2006). This view corresponds to this thesis's approach: Before arriving at the proposed framework in this thesis, the first stage has involved extensive interdisciplinary literature review and pilot research that helped to create the framework. The latter stage analyzes textual samples to test it. The aim of research entails analyzing culturally driven samples with the model (deductive), and at the same time, this research attempts to develop the theoretical idea of cultural translatability from them (inductive). The deduction and the induction meet and mirror each other in various ways, until the framework reaches theoretical saturation. This deduction-induction corroboration is referred to as a research cycle (Northey, Tepperman, and Russell, 2002). Figure 9 illustrates the pilot analysis performed in Chapter One.

This thesis will examine various culturally driven specificities that can also be categorized as deduced research subjects being hypothesized for their testing cycles. The idea of a research cycle intersects with the adopted methods that involve constant theoretical comparisons with the observed data (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). A research cycle can be part of theoretical comparisons to refine and test the proposed model that the body of literature supports.

Methodologically speaking, the type of investigation that this research performs is interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA), which is widely used in social science (Smith, Flower, and Larkin, 2009). The aim of IPA is to "explore in detail how participants are making sense of their personal and social world" (Smith and Osborn, 2003, p. 53). This thesis performs this type of qualitative analysis, though the notion of a "participant" can be wider than that of the generally known method of participant observation in social science research. Because this thesis investigates various types of texts, a "participant" can be a translator who created a translated text, an actor in a text, or an author of an academic paper. IPA is to uncover an insider's perspective, which is a cultural value of preference in this thesis, regardless of who owns it. If tested, the proposed framework can illustrate culturally driven specificities for any type of participants.

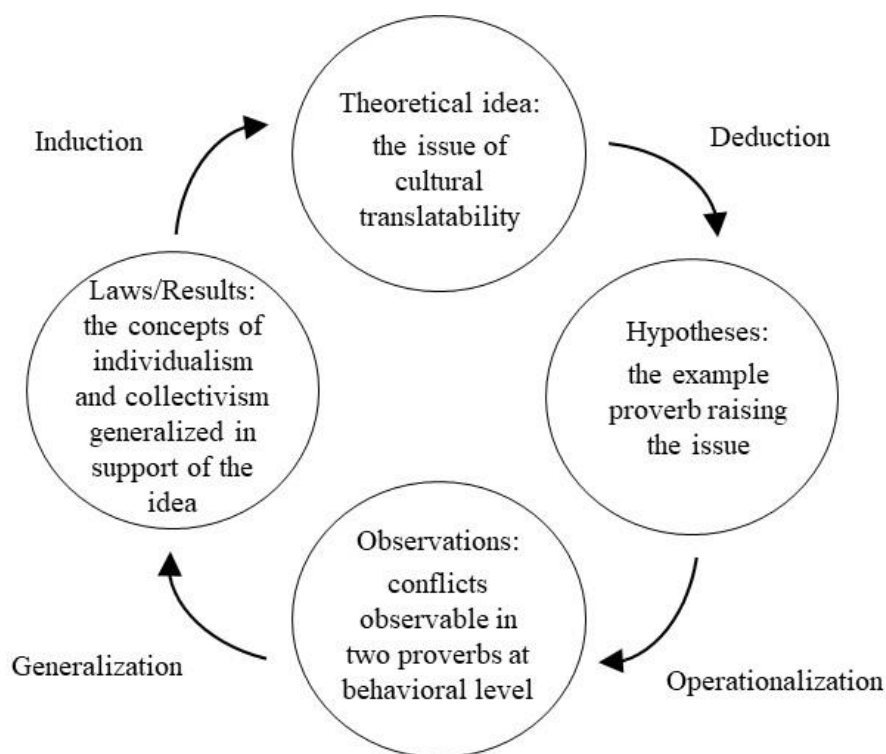


Figure 9: Research cycle (adopted from Northey, Tepperman and Russell, 2002, p. 33, Figure 3.1, with research contents added for clarity)

IPA involves two perspectives: an insider and a researcher’s perspectives. Because of this, IPA requires “a two-stage interpretation process, or a double hermeneutics” (Smith and Osborn, 2003, p. 53). In simple terms, “The participants are trying to make sense of their world; the researcher is trying to make sense of the participants trying to make sense of their world” (Smith and Osborn, 2003, p. 53). In this thesis, the first stage of analysis investigates the participant’s perspective, which can be ethnocentric or polycentric, depending on their strategic orientation discussed in Chapter Two. The second stage involves the present researcher’s perspectives (of the etic and emic views) to generate research output that explains the viewpoints of the translator and target audience who are likely oriented towards target-language culture.

IPA’s staged analysis corresponds to a research cycle explained earlier. For example, in the pilot analysis of the sample proverb (Yamada, 1992), the translator/author (Yamada) has delivered the ethnocentric translation to convey their emic view. The first stage has analyzed this emic view embedded in the Japanese proverb. The second step of investigation has been to see if the findings mirror the generally common views of cultural constructs: individualism and collectivism as quoted in Chapter One (Yamada, 1992, p. 33). In this thesis, “a researcher’s perspectives” will uncover the viewpoints of source-language and target-language cultures through a staged process. The proposed framework can help present the findings by visualizing them.

Moreover, the staged approach mitigates the potential issue with the interpretive approach (not IPA but the one examined in Section 2.1.2). This potential issue is discussed as a “threat” (Babbie, 2015) in Chapter One. Depending on the research context, the interpretive approach alone can be the first stage of IPA analysis. It does not necessarily address the majority view(s) as it is used to analyze any unit of analysis

through the lens of individuals. The findings may represent the participants' views that do not correlate with the majority view of the target society. In that case, the findings are not generalizable for explaining the society. This characteristic of the interpretive approach is not necessarily negative if it suits the research project. However, if the research aim is to find the majority view, it would end up with an ecological fallacy (Neuman, 2006). This thesis first focuses on the majority views to construct and test the proposed framework, so that it will have the capability of analyzing findings of emic views standing between two extremes of a continuum by examining them against the generally common views of cultural constructs.

This thesis focuses on established organizational behaviors as evidential samples. Cassell and Symon (2004) compile useful research approaches to organizational behavior. Among those, particularly relevant are thematic analysis of text through coding, interviews in qualitative research, and case study research. These three methodological approaches will be the primary tools of inquiry. These are not mutually exclusive: for example, this thesis performs thematic analysis of textualized interview data and business case narratives through coding. In short, IPA is the type of investigation to test the hypothesis through a series of research cycles, conducted with the three tools of inquiry for qualitative analysis, in this thesis.

Regarding template analysis, King (2004) emphasizes its flexibility: "The term *template analysis* does not describe a single, clearly delineated method; it refers rather to a varied but related group of techniques for thematically organizing and analyzing textual data" (p. 256). The next section will perform pilot analysis, following the techniques of template analysis: "The researcher produces a list of codes ('template') representing themes identified in their textual data" (King, 2004, p. 256). This technique appears to overlap with *coding* in the grounded theory approach (Strauss and Corbin, 1998) that intersects with other qualitative methods to varying degrees. Qualitative inquiry is inevitably multi-method research to maximize theoretical strength through triangulation. This thesis adopts the idea of thematically organizing and analyzing textual data for the identification of cultural values behind the use of text.

As for a researcher's perspective, King (2004) cautions "...for some researchers, a preference for template analysis may be based on their philosophical position" (p. 257). This can be the weakness of any social science research as discussed in Section 1.3 (Babbie, 2015). To minimize bias, this research incorporates research cycles (Northey, Tepperman, and Russell, 2002). With the approach, the process of analysis does not require the researcher's philosophical position: the process has no room for that. Simply put, the researcher does not judge participants' perspectives but impartially focuses on the investigation to see if a research cycle takes place. A complete research cycle means that the original findings and the literature concepts of cultural construct(s) support each other. This thesis repeats a research cycle until it reaches theoretical saturation.

This thesis will analyze interview data, including publicly available news articles in the business sectors and recent data collected by the present author. Interviews and case studies have turned out suitable for the exploratory nature of research with the ontological orientation of constructionism.

There appears to be an academic debate as to whether case study research is a methodology or a choice of what is to be studied. However, literature generally suggests that case study research can be "a strategy of inquiry, a methodology, or a comprehensive research strategy" (Creswell, 2013, p. 97). Perhaps the bottom

line is that a methodology is “a way of thinking about and studying social reality”, and methods are “a set of procedures and techniques for gathering and analyzing data” (Strauss and Corbin, 1998, p. 3). Creswell (2013, p. 97) writes that “Case study research is a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (e.g., observations, interviews, audiovisual material, and documents and reports), and reports a case description and case themes”. This explanation suggests that case study is effective for this research, which analyzes textual samples, some of which represent a bounded system(s). While so, not all textual samples in this research can be substantial in length. Literature does not appear to specify how many words a case needs to be a case-study material. Rather, a textual sample can be considered a case if it satisfies the following: “Case study research comprises two parts: 1) a subject and 2) an analytical framework or object” (Thomas, 2016, p. 15). Similarly, Denscombe (2010, p. 56) says “Good case study research needs to contain a clear vision of the boundaries to the case and provide an explicit account of what they are”. The literature says that a case basically needs to have sufficient information on who did what. Textual samples that satisfy the requirements will be case study materials.

This thesis adopts the combined methods discussed above. This methodological coordination is called triangulation, which “involves the practice of viewing things from more than one perspective” (Denscombe, 2010, p. 346). The following five subcategorized types of triangulations explain this research: 1) triangulation between methods, 2) triangulation within each method, 3) data triangulation, 4) investigator triangulation, and 5) theory triangulation (Denscombe, 2010). The first and second points denote this research’s methodology as discussed in this section. The third point explains the types of samples collected from different business sectors. The fourth point explains the individual level, which is grounded in the cultural concepts shared across different researchers. The fifth point described the proposed framework built on different yet related theories as explained in the literature review. The benefits of triangulation are improved accuracy and fuller picture (Denscombe, 2010, p. 348). These benefits correspond to the concept of meta-synthesis mentioned in Chapter Three.

Having designed the research methods, the following section will present research questions and perform a pilot analysis to investigate the cultural values behind the behavior described in textual data, going beyond the narrow focus on words or texts.

4.2 Research questions

Chapter Three has hypothesized the concept of cultural translatability as the degree of translation cultural specificity from one society to another. Assuming there are factors that influence its degree, the following question will test the hypothesis:

Main Research Question: What are the factors that affect the feasibility of translating culturally driven specificities from one society to another?

The answers to the Main Research Question will be descriptive accounts that explain the factors. Chapter Two has briefly mentioned the types of research samples for this research: linguistic items whose connotations likely represent sets of culturally driven specificities. Based on this presupposition, Chapter Two has discussed the sets of symmetrically opposite specificities, including Arm's-Length Contractual Relation ("ACR") and Obligational Business Relation ("OCR") (Sako, 1992), each of which has its intrinsic connection with the local cultural values of preference in the respective society. Sako (1992, p. 10) implies that culturally driven specificities ("the degree of interdependence" and "the time span for reciprocity" in her words) may drive the issue of cultural translatability. The following sub-questions will capture such culturally driven specificities at the respective levels for analysis:

Research Question 1: What typical Japanese business behaviors are incongruous in Liberal Market Economies?

Research Question 2: What cultural values explain the typical Japanese business behaviors?

Research Question 3: What cultural values explain why such behaviors appear incongruous in Liberal Market Economies?

Research Questions 2 and 3 ask what cultural values are embedded in business practices for answering the Main Research Question. Although stated from the CME standpoint, Research Questions 1 and 3 are to find sets of symmetrically opposite practices and cultural values, respectively. Research Questions 2 and 3 reveal the cultural values generally shared in the context of business practice. Research Question 3 is necessary as LME cultural values constitute the individual-level specificity on the LME side in the proposed framework of cultural translatability. To reiterate, the framework consists of four domains, namely Japanese practice, Japanese cultural values, LME practice, and LME cultural values as introduced in Chapter Three. This thesis will examine the perceptions of incongruity from the standpoints of the CME of Japan and LMEs separately, if any, reversing the perspectives for understanding both. Altogether the answers will help explain the issue of cultural translatability. For data collection, Section 4.3 will present select specificities that this thesis will use as search keywords to gather linguistic items. The rest of this section will present a pilot analysis, following the research design explained in the previous section, to demonstrate how to answer the research questions.

Chapter One has reviewed the example of a Japanese proverb: The nail that sticks out gets hammered back in/down. Similarly, there is a well-known English saying that signifies a locally appropriate practice: Stand out from the crowd. The two sayings are semantically opposite but share the same connotation of being locally congruous behavior. Marin (2007) discusses the set of proverbs in their book *The Japanese Housewife Overseas: Adapting to Change of Culture and Status* as follows. This section analyzes it as a sample to demonstrate the IPA process. Parentheses are added for coding culturally driven words. The letters L and C stand for LME and CME, respectively, and the numbers indicate specific occurrences of culturally driven specificities. These coding symbols will be used in all analysis sections throughout this thesis.

Another aspect of Japanese behavior... is the feeling that the individual should not stand out from the crowd [C1]. In emphasizing the cultural ideal of harmony [C2], Japanese culture tends to look down on any behavior that might foster conflict or that indicates deviance [C3]. As the Japanese saying goes, ‘the nail that sticks up should be hammered down’[C4]. Ryoko (the author’s interviewee) told me “In Japan everyone looks the same [C5], and mostly acts the same [C6], but here (in the UK where the interview took place) it is OK to be different [L1].” Again, this is something instilled into children at an early age in Japan. Children in kindergarten for example, learn that they can either cooperate with the activities of the group and be happy, or be left out and laughed at and thought of as peculiar [C7]. (Martin, 2007, p. 127)

This academic text can be treated as a suitable sample that contains culturally driven specificities. Table 4 shows the coding results of text analysis. To reiterate, this thesis focuses on culturally driven specificities - culturally congruous behaviors at the practice level and cultural values of preference at the individual level - as its units of analysis. “RQ” stands for Research Question in all tables going forward.

	LMEs	CME of Japan
Sample text	(Implied) Stand out from the crowd	(C4) Nail that sticks up should be hammered down
Category: Practice level (RQ 1)	(L1) “OK” to be different	(C1) Should not stand out from the crowd (C3) Look down on any behavior that might foster conflict or indicate deviance (C5) Everyone looks the same (C6) Mostly acts the same
Culturally driven behavior	Behave to be recognized or valued as an individual	Behave not to be self but in a collectively correct way to keep collective harmony
Category: Individual level (RQs 2 & 3)	(Implied) Cultural ideal of individuality	(C2) Cultural ideal of harmony (C7) Thought of as peculiar if not harmonious: instilled since kindergarten
Cultural values	Primacy of individualistic interest to be self	Primacy of collectivistic interest to keep collective harmony
Cultural construct	Individualism	Collectivism

Table 4: Concept analysis of the example

In Table 4, the answer to the Main Research Question is placed at the bottom because the process of analysis has a research cycle (Northey, Tepperman and Russell, 2002), which is a staged approach explained in the next section. As explained in Chapter One, a cultural construct subsumes cultural values, which are its contents: for example, typically patterned ways of thinking, among other similar terms. In Table 4, “Primacy of collectivistic interest to keep collective harmony” is the description of their patterned way of thinking. The term *concept* is the briefest possible answer to the Main Research Question and subsumes the subcategorized term *cultural construct* or related ones such as *cultural dimension*. For Research Question 3, *Stand out from the crowd* is provided as the English-language equivalent in the sense of locally congruous behavior to answer Research Questions. The findings give the following answers to Research Questions in the context of this specific example:

1. Typical Japanese behavior: Not to stand out from the crowd.
2. Intrinsically connected cultural value(s): Cultural ideal of harmony in the CME.

3. Typical LME behavior: Stand out from the crowd.
4. Intrinsically connected cultural value(s): Cultural ideal of individuality in LMEs.
5. Factors: The opposite exists in another society. Locally ideal behaviors of being self and keeping collective harmony are opposite to each other at the practice level. Local values of individualist belief and collectivist belief are symmetrically opposite to each other at the individual level.

The sample text (Martin, 2007) exhibits two shared characteristics: 1) Although semantically opposite, the two proverbs share the same sense of locally ideal behavior. 2) Linguistically speaking, they are perfectly translatable into another language. These characteristics may be analyzed from two angles: one from an LME viewpoint and another from a CME viewpoint. From the LME standpoint, if a sense-to-sense translation meets the translation purpose, the translation *Stand out from the crowd* (TT) may be used as a suitable translation, aside from many possible variants of translations. In this case, the source-language text (ST) is manipulated by removing the word *not* to attain the translation purpose.

An LME audience may want a word-to-word translation: *You should not stand out from the crowd*. There will be two possible scenarios: The word-to-word TT 1) functions or 2) does not function as a suitable translation in the translation setting. It may function when it is accompanied by an explanation to reduce the cultural difference: For example, “This proverb predominantly works in Japan and does not in LMEs”. If the target audience wants this explanation, the translator’s mission is accomplished. Otherwise, the word-to-word TT is unlikely to be treated as a culturally congruous maxim in LMEs. If the LME audience requires naturalness in the LME sense, the TT will raise the issue of cultural translatability. As examined in Chapter One, individuals have their “learned interpretations” (Strauss and Quinn, 1997) to determine what is typically congruous. In the sample case, learned interpretations are individualistic and collectivistic values of preference in the respective societies. Nothing else appears to explain typical behavior. This line of analysis is central to this thesis.

From the CME standpoint, the sense-to-sense TT will raise the issue of cultural translatability, if it is back-translated as-is to source language (SL). This back-translation may be translated again to target language (TL). There will be two possible scenarios: Back-and-forth communications will eventually find common ground between cultures, if the translation setting permits to do so. The SL may have been partially manipulated during the process. Another scenario is that back-and-forth exchange will become endless, and the issue of cultural translatability remains in the setting. Culturally driven specificities in this scenario will help this thesis answer RQs. Acknowledging that manipulation as a translation technique is potentially effective, this thesis primarily focuses on culturally driven text before ST is manipulated or (partially) removed for translation purposes at this stage of research.

As discussed above, in certain cases, the existence of opposite behavior from the viewpoint of SL culture (SC) makes the ST more translatable than not. Although some approaches circumvent the issue of cultural translatability by text manipulation, it may be a workable solution in LMEs. At the translator level, text manipulation may be discussed from two angles. If the translator has a sufficient knowledge about LME and CME cultures beyond language, their knowledge will facilitate text manipulation as a translation technique by effectively spotting culturally driven specificities. As mentioned earlier, this knowledge is referred to as cultural competence in this thesis. Figure 10 attempts to illustrate the ability, using the

proposed framework. If the translator does not possess an adequate knowledge of cultural specificity, the issue of cultural translatability may remain in the setting where an audience wants naturalness in TT. The possible concept of cultural translatability will be beneficial as it aids translators to recognize culturally driven specificities.

At the audience level, they may already have prior knowledge about cultural values. For example, an LME audience may be aware that, without being explained, the proverb *Nail that sticks up should be hammered down* works in Japan but not in LMEs and be able to act well in a cross-cultural setting: for instance, handling the culturally driven specificity with no hitch. At this preliminary stage of research, this thesis presupposes that audience has zero cultural competence to give the highest level of versatility to the proposed framework. No such presuppositions will be made once the framework is tested.

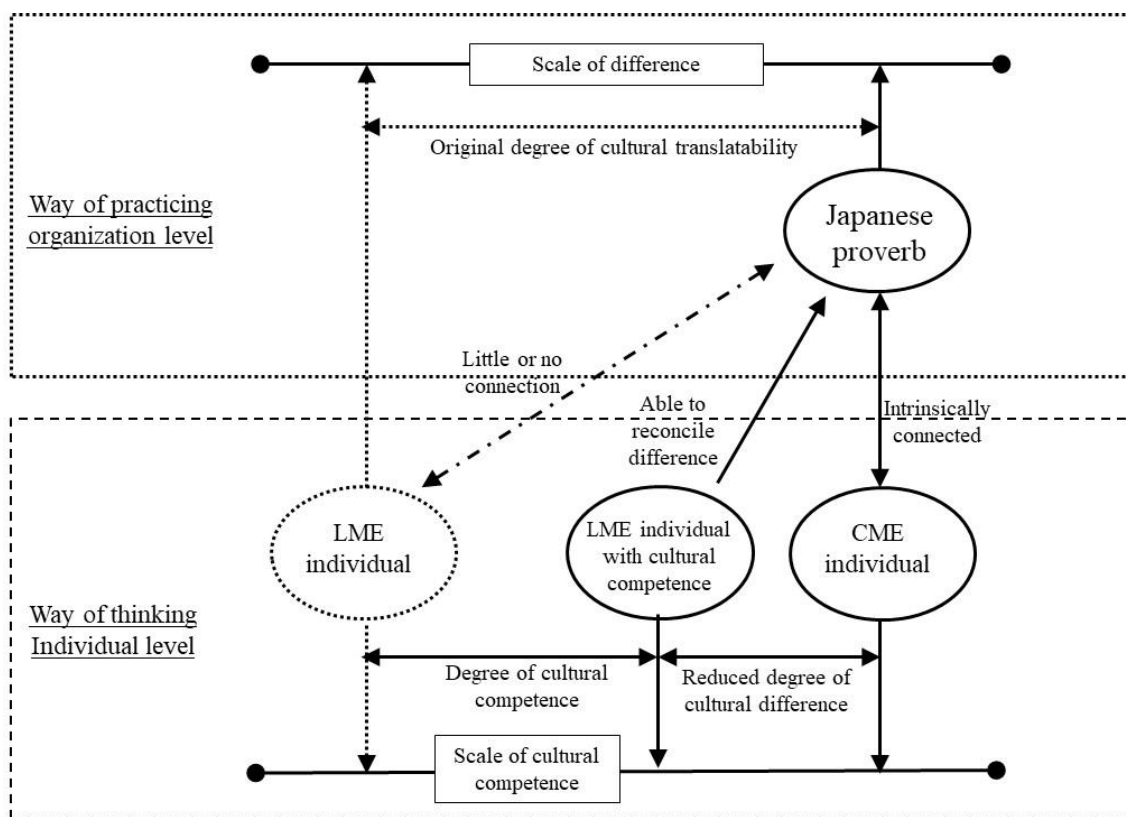


Figure 10: Pilot analysis of a culturally competent LME individual

As shown in Figure 10, the proposed framework has the potential to illustrate and elaborate the concept of cultural competence. Figure 10 is shown in the simplest form for presentation purposes to focus on the ability. Although this thesis focuses on the possible concept of cultural translatability, the framework may contribute to the current knowledge of cultural competence if tested.

Chapter One has quoted early literature that briefly mentions the potential idea of cultural (un)translatability: "... what renders 'culturally untranslatable' item 'untranslatable' is the fact that the use in the TL text of any approximate translation equivalent produces an unusual collocation in the TL" (Catford, 1965, p. 101). The pilot analysis elaborates on the idea of "an unusual collocation": The ST opposite exists in

the TL and makes a TL audience perceive that it is incongruous in TL culture. This thesis uses this description as the working description of the issue of cultural translatability.

With proposed Research Questions, the issue of cultural translatability can be discussed as follows: A culturally driven behavior (an answer to Research Question 1) in one society may or may not be translated and transferred to another society. The language equivalent used as a translation (TT) may be the best possible equivalent but may represent the opposite behavior of what the SL text (ST) conveys in SL culture (SC). This cultural contrariety not absolutely but possibly negatively affects the degree of translating cultural specificity from one society to another (Hypothesis). The opposing ST and TT in the original sense may be postulated to constitute a symmetrically opposite set at the practice level. The cultural contrariety, which is a relative notion, is best explained with cultural values grounded in the individual level (answers to Research Question 3). The proposed framework is to capture what SL and TL convey in the original sense across the levels.

The opposite specificities are relative and diffused notions. No sets of symmetrically opposite practices or values of preference are absolute unless they are positioned as the theoretical extremes. The opposite may or may not be influential, which is expressed as the degree of cultural translatability (or the extent of cultural contrariety in the preceding paragraph). One determinant of the degree is the underlying value(s) at the individual level. As clarified earlier, this thesis treats the link between the levels as intrinsic connection between language (practices) and culture (cultural values). Cultural specificities that have no intrinsic connection are considered culturally independent and out of research scope in this thesis. The proposed framework consists of connected levels of a linear continuum of two extremes to capture dynamic specificities.

The preceding text analysis is bound in the case context, including time and space. The findings do not equally apply to all individuals. As clarified in Chapter Three, individual differences are out of research scope for testing the proposed concept and framework. This thesis focuses on the relevance between this research's findings and the research questions. If tested, the framework may be used to evaluate individual differences. To improve the generalizability of the focused findings, this thesis has proposed the framework, which is built with the prevalent literature concepts.

To reiterate, this thesis pays close attention to ST as-is for attaining the research aim before ST is altered and/or partially omitted for translation. This section has so far performed a pilot analysis. The trial supports the hypothesis and the framework. This thesis adopts the coding approach for analysis throughout subsequent chapters. Having performed the trial, the next section will offer the methodological justifications for this research.

4.3 Procedure

This section discusses what types of data are to be collected and how they were solicited for this research. This research collects text samples, which contain sets of symmetrically opposite specificities ("search keywords") shown in Table 5. Chosen from prevalent literature works, the search keywords are used as the criteria for open-ended search on mainstream databases, including the library systems at academic

institutions and Google Scholar. Research samples include academic and non-academic texts, such as textbooks, newspapers, and culturally driven publications with the theme of “Doing business in Japan”. This thesis does not strictly limit the types of samples but only investigates authentic data - reports of real-life experiences in interviews and written narratives - for robust research to maximize theoretical strength. Any texts, original and translated, are investigated where the issue is culturally driven. Collected samples are investigated to see whether they have distinctive relevance with the cultural construct(s), for example individualism and collectivism. As clarified earlier, culturally independent specificities are out of research scope for this thesis. This thesis uses the literature concepts of cultural constructs for its systematic screening process during data collection and analysis.

Economy level	Liberal market economies	Coordinated market economy of Japan
Organization level		
Decision-making communication		
Decision making unit	Individual manager or small group	Collective (group consensus)
Communication style	Escalation	Horenso (communication for consensus)
Human resources management		
Employment pattern	Job-type employment	Membership-type employment
Job description	Explicit job description	No job description (multi-tasking)
Manufacturing sector		
Corporate alliance	Strategic alliance	Keiretsu
Supplier contract	Purchase order (every purchase/vehicle life)	Master trade agreement (every relationship)
Banking sector		
Banking system	Arm's-length banking system	Main bank system
Lender-borrower relation	LME style relationship lending	Japanese style relationship lending

Table 5: A summary of symmetrically opposite specificities (search keywords for data collection)

The search keywords are provisionally set based on the present author’s literature review¹⁰. Based on pilot search, this thesis will examine the three sets of symmetrically opposite specificities highlighted in bold in Table 5. The three sets are chosen because they represent the respective sectors and appear to be more concrete than other attributes. Pilot research has found that semantically broad specificities tend to become more diffused, being rather not suitable for this research, than semantically specific attributes. For example, the LME term *arm’s-length employment* consists of multiple attributes, including *internal job posting* and *job descriptions*, comprised of more variables than the specificity *internal job posting*. For this reason, this research chooses specific sets that represent the respective societies.

The search keywords are applied to the organization level of the proposed framework for collecting textual data. Synonymous or related terms are also input in catalogue and database searches for data collection. The search keywords are likely to answer RQ1. All the search keywords in Table 5 are used as case themes for case-study analysis where appropriate.

This thesis collects samples from the following areas: decision-making practice, employment practice, and the manufacturing and banking sectors in the context of international business. The proposed model

¹⁰ The present author’s past research has identified many keywords with potential relevance more than shown here. However, this chapter only presents the core keywords because at this pre-research stage the present author was not aware how this research would unfold nor what keywords would newly come into sight.

integrates the ACR-OCR model (Sako, 1992) as part of it. ACR-OCR is tested against the original findings collected from the manufacturing sector. Furthermore, this thesis tests the proposed model against samples collected from the finance sector for cross-sectoral triangulation to see if finance-sector findings support ACR-OCR as part of the proposed model beyond manufacturing.

As presented in Table 5, each sector has three attributes as the most representative and concrete specificities. Pilot research suggests that many other sets of symmetrically opposite specificities possibly exist under the major categories, such as long-term employment. Related specificities are incorporated into analysis.

This thesis not only collects recent data but also deems early literature as textual samples: for example, as reviewed in Chapter Three, Beechler et al. (1996) write about what is referred to as *horenso* communication for consensus in this thesis, citing Abegglen (1958), Yoshino (1968), Cole (1971), and Dore (1973). If the current existence of *horenso* is found to raise the issue of cultural translatability, the issue is said to have existed at least for 50 years since 1958 with the literature support. The continuity coexists with long-term changes and reversions. Such movements naturally occur but do not terminate the continued business practices. This thesis focuses on the continuity that incorporates changes and reversions made during the research period (50 years in the preceding discussion).

As mentioned earlier, this thesis performs thematic analysis of textualized interview data to triangulate sampled data. Interview data include recent data that the present author collected for research and publication activities¹¹. The rounds of in-depth interviews were conducted with 40 interviewees in two sectors - banking and recruitment - among the top three largest Japanese banks and three major Japanese recruitment agencies located in the CME of Japan and LMEs. The initial field work began in 2014, and follow-up interviews were conducted in-person and over the phone over the next four years. During the follow-up phase, additional interviews were conducted also. Appendix A reports a summary of interviewee profile. The top three largest Japanese banks were selected based on the assumption that they would have more cross-national activities than smaller banks with modest foreign operations. The recruitment agencies were selected for the same reason and on the assumption that the sector would have the highest relevance with one of this thesis's major themes: HR management. All the interviewed organizations had a large global network, through which Japanese expatriates (expats) were regularly sent from the head office to work on assignment.

This research chose interviewees who had a cross-national professional experience, defined as 1) serving outside the home country where the interviewee was raised or 2) serving an employer whose management and employees consisted predominantly of nationals different from the interviewee. This ensured that the interviewee was empirically exposed to foreigners and foreign practices on a daily basis. All the interviewees resided and/or worked in LME(s) for an LME operation of a Japanese employer. 98% of the interviewees had a seven-year professional experience or more, and many had a management-level corporate title, such as Vice President, at the time of interview. Over the course of their career, 100% of them worked for two or more companies or offices by either changing the employers or being transferred within the

¹¹ The use of prior data is approved by the Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee on April 24, 2023 (Project ID: 37403).

employer network, making the interview results more general without bias, rather than specific to their current employer. The interviewees had reasonable “requisite knowledge” (Bryman, 2004, p. 156) on their expertise and cross-national matters that were compared between the countries. They were able to articulate their ways of thinking and the business practices, making comparisons between the Japanese and LME individuals at the individual level and between Japanese and LME business practices at the organization level. Their requisite knowledge indeed aided the researcher in detecting the cross-national differences effectively, without posing any leading questions.

Interviews were conducted in English with LME nationals and in Japanese¹² with Japanese nationals. All interviews started with a very generic topic about working for a Japanese-owned organization in the LME (i.e., in a cross-national setting) and a simple yet broad question: Do cross-national differences exist in your workplace? The word *differences* became concrete at various points of time during the fieldwork. All interview conversations were open-ended to maximize the research opportunities and avoid leading questions. Consequently, the field research collected a dozen cross-national topics shared among the interview data. This thesis reports on grounded categories that achieved theoretical saturation.

This thesis will also analyze publicly available news articles that report on relevant interviews performed by the articles’ authors. Such news articles are useful but do not constitute primary interview data as the present author has no access to the raw interview transcripts. This thesis will analyze relevant news articles as textual data.

In terms of document analysis, literature suggests four criteria for choosing documentary sources: authenticity, credibility, representativeness, and meaning, all of which are vital for the sources to be genuine, accurate, free from error or distortion, typical of its type, comprehensive, and unambiguous (Bryman, 2004). Although these are important guidelines, their significance can be relative because there is no perfect way of precisely gauging each research subject according to every single guideline. For example, the notion of a comprehensive source depends on a researcher’s need. Most critical for this thesis can be authenticity, representativeness, and meaning of cultural values embedded in data sources. This thesis selectively chose data that met these three in addition to the others on a best effort basis.

Intangible culture, often labelled as national culture, inevitably comes with the methodological issue because it is a construct at the individual level. It is impossible to measure cultural values precisely (Jones, 2007) in the first place due to their intangible nature. However, this issue can be mitigated with tangible evidence. This thesis presupposes that cultural values existent at the individual level becomes observable when it is contextualized (Cooke, 2018) with evidence of a culturally driven practice and/or behavior obtained at the organization level or higher. It will primarily examine publicly available sources and translated texts, including news articles, multinational corporations’ websites, academic and non-academic books written in English and Japanese. These sources will constitute contextualized cases with the key specificities shown in Table 5. This thesis will then apply the cultural specificities to the proposed model,

¹² The present author transcribed and translated all the Japanese data, including verbal and textual, into English unless an English translation is publicly available.

thereby answering the research questions. Any texts, original and translated, will be examined as long as they raise the issue of cultural translatability for robust research to test the proposed model.

With regard to sample size, no specific guideline is available as to how many samples or case studies are adequate (Yin, 2018). Many academic works conduct a single case study, while others have multiple case studies for a single project. To triangulate the sectoral findings, this project will examine at least one linguistic item from the aforementioned three critical areas (Sako, 1992). At this stage, this thesis is set to examine the three sets shown in Table 5, at least.

In summary, Part One has performed three tasks: 1) Chapter Two reviewing relevant literature to build a theoretical foundation, 2) Chapter Three crafting a framework based on the foundation, and 3) Chapter Four explaining the research methodology and data collection. Part One has briefly examined Japanese concepts but kept it bare minimum for this thesis to flow well by not dumping copious information in its early part. As mentioned earlier, the biggest challenge for this thesis is to present findings in the easiest possible way to an audience who is uninformed of collectivistic patterns of preference and/or Japanese ways of doing business. To tackle it, Part Two will begin with a review of the chosen sector, functional or industrial, to locate the units of analysis suitable for the research questions.

Part Two

Chapter Five: Findings on Decision-Making Communication

This chapter will test the concept of cultural translatability and the workability of its framework by applying them to decision-making communication in LMEs and the CME of Japan. It will first identify the suitable areas of communication styles for research. Second, it will examine concepts associated with decision-making communication. Finally, it will systematically analyze textual data through thematic analysis of text.

5.1 Preliminary analysis

Chapter Three has reviewed early prominent research in Japanese studies that provides the following distinctive characteristics of Japanese business different from their LME counterparts: “more frequent use of consultative decision-making practices, higher frequency of communication, lifetime employment, long-term planning horizons, generalist career paths, quality control circles, and implicit informal control mechanisms” (Beechler et al., 1996, p. 3). All these pertain to Japanese style decision-making to varying degrees, directly or indirectly, depending on the context. The first two characteristics *more frequent use of consultative decision-making practices* and *higher frequency of communication* describe a Japanese communication style for decision-making in general. This chapter will regard them as its primary focus for analysis.

The third characteristic *long-term planning horizons* is potentially relevant to this chapter. As reviewed in Chapter Three, it becomes influential especially when time orientation makes a difference that matters to the decision-maker: for instance, when short-term and long-term interests are in conflict, LME individuals tend to favor short-term oriented options whereas the Japanese have the primacy in long-term ones (Triandis, 2001). Such culturally contingent options are not always mutually exclusive, but research suggests that individuals have regionally shared preferences. This thesis selectively examines culturally driven texts that contain such values of preference. The remaining characteristics, such as lifetime employment, are generally sectoral or industry-specific and will be examined in the following chapters.

Regarding the first two characteristics, Kameda (2013) lists the following three practices as communication styles specific to Japanese decision-making: horenso, nemawashi, and ringi seido. Horenso (phonetically *hoorensoo*) is an acronym consisting of the first syllables of three words: hokoku (phonetically *hookoku*: reporting), renraku (contacting), and sodan (phonetically *soodan*: consulting). This chapter focuses on horenso since it is distinctively Japanese in that no precise counterparts exist in LMEs.

Nemawashi is a widely studied concept (Taplin, 1995), which means a Japanese consensus building technique: “It involves conversations, either one-on-one or in very small groups, to avoid the public display of differences of opinion”, which is why “it’s typically done as a more low-key alternative to the standard western style meeting filled with debate and clashing positions” (Kopp, 2010). This description alone exhibits an intense dichotomy of individualism and collectivism: the primacy of individualistic interest of expressing individual opinions of their own vs. the primacy of collectivistic interest of maintaining group harmony by suppressing individual opinions in public settings. This is why nemawashi is typically carried out one-on-one or in very small groups. While it is a suitable concept for cultural analysis, this chapter

focuses on horenso, whose characteristics of reporting, contacting, and consulting have overlaps with nemawashi conceptually.

Ringi sendo, or simply ringi, is also a widely studied concept. It mainly concerns the documentation part of Japanese business decision-making that takes place after horenso and/or nemawashi. Taplin (1995) provides the following explanation: “Although top managers may sometimes float ideas, they are actually discussed and analyzed throughout the company and then put forward for ratification at the top (the ringi system) once there has been a great deal of discussion at all company levels” (p. 26). The concept of ringi may also make a suitable concept for research, but linguistically it has a reasonable counterpart, such as decision-making files, in LMEs. Horenso can be most distinctive among the relevant characteristics.

5.2 Concept analysis

Horenso is a neologism, readily adopted by speakers of Japanese, because it is also a homonym of the Japanese word for the vegetable spinach commonly consumed in the nation. Horenso is a widely known term in Japan yet signifies the under-researched system of communication. Among available works, Kameda (2013) offers helpful discussions on the concept: It can be described as “a continual and collaborative communication process between superiors, subordinates, and colleagues over the course of a project” (p. 9).

Originally coined in the business sector, horenso is often practiced in empirical settings. The history of horenso dates to at least Japan’s boom times and possibly further back. Tomiji Yamazaki, President of Yamatane Securities at that time, first wrote a book about horenso in the late 1980s (Yamazaki, 1989). It is considered the groundbreaking work in the sense that it conceptualized the term and made it popular. While Yamazaki can be the father of the term, some form of horenso is likely to have existed in Japan. Before Yamazaki wrote his book, many scholars carried out research on Japanese business in the past. As mentioned earlier, the early prominent literature reports on more frequent use of consultative decision-making practices and higher frequency of communication as critical differences found in Japanese business (Abegglen, 1958; Yoshino, 1968; Cole, 1971; Dore, 1973; Beechler et al., 1996). These findings portray the concept without explicitly referring to it as horenso, which has been present¹³.

Japan’s Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare has developed a comprehensive website dedicated to teleworking due to Covid-19. One of their frequently asked questions reads: How can I do houkoku, renraku, and sodan [i.e., horenso] when teleworking (Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare, 2020)? Similarly, Japanese media features the issue: Nikkei, a prominent newspaper in the nation, writes that when teleworking, you should be mindful of horenso more than usual (Nihon Keizai Shimbun, 2020, p. 1). This thesis refers to Japanese communication with the long-standing features as horenso, which can be described as a continual and collaborative two-way communication style that involves frequent status updates for consultative decision-making. In LMEs, reporting is usually referred to as escalation (Masuda, 2014), which is examined in detail in Case 5-3.

¹³ The idea here is similar to how the practice of kaizen (continuous improvement of business process) attracted attention outside Japan: Masaaki Imai first wrote a book about kaizen in English (Imai, 1986). This book is considered the groundbreaking work worldwide that made it popular. While Imai’s work is an important milestone, the Japanese have been practicing kaizen before the publication of Imai’s work.

Having explored the concept's background, this section examines three excerpts from academic works to perform cultural analysis of it. The first text is from Kameda (2013), who offers the following in-depth descriptions of the three constituent words. As explained in Chapter Four, the parentheses are added for coding culturally driven specificities. The letters L and C stand for LME and CME, respectively, and the numbers indicate specific occurrences of culturally driven specificities.

Hokoku (reporting) means reporting to supervisors on the progress, changes, if any, and result of your work in a timely manner (C1) when and if instructions and/or orders are given by supervisors. Renraku (contacting) means transmitting useful information of one's own will to those who may need it (C2). Sodan (consulting) signifies ongoing consultation and discussion, usually with supervisors and/or those involved over an issue or problem that one has to resolve, asking for their opinions and suggestions (C3). (Kameda, 2013, p. 9)

The text explicates what is involved in the practice of horenso, which is positioned as an important attribute of the persona of the Japanese institutions. The second text below is cited from a relevant academic book *Decision-making and Japan* (Taplin, 1995):

In Japan, action or implementation of ideas takes place before the formal decision is announced. This occurs because the impact stage happens before action is announced formally (C4). The informal decision-making stage in a Japanese organization is a continuous process in which information is gathered and discussed.... Such forms of all-encompassing communication (C5) allow both greater individual participation in the solution and an increased likelihood that action will be implemented effectively because there is a group consensus (C6). Such behavior, which derives from groupism (C7) and egalitarian ranking, is contra-distinction to the Western decision-making method in which a quick decision, usually involving very few people (L1), tends to be followed by implementation and then evaluation. Within the Japanese context, extensive evaluation occurs first in an egalitarian corporate group process that eventually leads to action. (Taplin, 1995, p. 25)

Taplin is an American academic with her expertise in Japanese studies. Kameda (2013) and Taplin (1995) exhibit the CME viewpoint supportive of horenso.

Moving on to the LME viewpoint, the third text is cited from an academic paper (Hirt, 2012) that discusses two cross-cultural challenges arising from technology transfer that involves the Japanese. One challenge is that "countries with fluently speaking Japanese staff may facilitate the transfer of technology but also run the risk of subordinating completely to Japanese parameters" (Hirt, 2012). Related to the first point, another is described as follows:

A second risk factor affected by culture within transboundary communication process is the lacking implementation of the literally translated Japanese "spinach" ("horenso") concept. The process of keeping in close communication is summed up in three words: report (houkoku), inform and give periodic updates (renraku) and consult (sodan), or ho-ren-so for short. Japanese see this process as being one of the effective and important ways to avert risk (C8), as it acts as an overhaul between employees and between departments, as well as between vendors and the customers they service. This approach of back-and-forth communication for consultation and updates is widely applied in Japanese companies but hardly works across cultures (L2). Adopting this style of communication can be an advantage in a cross-cultural technology transfer project but is de facto in most cases perceived as a burden (L3) by people not used to this method of highly engaged communication. (Hirt, 2012, p. 13)

This quote contains the researcher’s (Hirt’s) argument that horensō does not work in other cultures than Japan. It inclines to the LME belief that horensō is not suitable for other societies. Table 6 summarizes the results of coding analysis.

	LMEs	CME of Japan
Culturally driven word	Escalation	Horensō
Practice level (RQ 1)	(Implied) Action followed by impact stage (L1) Quick decision usually made by few people, followed by implementation and evaluation. (Implied) Escalation possibly performed, if necessary, after evaluation. (L2) Horensō not workable across cultures other than Japan (L3) Horensō perceived as a burden	(C1) Any progress, change, and result to be shared with manager (C2) Useful information for others to be shared proactively (C3) Frequent communication with involved parties (C4) Impact stage followed by action (C5) All-encompassing communication for decision making (C6) Group consensus for decision making (C8) Horensō as effective and important ways to avert risk
Culturally driven behavior	Focus on task duties given to my team (self) until task completion: consult other(s) only when absolutely necessary for task completion or a serious problem my team cannot solve on my own	Regular status updates and information sharing necessary for our company’s task completion in a way agreed by all parties involved: It is the collective’s task (as opposed to my team’s)
Cultural values of preference (RQs 2 & 3)	(Implied) opposite of groupism	(C7) Groupism
Cultural constructs	No primacy of collectivistic interest shown right (primacy of self-interest)	Primacy of collectivistic interest to keep all parties of collective on the same page

Table 6: Summary of horensō concept analysis

Coding analysis indicates that this LME belief - horensō is not suitable for LME societies - can be understood as an individualist belief as opposed to the collectivist belief that horensō is important. The analysis shows that the words, *escalation* and *horensō*, raise the issue of cultural translatability to a high degree in the given contexts. Although linguistically translatable, the two words tend to be mutually exclusive because each of them represents the culturally appropriate behavior in the respective society. The two culturally driven words represent a system and constitute a set of symmetrically opposite specificities. To reiterate, any constituents of such sets are not always mutually exclusive, but they show societal preference. This concept analysis has so far offered descriptive accounts to the research questions. The following section will conduct case studies with the concepts as the case themes.

5.3 Case analysis

This section will examine three short cases¹⁴ that pertain to a horensō practice. Table 7 summarizes the units of analysis in the cases. The examples do not relate to each other but share the case theme of horensō. In Table 7, “Practice” denotes how the people manage the practice differences through negotiations.

¹⁴ Aside from the interview data collected by the present author, all chapters’ case descriptions are adopted from publicly available materials that meet the criteria for document analysis (Bryman, 2004) discussed in Chapter Four.

	Context	Practice	Outcome
Case 5-1	European CEO being asked to practice horenso in Europe by Japanese headquarters.	Horenso not practiced by European CEO resulting in mutual frustration and distrust with the Japanese.	Not translated: Horenso not understood nor accepted by European CEO.
Case 5-2	Japanese manager in a British business setting with British employees.	LME reporting practice that does not come with horenso reporting.	Translated with cultural conflicts: LME reporting adopted by Japanese manager with much frustration.
Case 5-3	Japanese manager in an America business setting with American employees.	Japanese manager asking for horenso in a locally appropriate way.	Partially translated: Horenso not literally translated for locals, but similar results achieved.

Table 7: A summary of cases

Case 5-1

The first case narrative is abridged from information offered by Japan Consulting Office, a cross-cultural consultancy organization with eleven offices worldwide. It recounts the experience of a newly hired CEO at the Dutch office of a Japanese conglomerate, followed by concept analysis as summarized in Table 8:

A major Japanese company’s European operation hired their first non-Japanese CEO to replace incumbent Japanese CEO. New CEO, James, had only worked for American and European companies prior to this appointment. Soon after hiring James, the Japanese company’s head office in Japan started receiving much less information than before (C1). The head office and the Japanese expatriates (“expats”) working at the European office kept asking James for information (C2). James did not share information as requested because he had never done so in his years of professional life (L1). The requested amount of information was too much for him (L2). For the Japanese, it was necessary to know what and how he was doing (C3). The head office became suspicious that James was not transparent about information sharing. At the same time, James became more and more frustrated with the Japanese company’s micromanagement (L3). James believed that he could do his job in his way. He was confident about the European office’s progress that would be shown in the upcoming financial report. However, his relationship with the head office became worsened without mutual trust. The head office let him go before the fiscal end. (Japan Consulting Office, 2021)

	LMEs	CME of Japan
Culturally driven word	Escalation	Horenso
Practice level (RQs 1)	(L1) Refused to practice horenso (L2) Too much information required for Horenso (L3) Horenso perceived as unnecessary micromanagement	(C1) Less information received from Japanese viewpoint (C2) Kept asking to practice horenso (C3) Information required for horenso perceived as an adequate amount
Culturally driven behavior	Horenso practice seen as a waste of time, requiring too much information too frequently	Horenso practice seen as a reasonable practice, requiring an adequate amount of information at right timing

Table 8: Case 5-1 analysis

Case 5-1 highlights three differences of communication: 1) the required amount of information, 2) the frequency of information sharing, and 3) the purpose of information sharing. The required amount and frequency are relatively larger and higher, respectively, in the Japanese communication system. The LME professional saw this as too much. Case 5-1 exhibits the intractable issue of cultural translatability of the

horenso attributes: for instance, everything the Japanese headquarters said to the LME professional made no sense from the LME standpoint.

Case 5-2

Differing expectations regarding horenso were also raised in the present author’s interviews with business professionals. During the field interviews, the interviewees brought up various types of cross-cultural encounters. One Japanese interviewee, a team manager for a UK operation of a Japanese bank for more than 10 years, recounted their observation as “frustration” on their British colleagues:

It seems to me that my local [British] colleagues do not know what other teams do for closing the same lending project at the bank (L4). Job functions are highly segmented into many different teams, and they seem to care only about getting their given tasks done. They do not let me know even when there is something wrong with a part of their finished task or something that requires attention (L5). They appear to be not interested in knowing the consequences or impacts of their task on other teams (L6). I often receive a report after it has become serious or someone else has discovered that it needs a corrective action (L7). They are not apologetic at all (L8). It is extremely frustrating to carry out lending projects in the UK (C4). (Interviewee 5).

Rendered from their Japanese viewpoint, the interviewee’s candid comment talks about their frustration, which originates from the different styles of communication and approaches to task fulfilment as summarized below (Table 9):

	LMEs	CME of Japan
Culturally driven word	Escalation	Horenso
Culturally driven behavior (RQ 1)	(L4) No need to know what other teams do in the same organization (L5) No status report required as long as employee completes job tasks given to the individual. (L6) No need to know how the way employee finishes work affects other teams unless instructed to do so (L7) No consultation required until an issue becomes uncontrollable, and/or employee recognizes the need for help (L8) Employees not apologetic about not performing horenso reporting (Implied) No frustration from not receiving horenso reporting	(Implied) Tacit need to know what other teams do in the same organization (Implied) Status report required on anything even if it does not prevent the employee from task completion (Implied) Unspoken need to know how the way employee finishes work affects other teams (Implied) Status report required, so that no issue becomes uncontrollable, even if it occurs before task completion (Implied) Employees apologetic about not performing horenso reporting (C4) Frustrating not to receive horenso reporting

Table 9: Case 5-2 analysis

The CME interviewee felt frustrated in the LME of Britain because they did not receive horenso reporting from the LME employees. This CME frustration is culturally driven since there is nothing wrong or unusual with the LME way that the LME employees completed their job duties. Case 5-2 manifests the same points as Case 5-1 concerning horenso: the amount of information, the frequency of information sharing, and the purpose of horenso that together characterize the CME practice of horenso. In the LME, no frequent status reports are required unless the employee is specifically instructed to do so.

The findings suggest the different notions of “your task” in the extreme sense: From the LME viewpoint, “your task” can be seen as independent from the organization’s task (the lending project in Case 5-2) and is considered complete when the employee’s (individual’s) given task is processed. In case the employee encounters an issue arising from what they did after their task completion, they will need to “escalate” it and seek for help. In the CME of Japan, “your task” is part of the organization’s task and is considered complete when the organization’s task is processed. The CME purpose of horenso can be for the whole lines of teams to complete the collective task. All CME employees are supposed to share anything with each other for that purpose at the organization level.

Case 5-3

Case 5-3 recounts horenso in a cross-cultural setting. Yoshihiko Masuda, a Japanese national who served as CEO for two of the Fujitsu conglomerate’s American affiliates between 2004 and 2019, contributed a short article to a Japanese magazine locally published in the United States. Written from a Japanese viewpoint, this work offers lessons and tips for Japanese expats regarding how to manage business operations in the United States. This case is abridged from the article (Masuda, 2014), followed by case analysis (Table 10):

In Japan, horenso is important (C5). In the United States, it is not (L9). Sometimes they come to you but it is not for horenso. You get a request for a pay raise or a notice of resignation instead. American employees believe that horenso is a waste of time for your boss (L10). This local norm is supported by two country-level beliefs: Capable employees should complete their tasks on their own, and incapable employees go to their manager and ask for advice (L11). If they find themselves unable to fulfill the professional responsibility on their own, they will eventually come to you (L12). This is called an escalation. One way to have status updates from American team members before an escalation happens is to give them explicit instructions: for example, “Please provide me with a status update once a week.” You should set a specific time and a specific date with each member to be clear (C6).

	LMEs	CME of Japan
Culturally driven word	Escalation	Horenso
Practice level (RQs 1)	(L9) Horenso as an unimportant practice (L10) Horenso perceived as a waste of time for manager (L12) Employees required to report a problem as escalation when finding it as insoluble	(C5) Horenso as an important practice (C6) Possible to ask team members to report on task status in LME settings
Culturally driven behavior	(L11) Capable employees able to complete tasks on their own: advice/help from manager for incapable employees	(Implied) Horenso not possible in LMEs but scheduled, less frequent status updates obtainable

Table 10: Case 5-3 analysis

This quote explains why horenso practice raises the issue of cultural translatability in the USA and how to mediate the issue by soliciting status updates from local employees following local LME norms. In Japan, employees tend to report on any negative news or signs to managers before it turns into a fatal issue because there exist unspoken codes of horenso conduct. In the USA, no such codes exist. Masuda’s advice is based on his personal accounts gained during his successful career: He implemented a code of horenso in his

workplace, following the local norms in the USA. Case 5-3 suggests that part of horensō (less frequent but regular status updates) are culturally translatable. The idea here supports the working definition of the concept: cultural translatability is a relative notion.

5.4 Cross-case analysis

Having illustrated the cases, Table 11 triangulates cross-case analysis to answer the research questions. The “Findings” refers to the present research’s findings of Research Questions 2 and 3 on the culturally driven practices.

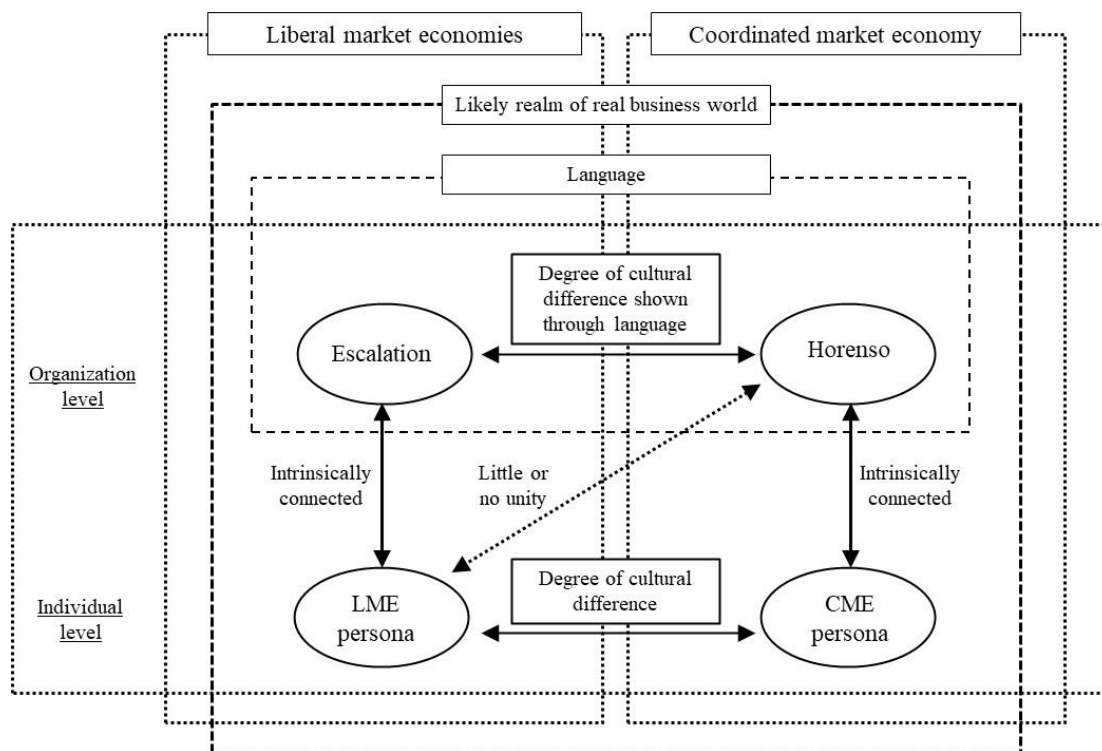
	LMEs	CME of Japan
Practice (RQ 1)	Escalation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To report to manager when a team member recognizes the need of help for or the impossibility of task completion. Individuals to complete tasks on their own: No need to report on task status on a regular basis. Respect to individual approaches superior to collective task completion. 	Horensō: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To report on task status to manager and/or seek for advice for task completion on a regular basis. Involved parties to be on the same page for collectively preventing a serious problem and/or task failure from happening. Respect to collective approaches superior to individual task completion.
Findings (RQ 2&3)	Primacy of individual decision making and problem solving.	Primacy of collective decision making and problem solving.
Cultural constructs	Individualism	Collectivism
Findings (RQ 2&3)	Speedy task completion by not reporting on task status on a regular basis: Time saving for involved parties.	Reporting on task status on a regular basis more valued than speedy task completion or time saving.
Cultural constructs	Short-term orientation	Long-term orientation
Findings (RQ 2&3)	Reasonable power distributed to all team members for own decision making and task completion: small power distance in the hierarchy normative and/or ideal.	Reasonable power given to manager for collective decision making and task completion: large power distance in the hierarchy normative and/or ideal.
Cultural constructs	Low power distance	High power distance
Findings (RQ 2&3)	Individual ways of task completion accepted: collectively standardized approaches to be seen as a syndrome. Individual differences not to be seen as uncertainty.	Collectively standardized way of task completion accepted: individually different ways to be seen as uncertainty. Many collective codes not to be seen as a syndrome.
Cultural constructs	Low uncertainty avoidance	High uncertainty avoidance
Findings (RQ 2&3)	Details to be provided during escalation process: Reporting should contain every single detail.	Minimum necessary amount of information required for horensō, as long as team members abide by collective’s codes of horensō conduct.
Cultural constructs	Low context of communication	High context of communication

Table 11: Descriptive answers to Research Questions

Table 11 offers the findings of cultural values of preference in the respective societies and corresponding cultural constructs that together answer the Main Research Question in a concise fashion. Table 11 supports the deductive approach to the hypothesis of cultural translatability, which is posited from the literature concepts of cultural constructs. At the same time, it supports the inductive approach to the hypothesis of

cultural translatability with the assistance of the findings that explain why the culturally driven samples raise the issue of cultural translatability. The deduction and the induction meet and mirror each other in this research cycle.

All the descriptions denote relative and diffused notions bound in the case contexts. Not all individuals equally embody the modal practices and values of preferences described in Table 11. In addition, the practices of escalation and horensō are not always mutually exclusive. Acknowledging all possible scenarios, Table 11 offers the extreme types of practice that capture a spectrum of possible realities for answering Research Questions. Within the case contexts, the findings indicate that all coded elements raise the issue of cultural translatability. Figure 11 illustrates the preceding cross-case findings, using the proposed framework.



- LME persona includes high individualism, short-term orientation, low power distance, low uncertainty avoidance, and low context of communication.
- CME persona includes high collectivism, long-term orientation, high power distance, high uncertainty avoidance, and high context of communication.

Figure 11: Analysis of cultural driven specificities

In Figure 11, LME and CME personas represent the LME and CME cultural constructs, respectively. The framework is structured with the minimum necessary elements for many different possible ways to be applied to the same subject matter. For example, “little or no unity” between the horensō practice and LME persona depicts Case 5-1 and helps understand Case 5-2. In Case 5-1, the LME target audience (new CEO) did not accept the cultural translation of horensō practice. This translation did not serve the purpose of translation to request horensō reporting, though the source text is linguistically translatable. In Case 5-2, the Japanese manager accepted the cultural translation of LME reporting practice with much frustration. This translation can be said barely workable in the specific case context. The case-specific findings indicate that

horenso is a relative concept, and the culturally driven terms, *escalation* and *horenso*, have intrinsic connections with the local cultural values in the respective societies.

In Figure 11, “The degree of cultural difference shown through language” can be interpreted as the degree of the issue of cultural translatability. Its reversed meaning is the degree of cultural translatability. The concept of translatability is a relative notion that cannot be a fixed value, but let’s assume for discussion purposes that 80% of all horenso texts raise the issue of cultural translatability, and 20% of them are translated without any issue in a hypothetical setting. In this case, the degree of the issue of cultural translatability is said to be 80%, and the degree of cultural translatability is 20%. The framework can be used either way to explain the possible scenarios.

Case 5-3 illustrates that horenso hardly raises the issue. Potentially, the issue would have materialized there if horenso had been forcibly imposed in the typically Japanese way. The Japanese manager did not literally translate the term for that but offered an explanation of the term in the form of instruction to achieve similar results. Alternatively said, the manager’s explanation does not contain every single attribute of the practice of horenso literally but can be seen as a workable equivalent of the term that attains local naturalness in the LME. Naturalness is materialized because the translation of practice contains a reasonable level of cultural compatibility with the LME cultural values of preference. This thesis regards the ability to render a culturally proximate specificity as cultural competence. Chapter Nine will discuss it in detail.

The findings support the concept of cultural translatability and the proposed framework in the case contexts. The framework helps envisage possible cases with intrinsically connected perspectives on the practices of escalation and horenso. An LME manager with a high level of cultural competence, for example, may be able to function in a typical Japanese environment in the CME of Japan, translating and comprehending all the horenso attributes. The proposed framework is capable of illustrating this hypothetical scenario similar to Case 5-3. It is also capable of illustrating the unsuccessful LME manager depicted in Case 5-1, showing what would have been necessary for succeeding in the case context with the findings presented in this section. While this chapter does not present all possible cases for the sake of brevity, the analysis suggests that the concept of cultural translatability helps recognize what is culturally driven and what will be culturally appropriate.

Taken together, the issue of cultural translatability can be described as follows: A culturally driven source language text (ST) can be literally translated into target language (TL). A translated TL text (TT) is likely to raise the issue in target language culture (TC) when communicated literally as-is. The issue arises where TL does not have a direct ST equivalent or where TL has an ST antithesis, which is trusted in TC: in other words, the antithesis is intrinsically connected with the local TC values of preference. The concept of cultural translatability addresses the need for cultural appropriateness, and the proposed framework helps understand the need systematically.

Chapter Six: Findings on Employment Practice

This chapter will test the concept of cultural translatability and the workability of its framework by applying them to employment practice in LMEs and the CME of Japan. Employment practice is a regular part of everyday life for the majority in any societies. For this reason, this thesis presumes that relevant business-related concepts can be applicable to any industry sectors in general. This chapter will first offer an overview of employment practice, examine practices linked to job descriptions, and systematically analyze textual data through thematic analysis of text.

6.1 Preliminary analysis

Chapter Three has reviewed the two terms, *job-type employment* and *membership-type employment*, and posited the working definitions: LME employee's commitment to the job position and the Japanese commitment to the employer, respectively. Asuyama (2021) suggests the following sets of symmetrical opposites: commitment to the job position/employer, explicit/no job descriptions, and desired/mandatory transfers. To begin with, this section will examine these practices as culturally driven specificities to determine which one(s) can be useful to answer the research questions regarding employment practice. The answers should explain what keeps the job-type and membership-type diffusedly yet discernably distinctive. This initial task is necessary since employment is a vast system with many subcategorized specificities.

Robert Charles Azar (2016) writes a book *Navigating Japan's Business Culture* based on his 35 years of professional experience. This book is written in English for an LME audience. It offers useful comparisons of LME and CME employment practices to explain how Japan is different and how to do business there. The following quote offers an overview of LME employment practice. As demonstrated in Chapter Five, the parentheses are added for coding culturally driven specificities. The letters L and C stand for LME and CME, respectively, and the numbers indicate specific occurrences of culturally driven specificities.

In America, workers are hired by a company to fulfill a specific job function (L1). The job title is specified. The job function and responsibilities are clearly defined (L2). Companies will evaluate job applicants based on their level of experience and success with those specific job functions in the past and gauge how likely the candidate is to succeed with that job function in the company going forward. For example, a software programmer will be hired based on his/her familiarity and proven track record with the specific programming needs of the company as they are defined in the job description (L3) and discussed during the interview process. This is true for executive level positions all the way down to openings in the company's mail room (L4). Following this approach, American companies hire specialists, individuals who are qualified and committed to performing the specific duties of their job function (L5). Management and human resources practices are designed to facilitate workers performing their specific duties. When it comes to pay raises and promotions, workers are evaluated based on their level of performance regarding those specific job functions (L6). (Azar, 2016, pp. 65-66)

This quote narrates three major stages of an employee's life cycle commonly seen in all LMEs: recruitment, evaluation, and promotion or separation. Although marked as American, it explains the shared processes under job-type employment across LMEs. It is well known that employees are hired to fill vacancies of job

functions specified in job descriptions. Promotion opportunities are posted internally, typically on the company intranet. Employees have the freedom to change jobs for a pay raise. In LMEs, the term *fluid labor force* (Hall and Soskice 2001) denotes the whole life cycle of job-type employment. Azar (2016) moves on to the Japanese pattern:

In Japan, companies hire specialists (*senmon shoku*) for those positions that require high levels of specialized knowledge or skills.... But unlike in America, most workers in Japan are hired as generalists (*sougou shoku*) (C1), and generalists have the more promising career path within the company than specialists do. Instead of hiring only workers with an interest in a specific job function, Japanese companies hire generalists who are thought to be able to contribute to the company by fulfilling diverse job functions over the long term - that is, over the long career of the individual at that one company (C2). As the result, the common (recruitment) practice is for new workers to be interviewed and accepted with no specific job functions (C3) being agreed upon and with no title.... Japanese companies actually prefer new workers without experience (C4) because previous work experience can get in the way of an employee doing things the company's way. For the sake of productive relationships with co-workers and to avoid "confusion" - in other words, for the sake of group harmony (C5) and maximizing employee efficiency - companies like to hire workers without experience right out of high school or college as it is easier to train them in the way the company does things if the employee does not have to unlearn the ways learned in previous companies (C6). (Azar, 2016, pp. 66-67)

Azar suggests that, broadly speaking, membership-type employment too has three major stages of an employee's life cycle: recruitment, evaluation, and promotion or separation. These can be seen as the objectives of the subsystems in Japan also. However, the process of attaining each objective differs from job-type employment. The quote helps understand the Japanese process to hire their core employees or "generalists".

The body of literature, early and recent, corroborates the quote (Azar, 2016). Tung (1984) explains the Japanese hiring process: "In Japanese organizations, virtually all the career staff are recruited directly from college. The academic year in Japan coincides with the fiscal year of business corporations. Students graduate at the end of March and join the company on April 1" (p. 31). Tung (1984) suggests that the Japanese process has been in place possibly since 1930s, which is the inception of membership-type employment. Froese, Sekiguchi, and Maharjan (2018) refer to the recruitment process as "a periodic hiring system" (p. 278) since employers usually hire new graduates during a specific period of the year. The Japanese process usually does not involve the LME tools - *job description* and *internal job posting* - to hire core employees.

At the broadest level, this thesis focuses on core work force¹⁵ for research effectiveness. Non-core workers¹⁶ are relatively fluid as the Japanese organizations tend to control and adjust their non-core workforce according to the economic climate.

¹⁵ In Japan, full-time employees are typically categorized into three types: *sougou shoku* (managerial track), *ippan shoku* (non-managerial track), and *senmon shoku* (specialists), excluding part-time and temporary workers (Harada 2017). Usually, college graduates are hired as full-time employees through Japan's periodic recruitment process.

¹⁶ Although this thesis does not focus on non-core workforce, it presumes that the concept of membership-type employment generally applies to them in Japan, too.

Among the subsystems under membership-type employment, mandatory job rotation (*tenkin* in Japanese)¹⁷ seems to raise the issue of cultural translatability at an intense level. In Japan, “Typically, management will rotate employees across job functions and company departments every few years” (Azar, 2016, p. 68). Jacoby (2005) writes that mandatory job rotation involves relocation as ordered by management, and the employees typically accept the order as designated. Mandatory job rotation is commonly used for executive level positions, including expat positions, all the way down to the company’s mail room, depending on the organization. Because it is a one-way instruction from the HR to the employees in practice, its process involves none of the key LME features: advertising vacancies, screening job applications, and interviewing candidates, who can be internal or external, for filling job openings. It is not to hire someone new from the job market but to change job positions within the same employer network. Azar (2016) adds “As job rotations usually bring with them promotions and salary increases, the rotation system diminishes the need for employees to look for work elsewhere to obtain them” (p. 68). In addition, a mandatory job rotation is often accompanied by a promotion and/or increase in salary (Kopp, 2016). Having reviewed the related terms, Table 12 shows the coding results of text analysis:

	LMEs	CME of Japan
Culturally driven system	Job-type employment	Membership-type employment
Working definition	Commitment to job position: (L1) Hired as specialists to fulfill specific job functions	Commitment to employer: (C2) employed at an organization for whole career life
Practice level (RQs 1)	(L2) Job functions and responsibilities clearly defined (L1/implied) Employees committed to specific job functions (L3) Job descriptions used as vital tools for HR management (L4) All job openings advertised internally and externally (L6) Task performance to satisfy job functions important for evaluation (L5) Past professional experience viewed positively	(C1, C3) Employees hired as generalists with no specific job functions (C2) long-term commitment to employer throughout career life at most (Implied) No job descriptions used during the whole HR management cycle (Implied) Internal job openings hardly used (C5) Group harmony also important for evaluation besides task performance (C6) Past professional experience viewed negatively
Culturally driven specificities	Job description, internal job posting	Mandatory job rotation
Individual level	Job freedom given to all employees, changing jobs for advancement and/or personal reasons: fluid labor force matches employers’ needs	Job security given to all core employees with advancement determined by employer: mandatory rotation system matches employers’ needs
Cultural values (RQs 2 & 3)	Primacy of individualistic interest to change jobs: individual interest serving as the basis of job-type employment.	Primacy of collectivistic interest to be a member of an organization, serving as the basis of membership-type employment
Cultural constructs	Individualism	Collectivism

Table 12: Preliminary analysis of LME-CME employment practice

¹⁷ In a strict sense, *tenkin* has two different connotations: *mandatory job rotation* and *mandatory job transfer*. The former is supposed to come back to the original employer eventually, and the latter is not. This thesis uses the term *mandatory job rotation* to refer to both connotations for ease of discussion in the target language, English.

The preceding discussion suggests that the system of mandatory job rotation is generally not feasible in LMEs, where employees, not employers, initiate their job transfer. Described in terms of cultural translatability, the system of employment, as well as any of its subsystems, is linguistically perfectly translatable between English and Japanese as shown in Table 12 but cannot be adopted as a normative system in LMEs. It raises the issue of cultural translatability across levels. The disregard of job freedom contradicts the individualistic value of job freedom at the individual level in LMEs. At the practice level is the human resources, where the management does not neglect employees' job freedom, and individual HR employees make HR-related decisions based on the local cultural values of preference together with culturally independent protocols. In other words, the specificity of mandatory job rotation exhibits a very low level of feasibility of cultural translatability¹⁸ if transplanted to LMEs. This assumption may not always stand but can be the most likely scenario. A culturally driven practice with a very low level of feasibility is unlikely to generate dynamic results of culturally translated cases.

On the other hand, the specificity of a job description seems meaningful for this thesis than other subsystems. One reason why the two terms - *job-type* and *membership type* - have become popular in Japan is that the Japanese have been evaluating their membership-based employment pattern in search of the answer to the question of how to improve the Japanese economy. As examined in Chapter Three, Japan went through a decade-long economic recession in the 1990s and the 2000s. Many Japanese companies had to scale back long-term employment, especially lifetime employment, to reduce labor cost for survival. The Covid pandemic has further prompted Japanese business to explore all avenues of cost curtailment (Nakashima, 2020). The business and government sectors are aware that their labor force is relatively not fluid, which can be seen as a double-edged samurai sword. On the positive side, their work force is cohesive, even enough to perform horenso as examined in the previous chapter. Horenso is important in the CME of Japan though not necessarily positive from the LME standpoint. On the negative side, their core work force is seen as costly especially during economic downturns since involuntary separation is not normative in Japan. This characteristic is known, and that is why they are studying job-type employment. Their current answer appears to make possible changes from membership to job-type employment (Tsuru, 2021).

Table 12 shows individualism and collectivism as its sole findings. This is not exhaustive as this section only performs a pilot analysis to locate the chapter's focus, and individualism and collectivism are the most frequently used cultural constructs in literature on cross-cultural interactions (House et al., 2004). There are at least three relevant Japanese specificities: 1) job descriptions are non-existent, 2) job rotations are mandatory regardless of employees' interests (Asuyama, 2021), and 3) seniority is generally influential in membership-type employment (Ohtsu and Imanari, 2002). The third point is often referred to as, for instance, seniority-based promotion (as opposed to merit-based promotion). The seniority system is representative of the cultural construct of power distance: power distributed relatively more to the senior than others.

¹⁸ All those cultural dynamics can be illustrated in the proposed framework of cultural translatability in the same manner as the horenso case presented in the previous chapter. This section does not show it for the sake of brevity.

The seniority system is fair in the sense that it gives preferential treatment to the experienced. At the same time, it is unfair in the sense that, unlike the merit-based system, it does not promote less experienced yet highly performing employees. To remedy the drawback, the Japanese attempted to implement merit-based promotion in the late 1990s, but it faltered in the early 2000s (Yamada, 2020). Two decades later, history is repeating itself: The Japanese firms are trying merit-based promotion again (Yamada, 2020) by using job descriptions as benchmarks. Since the tool of a job description is already “translated” in Japan¹⁹, it is likely to generate dynamic research outcomes. This chapter will perform case studies on the previous paragraph’s three points, including the symmetrical set of merit vs. seniority-based promotion, to have grounded answers.

6.2 Concept analysis

To better understand the LME-CME employment patterns, this section examines the symmetrically opposite practices: the use of job descriptions in LMEs and the non-use of that in the CME of Japan. It is instructive to begin with a review of the LME tool of a job description from an emic perspective since the specificity in the LME sense is absent in the CME of Japan (Kopp, 2000). A job description can be defined as “a written statement of the content of any particular job and derived from the analysis of that job” (Cushway, 2008, p. 2). Tapebasi and Kozanoglu (2021, pp. 57-58) list the following 20 items as job-description contents: job title, salary, reports to, date, summary/objective, essential functions, competency, supervisory responsibilities, work environment, physical demands, position type and expected hours of work, required education and experience, preferred education and experience, additional eligibility qualifications, and other duties. These 20 items can be categorized as follows: 1) a job summary, 2) a list of job functions, 3) a requirements section, and 4) other information (Mader-Clark, 2013, p. 3). Recent literature offers details and/or breakdowns, but Mader-Clark’s four categories appear concise and useful for discussion.

In LMEs, job descriptions are used for various reasons besides recruitment. According to Mader-Clark (2013, p. 4), job descriptions are helpful in the following: 1) enhancing communication between the employer and its employees, 2) measuring performance, 3) setting the stage to fairly and legally discipline or terminate employees who do not meet the employer’s expectations, 4) improving the employer’s ability to retain highly performing employees, 5) planning for the future as to various HR matters, and 6) improving employee morale. This statement does not mean that job descriptions alone are used for these purposes but help with them. Other instruments are used to aid job descriptions: for example, many organizations have their in-house systems for performance measurement, or otherwise many vendor-developed software applications are available (Cushway, 2008). In any case, job descriptions are considered indispensably important in LMEs.

Perry and Haluska (2016) write a book *Hiring Greatness* that offers how-to tips for hiring managers in LMEs. In discussing how to recruit executive officers, Perry and Haluska (2016) stress the importance of creating a proper job description as follows:

¹⁹ The term *job description* is usually translated as *shokumu kijyutsusho* into Japanese, which is, in this thesis, back translated as *description of job duties* or referred to as Japanese style job descriptions or job description equivalent.

Your job description is a fundamental document (L7). Everything else in the search will spring from it (L8). Before you develop a position profile, assess the marketplace, and research target companies - let alone begin to recruit - you must first have a clear picture of the role and what's required for success. (Perry and Haluska, 2016, p. 43)

Normative from an LME viewpoint, this text explains that having a proper job description is the first and “fundamental” step to hire capable employees, and the rest will “spring from it”. As reviewed previously, a job description possibly contains up to 20 items to help the HR team find suitable candidates. The quote supports the necessity of job descriptions for hiring in LMEs.

There is a useful etic book that provides comparative analysis of the subject. Takehiko Harada, former President of Toyota’s Taiwan Operations who served as Executive Officer of Toyota Motor Corporation under membership-type employment in Japan, writes a book²⁰ to explain managerial concepts explicated by Taiichi Ono. Ono is the one who invented the Toyota Production System, often abbreviated as TPS, during the time Ono was alive and employed at Toyota Motor Corporation. Widely studied in the business-related disciplines, TPS is also known as Lean production. Harada’s book discusses Toyota’s international business management that has built today’s Toyota Motor North America among other Toyota affiliates in LMEs. Figure 12 is developed from the book (Harada, 2015) to illustrate what needs to be understood first - each of LME and CME style management - for overcoming the challenges of LME-CME differences. The book is originally intended for Japanese expatriates (expats), but it will conversely help an LME audience to understand why the Japanese business world functions without having job descriptions. The figure’s textual data are quoted as-is:

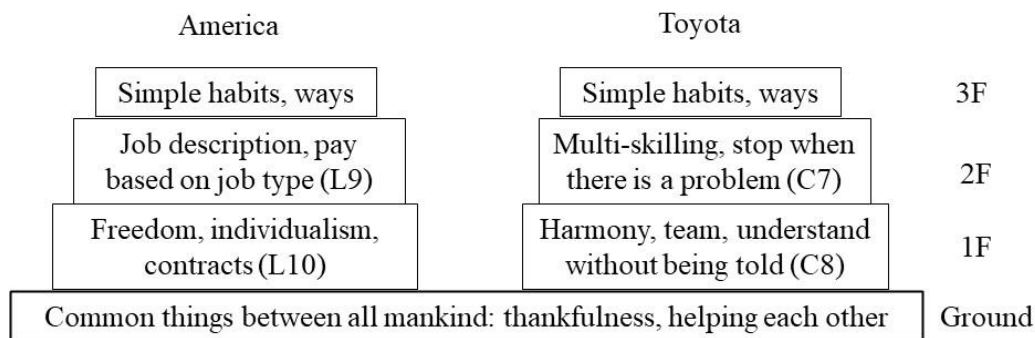


Figure 12: A summary of case illustrations (developed from Harada, 2015, p. 121)

Keeping Ono’s maxims, Harada (2015) explains to Japanese expats that it is best to perceive an LME plant/operation as a three-story building. In Figure 12, the “Toyota” and “America” buildings represent Toyota’s operations in the CME of Japan and the LME of the USA, respectively. The common ground shows culturally independent specificities, in this thesis’s terms, generally shared across the world. The first floor represents “culture, values: very hard to change” (Harada, 2015, p. 121), expressed as cultural values grounded in the individual level in this thesis. The quote supports the prevalent idea in cultural studies that

²⁰ Originally written in Japanese and translated into English. This thesis uses the English version.

cultural constructs, such as individualism and collectivism, are generally stable, which is why it is “very hard to change”. The second floor is labeled as “business habits: need to be creative to change” (Harada, 2015, p. 121). This thesis refers to “business habits” as culturally driven practices at the organization level. Harada (2015) implies that culturally driven practices may be changed, perhaps depending on it. This thesis focuses on these two floors. The third floor is described as “simple habits/ways: easy to change” (Harada, 2015, p. 121). The third-floor items are generally culturally independent and hence out of scope. For example, following a manager’s instruction and respecting a customer’s request are culturally independent “simple habits” generally practiced across societies. Such “simple habits” are not suitable for this research that investigates culturally driven “business habits”. The third-floor items support the thesis’s premise that culturally independent specificities can be relatively easily changed. It is out of scope because they are generally not cultural, having no intrinsic connections with individuals’ cultural values or “cultural constraints” in Abegglen’s words (2006). Figure 12 indicates that the CME of Japan has no equivalent of “job description” as employees are supposed to be “multi-skilling”. This quote corresponds with many research works, early and recent. Shook (1988, p. 129) writes “Your job is everything” to describe the Japanese specificity of having no job description in his book *Honda: An American Success Story*. Released at different time points, these works together suggest that job descriptions have not been used in Japanese business possibly for roughly half a century at least. Harada’s work (2015) supports the proposed framework, which is conceptually identical to the core elements placed on the second and third floors in Figure 12. The proposed framework of cultural translatability has the same theoretical structure as Harada’s buildings. Table 13 summarizes the results of coding analysis.

	LMEs	CME of Japan
Culturally driven system	Job-type employment	Membership-type employment
Culturally driven specificity	Job descriptions	Lack of job descriptions/multi-skilling
Practice level (RQ 1)	(L7/L9) Job descriptions as fundamental documents: used to document functions and responsibilities (L8) job descriptions used to support everything: recruitment, evaluation, etc.	(C7) multi-skilling expected according to collective’s needs (C7) Collective objective of minimizing defects more important than line workers’ task fulfillment
Culturally driven behavior	Job description positioned as a cardinal tool under job-type employment	Job description irrelevant to membership-type employment
Individual level (RQs 2 & 3)	(L10) Employment contracts necessary between employer and employee to set boundaries as employees have job freedom	(C8) As a member of collective, employees expected to prioritize collective directives in harmony without being told
Cultural values	Primacy of individualistic interest to pursue ideal job position requiring commitment to it	Primacy of collectivistic interest to be a member of an organization, requiring commitment to employer
Cultural constructs	Individualism	Collectivism

Table 13: Concept analysis of the tool of a job description

Figure 12 is filled with symmetrical opposites of culturally driven practices associated with the use and non-use of job descriptions: for example, “Stop when there is a problem” (Harada, 2015, p. 121). This “problem” refers to one occurred during the manufacturing process to produce Toyota automobiles. In the

CME of Japan, a problem should be resolved by stopping the production line for the collective purpose of having no defects. Not only does it take time and cost to stop the lines, but also it interferes with every worker's task fulfillment. Yet the primacy of collective interest outweighs other objectives. According to Glass (2010; 2015), this collective purpose is absent in the American automobile industry, where the auto manufacturers dictate not to stop the lines. This LME-CME difference appears highly culturally driven from various angles, one of which is the LME primacy of individualistic interest: Each line worker is to fulfill their line task as specified in their job description.

The preceding discussions help understand each of LME and CME practices on the second floor (Harada, 2015). Regarding first-floor specificities, Chapter Two has reviewed two concepts: the economic company with the LME-purpose and the community company with the CME-purpose, representing LMEs and the CME of Japan in the extreme sense, respectively (de Geus, 2002). The CME-type purpose can be paraphrased as the primacy of collectivistic interest in perpetuating the collective as an ongoing community. The community companies, or the CME employers, are “not simple collections of physical assets” but “social organizations that seek a long life on behalf of the well-being of all of their members” (Abegglen, 2006, p. 13). As discussed earlier, the concept of membership-type employment is described as commitment to the employer. In the CME sense, getting a job means committing to the employer, not to the job position, and that is why employees perform tasks as requested by the employer. Employers' requests include mandatory job rotations and changes of job duties. If job descriptions were put in place, they would obstruct employers' requests.

6.3 Case analysis

This section will examine three cases that pertain to job descriptions. Table 14 summarizes the cases and their units of analysis. They do not relate to each other and have different scenarios that portray the dynamics of cultural translatability.

	Context	Practice	Outcome
Case 6-1	American employees facing challenges, confused without job descriptions	No job descriptions in Japanese business. Rationale given through American lens.	Not translated: Complaints on multi-tasking made by American employees.
Case 6-2	Experienced Japanese recruitment consultant explaining employment in UK	Job descriptions not used in Japan but used in Japanese business in LMEs.	Translated: Job descriptions used in Japanese business outside Japan.
Case 6-3	Executive HR officers in Japan explaining institutional HR policies in interview.	Experimental implementation of job descriptions started in Japan circa 2020.	Partially translated: Parts of Job description being experimented in Japan.

Table 14: A summary of cases

Case 6-1

Rochelle Kopp, Managing Principal with Japan Intercultural Consulting, offers the following article (Case 6-1) *Why do Japanese avoid detailed job descriptions?* (n.d.). This article is publicly available on their consulting firm's webpage, and its publication date is unavailable. It is likely written after 1994, which is the inception of their firm. It discusses how American employees are confused without a job description and

why job descriptions are not used in Japan based on their real experiences. This thesis treats this article as case material since it contains suitable case topics of personal experiences gained in cross-cultural settings. The first half of the article (Case 6-1 on LME) reads:

In many Japanese organizations operating in the U.S., American employees complain that job descriptions are non-existent or are outdated and irrelevant (L11)... It seems that Japanese managers do not feel that job descriptions are important, and do not look at them as an important working tool. But for Americans, accurate up-to-date job descriptions are essential. In the U.S., the job description not only guides the employee to know what their work purview is, but also forms an important basis for making decisions on hiring, promotion, performance evaluation, and other human resource management matters (L12). Without them, we feel lost, unsure what we are supposed to be doing (L13). (Kopp, n.d.)

Case 6-1 (LME) narrates the LME mind that supports the previous section's findings presented earlier. Having no job description does not work with the Americans and leads to a complaint in the case context. Alternatively said, the Japanese practice of having no job descriptions (or multi-skilling) raises the issue of cultural translatability in the job-type system. Without job descriptions, employees are unsure of what to do because LME employees need to know "my" job duties that "I" agreed to perform based on "my" professional interest(s).

Moving onto membership-type employment, Kopp (n.d.) says that employees are "known as members of a particular team" and "because Japanese companies do little external hiring, there are few occasions where they are absolutely necessary." This comment supports the Japanese hiring process examined in Sections 6.1 and 6.2. The second half of the article (Case 6-1 on CME) maintains:

The Japanese culture of teamwork also makes its job descriptions less important. Rather than relying on set definitions of what they are supposed to be doing, the Japanese tend to work like amoebas, shifting their work and taking on new activities as the organization's needs require (C9). Everyone is expected to be on the look-out for things that need to be done but that no one is taking care of, so that nothing falls between the cracks. When a new activity becomes necessary, the members of a team typically decide among themselves who will take care of it... Japanese are used to working in this style due to their early training. Japanese grammar schools emphasize a lot of group work, so it's very comfortable for Japanese to work in teams... Another reason for the Japanese aversion to job descriptions is the fear that having a set job description will limit the amoeba-like flexibility that they so value (C10). For a Japanese, one of the most horrifying things that an employee can say is "that's not my job" (C11). In Japan, people are hired to join the company as a whole rather than take a specific position, so they are willing to do whatever is needed, even if it's something that's a very basic task (such as sweeping the floor) or not in their area of expertise or interest (C12). It's this extreme flexibility of employees that makes the lifetime employment custom possible and enables Japanese firms to be innovative in response to market changes (C13). Thus, for Japanese, the idea of someone refusing to do something that needs to be done just because it's not written on a piece of paper is extremely distasteful. It smacks of putting the employee's desires above the needs of the company - in other words, of selfishness and disloyalty (C14). (Kopp, n.d.)

Case 6-1 (CME) elaborates on the reasons why the practice of having job descriptions raises the issue of cultural translatability in the membership-type system. Japanese workforce consists of "amoebas" with "Japanese teamwork" to perform "everything" (Shook, 1988). From the Japanese standpoint, it is cardinal to make sure that "nothing falls between the cracks" in their collective. Job descriptions are unnecessary or

perhaps even detrimental because it hinders employees from being “amoebas” which can be achieved by suppressing each employee’s professional or individualistic interest (Asuyama, 2021) in the case context. Table 15 presents a summary of case analysis. Section 6.4 will perform individual-level analysis and synthesize the chapter findings.

	LMEs	CME of Japan
Culturally driven word	Job description	No job description/multi-skilling
Practice level (RQ 1)	(L11, L12) Having no job description leading to complaints: it is essential for workforce and HR management (Implied) Comfortable in saying “That’s not my job, not in my job description” (Implied) Collective’s efficiency pursued through primacy of employees’ individual interest(s) (Implied) Changes made to job descriptions to cope with market changes	(C9, C10) Having job descriptions likely detrimental for workforce and HR management (C11) Not comfortable in saying “That’s not my job” (C12) Collective’s efficiency pursued through primacy of collective’s needs over employees’ individual interest(s) (C13) Flexible job assignments to cope with market changes
Culturally driven behavior	Employees’ skill adherence to job descriptions important for fulfilling collectives’ needs: Individuals’ interest(s) prioritized (L13) Feeling lost without job description: work means to perform job duties specified in job description	Employees’ multi-skilling important for fulfilling collectives’ needs without job descriptions: Individuals’ interest(s) not prioritized (C14) Not performing newly assigned job duties (going extra miles) deemed as selfishness and disloyalty

Table 15: Case 6-1 analysis

Case 6-1 indicates that the use of a job description comes with a very low level of feasibility in Japan, and vice versa. The case analysis suggests that the definitions of “I” and “my” differ between LME and CME. This finding agrees with the literature concept of social identity reviewed in Chapter Three.

Case 6-2

Case 6-2 is based on the present author’s interviews with the recruitment agencies as explained in Chapter Four. Interviewee 8, who is based in London, the UK, employed at a large Japanese employment agency with a global network, specializing as a senior consultant in recruiting Japanese professionals for the British and European operations of Japanese corporations, maintained:

In the UK, as well as English-speaking countries such as the USA and Canada, job descriptions are required for hiring. Job descriptions are a must-have because employers use them to not only hire new employees but also manage the hired employees, for example, for evaluation purposes (L14). So, it is used pre-employment and post-employment both. In Japan, there are no job descriptions (C15). My Japanese clients [corporations] often ask me to create job descriptions for their UK operations. Japanese companies do not have one in Japan, perhaps because the notion of *shuusha* [which means in English to join an employer to spend the whole professional life, synonymous to lifetime employment] still exists at all major companies in Japan (C16). There have been changes in Japan’s employment systems, for instance *haken* [which means the service of or practice of dispatching temporary employees], but those changes have taken place outside the systems for core employees and in the end make no difference in the long-standing practice of *shuusha*. Because job duties for one employee [who is employed under lifetime employment] change over time at a Japanese employer, job descriptions are meaningless (C17). Under Japanese management, employees must do everything that their boss asks them to, which may be a reason for their long working hours. In the UK, employees go

home after finishing the tasks listed in the job description. This is rational as well here for minimizing the wages to be paid for overtime work. (Interviewee 8)

Interviewee 8's observation is based on their 30+ years of experience in the cross-national HR sector. Corroborating the literature arguments reviewed in Section 6.2, the interview comments manifest the issue of cultural translatability: The use of a job description comes with a very low level of feasibility in Japanese business.

	LMEs	CME of Japan
Culturally driven word	Job description	No job description/multi-skilling
Practice level (RQ 1)	(L14) Job descriptions used for evaluation purposes (Implied) Lifetime employment not normative	(C15) Job descriptions not used for evaluation purposes (C16) Lifetime employment generally normative
Culturally driven behavior	(Implied) Job descriptions necessary because employees are guided/instructed by job duties listed in them	(C17) Job descriptions unnecessary because employers change job duties assigned to employees

Table 16: Case 6-2 analysis

As presented, the Case 6-2 findings by and large overlap with the preceding case findings. Nonetheless, Case 6-2 offers three important points not observed in Case 6-1. First, Case 6-2 narrates the Japanese business sector in the UK from the Japanese standpoint, whereas Case 6-1 scrutinizes the Japanese mind through the American lens. The overlaps support the research premise that there exist shared elements among LMEs that this thesis focuses on. One of them is job-type employment as examined in this chapter.

Second, Case 6-2 provides insights into the on-going changes in membership employment. Broadly speaking, Japanese workforce consists of two parts: 1) core workers employed under membership-type employment and 2) non-core workers that are relatively fluid as discussed earlier in this chapter. The interview results suggest that the system of membership-type employment has remained with changes and reversions in Japanese business. The system changes, such as haken discussed in Case 6-2, primarily concern non-core workers that this thesis does not focus on.

Finally, Case 6-2 talks about job descriptions adopted in Japanese business in the UK. In other words, the use of a job description is implemented or “translated” in the Japanese businesses in the UK. This point agrees with the fact that Japanese organizations advertise job descriptions on the internet and use them in their hiring process outside Japan across the world today (Human Capital Online, 2021). This implies that job descriptions are a manageable cultural translatability issue to Japanese HR professionals and managers working outside Japan. The following section will discuss the point in detail.

Case 6-3

This case is based on a news article (Human Capital Online, 2021)²¹ featuring a panel discussion between Masato Arisawa, Chief Human Resources Officer (CHO) with Kagome, Co., Ltd and Miki Fujima,

²¹ Human Capital Online is a division of Nikkei Business Publications, Inc., which is a part of Japan's prominent newspaper, Nikkei. The article is dated 1 January 2021, featuring the discussion took place on 30 November 2020.

Corporate Officer and Head of Human Resources (CHRO)²² with Santen Pharmaceutical Co., Ltd²³. They spoke of the two organizations' HR strategies, including the use of job descriptions. Case 6-3 focuses on the CME of Japan, which appears to have translated the tool of job description recently and been experimenting on it. Case 6-3 involves two other sets of symmetrical opposites: merit/seniority-based promotion and desired/mandatory transfers. Kagome's CHO explains:

We [Kagome] should not implement job-type employment for the sake of implementing something new. We should aim to make appropriate adjustments to the seniority system by using descriptions of job duties as benchmark tools (C18). It is important to assess how necessary job-type employment is for us in real terms.... We have been contemplating ways to implement job-type employment that suits our corporate culture and missions (C19). The scope only includes management personnel at present (C20).... We see HR evaluation, recruitment, development, and diversity as our HR missions. We have set guidelines for each mission to establish strategies for appropriating HR expenses while adjusting the seniority system. We began with the executive officer level, so that the whole organization understands the initiatives.... We do not think job descriptions are necessary (C21). We use our own descriptions of job duties and requirements.... We aim for Japanese style job-type employment with descriptions of job duties for job titles (C22).... (Human Capital Online, 2021)

The quote has many implications, but salient is "Japanese style job-type employment" that integrates descriptions of job duties. "Descriptions of job duties" here are not job descriptions in the LME sense (hence not translated as job descriptions) but are used to adjust the Japanese seniority system in the Japanese way, not primarily to regulate fluid work force in the LME sense. The CHO suggests that Kagome's descriptions of job duties contain the same type of information on job duties as LME job descriptions, but it lacks other LME items such as specifications of external candidates reviewed in the previous section. The news article continues with the CHRO comments:

Job-type and membership-type are not mutually exclusive. Merit-based promotions and lifetime employment can coexist (C24). Job-type employment can be implemented to place high-caliber employees in important positions internally, so the whole organization becomes stronger.... It is important to have a good system for talent management with a cycle of placement [through mandatory rotation], employee development, and evaluation for each employee (C25).... Eventually employees become independent and apply for an open position internally (C26). (Human Capital Online, 2021)

Similar to Kagome, Santen does not use job descriptions in the LME sense but pursues the possibility of a fusion system while keeping Japanese style HR management. Santen incorporates descriptions of job duties for "talent management" that will adjust the seniority system and eventually enable a job change within the organization at the employee's will ("desired transfer" hereafter) within the organization.

Following the CHRO, the panel moderator asks a question "Do you think that all Japanese firms need to implement job-type employment?" The CHO and CHRO answer "No", commenting:

Job-type employment is not perfect (C27). Japanese firms should come up with a HR system of their own that suits company culture and sense of value, not choosing one between job-type and membership-type [CHO] (C28). It can be a matter of what extent Japanese firms can give up on the

²² The panel speakers' corporate titles are at the time of the news article.

²³ Kagome and Santen are publicly listed multinationals headquartered in Japan.

seniority system, rather than full implementation of job-type employment (C29). Japanese multinationals with the seniority system may not succeed in the global markets [CHRO].... (Human Capital Online, 2021)

The CHO and the CHRO corroborate each other about Japanese style job descriptions used to manage existing employees, not primarily to recruit external candidates. This finding suggests that the Japanese firms are keeping membership-type employment. Case 6-3 indicates that the Japanese firms' main interest is to adjust the seniority system. Table 17 presents the results of coding analysis:

	CME of Japan (before)	CME Case 6-3 (after)
Practice level (RQ 1)	Job descriptions not used for domestic business in Japan	Job descriptions being translated experimentally
Culturally driven behavior	Membership-type employment with generally seniority-based promotion and mandatory rotation	(C18, 24) Adjusting seniority system by incorporating merit-based system (C19, 20) Membership-type with limited changes as to promotion and rotation (C21, 22) Job descriptions not necessary but descriptions of job duties useful (C25, 26) Fusion system to enable desired transfers possibly

Table 17: Case 6-3 analysis

Case 6-3 offers three examples of culturally driven words translated to Japan: job descriptions, merit-based systems, and discretionary transfers (as opposed to mandatory transfers). All these are linguistically translated as-is, but none of the corresponding business practices are implemented exactly in the LME way. The tool of a job description has been translated, but it is not exactly it in the LME sense: The Japanese style job descriptions appear to be tailored to the Japanese employment practices. The coding analysis of Case 6-3 supports the distinction: For example, Kagome's CHO comments "We do not think job descriptions are necessary (Human Capital Online, 2021). It explicitly indicates that the Japanese firm does not use job descriptions in the LME way but assimilate specific parts of an LME job description into Japanese HR through translation. This partial translation is used as a tool and/or benchmark tailored to manage current employees in the context of Japanese style management.

Regarding merit-based promotion, Case 6-3 shows that the Japanese firms wish to strike the balance between the seniority and merit-based systems. It has made Japanese style HR management more merit driven, while seniority is not entirely disregarded. The following section will further discuss the feasibility of cultural translatability of this specificity.

As for desired transfers, Case 6-3 suggests that the Japanese firms are interested in it as opposed to the traditional system of mandatory rotation, but they are exploring possibilities as Kagome's CHO explains. The term *desired transfer* or *internal transfer* is translated into Japanese and adopted in very specific segments, far from the mainstream.

In sum, the three terms are linguistically translated as-is, and the translated practices coexist with symmetrically opposite specificities in the local systems. The following section will synthesize the case findings.

6.4 Cross-case analysis

The previous section has examined three cases with different scenarios: translated (Case 6-2), not translated (Case 6-1), and partially translated (Case 6-3). Based on the cases, Table 18 provides the triangulated cross-case analysis in the respective societies to answer the Main Research Question:

	LMEs	CME of Japan
Practice (RQ 1)	<p>Use of job descriptions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To be used for recruitment and possibly evaluation: Employees find a job with compatible job duties at their own will To manage fluid workforce consisting of individuals who come and go Organizational efficiency to be pursued by prioritizing individual employees' interest(s) <p>Merit-based promotion supplemented by seniority-based promotion</p> <p>Desired transfers supplemented by requested transfers by HR</p>	<p>No use of job descriptions / multi-tasking</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To perform job duties given by management: Job duties can be any and be changed irrespective of employee's interest To manage collectives consisting of membership-based individuals Organizational efficiency to be pursued by prioritizing collectives' interest(s) <p>Seniority-based promotion supplemented by merit-based promotion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (Before translation) Seniority as relatively dominant determinant (After translation) Striking a balance between seniority-based and merit-based systems <p>Mandatory transfers supplemented by requested transfers by HR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (Before translation) Mandatory transfers predominant (After translation) Mandatory transfers remaining dominant with fringe trials of desired transfers
Findings (RQs 2&3)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Individualistic interest in job freedom prioritized through employees' skill adherence to job descriptions Individualistic identity: "I" perform "my" job duties that meet "my" skills as "I" agreed on Reasonable power given to all individuals for own decision making power on job changes Relatively less power distributed to senior than others regarding promotion in merit-based system Relatively shorter average tenure due to individuals' job freedom Tolerant of individuals' job freedom, which is uncertain to HR managers from employer's perspective Tolerant of uncertainties arising from not knowing next employer: Individual ways of work life respected. Individual attributes deemed as identity Detailed, written job descriptions necessary to manage individual differences. Many codes of conduct written out and put in place 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Collectivistic interest in teams' task completion prioritized through employees' multi-skilling over individuals' job freedom Collectivistic identity: "I" am part of employer so whatever given is "my" job Reasonable power given to HR team/manager for collective decision making on mandatory job rotation Relatively more power distributed to senior than others regarding promotion in seniority-based system Longer average employment tenure as employees tend to stay as part of collective Collective members' desired transfers seen as uncertainty unless agreed in advance from employer's perspective Tendency to avoid uncertainties of not knowing next employer: Having membership-type employment to avoid life uncertainties. Collective membership deemed as identity Being "amoeba" with shared unspoken codes of conduct preferred over written job descriptions
Cultural constructs	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Individualism (cultural construct) Individualism (social identity) Low power distance (job transfers) Low power distance (promotion) Short-term orientation Low uncertainty avoidance Low uncertainty avoidance (identity) Low context of communication 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Collectivism (cultural construct) Collectivism (social identity) High power distance (job transfers) High power distance (promotion) Long-term orientation High uncertainty avoidance High uncertainty avoidance (identity) High context of communication

Table 18: Descriptive answers to research questions

Table 18 offers the findings of cultural values of preference in the respective societies and corresponding cultural constructs that collectively answer the Main Research Question. Similar to the previous chapter’s cross-case analysis, Table 18 can be interpreted as a series of research cycles consisting of deductive and inductive approaches to the hypothesis.

Table 18 offers three grounded interpretations: culturally driven specificities are not mutually exclusive, culturally driven texts can be translatable, and the issue of cultural translatability lingers. For the first point, the cases have examined three interrelated sets of symmetrical opposites: 1) job descriptions vs. multi-skilling, 2) desired vs. mandatory transfers, and 3) merit-based vs. seniority-based systems. All of them are not always nor strictly mutually exclusive. The findings indicate that the Japanese use both, generally keeping membership-type employment and its attributes, while using the LME specificities as supplemental tools to develop what has been neglected in the membership-type system.

Second, the findings indicate that culturally driven texts can be linguistically translatable as-is, depending on the context. This point is related to the first one, as translated specificities can coexist with incumbent specificities. Figure 13 illustrates Japanese style job descriptions translated and used as a tool to adjust the seniority system:

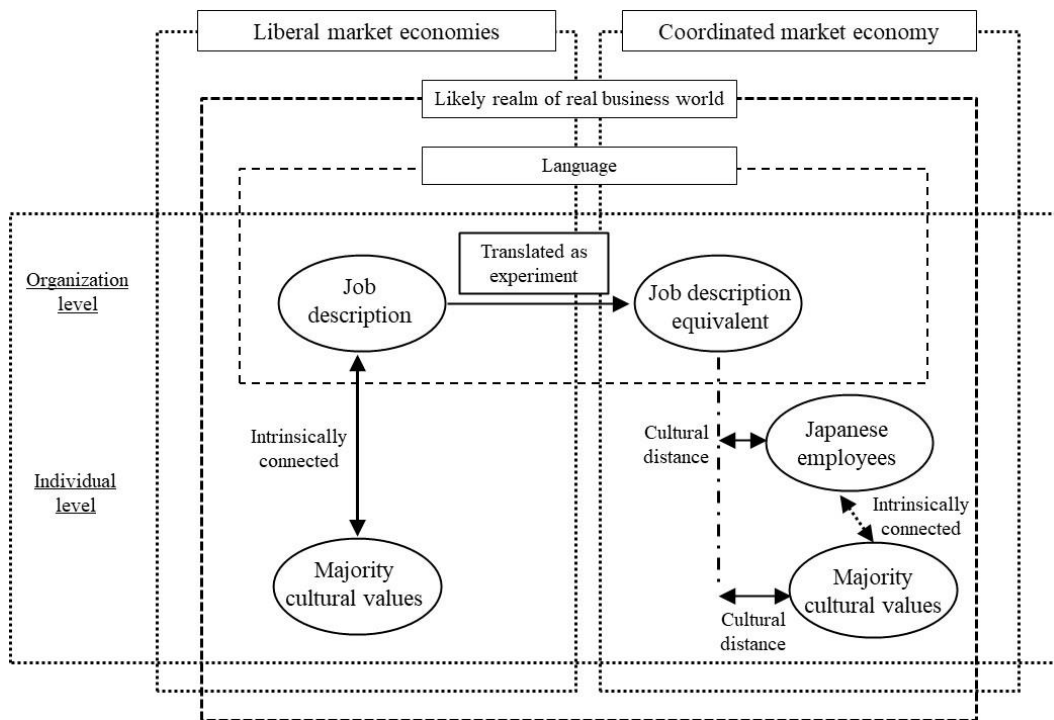


Figure 13: Analysis of culturally driven text translated from LMEs to CME

Figure 13 indicates the translated specificity as “job description equivalent” since currently the Japanese firms only translate and use the specific parts of the LME tool of job descriptions. The translated specificity is more precisely a set of descriptions of job duties as examined earlier. As a result, Japan currently has a set

of symmetrical opposites coexisting in membership-type employment: Japanese style job descriptions and multi-tasking. Referred to as “Cultural distance” in Figure 13, this gap exists, and the identifiability of symmetrical opposites facilitates negotiations between the opposite camps. Chapter Nine will discuss such negotiations as a catalyst for the reorientation of cultural translation. Coexistence does not necessarily result that a target audience is perfectly comfortable with the translated specificity, or a translated text remains in use, which pertains to the next point.

Finally, the issue of cultural translatability lingers even after a culturally driven specificity is translated and introduced for use. Case 6-3 has examined merit-based promotion that was in fact translated and tried in the late 1990s and faltered in the early 2000s in Japan (Yamada, 2020) as mentioned earlier. Currently the Japanese firms are trying to adjust the seniority-driven system by making it more merit based, again. Future state may be more of merit based, depending on the negotiation results between the systems in the CME of Japan. Figure 14 illustrates a possible future scenario, focusing on Japanese style HR management:

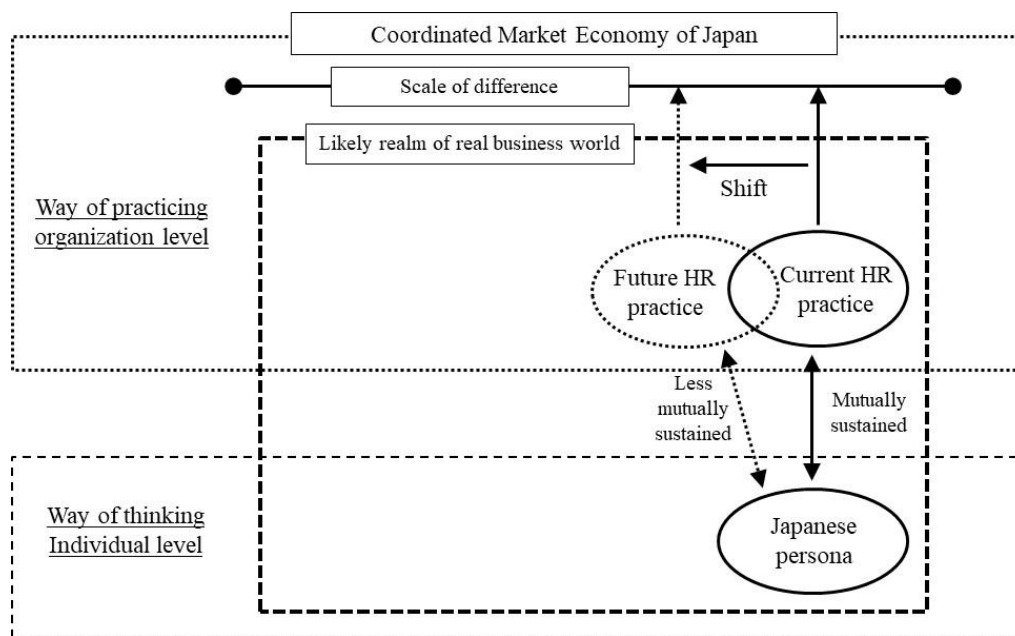


Figure 14: Future scenario analysis in membership-type employment

In Figure 14, “Current HR practice” and “Future HR practice” represent the current and possible future state of the seniority-based promotion system, respectively. Figure 14 hypothetically presumes future practice becomes more of merit-based, while staying within the realm of the CME of Japan. The proposed framework is capable of illustrating the change as a shift. It can illustrate any trajectories of any of the three sets: 1) job descriptions vs. multi-tasking, 2) desired vs. mandatory transfers, and 3) meri vs. seniority-based promotion.

While hypothetical, Figure 14 illustrates a likely scenario based on the results of case analysis in this chapter. Yamada (2020) details Japan’s boom in merit-based promotion two decades ago: It lost its momentum within one decade because it did not function well with Japanese style HR management. The major reason is rooted in the system differences between LMEs and Japan: In LMEs, employers recruit trained work force, whereas Japanese employers hire employees first and then train them (Yamada, 2020).

The training system is readily available to anyone in LMEs, but it is generally confined in the organizational silos in Japan.

As presented, the employment system has interrelated subsystems, altogether consisting of the whole in quasi-equilibrium. This durability tends to reject culturally incompatible systems, including merit-based promotion, that conflict with the incumbent practices compatible with the local cultural values. In translation settings, this rejection can be expressed as the issue of cultural translatability.

Chapter Seven: Findings in the Manufacturing Sector

This chapter will test the concept of cultural translatability and the workability of its framework by applying them to the forms of corporate groups and interfirm trading relations. It will first review Arm's-Length Contractual Relation ("ACR") and Obligational Contractual Relation ("OCR") (Sako, 1992) introduced in Chapter Two and then examine textual data obtained mainly from the automobile industry. In answering the research questions, this chapter will advance ACR-OCR as a constituent of the proposed framework, making it functional with any sectors, including manufacturing, besides the sectors of communication and employment tested in Chapters Five and Six, respectively.

7.1 Preliminary analysis

Chapter Three has discussed the Japanese term *keiretsu* that generally means tight-knit conglomerates in Japan. Miyashita and Russell (1994, p. 7) write "The word *keiretsu* does not translate neatly into English, and that is the beginning of the problem" in their book published in English to explain keiretsu. This "problem" occurs because of the same reason as the proverb examined in Chapter One: "The nail that sticks out gets hammered back in" (Yamada, 1992). LMEs have a symmetrical opposite "Stand out from the crowd". It is naturally hard for anyone to give credence to such an opposite that confronts locally supported specificities as examined so far. Keiretsu still exists in Japan and does not in LMEs today. Posed by Miyashita and Russell (1994), the "problem" is possibly recurring and pertinent to the concept of cultural translatability proposed in this thesis. This section will first examine the keiretsu characteristics to find which one(s) may be useful for answering the research questions.

In LMEs, groups of firms are referred to as strategic alliances. They are formed for a shared goal: for example, airline partners that have the shared goal of having more passengers through a unified loyalty program. It can be the closest English equivalent of keiretsu. These two forms are not mutually exclusive, as Japanese airlines participate in such alliances created in LMEs. On the other hand, virtually no LME firms is a member of Japanese keiretsu. Miyashita and Russell (1994) write that a strategic alliance is "far from being Japanese-style horizontal keiretsu" (p. 208).

The major reason why the word *keiretsu* does not translate neatly into English is that LME strategic alliances do not exhibit the Japanese ties that bind keiretsu affiliates: "ownership networks, personnel flows, and expectations of mutual assistance" (Dow, McGuire, and Yoshikawa, 2011 p. 301). Among the three "tight knit" ties, "ownership networks" mean comingled capital relationships between affiliates: for instance, five affiliates owning 5% of the outstanding shares of each other. This tie is representative of keiretsu and uncommon and/or illegal in LMEs, thus likely to highlight the issue of cultural translatability. However, this chapter does not focus on this tie, which is not suitable for this thesis. It calls for separate substantial research, integrating relevant commercial codes and laws and quantitative analysis of ownership interests.

The tie of "personnel flows" is also generally, though not absolutely, specific to keiretsu. Japanese keiretsu rotates management personnel between affiliate organizations within the keiretsu group. It is essentially the same practice as mandatory rotation examined in the previous chapter. However, this keiretsu

tie goes beyond the corporate boundary, whereas the standard practice of mandatory rotation generally means a job transfer within a single organization. Culturally speaking, keiretsu can be more intensely culturally driven in a Japanese way than non-keiretsu CME organizations. Either case, mandatory rotation exhibits a very low level of feasibility of cultural translatability in LMEs as reviewed in Chapter Six. A culturally driven practice with an extremely low level of feasibility supports the category of cultural translatability but is unlikely to generate dynamic results of culturally translated cases.

The tie of “expectations of mutual assistance” seems to be a suitable research theme for this thesis. It pertains to goodwill trust (Sako, 1992) examined in Chapter Two: “a sure feeling that trading partners possess a moral commitment to maintaining a trading relationship” (p. 10). “Maintaining a trading relationship” is an OCR type of “mutual assistance” that promotes long-term business security. In the CME of Japan, OCR organizations can expect it based on “a sure feeling” of “a moral commitment” at the practice level. As examined as a type of *giri* in Section 3.4, it is diffusedly shared not only among keiretsu affiliates but also across Japanese business in general (Gillespie and Sugiyama, 1996). Recent research (Sasaki, Nummela, and Ravasi, 2021) supports the continued existence of “moral commitment”. It can be one of the CME features, including keiretsu affiliates to varying degrees, not strictly nor uniformly applicable to every single business. This tie appears suitable for this research as it is generally yet widely applicable to the CME of Japan and relevant to literature reviewed in the first three chapters.

The Japanese cultural values of preference, including goodwill trust, manifest the intrinsic connection - an important part of the proposed framework of cultural translatability - between the individual and practice levels. This conceptual connection supports the structure of the proposed framework of cultural translatability. This chapter primarily focuses on goodwill trust and related specificities coming out through text.

7.2 Concept analysis

Chapter Two has reviewed the definitions of ACR and OCR extremes. Table 19 below quotes the features of ACR and OCR patterns - more detailed explanation of ACR-OCR (Sako, 1992) - and perform conceptual analysis of the features to have a holistic understanding of the patterns by supplementing the individual-level values of preference on Sako’s seminal work. The tie of expectations of mutual assistance can be central to the salient OCR characteristic of goodwill trust, but at the same time goodwill trust is only the tip of the giant iceberg. The proposed framework is structured to illustrate the iceberg of business practice as discussed so far. Chapter Three has adopted the prevalent concepts, including the ACR-OCR model, to create the framework. The next section of case analysis will perform thematic analysis of texts that will also test ACR-OCR against recent findings and evaluate whether it reasonably holds. The table’s textual data are quoted as-is for this section’s coding analysis. As explained in Chapter Four, the parentheses are added for coding culturally driven specificities. The letters L and C stand for LME and CME, respectively, and the numbers indicate specific occurrences of culturally driven specificities.

Arm's-length contractual relation (ACR)	Obligational contractual relation (OCR)
(A) Transactional dependence: Buyer seeks to maintain low dependence by trading with a large number of competing suppliers within the limits permitted by need to keep down transaction costs (L1). Supplier seeks to maintain low dependence by trading with a large number of customers within limits set by scale economies and transaction costs (L2).	(A) For a buyer, avoidance of dependence is not a high priority; it prefers to give security to few suppliers, though may still dual or triple source (some from a fringe group of suppliers with whom it has ACR relation) for flexibility (C1). For a supplier, avoidance of dependence is not a high priority, but it may well have several OCR customers (plus, perhaps, a fringe group of ACR customers) (C2).
(B) Ordering procedure. Bidding takes place; buyer does not know which supplier will win the contract before bidding (L3). Prices negotiated and agreed before an order is commissioned (L4).	(B) Bidding may or may not take place. With bidding, buyer has a good idea of which supplier gets which contract before bidding (C3). Without bidding, there is a straight commission to supplier. Prices are settled after decision about who gets the contract (C4).
(C) Projected length of trading. For the duration of the current contract. Short-term commitment by both buyer and supplier (L5).	(C) Continued beyond the duration of the current contract. Mutual long-term commitment (C5).
(D) Documents for exchange. Term and conditions of contract are written, detailed and substantive (L6).	(D) Contracts contain procedural rules, but substantive issues are decided case by case. Contracts may be oral rather than written (C6).
(E) 'Contractualism'. Contingencies are written out and followed strictly (L7).	(E) Case-by-case resolution with much appeal to the diffuse obligation of long-term relationships (C7).
(F) 'Contractual trust'. Supplier never starts production until written orders are received (L8).	(F) Supplier often starts production on the basis of oral communication, before written orders are received (C8).
(G) 'Goodwill trust'. Multiple sourcing by buyer, combined with supplier's low transactional dependence (L9).	(G) Sole sourcing by buyer, combined with supplier's transactional dependence (C9).
(H) 'Competence trust'. Thorough inspection on delivery; the principle of <i>caveat emptor</i> predominates (L10).	(H) Little or no inspection on delivery for most parts. (Customer may be involved in establishing supplier's quality-control systems) (C10).
(I) Technology transfer and training. Only the transfer, training or consultancy which can be costed and claimed for in the short run occurs (L11).	(I) Not always fully costed, as benefits are seen as partly intangible and/or reaped in the distant future (C11).
(J) Communication channels and intensity. A narrow channel between the buyer's purchasing department and the supplier's sales department, with frequently kept to minimum necessary to conduct business (L12).	(J) Extensive multiple channels, between engineers, quality assurance personnel, top managers, as well as between purchasing and sales managers. Frequent contact, often extending beyond the immediate business into socializing (C12).
(K) Risk sharing. Little sharing of risk; how risk, resulting from price and demand fluctuations, is to be borne by each party is spelt out in explicit prior agreement (L13).	(K) Much sharing of risk, in the sense that the relative share of unforeseen loss or gain is decided case by case, by applying some principle of fairness (C13).

Table 19: A summary of ACR-OCR pattern features (adopted from Sako, 1992, pp. 11-12)

As presented, the LME and CME features appear symmetrically opposite to each other. If a manufacturer and their supplier(s) agree on and strictly follow the ACR pattern for instance, the OCR pattern makes no sense or possibly is illegal to them. In other words, the other practice is not feasible as-is, or it exhibits an extremely low level of feasibility for cultural translatability, though it is not always the case. To reiterate, ACR and OCR are the extremes of a continuum to capture variations in trading relations (Sako, 1992). In Sako's words, both Britain and Japan have "a range of actual trading patterns which lie on the ACR-OCR continuum" and in practice "the modal Japanese inter-company relationship is more OCR than the modal British one" (1992, p. 15). This understanding applies to the proposed concept of cultural translatability and its framework as clarified at the outset. Since Table 19 offers concise descriptions of culturally driven practices, this section performs conceptual analysis of the table contents as texts through coding. Table 20

summarizes the results. The “Findings” refers to the present research’s findings of Research Questions 2 and 3 on the ACR-OCR features (A) through (K). These features alone answer Research Question 1 as they are symmetrically opposite to each other.

	LMEs	CME of Japan
System	Arm’s-length contractual relation (ACR)	Obligational contractual relation (OCR)
Feature (A)	(L1, L2) Buyer and supplier’s low dependence on each other	(C1, C2) Buyer and supplier’s high dependency on each other
Findings	Primacy of individualistic interest in low dependence on trading partner(s): being independent preferred	Primacy of collectivistic interest in high dependence on trading partner(s): being part of a collective preferred
Cultural constructs	Individualism	Collectivism
Feature (B)	(L3, L4) Real bidding to choose most economical transaction among available suppliers: prices set before purchase order	(C1, C2) Bidding not necessarily taken place to choose supplier: prices set after commission given to supplier
Findings	Buyer’s primacy of individualistic interest in setting and gaining most economical pricing: price over relation	Buyer’s primacy of collectivistic interest in selecting supplier as suitable member of collective group: relation over price
Cultural constructs	Individualism	Collectivism
Feature (C)	(L5) Buyer-supplier relation lasting for duration of current contract	(C5) Buyer-supplier relation lasting quasi-eternally
Findings	Relatively short-term commitment preferred to prioritize Feature (B)	Relatively long-term commitment preferred to prioritize Feature (B)
Cultural constructs	Short-term orientation; individualism	Long-term orientation; collectivism
Feature (D) & (E)	(L6, L7) Terms and conditions written, detailed and substantive	(C6, C7) Terms and conditions not always or necessarily written, detailed nor substantive
Findings	Written, detailed and substantive contract necessary to regulate trading partners relatively tolerant of each other’s individual freedom of interpretation, which is uncertain to others, unless documented	Written, detailed and substantive contract unnecessary as collective group’s unspoken codes of conduct regulate trading partners: individual interpretation seen as potentially negative uncertainties
Cultural constructs	Low context of communication; low uncertainty avoidance; individualism	High context of communication; high uncertainty avoidance; collectivism
Feature (F)	(L8) No production until supplier receives written purchase order	(C8) Production begun at supplier once trading relationship is established
Findings	Same as Feature (D)	Same as Feature (D)
Cultural constructs	Low context of communication; Low uncertainty avoidance; individualism	High context of communication; High uncertainty avoidance; collectivism
Feature (G)	(L9) Arm’s-length principle as cardinal rule shared across industry for buyer to choose supplier among many	(L9) Goodwill trust as cardinal rule shared across industry for buyer to have supplier as part of collective group
Findings	Primacy of individualistic interest in freedom of choosing cheapest supplier for buyer’s profit over retaining trading relation	Primacy of collectivistic interest in retaining trading relation with chosen suppliers while buyer seeks for profit in bound context
Cultural constructs	Individualism	Collectivism
Feature (H)	(L10) Buyer’s through inspection on delivered product	(C7) No or little inspection on delivered product
Findings	Primacy of individualistic interest in individual quality assurance: responsible individually; free trading and resultant uncertainties of product variances tolerated and seen as natural part of whole process	Primacy of collectivistic interest in collective quality assurance: responsible collectively; product variances arising from unknown supplier seen as uncertainties and avoided
Cultural constructs	Individualism; low uncertainty avoidance	Collectivism; high uncertainty avoidance

Feature (I)	(L11) Training cost posted as short-term accounting expenses	(C7) Training cost not always or usually posted as accounting expense
Findings	Training is believed to take immediate effect: Primacy of individualistic interest in perceiving/treating trainer and trainee as separate individuals/entities	Training is believed to take effect in the long run: Primacy of collectivistic interest in perceiving/treating trainer and trainee as constituents of collective
Cultural constructs	Short-term orientation; individualism	Long-term orientation; collectivism
Feature (J)	(L12) Minimum necessary communication to carry out business	(C12) Extensive, multi-lateral communication to carry out business
Findings	Representative feature of LME communication style of escalation (Chapter Five) and job-type employment (Chapter Six)	Representative feature of CME communication style of horensō (Chapter Five) and membership-type employment (Chapter Six)
Cultural constructs	Individualism; short-term orientation; low power distance; low uncertainty avoidance; low context of communication	Collectivism; long-term orientation; high power distance; high uncertainty avoidance; high context of communication
Feature (K)	(L13) Minimum risk sharing: Conceivable scenarios spelt out in contract	(C13) Risk shared and managed by unspoken codes of conduct shared between partners in collective
Findings	Same as Features (D) and (E)	Same as Features (D) and (E)
Cultural constructs	Low uncertainty avoidance; individualism	High uncertainty avoidance; collectivism

Table 20: Contractual relations in LMEs and the CME of Japan (developed from Sako, 1992)

The coding results indicate that the ACR-OCR patterns manifest the cultural values of preference. Sako (1992) writes that the ACR-OCR features boil down to two dimensions which capture their essence: namely “the degree of interdependence” and “the time span for reciprocity” (p. 10). These two “dimensions” are essentially the cultural constructs of individualism/collectivism and short/long-term orientation, respectively.

As a result of conceptual analysis, Table 20 adds other cultural constructs than Sako’s two dimensions. This elaboration on the individual level is necessary for this thesis due to the differences in research orientation: Sako’s original work primarily focuses on the organization level with the central theme of comparative research in institutional practice. This thesis investigates the intrinsic connection between the organization and individual levels with the central theme of cultural translatability. This section of concept analysis needs as many individual-level cultural constructs as possible, in addition to individualism/collectivism and short/long time orientation.

As shown in Table 20, Sako’s grounded findings and this section’s analysis results indeed corroborate each other and together support the proposed framework of cultural translatability. Any OCR practice, for example, is likely to raise the issue of cultural translatability if translated and implemented as-is in ACR. This interpretation is based on Sako’s work released in 1992. If current evidence supports the proposed framework, it will also support ACR-OCR in the research context.

According to Sako (1992), goodwill trust “may manifest itself in not taking unfair advantage of one’s circumstances (for which shared principles of fairness exist) and in offering preferential treatment or help whenever the need arises” (p. 10). This quote’s “unfair advantage” and “fairness” appear to need an additional explanation because it may not be “unfair” from an ACR perspective. For example, it is normative for ACR buyers to maximize their own profits by changing suppliers for cheaper products or services. That is why business relationships last only during the contract period. There is no need to make sure that their

suppliers make sufficient and sustainable profits on a long-term basis. Such an involvement in another’s business is seen as culturally intrusive and/or treated as a cost-bearing service especially in LMEs. Each business entity is individually responsible for their own business in an individual way of doing business. This is ACR “fairness” which should be respected in LMEs. Otherwise, it may even appear as “a threat” (Babbie, 2015) as discussed in Section 1.3.

On the other hand, OCR buyers tend to make sure that their suppliers make sufficient and sustainable profits on a long-term basis (Liker and Hoseus, 2008), depending on the context. Such an involvement in another’s business within the collective group is seen as culturally appropriate, encouraged, and/or expected, which can be paraphrased as the tie of expectations of mutual assistance (Dow, McGuire, and Yoshikawa, 2011). In the OCR pattern, a trading partner is part of the collective that shares the same social identity in a diffused sense. If an OCR buyer frequently changes suppliers for cheaper products or services, it tends to be seen as “unfair” in the OCR sense that it violates the collective codes of conduct to respect mutual assistance. These OCR codes of conduct represent OCR “fairness” which should be respected in the CME of Japan.

ACR and OCR differ in many ways but share the principle of respecting the local codes of conduct. This shared principle can be said that an organization generally respects another following the local codes of conduct shared in the society. In LMEs, organizations respect other individual organizations’ business. In the CME of Japan, collectives respect other collective groups’ business. In short, respectfulness is shared across the world, but what is respected is not always the same: relatively speaking, individual entities in LMEs and collective groups in the CME of Japan.

There is a subsequent study that not only supports ACR-OCR but also helps understand the automobile industry’s terminology. Toyoda (2003) reports on the supplier selection processes and commonly used contracts in ACR and OCR. Table 21 summarizes Toyoda’s findings:

	LMEs	CME of Japan
Initial state	Pool of suppliers to be selected (L14).	Master trade agreement made (C14).
Vehicle development stage	Product development request and a purchase order (L15) sent to suppliers.	Collaborative work between manufacturer’s engineers and suppliers’ engineers (C15).
Early selection stage	Suppliers selected that manufacturer sends a request for quote (RFQ), after comparing suppliers’ products (L16).	Suppliers selected that manufacturer sends RFQ, based on supplier’s technology and past transaction history (C16).
Middle selection stage	RFQ and accompanying documents evaluated. Manufacturer’s target price presented.	RFQ and accompanying documents evaluated. Price negotiation between manufacturer and suppliers.
Final selection stage	Purchase order sent to selected supplier to make a trial piece.	A letter of intent sent to selected supplier to make a trial piece: Commercial production promising.

Table 21: Supplier selection process in the automotive industry (abridged from Toyoda, 2003)

Toyoda (2003) points out the ACR-OCR difference in the supplier selection process: In ACR, a purchase order is sent out in each selection stage, meaning that a real screening process takes place in each stage. A purchase order is a culturally driven ACR document as it pertains to Features (A) through (G) on the ACR column in Table 19. In OCR by contrast, a request for a trial piece based on the master trade agreement

(*torihiki kihon keiyakusho* in Japanese) usually means that commercial production is awarded unless there is a critical problem with the supplier. Also pertinent to Features (A) through (G), the master trade agreement is representative of OCR. Table 22 shows the results of conceptual analysis through coding:

	LMEs	CME of Japan
System	Arm's-length contractual relation (ACR)	Obligational contractual relation (OCR)
Initial stage	(L14) Buyer and supplier's low dependence on each other by trading with a pool of competing suppliers based on arm's-length principle	(C14) Buyer and supplier's high dependency on each other: foundational contract made at first with relatively fewer suppliers based on goodwill trust
Findings (RQ 2&3)	Primacy of individualistic interest in low dependence on trading partner(s): being independent preferred	Primacy of collectivistic interest in high dependence on trading partner(s): being part of collective preferred
Cultural construct	Individualism	Collectivism
Vehicle development stage	(L15) Independent product development by suppliers	(C15) Collaborative product development between buyer and supplier
Findings (RQ 2&3)	Primacy of individualistic interest in individual product development	Primacy of collectivistic interest in collective product development
Cultural construct	Individualism	Collectivism
Early selection stage	(L16) Current pricing as primary determinant for supplier selection based on acceptable quality	(C16) Transaction and collaboration history seen as determinant for supplier selection based on acceptable pricing
Findings (RQ 2&3)	Primacy of current pricing determined by independent product development	Primacy of collective, long-term relation built for product development
Cultural construct	Short-term orientation; individualism	Long-term orientation; collectivism

Table 22: Conceptual analysis of the literature (Toyoda, 2003)

As shown above, the supplier selection processes contain culturally driven practices that would raise the issue of cultural translatability if translated and exported to the other side. Especially distinctive are the culturally driven documents *purchase order* and *master trade agreement*. In ACR, buyers commonly and frequently use a purchase order to manage relatively short-cycling supplier relationships. In OCR, the master trade agreement is made at the initial stage to set general terms and conditions. It is an “evergreen” contract, automatically renewed unless either party terminates it (Toyoda, 2003). This agreement exemplifies Features (A) through (G) in Column OCR (Sako, 1992). Its quasi-eternity indicates that OCR organizations assume a continued business relationship with no set end for the trading relationship.

Having reviewed the foundational concepts, the following section will test the framework of cultural translatability by applying culturally driven specificities, including *purchase order* and *master trade agreement*, to the framework primarily focusing on the automobile industry. The automobile industry is chosen for three reasons: 1) it is part of the whole manufacturing sector, which is one of the pillars of Japanese business, 2) ample literature discusses the automobile industry (Harada, 2015 as examined in Chapter Five), and 3) this thesis aims to advance the ACR-OCR model for wider applicability by triangulating the automobile industry and the electronics industry, which Sako (1992) investigated for developing ACR-OCR.

7.3 Case analysis

This section will examine three short cases (Case 7-1, 7-2, and 7-3) that contain or pertain to ACR/OCR attributes. Table 23 summarizes the units of analysis in the cases:

	Context	Practice	Outcome
Case 1	ACR and OCR organizations explaining their business contracts in their reports	Vehicle life as contract duration in LMEs vs. quasi-eternity in OCR	Appropriate contract duration not translatable as-is to each other
Case 2	ACR news reporters/writers discussing ACR practices in their news articles	Bidding used to choose supplier during ACR selection process	OCR practice of no bidding translated and adopted in ACR with its limited scope
Case 3	OCR managers explaining business strategies featured in news articles	Fewer suppliers with quasi-eternal business relation in OCR	ACR practice of having large customer base translated and adopted with its limited scope

Table 23: A summary of cases

This section treats business reports and news articles as texts and performs thematic analysis through coding. The cases do not relate to each other but share the case theme of ACR/OCR practice.

Case 7-1

Case 7-1 (ACR) scrutinizes four texts excerpted from two financial reports²⁴ filed by Magna International Inc. (Magna) and Lear Corporation (Lear) in LMEs. Magna is a Canadian multinational company that manufactures components mainly for automobiles. Lear is an American multinational company in the same industry.

Revenue recognition

The Company [Magna] enters into contracts with its customers [buyers] to provide parts or assembled vehicles. Contracts do not commit the customer to a specified quantity of products; however, the Company is generally required to fulfill its customers' purchasing requirements for the production life of the vehicle (L17). Contracts do not typically become a performance obligation until the Company receives a purchase order and a customer release for a specific number of parts or assembled vehicles at a specific price (L18). (Magna International Inc., 2022, p. 40)

Customers

In 2020, General Motors and Ford, two of the largest automotive and light truck manufacturers in the world, accounted for 20% and 14% of our net sales, respectively.... We [Lear] receive purchase orders from our customers that generally provide for the supply of a customer's annual requirements for a particular vehicle model and assembly plant, or in some cases, for the supply of a customer's requirements for the life of a particular vehicle model, rather than for the purchase of a specified quantity of products (L19)... We are subject to risk that an automotive manufacturer will produce fewer units of a vehicle model than anticipated or that an automobile manufacturer will not award us a replacement program following the life of a vehicle model (L20). (Lear Corporation, 2022, pp. 16-17)

Purchase obligations

²⁴ A financial report is required for all listed/public companies in all LMEs and CMEs. In Canada and the USA, it is referred to as Annual Information Form and Form 10-K, respectively.

We [Lear] enter into agreements with our customers to produce products at the beginning of a vehicle's life cycle (L21). Although these agreements do not provide for a specified quantity of products, once entered into, we are generally required to fulfill our customers' purchasing requirements for the production life of the vehicle (L22). (Lear Corporation, 2022, p. 45)

Revenue recognition and sales commitments

We [Lear] enter into contracts with our customers to provide production parts generally at the beginning of a vehicle's life cycle. Typically, these contracts do not provide for a specified quantity of products, but once entered into, we are often expected to fulfill our customers' purchasing requirements for the production life of the vehicle (L23). (Lear Corporation, 2022, p. 47)

Salient is "the life of the vehicle" - the culturally driven word that explicitly specifies the contract duration in LMEs. Recent research shows that the average platform longevity - how long a vehicle model is produced on average - spans between 5.9 and 7.8 years, depending on the vehicle type: for instance, passenger or light truck (Center for Automotive Research, 2017). This longevity can be generally interpreted as the longest possible length of an ACR contract. Because the ACR manufacturing sector involves constant screening and selection based primarily on pricing (Toyota, 2003), it can be shorter than the theoretical cap.

Moving onto OCR (Case 7-1 OCR), the following is an excerpt from Honda Motor's annual sustainability report. It is an English translation of the Japanese original.

Honda seeks to strengthen sustainability, including compliance, throughout the supply chain. In conducting business, the Company [Honda] concludes basic agreements on component procurement that specify areas of attention such as safety, disaster prevention, environmental prevention and protection of resources (C17). (Honda Motor, 2023, p. 151)

In this report, the Japanese term *torihiki kihon keiyakusho* (or "master trade agreement" discussed earlier) is translated as "basic agreements". The original report uses the exact term in Japanese. The report indicates that Honda continues using the master trade agreement, which is specific to OCR practice.

The following is an excerpt from Denso Corporation's webpage regarding business sustainability. Denso is an automotive component manufacturer and a part of the Toyota group.

...To this end, DENSO requests that all of its suppliers agree to the DENSO Group Sustainability Policy as well as conclude a basic transaction contract that addresses issues such as compliance, protection of human rights, environmental conservation, and occupation safety (C18). (Denso Corporation, 2023)

Their English website uses the term "basic transaction contract", but in the original Japanese website from which the English website appears to have been translated, the term used is *torihiki kihon keiyakusho*: the same term as used by Honda in the preceding extract and translated in that case as "master trade agreement". Denso's Japanese website indicates that they continue using the master trade agreement²⁵. Table 24 presents

²⁵ Besides keiretsu multinationals such as Honda and Denso, many non-keiretsu Japanese manufacturers use the master trade agreement. For example, a web search with the following keywords *nihon seikoo* [a non-keiretsu multinational's name in Japanese for search purposes] *torihiki kihon keiyakusho* returns evidential texts posted on the internet.

the results of case analysis on the practice level. The next section will perform individual-level analysis and synthesize the chapter cases.

	LMEs	CME of Japan
Culturally driven term	Purchase order; life of vehicle	Master trade agreement
Practice level (RQs 1)	(L17, L19-23) Life of vehicle (platform longevity) used as contract duration; (L18) Purchase order used as production request	(C17, C18) Quasi-eternity as contract duration as stated in master trade agreement
Culturally driven behavior	Relatively shorter trading relationship: no production begun until purchase order received	Relatively longer trading relationship: production begun without purchase order (no such document absolutely necessary)

Table 24: Case 7-1 analysis

As presented in Table 24, the culturally driven terms are symmetrically opposite to each other, likely to raise the issue of cultural translatability if/when translated into the other’s language and implemented as-is. For example, the master trade agreement is not appropriate in LMEs since ACR does not assume quasi-eternity, which is normative duration of trading relation in OCR. Case 7-1 supports ACR-OCR and portrays each pattern that has culturally driven specificities against symmetrical opposites on the other side.

Case 7-2

Having investigated the recent textual data, the next case study (Case 7-2) performs textual analysis of newspaper articles. Cases 7-2, as well as 7-3, are not as recent as Case 7-1 but contain watershed business decisions and/or critical insights into them. As discussed in Chapter Three, watersheds generally help recognize the durability of time-honored specificity and understand changes and reversions centering around it.

Case 7-2 consists of two texts (Cases 7-2-1 and 7-2-2): Case 7-2-1 narrates a historical background of ACR for Case 7-2-2, which contains a translated practice. In *Automotive News* published in the USA, Edward Lapham writes of his opinions in his article with the headline “Comment: Times change, but supplier talk doesn’t” (Lapham, 2008). Lapham was the executive editor of *Automotive News* at the time of publication and had been involved in the automobile industry since 1972. His article talks about ACR suppliers’ relationships with General Motors Company (“GM”), Ford Motor Company (“Ford”) and the US operation of Fiat Chrysler Automobiles (“Chrysler”)²⁶, all of which are multinational automakers based in the USA. Because his comment is cohesive in conveying his message on the ACR pattern, the entire comment is quoted as-is (Case 7-2-1):

I ran across an upbeat headline the other day: “A brand new way... to do business: GM and suppliers to be partners.” No, the story wasn’t about the happy talk of the need for collaboration, heard at the Management Briefing Seminars this month. The headline was from the February 25, 1985, issue of *Automotive News*. It quoted Donald Pais, who was then director of materials management for General Motors’ Chevrolet-Pontiac-Canada group. The rhetoric never seems to change. One executive who

²⁶ Fiat Chrysler Automobiles merged with the PSA Group, the owner of Peugeot, and together created a conglomerate called Stellantis N.V. as of 2021. This thesis refers to it as Chrysler since it is better known in general.

was in Traverse City, Michigan for this year’s seminars told me that the presentation by Ford purchasing boss Tony Brown about the company’s preferred suppliers sounded a lot like the spiel that former Ford purchasing boss Carlos Mazzorin used to deliver nearly a decade ago. In the same session, John Campi, Chrysler’s executive vice president of procurement, used a PowerPoint slide that showed his view of healthy supplier relations. It had three main elements: lowest total cost, highest quality and fastest time to market. Though worded differently, Lopez’ three benchmarks that suppliers had to meet were the same: quality, service and price. But in 1992, most suppliers were certain that Lopez really only cared about lowering GM’s cost and would use any excuse to tear up supply contracts and renegotiate prices (L24). Times and circumstances change. You can call companies that sell stuff to automakers’ vendors, suppliers, partners or collaborators. But by any name, suppliers still depend on their customers. And like shoppers everywhere, automakers want the best price they can get. The rhetoric never changes, because the basic relationships don’t change. (Lapham, 2008)

Lapham (2008) candidly talks of the ACR social reality from the suppliers’ viewpoint. It offers many insights, but the main argument is that the three benchmarks “quality, service and price” are paramount for the Detroit Three: GM, Ford, and Chrysler. Among those three benchmarks, “price” in the ACR sense represents the arm’s-length principle. Lapham argues that the culturally driven practice of the ACR pattern (“rhetoric” in his words) never changes, pointing out its durability through economic ups and downs over the past 30-plus years till the publication date. This thesis primarily examines such culturally driven specificities that have withstood watersheds.

Seven years later, Automotive News publishes the following article (Case 7-2-2) “GM to suppliers: Let’s see books, not bids: Strategy cuts costs but requires trust” dated May 11, 2015 (Sedgwick, 2015). It features General Motors (GM) and their new parts-buying program called the “One Cost Model”. This program is also referred to as the “No-Bid Model” that indicates no bidding in their supplier selection process. However, this article in practice attests to the durability of ACR pattern as Lapham (2008) has foretold in the previous article. Sedgwick (2015) comments:

Under the program, GM dispatches a team of engineers and purchasing staffers to visit a supplier’s factories and analyze its internal cost data. If GM and the supplier can agree to the terms, the supplier can get a contract for the life of vehicle (L25). In return, GM does not solicit bids from other suppliers (L26). (Sedgwick, 2015)

GM’s program is titled “no bid” which seemingly appears to be a departure from the ACR pattern. However, it is fundamentally an ACR business strategy valid only for the life of a vehicle. Table 25 shows the results of textual analysis. The individual level remains the same as Table 24 and thus is omitted:

	LME Case 7-2-1	LME Case 7-2-2
Culturally driven term	Feature (B): Bidding	Feature (B): No bidding
Practice level	(L3) Real bidding (L24) Constant price negotiation during contract period over the life of vehicle	(L26) No bidding (L25) One-time price negotiation by looking at accounting books for contract period over the life of vehicle
Culturally driven behavior	Supplier contract possibly reduced by negotiation even during the life of vehicle	Supplier contract likely secured during the life of vehicle while contract period unchanged

Table 25: Case 7-2 analysis

Case 7-2 can be seen as a translated case of the OCR practice: “having no bid” translated and implemented in ACR. This case can be discussed from two angles: 1) what has changed and 2) what has remained unchanged. What has changed is in practice how frequently GM negotiates with its suppliers and what to look at for that. By having no bid, GM conducts less negotiations with its suppliers during the set contract period: the life of the vehicle. For that purpose, GM investigates suppliers’ accounting books for informed negotiations. In simple words, it is translated for GM’s effective cost curtailment (Sedgwick, 2015) in the ACR realm.

What has remained unchanged is everything else, other than GM’s negotiation approach. As reviewed in Section 7.2, the ACR/OCR pattern consists of various culturally driven specificities, all of which are intrinsically (or vertically in the proposed framework) connected to local cultural values and interrelated with relevant business practices (horizontally at the organization level) to varying degrees, thereby making the whole pattern stable. Some of them are heavily culturally driven, while others are not as much. In the case context, most significant is the life of a vehicle as contract duration, which remains unchanged. The ACR organizations do not appear to convert into OCR, as Lapham suggests.

Case 7-3

Case 7-3 consists of two news articles: Case 7-3 Gosei and Case 7-3 Aisin. Tadashi Arashima, President of Toyota Gosei Co., Ltd. (“Gosei”)²⁷, spoke of his vision for the future as follows in the interview with Automotive News conducted on June 30, 2014 (Case 7-3 Gosei). This OCR case also contains a translated specificity. The news article is roughly 10 years old but is chosen for analysis as it contains their watershed decision influential for their operation today.

I want to change this company into a true, real global supplier. That is the goal. In Japan, we can rely on Toyota very much. But if it is outside of Japan, except for maybe Indonesia or Thailand, Toyota’s market share is still quite low and not so stable. We have to have a broader customer base (C19). (Greimel, 2014)

This short yet informative data contains many implications. It can be disaggregated into two units of analysis: 1) in Japan, Gosei relies on Toyota and 2) outside Japan, Gosei needs to be on its own and expand its business by finding new customers other than Toyota. The first unit is straightforward evidence that supports the continued existence of Toyota’s single sourcing, which is the OCR feature examined in the previous section. The second unit of analysis has the translated term: “broader customer base” that is the ACR practice of multiple sourcing for Gosei’s non-Japanese operation.

Similarly, the following news article (Case 7-3 Aisin) discusses the same strategy as Gosei. In the interview with Automotive News conducted on July 7, 2015 (Greimel, 2015), Yasunori Ihara, President of Aisin Seiki Corporation (“Aisin”, another major Toyota supplier)²⁸, explained Aisin’s growth strategy:

²⁷ Gosei is a major Toyota-affiliated/keiretsu component supplier. Toyota has a 42.82% ownership interest in Gosei. Sales to Toyota account for 54.35% of its consolidated sales on a global basis as of March 2023 (Toyota Gosei, 2023).

²⁸ Aisin is another major Toyota component supplier. Toyota has a 24.80% ownership interest in Aisin. Sales to Toyota account for 64.55% of its consolidated sales on a global basis as of March 2022 (Aisin Corporation, 2023).

Before, Toyota’s purchasing policy was ‘Don’t sell to non-Toyota,’ ‘Please insist on Toyota.’ But now they are promoting it, that we should sell to non-Toyota (C20). They have changed their policy (Greimel, 2015).

Triangulated by the two news articles, Case 7-3 exemplifies Toyota’s latest strategy for their overseas operations outside Japan to promote the ACR practice of multiple sourcing. This change can be interpreted as a translated case from ACR to OCR at the overseas subsidiary level as to the specific feature. Table 26 presents the results of textual analysis:

	CME of Japan (before)	CME Case 7-3 (after)
Culturally driven term	Feature (A): Fewer suppliers	Feature (A): Large number of suppliers
Practice level	(C1) Fewer, select customers (C2) Trading only with fringe group of ACR customers	(C19) Broader customer base (C20) More selling to non-Toyota customers
Culturally driven behavior	Buyer and supplier’s high dependency on each other	Buyer and supplier’s low dependency on each other outside trading jurisdiction

Table 26: Case 7-3 analysis

Similar to Case 7-2, Case 7-3 can be discussed from two angles: 1) what has changed and 2) what has remained unchanged. What has changed is to adopt the ACR practice of having a large pool of suppliers by translating and adopting it as-is. This cultural translation is performed specifically for Toyota’s ACR operations outside the group’s main playgrounds to improve Gosei and Aisin’s financials with greater scale economies and lower transaction costs (Sako, 1992).

What has remained unchanged is everything else, other than the specific parts of Toyota’s global supply chain. The case indicates that the Toyota group remains OBR distinctively: Gosei and Aisin’s goal is to supply quality auto parts at the cheapest possible price for Toyota by strengthening their own financials through selling products to non-Toyota outside Japan. Greimel (2015) explains “The higher sales volume brings down parts prices for all carmakers, benefiting new partners as well as long-established customer No. 1, Toyota” (p. 52). Similar to Case 7-2, Case 7-3 is seen as an example of translated specificity its limited scope. This strategic change is not the suppliers’ transformation into an ACR entity but their business development in the OCR realm of the proposed framework²⁹.

7.4 Cross-case analysis

Having examined the focused cases, Table 27 summarizes the answers to the research questions generated though triangulated analysis of the cases in the respective societies:

²⁹ The present author’s earlier work (Kitamura, 2019) reports on the tie of personnel flows within the Toyota group that this chapter does not focus on for the sake of brevity.

	LMEs	CME of Japan
Practice (RQ 1)	Life of vehicle as duration of trading relation evidenced by purchase order: purchase order used for every product order (Case 7-1 ACR) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quasi-eternity as duration of trading relation not translated to ACR due to symmetrical opposite: life of vehicle 	Quasi-eternity as duration of trading relation evidenced by master trade agreement (Case 7-1 OCR) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Life of vehicle as duration of trading relation not translated to OCR due to symmetrical opposite: Quasi-eternity
Findings (RQ 2&3)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 9) Preference for relatively short business relationship 10) Primacy of individualistic interest in freedom of trading 11) Reasonable power distributed to suppliers to change buyers (depending on availability) 12) Tolerant of each other's individual freedom of interpretation, which is uncertain to others, unless documented individually 13) Every order explicitly documented as purchase order to indicate intent 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 9) Preference for relatively long business relationship 10) Primacy of collectivistic interest in being part of collective with shared goal 11) Relatively less power distributed to suppliers regarding buyer change 12) Collective member's own interpretation (individual variance) seen as uncertainty unless consulted and agreed collectively 13) Written purchase order unnecessary as collective's unspoken codes of conduct regulate production
Cultural constructs	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 9) Short-term orientation 10) Individualism 11) Small (buyer-supplier) power distance 12) Low uncertainty avoidance 13) Low context of communication 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 9) Long-term orientation 10) Collectivism 11) Large (buyer-supplier) power distance 12) High uncertainty avoidance 13) High context of communication
Practice (RQ 1)	Supplier chosen from large pool of suppliers during selection process: relatively low dependence between buyer and supplier <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (Before translation) Bidding used anytime even during contract period: life of vehicle (Case 7-2-1; implied from Case 7-2-2) (After translation) Bidding no longer used during contract period in case context; however, life of vehicle as definition of contract period unchanged (Case 7-2-2) 	Buyer's preference for quasi-eternal relation with fewer suppliers: relatively high dependence between buyer and supplier <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (Before translation) OCR suppliers selling products to fringe group of ACR customers (C2) (After translation) OCR suppliers selling products larger group of ACR customers to improve profitability for providing parts at lower cost for main OCR buyer: Such ACR sales considered secondary, not main business (Case 7-3)
Findings (RQ 2&3)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Primacy of individualistic interest in low dependence on trading partner(s) 2) Buyer's primacy of individualistic interest in setting and gaining most economical pricing through large pool of suppliers: price first, relationship next 3) Supplier's primacy of individualistic interest in joining pools to be selected for maximizing profit individually unchanged 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Buyer and supplier's high dependency on each other in collective group 2) Buyer's primacy of collectivistic interest in selecting supplier as suitable member of collective group: relationship first, price next 3) Supplier's primacy of collectivistic interest in overarching goal of providing products at most economical prices for collective's core entity unchanged
Cultural constructs	Individualism	Collectivism

Table 27: Descriptive answers to research questions

The previous section has analyzed two different cases: untranslated and translated. Case 7-1 has examined the salient textual data *life of the vehicle* and *quasi-eternity* that are not translated to each other, signifying the ACR and OCR patterns, respectively, in the highly internationalized industry. These terms of practices answer Research Question 1 on incongruous business behaviors. The findings in Columns LMEs and the CME of Japan answer Research Questions 2 and 3, respectively. The findings are the descriptions of cultural values of preference that boil down to the cultural constructs listed at the bottom of the case summaries in

Table 27. Case 7-1 exhibits the issue of cultural translatability: For instance, quasi-eternity as contract duration is more than unlikely to be translated and adopted as-is in LMEs.

Case 7-2 has presented the OCR term of having no bid translated literally as-is at the textual level to LMEs. The specificity is translated and worked with its limited scope. GM has adopted the OCR practice for the specific area of their global operation. This strategic change is not their transformation into an OCR entity but can be seen as an example that a culturally driven text can be translated. Similarly, the Toyota suppliers have translated and adopted the ACR practice of having a broader customer base as-is for their specific area of their global operation. Their expansion of non-Toyota businesses can be primarily a growth strategy especially common for all major LME suppliers to survive in the automobile industry (Greimel, 2015).

The results of case analysis offer three grounded interpretations: First, culturally driven texts of practices can be translated as-is for business development, as long as the core elements of the ACR/OCR business pattern retain the compatibility with cultural values of preference. In simple terms, a culturally driven text of business practice can be translated, as long as the ACR and OCR patterns remain as they are. Case 7-2 ACR can be seen as a developed practice in the sense that the buyer needs less bidding, and the suppliers have more security than before. So can Case 7-2 OCR in the sense that the suppliers improve profitability through greater economies of scale. These translated cases can be seen as a shift towards the other extreme on a linear continuum of two polar ends in the proposed framework of cultural translatability. Chapter Nine will discuss these developments as cross-cultural learning.

Second, the issue of cultural untranslatability lingers: The CME term *quasi-eternity* as contract duration is more than unlikely to be translated as-is in LMEs³⁰. ACR buyers will be more than unlikely to transform into OCR buyers (Lapham, 2008). The findings suggest that, from the ACR and OCR patterns have remained and will remain with changes and reversions centering around the durable practices.

Finally, related to the second point, culturally driven practice-level texts have a high level of cultural compatibility with the individual-level cultural values in the respective societies. This compatibility explains the stable nature of culturally driven specificity that not only addresses the issue of cultural translatability but also supports the structure of the proposed framework.

This chapter has tested the framework of cultural translatability, applying the cultural specificities to it in the context of manufacturing. The findings stress the importance of disaggregating the durable and changing elements of business practice. The previous section has examined the Toyota suppliers' strategy pertaining primarily to economies of scale, the concept of which may be seemingly remote from goodwill trust. The critical point there is Aishin's ultimate goal, which is to be a good Toyota supplier based on their

³⁰ The previous section has only examined several cases that rise the issue of cultural translatability. The present author's earlier work (Kitamura, 2019) reports on US\$12 billion criminal fines that the US Department of Justice charged to the Japanese component suppliers in the late 2010s. The crux of the series of high-profile cases appears to be the issue of cultural translatability of the Japanese business term *shoken*, meaning "respecting commercial rights" or "respecting incumbency" (Greimel, 2016) which is the everyday value of preference in Japan but resulted in illegal behaviors in the USA. As discussed in Section 7.2, the Japanese respect other collectives' business in an OCR way that conflicts ACRs' respect to the arm's-length principle. The whole cases were labeled as criminal "price-fixing", which strikingly highlighted the issue of cultural translatability between ACR and OCR.

goodwill trust with the suitable business strategy for the on-going industry-wide internationalization. It is inaccurate to judge, based on the superficial part of the strategy change, that the Toyota group has ended making keiretsu transactions. If a researcher only examines Aishin's new relationships with non-Toyota companies, overlooks Aishin's shared goal within the Toyota group, and claims "Toyota no longer employs the keiretsu system", this wrong conclusion exhibits "the ecological fallacy that arises from a mismatch of unit of analysis" (Neuman, 2006, p. 168). The unit of analysis here is the continued existence of the Toyota keiretsu based on their goodwill trust, not their strategic reversions necessary for survival. This point needs to be put forward since some research works in circulation appear to make misleading claims that Japanese style management is fundamentally changed. The reality is that it retains its durable parts with changes and reversions made according to internal and external influences including economic ups and downs. The body of literature (Abegglen, 2006; Gotoh, 2020) supports this point. The proposed framework of cultural translatability can help perform case-by-case analysis and avoid an ecological fallacy. This use of the framework corresponds to the need for the new category of cultural translatability discussed in Chapter One.

The discussion above suggests that not all early concepts reported in classical literature are dated. The findings support early concepts, including ACR-OCR (Sako, 1992), reviewed and borrowed to create the proposed framework. Japan is known for its assimilation of non-Japanese inventions and practices and making them "Japanese" by blending them with local specificities. This can be in some sense "Westernization" in search of the optimal point through cross-cultural learning but does not attest to complete transformation into ACR.

Chapter Eight: Findings in the Financial Sector

This chapter will explore the financial systems in LMEs and the CME of Japan for further testing the concept of cultural translatability and the workability of its framework. The financial sector is generally considered “least cultural” (Abegglen, 2006). If there exists the issue of cultural translatability, the sectoral findings may help better understand cultural translation. This chapter will first offer an overview of the sector, identify its focused units of analysis and then systematically analyze textual data.

8.1 Preliminary analysis

A financial system may be seen as a collection of financial institutions, which channel money from depositors’ accounts to investors. Aoki and Patrick (1994) draw a fundamental distinction between two types of financial systems:

A fundamental choice is between a securities market-based system of external finance, primarily for large businesses, through competitive issue of equity, bonds, and commercial paper; and a banking-based system of loans, short term and longer term. The securities market system, often termed Anglo-American model, has dominated much academic and policy thinking about financial systems. The banking-based system of corporate finance, monitoring, and governance - more recently termed by some the Japanese-German system - provides an alternative analytical model of direct policy relevance. (Aoki and Patrick, 1994, xxii)

Aoki and Patrick (1994) clarify that the actual systems in most countries stand somewhere between the two types: “While the dichotomy between security market and bank systems of corporate finance is analytically important, the reality is that advanced industrial countries combine both so that differences are less extreme in practice than in theory” (xxii). Aoki and Patrick (1994) suggest that developed countries use a mixture of systems but have specific preference for one system over the other. This duality is discussed across the discipline of finance: For instance, the debt obligations of large corporations tend to be diffusely held in LMEs, but LME banks extend corporate loans too (Hoshi et al., 1990). In the CME of Japan, the banking-based system is not as dominant as before but still prevalent (Hirota, 2009).

The two models of financial systems appear to correspond to the LME-CME distinction. Hall and Soskice (2001) explain the LME financial system: “Firms coordinate their activities primarily via hierarchies and competitive market arrangements”, and “market relationships are characterized by the arm’s-length exchange of goods or services in a context of competition and formal contracting” (p. 8). This explanation points out that the arm’s-length principle characterizes the LME systems, including financial markets. As such, this thesis refers to the LME financial system as the arm’s-length system (ALS) for discussion purposes. Akin to other specificities previously examined in Part Two, ALS specifically means the shared elements of the LME system. This thesis does not assume that LMEs are the same. This chapter does not use “Anglo-American” or “securities” to refer to ALS because this research is not specifically bound to the Anglo-Americans nor the securities markets.

As for the CME financial system, this thesis borrows the term *main bank system* (MBS) (Aoki and Patrick, 1994), which is frequently used in pertinent studies. The term *main bank* refers to the closest

relationship bank(s) as examined in Chapter Three (Aoki and Patrick, 1994). The MBS is specific to the CME of Japan, among other CMEs, corresponding to this thesis's focus. The Japanese MBS has distinctive characteristics that the next section will discuss. Some of them may differ from other CMEs' systems country by country. For example, Germany is a CME (Hall and Soskice, 2001), but their system's characteristics may not be perfectly the same as Japan's MBS. The idea is consistent with the different types of collectivism between Japan and Turkey examined in Chapter Three.

ALS-MBS is suitable for testing the proposed framework of cultural translatability in three ways. First, The ALS and MBS patterns can serve as two extremes of a linear continuum - the framework's horizontal feature - placed at each level. The two patterns can be treated as modal types of financial systems to capture the social realities that exhibit duality in the same way as job-type vs. membership-type employment examined in the preceding chapter. This horizontal feature is shared among all the adopted concepts for the framework.

Second, as discussed earlier, the ALS and the MBS patterns are generally specific to LMEs and the CME of Japan (Aoki and Patrick, 1994) respectively. This sector-economy link can be seen as the vertical connection between the organization and economy levels in the framework.

Finally, prior research suggests the vertical link (or intrinsic connection) between the organization and individual levels. To be linked, a business practice needs to be culturally driven. Recent studies often refer to such a banking/financial practice as ethical finance. Noting De-Clerck (2009), Chew et al. (2016) write:

... there is no clear definition of ethical banking because *social, ethical, alternative, sustainable development and solidarity banking and finance* are denominations that are currently used to express particular ways of working with money based on non-financial deliberations. A precise and unified definition of these types of finance as such is not available and perhaps not possible because of the different traditions from which the ethical finance actors have emerged. (pp. 73-74)

The quote points out no unanimity on the term *ethical banking*, among others, because ethics can vary by society. The term *ethical banking* means, in terms of this thesis, culturally driven practice of banking. The ALS and MBS systems can be "ethical finance" - regionally patterned yet generally accepted ways of banking practice with fair principles in the respective societies. As such, this chapter postulates that ALS and MBS are culturally driven and compatible with local cultural values of preference (Karl, 2015; Rogers, 2003). This vertical connection is the rationale for the proposed framework's structure.

This thesis differentiates culturally driven and culturally independent behaviors and focuses on the former. It does not focus on culturally independent banking practice: for example, green banking (safeguarding the ecology) (Tara et al., 2015), crypto currencies, and crowd funding (Rizzi et al., 2018). These types of banking alone are generally, not absolutely, remote from the cultural constructs reviewed in Chapter Three. Having located the chapter focus, the following section will examine the ALS-MBS attributes.

8.2 Concept analysis

Prior studies introduce the “classical” features of MBS: for example, it is “an especially intensive manifestation of relationship banking” (Aoki and Patrick, 1994, xxi) that is best understood as “a financial institution that keeps money flowing to a group of industrial concerns” (Miyashita and Russell, 1994, p. 43) that include keiretsu. It is a diffused yet shared understanding, not to claim that a main bank exists exclusively for its group (Learmount, 2002). The main banks’ roles include extending loans, holding client companies’ shares, and sending executive officers to client companies (“the tie of personnel flows”) (Dow, McGuire, and Yoshikawa, 2011): for example, recruiting a Chief Executive Officer from their main bank within the institutional group.

Subsequent research suggests that the preceding MBS features have remained, but main banks have become less exclusive for their group. One influential reason is a major policy reform known as Japan’s Big Bang, initiated in the late 1990s (Toya, 2006) to internationalize the Japanese financial system by loosening the regulations, allowing non-Japanese financial institutions to enter Japan for doing business. Among other watersheds reviewed in Chapter Three, the Big Bang has significantly affected the Japanese banks, as it has intensified business competition in multiple ways. It pressed them to start doing more business beyond the group boundary to improve their chances of survival. To best understand the MBS attributes, this section examines what has changed and remained in the MBS before and after the Big Bang.

Hirota (2009)³¹ reports on the Big Bang changes of the main bank roles in Japan, based on approximately 500 companies and their main bank relationships between 1973 and 2008. Hirota (2009) summarizes his findings into six points as follows:

The company-main bank relationships are stable, and most companies have not changed their main bank(s) (C1). In the 1980s and 1990s, the importance of bank borrowing and main bank borrowing became less because of the companies’ lowered debt ratios (C2). However, since the 1990s, the companies’ dependency on main bank borrowings has remained unchanged (C3). Less cross-shareholdings [mutual holdings between the company and its main bank] and the lessened tie of personnel flows [less executive officers hired as a member of the company’s board from its main bank] are observed in the 2000s (C4). In most cases, companies usually choose their main bank to become the arranger of syndicated credit facilities extended to the companies (C5). Most companies choose their main bank and its group security company to become the arranger of corporate bond issuance (C6). (p. 1)

Hirota’s grounded finding is the continued existence of the MBS with changes and reversions (2009). As quoted above, the significance of lending, cross-shareholding, and the tie of personnel flows has lessened over the last two decades. These changes have occurred according to the client institutions’ needs, yet the attributes still exist. A recent study (Gotoh, 2020) also supports Hirota’s grounded finding. Although some MBS characteristics have changed, most of the Japanese firms have retained the same relationship bank(s) since the emergence of the MBS, during the war period around 1939 (Teranishi, 1994).

As examined in Chapter Three, there is no legally binding contract for the main bank relationship between the firm and its main bank. What binds them is essentially the same as the keiretsu ties: “ownership

³¹ Available only in Japanese. The present author translated all quotes into English.

networks, personnel flows, and expectations of mutual assistance” (Dow, McGuire, and Yoshikawa, 2011 p. 301). It is well known that the main banks and their client institutions comingle capital investments (Hirota, 2009): for instance, owning 3% of the outstanding shares of each other. The tie of personnel flows has lessened but still exists as examined earlier (Hirota, 2009). These ties strikingly exhibit the issue of cultural translatability³² but are not the most suitable research subjects for this thesis as discussed in Chapter Seven.

The tie of expectations of mutual assistance is a suitable research topic for this chapter. It can be explained as *giri* or goodwill trust: “a sure feeling that trading partners possess a moral commitment to maintaining a trading relationship” (Sako, 1992, p. 10). In the banking context, it can be said to maintain a banking relationship. This thesis postulates that goodwill trust is generally applicable to the whole CME of Japan for testing the proposed framework in the financial context.

The previous section has discussed a financial system’s function of channeling money from depositors’ accounts to investors. Hall and Soskice (2001) classify it into two types of functions: fluid and patient capital that correspond to LMEs and the CME of Japan, respectively. In LMEs, the financial system provides capital sensitive to current profitability: Bank loans are “fluid” because the banks stop lending to borrowers losing money and move funds to those profitable. In the case of Japan, companies have access to finance “that is not entirely dependent on publicly available financial data or current returns” (Hall and Soskice, 2001). Hall and Soskice (2004) view the MBS’s continuous financial support (or the aggregate bank loans at the national level) as “patient” capital. It can be described as “patient” because supporting poorly performing borrowers is costly for the banks (Cortavarria et al., 2000). Having reviewed the literature, Table 28 summarizes the results of conceptual analysis of the literature:

	LMEs	CME of Japan
Culturally driven system	Arm’s-length system	Main bank system
Practice level: findings of RQ 1	(Literature) Debt obligations of large corporations diffusely held by various investors: individuals’ investment interest and appetite respected (Literature) Relationship history generally irrelevant (Literature) Main bank and institutional clients’ low dependency on each other: No “main bank” concept exists (Literature) Banking relationships governed by arm’s-length principle (Literature) Banks’ financial support seen as “fluid” (Literature) Terms and conditions written, detailed and substantive for all lending transactions (Literature) Illegal or uncommon for banks to own clients’ shares (Literature) Personnel flows irrelevant to banking relationships	(Literature) Keeping money flowing to a group of industrial concerns, including keiretsu: collectives and collectivistic transactions preferred (C1-3) Bank-client relation lasting quasi-eternally: history viewed as significant (C5-6) Main bank and institutional clients’ high dependency on each other: main bank’s financial support expected (Literature) Main bank relationships governed by goodwill trust (Literature) Banks’ financial support seen as “patient” (Literature) No terms and conditions written to have main bank relationships, while lending transactions documented (C4) Cross-shareholding signifying closeness of banking relationship (C4) Personnel flows signifying closeness of banking relationship
Cultural values: findings of RQs 2 and 3	1) Primacy of individualistic interest in investment freedom regarded as ethical	1) Primacy of collectivistic interest in group-based financing regarded as ethical

³² In the USA, it is illegal for banks to own any of the outstanding shares of their client institutions.

	2) Decision-making managers' support for investment freedom over long-term relationship at organization level 3) Arm's-length principle prioritized to regulate banking partners relatively tolerant of each other's individual freedom of interpretation, which is uncertain to others, unless documented	2) Decision-making managers' support for long-term relationship within group context at organization level 3) Goodwill trust (unspoken code of collective conduct) preferred: no legal documentation required to keep main bank relationship: deviation from goodwill trust seen as uncertainty, which is to be discouraged
Cultural constructs	1) Individualism 2) Short-term orientation 3) Low uncertainty avoidance	1) Collectivism 2) Long-term orientation 3) High uncertainty avoidance

Table 28: Conceptual analysis of literature

Table 28 is a list of focused attributes on the tie of expectations of mutual assistance, not an exhaustive list of all MBS characteristics. The analysis suggests that ALS and MBS do not operate in the same manner: more precisely, the respective systems have different approaches to the goal of channeling the flow of funds in international settings. These symmetrical opposites of attributes are likely to raise the issue of cultural translatability if brought from one society to another. Having reviewed the attributes in a systematic manner, this chapter will focus on the tie of expectations of mutual assistance and related specificities in the financial sector.

8.3 Case analysis

This section will examine three cases that pertain to the focused attributes in the financial sector. Table 29 summarizes the cases and their units of analysis. The cases have different scenarios that portray the dynamics of cultural translations.

	Context	Practice	Outcome
Case 8-1	Bank employees explaining views on MBS operating in ALE during interviews	Different missions, types of capital, lending decision rationale, and loan pricing.	Partially translated: MBS loans extended in ALS but not all attributes translated
Case 8-2	ALE bank employees discussing MBS bank loan pricing in news articles	MBS syndicated loan priced significantly lower than ALS loans	Partially translated: MBS syndicate closed in ALS but pricing not understood
Case 8-3	Definition of term <i>relationship lending</i> provided in literature	Practice of relationship lending and its attributes in ALS and MBS	Partially translated: Relationship lending practiced but not all attributes translated

Table 29: A Summary of cases

Case 8-1

Case 8-1 is based on the present author's interviews with the banking professionals as described in Chapter Four. Interviewee 3, a Canadian banking professional with more than 30-year banking experience, much of which was gained in the USA, recounted the following. Reflective questions that the interviewer asked the interviewee are italicized.

[There is a] distinct difference in how to treat people: In Japanese banking, support for accounts, commitment to customers and low pricing (C7). Here [for US banks] banking means making money (L1). Banks' missions are different: Japanese banks help customers –different levels of priority between Japan and the US –I guess Japan is more social or socialized in many ways (C8). *You mean social harmony or something?* Yes.

The interviewee mentioned “support for accounts, commitment to customers, and low pricing” as the three major differences from the ALS. The three specificities appeared to exemplify the characteristics of Japanese banking delineated by all the bank interviewees, some of whom highlighted one or two categories and others stressed another, depending on their professional expertise. Interviewee 6, an experienced Japanese credit manager with 18 years of experience in underwriting Japanese corporate credits, including nine years gained in the USA, maintained:

Rationale for credit decisions is radically different between Japanese banking and US banking. The Japanese relationship managers come to me [Japanese credit analyst/underwriter] and say, “We will extend this new loan to the borrower because we are the main bank to them, thank you for your work.” The lending decisions are often made without analyzing the borrower's financial performance in detail, when we are the main bank to the borrower (C9). Being the main bank is the decision determinant. In the US however, borrower performance is absolutely critical for the American credit committee members (L2). Main-bank relationship supersedes anything for the Japanese professionals but it normally means nothing to American professionals (L3). This gap is highly problematic in the credit committee meeting with American credit officers about poorly performing Japanese borrowers.

Interviewee 6's comments include the word *problematic* because the rationale of Japanese decision, which is perfectly reasonable to the Japanese bankers, is perceived differently to the American bankers. Borrower performance is certainly a critical factor for the Japanese banks and banking supervisors, yet the main bank relationship can be the decision base. All bank interviewees portrayed the main bank relationship as the decision rationale for lending, although it was case by case: for instance, mitigating measures, such as credit enhancement, were negotiated with poorly performing borrowers. Another Japanese banking professional, Interviewee 2, who had 17 years of experience gained at six financial institutions in Japan and the USA, elaborated the difference in lending rationale as follows:

One reason why long-term relationship [in the sense of MBS relationship] is not critical in US banking is that relationship is easily overthrown. Long-term relationship-based banking does not work in the US. Business relationships [including banking relationships] are money-based (L4).

The colloquial expression “money-based” was intended to describe the healthy LME pattern, consisting of for-profit parties following the arm's-length principle (ALP). This chapter is not to deface the ALS in any way but to give shape to it and highlight the different attributes that raise the issue of cultural translatability in international settings. Table 30 presents the results of textual analysis:

	LMEs	CME of Japan
Culturally driven specificity	Fluid capital: Financial freedom given to individual organizations to maximize profit based on arm's-length principle	Patient capital: Expectation of mutual assistance between banks and clients in collective group based on goodwill trust
Practice level (RQ 1)	(L1) Profit maximization seen as primary mission while supporting clients (Implied) Individual profit maximization prioritized whenever possible (Implied) Relatively high pricing (L2, 3) Evaluation of client performance through credit analysis prioritized over relationship (L4) Lending decisions to be made based on client's business performance: no concept of long-term institutional relationship	(C7) Financial support for clients seen as primary mission while making profit (C7, 8) Commitment to institutional customers prioritized whenever possible (C7) Relatively low pricing (C9) Relationship prioritized over evaluation of client performance through credit analysis (in case context) (C9) Lending decision to be made based on institutional membership-based relationship (e.g., keiretsu) besides client's business performance
Culturally driven behavior	Ethical to maximize profit on each transaction at each individual organization	Ethical to provide financial support for institutional clients in group context through relatively low pricing

Table 30: Case 8-1 analysis

The findings suggest that the ALS-MBS dichotomy can be described with different missions given to financial institutions between the respective societies. In the ALS, each financial institution has the prioritized mission of pursuing healthy growth through profit maximization individually. In the MBS, each main bank has the diffused yet prioritized mission of “keeping money flowing to a group of industrial concerns” (Miyashita and Russell, 1994) that appears to be “patient capital” to Hall and Soskice (2001). A group of industrial concerns here include a large corporate group or a bilateral banking relationship lasting for a long time, depending on the context.

Case 8-1 shows mixed results: some specificities raising the issue of cultural translatability at a striking level, and others partially translated in cross-cultural settings in the case context. The concepts of fluid and patient capital raise the issue as they cannot be culturally appropriate in the MBS and the ALS, respectively, in the extreme sense. So do the ALE and MBS missions as presented above. Interviewee 6's comments explain that LME professionals do not support the concept of patient capital, which is supported in the MBS.

At the same time, the interview results generally suggest that the MBS is operative in LMEs. In other words, the MBS is translated and transplanted in LMEs. However, the MBS's foreign operations come with the issues of cultural translatability constantly occurring to varying degrees. For instance, the Japanese bank employees view their support of patient capital as “good loan” in quality (Interviewee 6). However, the LME bank examiners (the government agency officers) often regard such patient capital as “bad loan” during the bank supervisor examination (Interviewee 4). The findings suggest that, while the loan's attributes can be translated, its quality is not. This gap can be expressed as partially translated.

Case 8-2

Case 8-2 performs textual analysis of newspaper articles. The media, as well as Case 8-1, occasionally reports on Japanese pricing that appears low from the ALS perspective. For example, Schwartz (2014) writes

about the Japanese banks' low pricing for the syndicated deals closed in Central and Latin America in her Latin Finance article entitled *Syndicated loans: At any price*. Similarly, Uranaka (2013) highlights it as "razor-thin loan margins" in his Reuters news article based on their interviews with high-level officers in Japan's three largest banks also known as the megabanks. Important to note is that these news articles talk about a loan margin, which is often called a loan spread³³ and not a loan interest rate charged to a borrower. A loan spread, which is the unit of analysis in this case study, directly determines the bank's interest revenue. The loan interest rate generally consists of the loan spread, cost of funds,³⁴ and other miscellaneous fees, if any. Euroweek's (2009) *Loans hit single digit spread as Kirin refinances* features a loan margin of less than 0.1%, priced for a three-year loan syndicated by the Japanese banks. This news article is treated as a case material, as it is informative about the reality of Japanese pricing. For ease of presentation, the article is split into and presented as two paragraphs:

Japanese beer and soft drink manufacturer Kirin Holdings launched a JPY80 billion [US\$800 million] loan last week that pays a margin of less than 10 bp for three years, in a sign that pricing for Japanese borrowers is shrinking to levels not seen since the onset of the credit crunch.... "It is almost hilarious where this deal has been priced," said one loans banker away from the deal (L5). Another loans banker agreed: "This is Japanese pricing at its worst. It is absolutely bonkers." (L6)

The three-year loan amounts to US\$800 million, which is large enough for the Japanese bankers to be very serious about structuring the deal. However, their pricing appears "absolutely bonkers" to the ALS audience with no knowledge of the Japanese MBS. Schwartz (2014) writes about a general view of the arm's-length pricing in LMEs: "At 125 basis points over Libor, bankers say the pricing was tight" (p. 20). Compared with 1.25%, a margin of less than 0.1% is indeed low.³⁵ Why? The rest of the article (Euroweek, 2009) describes the bankers' conjectures that exhibit the ALS logic and the unfamiliarity of goodwill trust with the MBS:

The return to tighter loan margins has been described by some bankers as premature as it did not follow an improvement in global economic fundamentals (L7)... The lack of underwriting commitments may also be a factor. "Because most deals are done as clubs or on a best-efforts basis the lead banks are not forced to price the deals to the market and are not being market-oriented," said another loans banker (L8). But others defended the move toward lower pricing. "Pricing for double-A credits was always in the single digits in Japan until Lehman blew up so it is just a return to those days," said one loans banker close to the deal. Kirin is not rated by Standard & Poor's but it is rated Aa3 by Moody's.

In the article above, the word *club* refers to a club syndicate, meaning that only the Japanese banks, which are generally familiar with each other, participated in the syndicate. It means that the case is representative of

³³ It is a part of the loan's interest rate charged to the borrower. A loan spread is expressed as a percentage (e.g., 1.23%) or in basis points (e.g., 123 bps) over the cost of funds for the bank. A loan may be priced for a customer, for instance, at 2.00%, which is the sum of a spread of 1.23% and a base rate of 0.77% in simple terms. From a viewpoint of lenders, a loan with a 1.23% spread is priced lower than a loan with a 1.50% spread.

³⁴ The cost of funds is affected by many factors, such as the deposit rates, the central bank rate, and the measure of quantitative easing. In contrast, the loan spread is determined by the employees at the bank, not strictly attached to those factors (Gros et al., 2015).

³⁵ In banking, loan pricing varies significantly depending on the borrower credit risk, the loan tenor, etc. The quote is only cited to present the general differences between the ALS and MBS patterns.

Japanese pricing, suitable for this chapter. The word *double-A credit* means a good grade given to creditworthy institutional borrowers by credit agencies. It suggests that Kirin is a creditworthy company. The word *single digit* refers to loan pricing expressed with a single-digit basis points (bp) ranging from 1 to 9 bp. The article suggests that, although pricing can change over time, Japanese pricing has been relatively low. Table 31 presents the results of textual analysis:

	LMEs	CME of Japan
Culturally driven specificity	Relatively high pricing	Relatively low pricing
Practice level (RQ 1)	(L5, 6) MBS pricing as almost hilarious or absolutely bonkers, not generating sufficient profit (L7) MBS pricing seen as premature, not considering economic fundamentals (L8) MBS pricing interpreted as not market-oriented: ALS pricing believed to be appropriate	(Implied) MBS pricing decided as part of quasi-eternal main bank relationship, not strictly based on single transaction (Implied) MBS pricing prioritized over ALE type of “economic fundamentals” (Implied) MBS pricing believed to be appropriate in MBS context of club syndicate
Culturally driven behavior	Ethical to maximize profit gained from each transaction on a relatively short-term basis defined by individual product tenor	Ethical to reap sufficient profits from whole relationship package on a long-term (quasi-eternal) basis in group context

Table 31: Case 8-2 analysis

The findings suggest that the notion of appropriate pricing raises the issue of cultural translatability when brought to another financial system that entertains profit maximization on a transaction basis. Japanese pricing is unlikely to be translated and accepted as appropriate in the case context. Economic ups and downs can influence the employees’ mindset for loan pricing at the banks, but Japanese pricing has been relatively and significantly low for institutional borrowers with good creditworthiness.

As pointed out in Case 8-1, the pricing difference appears to be driven by the ALS and MBS ethics. The Japanese pricing mechanism considers the long-term benefits, including various types of fee income in addition to lending, based on the quasi-eternal MBS relationship (Scher, 1997; Learmount, 2002). In the MBS, loan pricing does not always have to be as high as the ALS level, so long as the long-term benefits are satisfactory to the MBS bank (Scher, 1997; Learmount, 2002).

In contrast, the ALS pricing mechanism has to be arm’s length to gain enough profit from each transaction in LMEs, where no MBS long-term benefits are guaranteed. The difference in pricing levels cannot be fully explained without addressing the underlying cultural values of preference as an influential factor.

Despite the difference in pricing mechanism between the ALS and the MBS, the findings show that MBS practice can be translated and transplanted to the ALS market in the sense that the Japanese banks were able to arrange a club syndicate in the case context. Although the MBS pricing did not make sense to the ALS bankers, the Japanese banks closed the deal in the ALS market. Chapter Nine will discuss the possible ripple effects of the issue of cultural translatability.

Case 8-3

Case 8-3 performs textual analysis of publicly available articles regarding relationship lending, which is a salient MBS characteristic as examined earlier. Broadly speaking, literature distinguishes two types of lending technologies, namely, transaction lending and relationship lending (OECD, 2015). Berger and Udell (2006) write that transactions lending is “based primarily on hard quantitative data,” whereas relationship lending is “based significantly on soft qualitative information” (p. 2946). Transaction lending is alternatively called arm’s-length lending, “which relies on hard (verifiable) information and assets” (Beck et al., 2014, p. 2). Besides the somewhat different terminologies defined and used in circulation, the literature generally supports the basic distinction of transaction and relationship lending as traditional lending technologies (OECD, 2015). In the LME literature, the mainstream idea appears threefold: 1) Banks employ, broadly speaking, two types of lending technologies. 2) These two are not mutually exclusive in the sense that banks use a mix of technologies, though one technology or mechanism may be prioritized for credit decision-making over the other (OECD, 2015). 3) Relationship lending is used as a risk-mitigating strategy to deal specifically with SMEs or “opaque borrowers” as opposed to “informationally transparent borrowers” (Berger and Udell 2006, p. 2946). This chapter focuses on the third point. Berger and Udell (2006, p. 2951) define the term *relationship lending* as follows:

Under relationship lending, the financial institution relies primarily on soft information gathered through contact over time with the SME, its owner and the local community to address the opacity problem (L9). This information is acquired in large part by the loan officer through direct contact with the borrower and through observing the SME’s performance on all dimensions of its banking relationship... This soft information may often remain proprietary to the loan officer because it is not easily observed, verified, or transmitted to others (L10).

This LME definition of relationship lending is likely to raise the issue of cultural translatability for three reasons if translated as-is to the CME of Japan. First, while relationship lending is believed to be used specifically for SMEs in LMEs, in the MBS, it is widely used regardless of company size. The MBS is considered “as an especially intensive manifestation of relationship banking” (Aoki and Patrick, 1994, p. xxi).

Second, the LME definition assumes the opacity problem is inherent in relationship lending. In the MBS, usually it is not inherent. Relationship lending can signify a credit relationship in the CME of Japan between a large bank and a listed company that publicly and regularly releases its financial information in detail (Hirota, 2009). In the MBS, Japanese SMEs and individual borrowers provide financial (or tax) statements as financial information for their bank(s) that they have a credit relationship with.

Finally, in the MBS, soft information remains proprietary to the collective of the financial institution, not to the loan officer. In the MBS, Japanese banks collect a copious amount of information from their institutional clients, use it for their credit analysis, and keep it in their decision-making files (Interviewees 1, 2, and 7). Such decision-making files are shared with their credit division headquartered in Japan and, when applicable, the local bank supervisors such as the Federal Reserve Bank in the case of the USA. Hall and Soskice (2001, p. 23) describe the MBS’s organization-level information sharing as follows:

...the presence of dense networks linking the managers and technical personnel inside a company to their counterparts in other firms on terms that provide for the sharing of reliable information about the progress of the firm (C10).

Hall and Soskice (2001, p. 23) see “dense networks” as the MBS’s strategy to mitigate the “problem” inherent in CMEs’ patient capital “that is not entirely dependent on publicly available financial data or current returns” as reviewed earlier. In simple terms, the MBS uses interfirm networks as the primary tool for channeling the flow of information solicited for relationship lending under the MBS mission to “keep money flowing to a group of industrial concerns” (Miyashita and Russell, 1994, p. 43). Table 32 presents the results of textual analysis:

	LMEs	CME of Japan
Culturally driven definition	Relationship lending meaning risk-mitigating technique for SME lending	Relationship lending representing various interfirm networks
Practice level (RQ 1)	(L9) Relationship lending to be used for informationally opaque SMEs. (L10) Soft information contained to responsible loan officer alone	(Literature) Relationship lending used regardless of borrower size (C10) Soft information shared as part of interfirm network and retained
Culturally driven behavior	Ethical to minimize information sharing for carrying out a specific loan project on a short-term, relatively low-context transaction basis	Ethical to build relatively high-context pool of information that contextualizes a group of industrial concerns on a long-term basis

Table 32: Case 8-3 analysis

The findings suggest that the LME definition of relationship lending raises the issue of cultural translatability when brought to the CME of Japan as-is. Conversely, the MBS definition of relationship banking is unlikely to make sense in LMEs.

MBS relationship lending inevitably comes with patient capital, which is seen as the “problem” in the LME literature (Hall and Soskice, 2001). Bank loans tend to be “patient” because the main banks consider the mission of keeping money flowing to a group of industrial concerns (Miyashita and Russell, 1994). Driven by the different missions discussed earlier, the different types of bank loans (fluid vs. patient capital) raise the issue of cultural translatability that occasionally results in conflicting understandings, for instance, disagreements within a bank portrayed in Case 8-1.

Conflicting understandings have more serious consequences when it involves a bank supervisor in cross-cultural settings. The CME of Japan has three large banks, often referred to as “megabanks”, operating worldwide with a global network of branch offices. The megabanks have American offices supervised by the Federal Reserve Bank (FED) and other government agencies in the USA. The interview results maintained that the bank employees and the government agencies often had disagreements over the quality of a corporate loan extended to a Japanese institutional borrower operating in the USA (in a similar situation to Case 8-2): for instance, the FED pointing out “It is a bad quality loan” to a Japanese “patient” loan, which

was assessed as “a good loan” internally by the Japanese bank with the MBS mission³⁶. In simple terms, the FED evaluated “The Japanese banks made misjudgments” in their official reports that had the authoritative power to dictate the quality of the megabanks’ loan operations. In a sense, this assessment resembles “bonkers” in Case 8-2. The interview results (Interviewee 4) maintained that these types of conflicts often occurred at all the megabanks, indicating that the issue of cultural translatability was rampant in the financial sector.

8.4 Cross-case analysis

Having examined the focused cases, Table 33 summarizes the answers to the research questions generated through triangulated analysis of the cases in the respective societies. Despite the differences of attributes between the ALS and the MBS, the case findings commonly indicate that MBS practice can be translated and transplanted to the ALS in the sense that the Japanese banks were able to operate, keeping money flowing to a group of industrial concerns, in the cross-national case context. The grounded findings may be summarized as “partially translated” since the MBS is operative with attributes raising the issue of cultural translatability. The target audience did not accept or approve of such attributes as-is in the case context. Some of the attributes become conflicts settled on a case-by-case basis.

The findings support the workability of the proposed framework, which is capable of illustrating the issue of cultural translatability arising from the culturally driven specificities. Case 8-3 suggests that the LME definition of relationship lending is reasonable in LMEs but does not explain the MBS relationship lending or potentially other CME financial systems (Hall and Soskice, 2001). The definition is linguistically perfectly translatable and makes perfect sense in LMEs but does not in CMEs. Alternatively said, the LME concept *relationship lending* does not reasonably explain *relationship lending* in the CME of Japan. This issue of cultural translatability serves as an explanation for the need for the new category of cultural translatability discussed in Chapter One: An argument proposed as a “universally applicable theory” to all societies may not be workable in all societies because it is only tested with the cultural values of preference in the country/region of origin³⁷.

This chapter has explored the financial sector to test the framework. The grounded findings can be summarized with three points. First, culturally driven values of preference can trigger the issue of cultural translatability in the financial sector. Case 8-2 has examined the difference in pricing levels that cannot be fully explained without addressing the underlying cultural values of preference as an influential factor. The financial systems do not operate in the same manner, even though the financial markets are increasingly interconnected across the world. The ALS and MBS systems can be seen as regionally patterned yet generally accepted ways of banking practice with fair principles in the respective societies. The ALS and

³⁶ The different views of a quality loan are detailed in the present author’s earlier work (Kitamura, 2016). This chapter does not discuss the technical theme of quality loan. This thesis is intended for the widest possible audience, including non-business readers.

³⁷ To be globally applicable, the literature definition may be refined as follows: Relationship lending is used as a risk-mitigating strategy to deal with various borrowers of any size: LMEs use the technology predominantly with informationally opaque SMEs, whereas CMEs use it with borrowers in any size regardless of the quality of obligatory financial information (Kitamura, 2022A).

MBS systems play the same role in regulating the growth of credit and money supply, but their approaches can be culturally driven.

	LMEs	CME of Japan
Practice (RQ 1)	Fluid capital: Financial freedom given to individual organizations to maximize profit <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arm’s-length principle regulating credit analysis of borrower’s business performance and subsequent lending transactions individually 	Patient capital: Expectation of mutual assistance between banks and clients <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goodwill trust regulating membership-type relationship lending in collective group context besides arm’s-length credit analysis of borrower’s business performance
Findings (RQ 2&3)	14) Employees making decisions to support bank’s mission to maximize profit through fluid capital: no concept of collective relationship at organization level resulted from employees’ decisions 15) Lending decisions made on a relatively short-term transaction basis 16) Reasonable power distributed to borrowers to change relationship banks (depending on availability)	14) Employees making decisions to support bank’s membership-type mission to supply patient capital in context of institutional relationship at organization level resulted from employees’ decisions 15) Lending decisions made on a quasi-eternal institutional relationship basis 16) Relatively less power distributed to borrowers regarding main bank change
Cultural constructs	14) Individualism 15) Short-term orientation 16) Small power distance	14) Collectivism 15) Long-term orientation 16) Large power distance
Practice (RQ 1)	Relatively high pricing	Relatively low pricing
Findings (RQ 2&3)	4) Pricing determined considering how much profits gained from each transaction with a specific maturity date on a relatively short-term basis 5) Arm’s-length principle to create market-level pricing suitable for regulating involved parties individually participating in transaction 6) Tolerant of uncertainties arising from different pricing levels given by banks following arm’s-length principle	4) Pricing determined considering how much profits gained from collective (institutional borrower or collective group) that has no set date to terminate institutional relationship. 5) Goodwill trust to promote specific pricing suitable for specific interfirm relationship between involved parties in the collective context 6) Collectively standardized pricing to avoid uncertainties of arm’s-length pricing applied to group-member borrowers
Cultural constructs	4) Short-term orientation 5) Individualism 6) Low uncertainty avoidance	1) Long-term orientation 2) Collectivism 3) High uncertainty avoidance
Practice (RQ 1)	Relationship lending defined as risk-mitigating technique specifically for SME lending	Relationship lending representing generally accepted way of lending practice for all
Findings (RQ 2&3)	1) Relationship as in term <i>relationship lending</i> referring to interpersonal relationship between individuals in business context 2) Proprietary information contained to loan officer (individual), not shared across collective for future communication	1) Relationship as in term <i>relationship lending</i> referring to interfirm relationship between collectives at organization level 2) Proprietary information shared across collective and retained for context building for future communication
Cultural constructs	1) Individualism 2) Low context of communication	1) Collectivism 2) High context of communication

Table 33: Descriptive answers to research questions

Second, the tie of expectations of mutual assistance is observable in the financial sector, among other sectors explored in Part Two. Case 8-1 has analyzed the MBS mission of providing patient capital. Hoshi, Kashyap, and Scharfstein (1990, p. 86) explain the MBS mission this way: “... group firms are helped in times of financial distress not because it is efficient to help them, but simply because the group is unwilling to let one of its members fail”. Similarly, Learmount (2002) describes such financial support as main bank

rescues: institutional attempts to “help a core client to the best of its ability” (p. 91). While a main bank’s ability to rescue troubled clients varies greatly according to the economic climate, recent research (Gotoh, 2020) supports the continued existence of main bank support with direct or indirect government involvement. These quotes correspond with goodwill trust, which is rooted in *giri* as examined in Chapter Three. The tie of expectation of mutual assistance matters more than financial efficiency to the Japanese, depending on the context³⁸. The Japanese companies value and favor their main bank and, in return, companies expect the main bank to provide financial support when truly necessary.

Finally, the findings stress the importance of disaggregating the durable and changing elements of business practice for understanding the issue of cultural translatability. Chapter Seven has discussed this point that appears to be applicable in all the sectors examined in Part Two. The case findings collectively suggest that the CME mission of providing patient capital exists in Japan. This point of continued existence corroborates literature arguments. For example, Hirota’s study (2009) is titled *Japan’s main bank relationship: from monitoring to risk hedge*, which indicates Hirota’s grounded finding: the continued existence of the MBS with changes and reversions. The MBS’s major function of monitoring is changing from “monitoring” to “risk hedge”. It does not indicate a complete shift but a change of significance in functionality. The term *monitoring* refers to the role of monitoring client institutions’ financial performance. Classic literature (Aoki and Patrick, 1994) points it out as the major feature of the MBS in general. The findings suggest that its significance has been lessened, while the role still exists diffusedly³⁹. “Risk hedge” connotes the tie of expectations of mutual assistance from the viewpoint of borrower institutions. Cultural specificities can change but do not ordinarily transform into a symmetrical opposite in a short period of time. In this regard, Chapter Nine will discuss changes and reversions of cultural specificities.

Part Two has tested the proposed concept of cultural translatability and its framework against the sectoral data collected from the four functional and/or industry sectors. Part Three will discuss the research implications, synthesizing all the sectoral findings, followed by concluding remarks.

³⁸ In the discipline of finance, prior research provides the concept *cushioning hypothesis* (Illiasenko and Laidroo, 2020), which explicates that individuals tend to take on more risk in collectivist societies because borrowers expect to receive help from the members of their social networks in the case of failure. The cushioning hypothesis is conceptually a precise synonym of the tie of expectation of mutual assistance. This thesis does not focus on the cushioning hypothesis to avoid being technical.

³⁹ The role of monitoring is highly unlikely to be relinquished, considering the nature of a financial system, including the country-level bank supervisor, which indirectly yet regularly examines the banks’ role of monitoring.

Part Three

Chapter Nine: Discussions

Part Two has presented the findings on the four sectors (the sectoral findings): decision-making communication, employment, manufacturing, and banking. Chapter Nine will first answer Research Questions 1, 2, and 3 through triangulation by synthesizing the sectoral findings. Second, it will answer the Main Research Question and detail the factors that affect the feasibility of cultural translation. Third, it will develop the working definition of cultural translatability. Fourth, it will elaborate on the characteristics of cultural specificities. Lastly, it will discuss the findings from the perspective of target audience.

9.1 Answering Research Questions

Chapter Three has hypothesized the concept of cultural translatability, provisionally defined as the feasibility of translating cultural specificity from one society to another. To test it, Chapter Four has placed the following:

Main Research Question: What are the factors that affect the feasibility of translating culturally driven specificities from one society to another?

The answers to this question will be descriptive accounts regarding the factors. The word *affect* conveys the relative nature of cultural translatability that embraces the dynamics of cultural translation. To generate case-by-case explanations, Chapter Four has created the following sub-questions that focus on a specific level in the respective societies:

Research Question 1: What typical Japanese business behaviors are incongruous in Liberal Market Economies?

Research Question 1 is to identify specific Japanese business practices that are perceived as incongruous from the viewpoint of LMEs. Conversely, the answers help identify specific LME business practices (symmetrical opposites) that appear incongruous from the viewpoint of the CME of Japan.

Research Question 2: What cultural values explain the typical Japanese business behaviors?

Research Question 2 is to find specific cultural values of preference that explain typical business practices. Japanese business practices appear “typical” to the Japanese because such practices are generally congruous with local cultural values of preference. A dynamic yet distinct level of congruity is identifiable in LMEs too.

Research Question 3: What cultural values explain why such behaviors appear incongruous in Liberal Market Economies?

Research Question 3 is to discover the cultural reasons why translated CME practices can appear incongruous in LMEs, and vice versa. Having reviewed the research questions, the following section will answer Research Question 1.

9.1.1 Answers by sectoral practice

Chapter Four has presented the search keywords at the initial stage to probe the organization level. The list of keywords has grown as research progresses. Table 34 summarizes the sectoral findings that together answer Research Question 1, which consists of symmetrically opposite practices:

Economy level	Liberal market economies	Coordinated market economy of Japan
Organization level		
Decision-making communication		
Decision making unit	Individual manager or small group	Collective (group consensus)
Communication style	Escalation	Horenso (communication for consensus)
Communication pattern	Minimal and efficient communication	All involved members to be on same page
Communication purpose	Individual task completion	Collective task completion
Human resources management		
Employment pattern	Job-type employment	Membership-type employment
Job description	Explicit job description	No job description (multi-tasking)
Promotion	Internal job posting	Shanai shooshin (promotion from within)
Job change	Job freedom	Tenkin (mandatory job rotation)
Manufacturing sector		
Corporate alliance	Strategic alliance	Keiretsu
Supplier contract	Purchase order (every purchase/vehicle life)	Master trade agreement (every relationship)
Relationship tie	Capital relationship irrelevant	Capital relationship important
Personnel tie	Personnel flows irrelevant	Personnel flows important
Banking sector		
Banking system	Arm's-length banking system	Main bank system
Lender-borrower relation	LME style relationship lending	Japanese style relationship lending
Profit orientation	High loan spread	Low loan spread
Loan pattern	Fluid capital	Patient capital

Table 34: A summary of the symmetrically opposite practices

Built with additional keywords identified over the course of thematic analysis of text, Table 34 is a developed list of symmetrically opposite specificities (of business practices). All of them can be applied as sets of two extremes of a linear continuum to the proposed framework of cultural translatability.

All the specificities, such as horenso, in the CME column are “typical” Japanese business practices likely incongruous in LMEs at the organization level. Conversely, those in the LME column, such as escalation, are typical LME practices incongruous from the viewpoint of the CME of Japan. In essence, the LME practice and the CME practice are symmetrically opposite to each other. Table 34 answers Research Question 1 by offering culturally driven practices appropriate in one society yet incongruous to another in the extreme sense.

The answers to Research Question 1 consist of two categories: 1) the broad categories, such as the arm's-length banking system vs. the main bank system under the banking sector, and 2) subcategorized practices, such as LME style relationship lending vs. Japanese style relationship lending. The findings suggest that, in general, the broad categories help understand the big-picture views of culturally driven practices by sector, and subcategorized practices are useful for feasibility analysis of cultural translation. A broader category contains multiple subcategorized practices with potentially different levels of cultural translatability, whereas focused analysis of a subcategorized practice can be suitable for generating context-specific explanations. Subcategorized practices raise the issue of cultural translatability at varying degrees:

translated, partially translated, and not translated. Under the broad category, some of the subcategorized practices may exhibit a low level of feasibility, while others may be translated without any issue.

Conversely, only looking at a single specificity may not be adequate for understanding the whole society by sector. The answers to Research Question 1 are not exhaustive either. Nonetheless, the findings are generally representative and support the structure of this thesis with multiple levels that help envisage the respective societies. Those multiple levels correspond with the steps of the ladder introduced in Chapter Two (de Geus, 2002). Having answered Research Question 1, the following section will synthesize the answers to Research Questions 2 and 3 by cultural value.

9.1.2 Answers by cultural value

To answer Research Questions 2 and 3, this section will systematically synthesize the sectoral findings by cultural value of preference. The answers are organized by cultural construct: individualism/collectivism, short/long time orientation, low/high power distance, low/high uncertainty avoidance, and low/high context communication. Table 35 shows a summary of the individualism/collectivism results. The table contents begin with a number, which indicates the corresponding Chapter number. This way of presentation applies to all tables shown in this section.

Liberal Market Economies (LMEs)	Coordinated Market Economy of Japan (CME)
5) Primacy of individual decision making and problem solving	5) Primacy of collective decision making and problem solving
5) Individualistic interest in job freedom prioritized through employees' skill adherence to job descriptions	5) Collectivistic interest in teams' task completion prioritized through employees' multi-skilling over individuals' job freedom
6) Individualistic identity: "I" perform "my" job duties that meet "my" skills as "I" agreed on	6) Collectivistic identity: "I" am part of employer so whatever given is "my" job to take
7) Primacy of individualistic interest in freedom of trading	7) Primacy of collectivistic interest in being part of collective with shared goal
7) Primacy of individualistic interest in low dependence on trading partner(s)	7) Buyer and supplier's high dependency on each other in collective group
7) Buyer's primacy of individualistic interest in setting and gaining most economical pricing through large pool of suppliers: price first, relationship next	7) Buyer's primacy of collectivistic interest in selecting supplier as suitable member of collective group: relationship first, price next
7) Supplier's primacy of individualistic interest in joining pools to be selected for maximizing profit individually	7) Supplier's primacy of collectivistic interest in overarching goal of providing products at most economical prices for collective's core entity
8) Employees making decisions to support bank's mission to maximize profit through fluid capital: no concept of collective relationship at organization level resulted from employees' decisions	8) Employees making decisions to support bank's membership-type mission to supply patient capital in context of institutional relationship at organization level
8) Arm's-length principle to create market-level pricing suitable for regulating involved parties individually participating in bidding	8) Goodwill trust to promote specific pricing suitable for specific interfirm relationship between involved parties in the collective context
8) Relationship as in term <i>relationship lending</i> referring to interpersonal relationship between individuals in business context	8) Relationship as in term <i>relationship lending</i> referring to interfirm relationship between collectives at organization level

Table 35: A summary of the sectoral findings on individualism/collectivism

Table 35 consists of two columns: LMEs and the CME, corresponding to individualistic and collectivistic values of preference, respectively. Each column provides the answers to Research Question 2. Table 35 helps understand what makes business practices culturally driven in the respective societies: The primacy of individualistic/collectivistic interest in a business relationship is generally shared beyond the sectoral boundaries.

The interpretation above corroborates the literature discussion reviewed in Chapter Three: "...when individual and collective interests are in conflict, individual interests have the primacy in individualist cultures whereas collective interests have the primacy in collectivist cultures" (Triandis, 1995). Although options of culturally driven business practices are not always mutually exclusive, the literature and the findings together suggest that the primacy of culturally specific interest encourages decision-makers to choose the culturally preferred one, rather than the symmetrical opposite translated to their society: for example, escalation vs. horensio (Chapter Five), job description vs. multi-tasking (Chapter Six), no capital relationship vs. capital relationship (Chapter Seven), and fluid capital vs. patient capital (Chapter Eight). Their cultural preference can be understood as their "learned interpretation" (Strauss and Quinn, 1997) that acts as a determinant of the feasibility of cultural translatability.

Moving on to short/long term orientation, Table 36 presents a summary of the synthesized findings of cultural values of preference:

Liberal Market Economies (LMEs)	Coordinated Market Economy of Japan (CME)
5) Speedy task completion by not reporting on task status on a regular basis: Time saving for involved parties	5) Reporting to involved parties on task status on a regular basis more valued than speedy task completion or time saving
6) Relatively shorter average tenure due to individuals' job freedom	6) Longer average employment tenure as employees tend to stay as part of collective
7) Preference for relatively short business relationship	7) Preference for relatively long business relationship
8) Lending decisions made on a relatively short-term transaction basis	8) Lending decisions made on a quasi-eternal institutional relationship basis
8) Pricing determined considering how much profits gained from each transaction with a specific maturity date on a relatively short-term basis	8) Pricing determined considering how much profits gained from collective (institutional borrower or collective group) that has no set date to terminate institutional relationship

Table 36: A summary of the sectoral findings on short/long time orientation

The sectoral findings suggest that LMEs and the CME exhibit the cultural preferences of short and long-term orientation, respectively. Table 36 suggests that the construct of short/long time orientation can be understood as the relative time length of business relation between the actors for task completion. The actors' relation can depend on the context: manager-employee (Chapter Five), employer-employee (Chapter Six), supplier-client (Chapter Seven), and lender-borrower (Chapter Eight). All the actors have their cultural values of preference to varying degrees, each of which acts as a determinant of the feasibility of cultural translatability that affects cultural translation of a business practice.

Table 37 presents a summary of the synthesized findings on low/high power distance:

Liberal Market Economies (LMEs)	Coordinated Market Economy of Japan (CME)
5) Reasonable power distributed to all team members for own decision making and task completion: small power distance in the hierarchy normative and/or ideal 6) Reasonable power given to all individuals for own decision-making power on job changes 6) Relatively less power distributed to senior than others regarding promotion in merit-based system 7) Reasonable power distributed to suppliers to change buyers (depending on availability) 8) Reasonable power distributed to borrowers to change relationship banks (depending on availability)	5) Reasonable power given to manager for collective decision making and task completion: large power distance in the hierarchy normative and/or ideal 6) Reasonable power given to HR team/manager for collective decision making on mandatory job rotation 6) Relatively more power distributed to senior than others regarding promotion in seniority-based system 7) Relatively less power distributed to suppliers regarding buyer change 8) Relatively less power distributed to borrowers regarding main bank change

Table 37: A summary of the sectoral findings on low/high power distance

The sectoral findings suggest that LMEs and the CME exhibit the cultural preferences of low and high power distance, respectively. Table 37 suggests that the cultural construct of low/high power distance can be understood as the relative difference in power distributed to the actors for decision making. The actors can depend on the context: manager vs. employee (Chapter Five) and employer/HR vs. employee (Chapter Six). These results are not exhaustive, as this research has a limited amount of qualitative data. Nevertheless, the findings show that all the actors have their cultural values of preference to varying degrees, each of which acts as a determinant of the feasibility of cultural translatability.

Table 38 presents a summary of the synthesized findings on low/high uncertainty avoidance:

Liberal Market Economies (LMEs)	Coordinated Market Economy of Japan (CME)
5) Individual ways of task completion accepted: collectively standardized approaches to be seen as a syndrome. Individual differences not to be seen as uncertainty 6) Tolerant of individuals' job freedom, which is uncertain to HR managers from employer's perspective 6) Tolerant of uncertainties arising from not knowing next employer: Individual ways of work life respected. Individual attributes deemed as identity 7) Tolerant of each other's individual freedom of interpretation, which is uncertain to others, unless documented individually 8) Tolerant of uncertainties arising from different pricing levels given by banks following arm's-length principle	5) Collectively standardized way of task completion accepted: individually different ways to be seen as uncertainty. Many collective codes not to be seen as a syndrome 6) Collective members' desired transfers seen as uncertainty unless agreed in advance from employer's perspective 6) Tendency to avoid uncertainties of not knowing next employer through membership-type employment. Collective membership deemed as identity 7) Collective member's own interpretation (individual variance) seen as uncertainty unless consulted and agreed collectively 8) Collectively standardized pricing to avoid uncertainties of arm's-length pricing applied to group-member borrowers

Table 38: A summary of the sectoral findings on low/high uncertainty avoidance

The sectoral findings suggest that LMEs and the CME exhibit the cultural preferences of low and high uncertainty avoidance (or uncertainty tolerant and uncertainty averse), respectively. Table 38 suggests that the cultural construct of low/high uncertainty avoidance can be understood as the relative difference in tolerance for uncertainty between the actors. What is uncertain depends on the context: individually different

ways of task completion (Chapter Five), individually different ways of career development (Chapter Six), and individually different interpretations of business contracts/documents (Chapter Seven).

Finally, Table 39 presents a summary of the synthesized findings on low/high context communication:

Liberal Market Economies (LMEs)	Coordinated Market Economy of Japan (CME)
5) Details to be provided during escalation process: Reporting should contain every single detail 6) Detailed, written job descriptions necessary to manage individual differences. Many codes of conduct written out and put in place 7) Every order explicitly documented as purchase order to indicate intent 8) Proprietary information contained to loan officer (individual), not shared across collective for future communication	5) Minimum necessary amount of information required for horensō, as long as team members abide by collective's codes of horensō conduct 6) Being "amoeba" with shared unspoken codes of conduct preferred over written job descriptions 7) Written purchase order unnecessary as collective's unspoken codes of conduct regulate production 8) Proprietary information shared across collective and retained for context building for future communication

Table 39: A summary of the sectoral findings on low/high context of communication

The sectoral findings suggest that LMEs and the CME exhibit the cultural preferences of low and high context of communication, respectively. Table 39 suggests that the terms *codes*, *conduct*, *written*, *order*, *shared* and/or *information* are generally associated with the cultural values in terms of low/high context communication. More precisely, the sectoral findings indicate that *written*, and *information* represent LMEs, and *shared*, *codes*, and *conduct* denote the CME of Japan. The significance here can be understood from two angles: 1) how much information is already shared among individuals before communication takes place and 2) how much information is exchanged during communication. As for the first pre-communication stage, the sectoral findings suggest that LME individuals share less information on collectively shared unspoken codes of conduct than those in the CME of Japan. Alternatively said, LMEs are less densely contextualized with shared information than the CME. This interpretation corroborates the concept of "low-context" culture. After communication begins, LME individuals exchange relatively more information than the CME for fueling the "low-context" communication setting.

The preceding interpretation corroborates recent literature: LMEs are commonly low-context cultures that "rely heavily on spoken words and detailed verbal explanations" (Cavusgil, Knight, and Riesenberger, 2020, p. 79). Although this description focuses on spoken and verbal explanations, mainstream literature suggests that low-context cultures require relatively more written communications too for successful communication. For instance, Sako (1992) describes LME documents for exchange in manufacturing settings: "Terms and conditions of contract are written, detailed, and substantive" (p. 11) compared to the counterpart in the CME of Japan. Reported in Chapter Six, highly detailed job descriptions are typical of LME communications in job-type employment. Such detailed spoken and written information fills the gap between before and after-communication stages for satisfactory communication. The gap is generally larger in LMEs than the CME of Japan.

As presented, the sectoral findings collectively answer Research Questions 2 and 3. The findings include various scenarios of cultural translation that can be interpreted as the dynamics of feasibility. Having

answered Research Questions 1, 2, and 3, the following section will discuss the implications of the synthesized findings before answering the Main Research Question.

9.1.3 Implications of the answers

The previous section has synthesized the sectoral findings by cultural construct. In the synthesis, the cultural constructs and the contexts have together answered Research Questions. Alternatively said, either of them alone would not adequately answer them. The cultural constructs and cultural values of preferences collectively constitute the contextualized answers.

The synthesis implies that a cultural construct, which is a concept, alone does not adequately answer Research Questions. For example, the idea “Individualism affects the dynamic feasibility of a culturally driven text in the CME of Japan” may be correct, but it contains nothing contextualized and consequently does not sufficiently explain why it does. During the pilot research, this assumption generated three types of needs: 1) the need for contextualized explanations, 2) the need to link the organization and individual levels that best contextualize translation cases of cultural specificities, and 3) the need to mitigate the weakness of qualitative explanations. This is not to say that qualitative research is inferior but to explain its characteristics that inherently differ from quantitative research. Bringing qualitative interpretations strengthens research into the complex subject of culture. The proposed framework helps illustrate such interpretations.

For the first need, Part Two has presented contextualized explanations - descriptive accounts of cultural values of preferences - by sector. This chapter has then synthesized the sectoral findings as descriptive explanations that together address the feasibility of translating cultural specificity from one society to another. The sectoral findings have effectively explained different levels of feasibility of cultural translation: translated, partially translated, and not translated. As presented in the previous sections, the sectoral findings have collectively answered Research Questions.

For the second need, this thesis has provided the proposed framework of cultural translatability with its multi-level structure that best contextualizes translation cases of cultural specificities. The framework has illuminated the links of intrinsic connections between the levels that have helped answer Research Question 2. The intrinsic connections represent the coexistence of business practices and cultural values in harmony between the organization and individual levels. The multi-level structure has helped address the cultural values which should be separate from business practices or personality traits for analysis. As pointed out in Chapter Two, some prior research mistreated the personality of being strong willed as individualism by overlooking the connection between an individualistic cultural value and an individualistic practice. The framework helps prevent such mistreatment.

In some cases, a cultural translation appears incongruous due to the lack of cultural congruity in target-language culture. The proposed framework has illustrated how the incongruity arises from the lack of intrinsic connection between the source-language practice and target-language cultural values of preference. The symmetrical opposites have together answered Research Question 3.

Finally, this thesis has contributed to advance qualitative research. In a strict sense, qualitative research’s outcomes cannot be generalized because the findings are context specific. To mitigate the innate

weakness, this thesis has performed a series of research cycles (Northey, Tepperman, and Russell, 2002). All research cycles have involved the cultural constructs, all of which are supported through quantitative research in prior studies (House et al., 2004). Alternatively said, this thesis has bridged the quantitative results of cultural constructs to delineate the LME and CME societies through qualitative meta-synthesis (Walsh and Downe, 2005).

Generated through the subcategorized research questions, the synthesized findings have together answered Research Questions. The following section will test the hypothesis by answering the Main Research Question: What factors affect the feasibility of translating culturally driven specificities from one society to another.

9.2 Factors affecting cultural translatability

This section will discuss the factors of cultural translatability from three angles by shaping three concepts: cultural compatibility, cultural competence, and purposes of translation as influential determinants of cultural translatability. All these are relative concepts and together explain the feasibility of cultural translation. Part Two has illustrated the translated, partially translated, and not translated cases by sector. A translated case can be seen as a “successful” translation, but it is referred to as a “feasible” translation in the preceding sections. This thesis does not use the term *successful translation* because the word *success* or *successful* is a relative notion. A translation can be successful from one perspective but may not appear successful from another. The idea here not only corresponds to the alternative perspectives reviewed in Chapter Two but also relates to the idea that the concept of translatability is a relative notion. This relativity stems from various and possibly combined factors in translation settings.

9.2.1 Cultural compatibility

Chapter Two has provided the rationale for the proposed framework of cultural translatability: It has a multi-level structure with the shared feature of two extremes of a linear continuum. To strengthen the structure, Chapter Two has integrated prevalent concepts, including “compatibility” between the levels (Rogers, 2003) into the framework, posing it as *cultural compatibility*, which denotes the vertical connection of cultural specificities between the levels. This thesis has used other synonymous concepts, including *culturally driven* and *intrinsically connected*, to reinforce the notion of vertical connection. Cultural compatibility exists between any cultural specificities: for example, between a source-language text and target audience and between a translator’s cultural value and a translated text. Cultural compatibility in this thesis is developed and distinguished from the literature concept *compatibility* (Rogers, 2003): It focuses on intangible culture, whereas the literature concept does not distinguish intangible culture from tangible culture.

The concept of cultural compatibility is a determinant of cultural translatability because the more compatible two specificities are, the more durable against (or less responsive to) change. For example, Chapter Six has examined Japan’s membership-type employment that currently embraces a set of symmetrical opposites: Japanese style job descriptions and multi-tasking. They currently coexist because the Japanese have translated the tool of job descriptions to try them out for the given objective. The Japanese

practice of multi-tasking (or no use of job descriptions) is compatible with the cultural values associated with the constructs of collectivism, high power distance, long-term orientation, high uncertainty avoidance, and high context communication. Figure 15 illustrates the cultural compatibility between the practice and the aggregate cultural values:

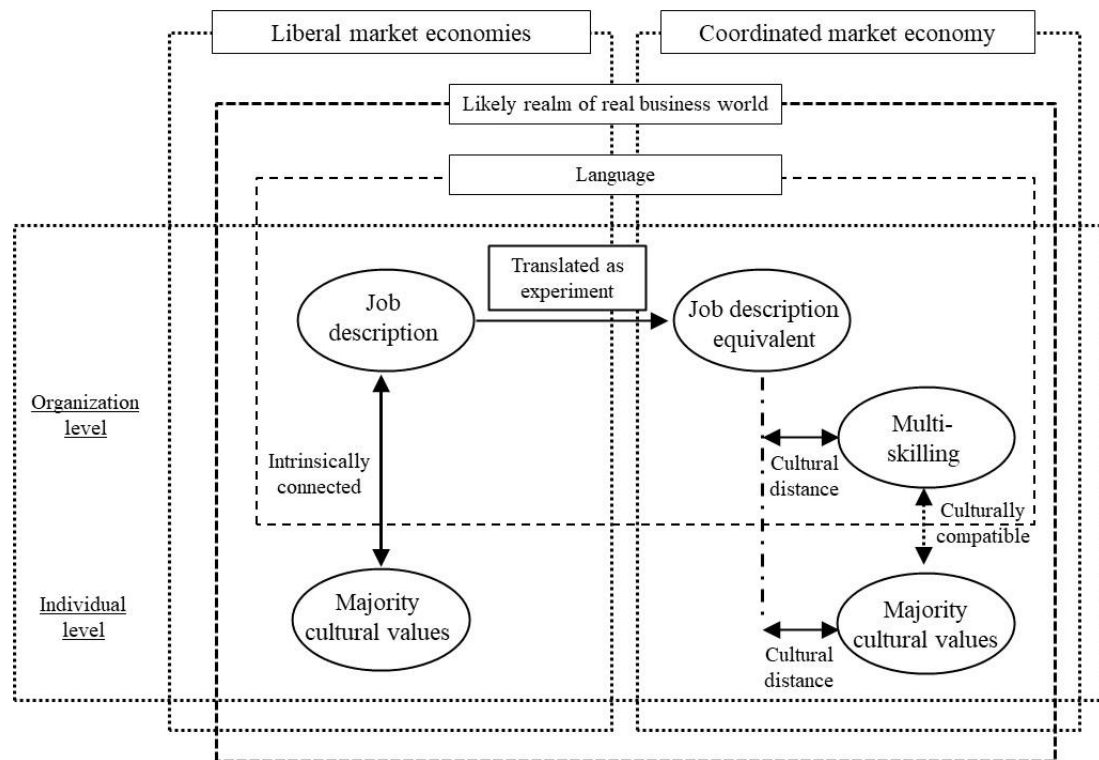


Figure 15: Cultural compatibility illustrated in the framework

The Japanese practice has been well established perhaps because it is reasonably compatible with the cultural values of preference associated with the pertinent cultural constructs. If not, it would have been already replaced with the tool of job descriptions. The Japanese have been aware of the tool yet have not tried it until recently (Fujii, 2020).

Noting of a recent questionnaire project (Japan Society for Chief Human Officer, 2022), Mizoguchi (2022) points out that salary mismatches have been occurring primarily because job descriptions do not suit the Japanese employment system: Membership-type employment hinges on members (employees), who are regularly rotated from a job position to another within the employer network. An experienced employee is paid much higher than an inexperienced employee being in the same position. This mismatch arises from seniority-based pay and makes the use of job descriptions meaningless (Mizoguchi, 2022). Figure 15 illustrates the cause of mismatch as a horizontal gap expressed as “cultural distance”.

Another major reason is traditional: Japanese employees are expected to perform job duties as requested, regardless of their job position (Japan Society for Chief Human Officer, 2022), as reported in Chapter Six. This culturally driven preference of “multi-skilling” (Harada, 2015) makes job descriptions meaningless. The idea here is nothing new but continuous: “Your job is everything” (Shook, 1988). All these

reasons boil down to the idea that the tool of job descriptions is not as culturally compatible as the Japanese practice of multi-skilling.

This section has discussed the concept of cultural compatibility which addresses the vertical relation between the organization and individual levels in the proposed framework. The concept helps understand the nexus of culturally driven practices and cultural values of preference. The next section will examine the concept of cultural competence which pertains to the horizontal relation at the individual level.

9.2.2 Cultural competence

Chapter Three has reviewed the concept of cultural competence, among others, which explain the ability in different ways. It can be described as “the capability to interact effectively with people from different cultural backgrounds” (Thomas and Inkson, 2004, p. 62) or “a motive, a trait, a skill, an aspect of a person’s self-image or social role, or a body of knowledge that a person uses” (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 2012, p. 352). These descriptions stem from prior studies that explain the ability from different angles.

Part Two has uncovered cultural competence in the context of business communication and decision-making. Chapter Five has examined the Japanese concept of horensō: “a continual and collaborative communication process between superiors, subordinates, and colleagues over the course of a project” (Kameda, 2013, p. 9). In the partially translated case (Case 5-3), the Japanese manager rendered a workable translation by translating specific elements of the Japanese practice of horensō. Figure 16 below illustrates the case, using the proposed framework, from the standpoint of the Japanese manager:

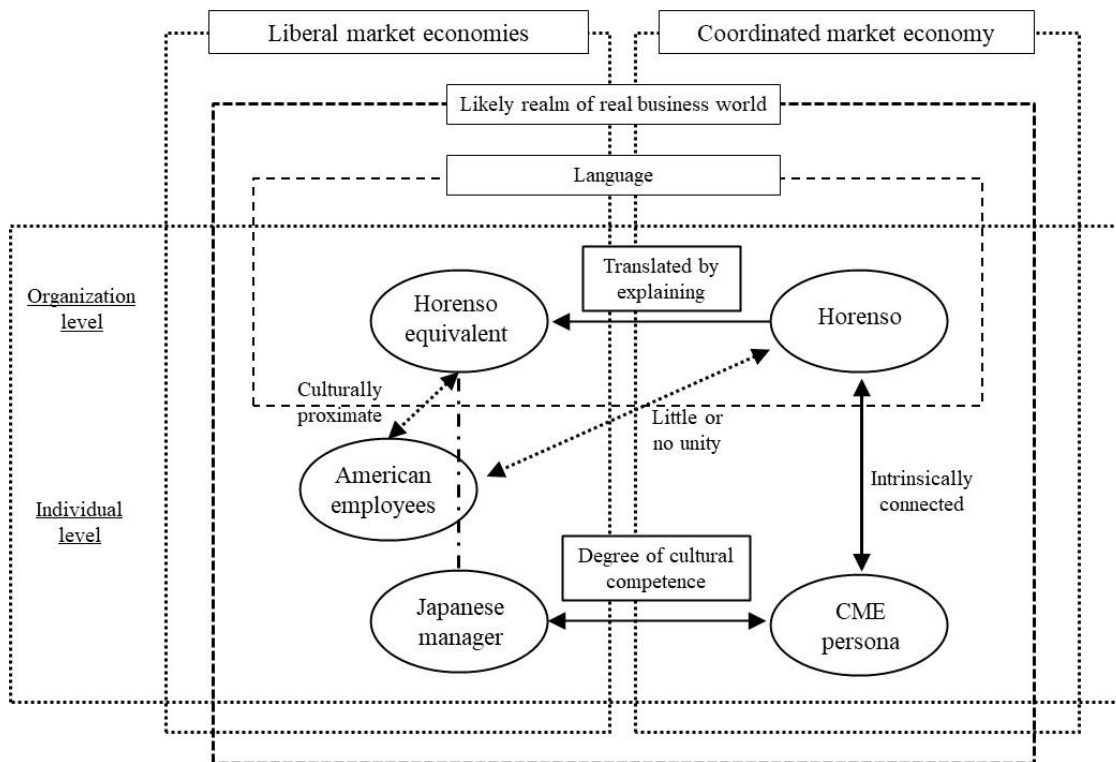


Figure 16: Analysis of cultural driven specificities

The translation attained cultural compatibility, as well as local naturalness, in the LME. The manager did not preach horensō nor translate every single element of it. Instead, he provided a simplified horensō equivalent that worked well with the LME values of preference. In this specific case, the ability includes determining the minimum necessary attributes of horensō, relinquishing the rest, and creating a tailored equivalent that conforms to the local cultural values. Using the terms of strategic orientations discussed in Chapter Three, this equivalent can be explained as a fusion translation of ethnocentric and polycentric orientations: It is not perfectly ethnocentric nor polycentric, but it is a blended and balanced one tailored to the need of translation. The manager/translator might have had a culturally driven desire to have more frequent status updates than what was achieved. He might have had to smother it for soliciting minimum required information from the team members. These possible conjectures are pertinent to his perspective. From the LME perspective by contrast, the regular reporting requirement may have appeared to be an unnecessary burden. Case 5-1 supports this line of analysis and suggests that not all individuals have an adequate level of cultural competence.

The manager's cultural translation does not raise the issue of cultural translatability mainly for three reasons: 1) partial translation delivered by omitting parts of source text, 2) the manager's ability to translate the practice through language, and 3) target audience's ability to accept the translation. Regarding the first point, the manager does not translate every single element of horensō, which constitutes a set of Japanese codes of conduct. Instead, the manager provides a simplified horensō equivalent that has worked in the LME workplace. There is a critical part in this translation process: He selectively chooses the elements of horensō practice that are likely to work with the LME cultural values of preference. This critical part relates to the next point.

The second point is that the manager is culturally, linguistically, and professionally capable of translating the culturally driven specificity: This chapter's focus is cultural competence in the sense of the ability to discern and differentiate what to include in the translation scope and what not. The translation setting has two target audiences: the Manager's local team members in the LME and remote ones with the head office in Japan. The manager needs to make sure that the translated elements are culturally acceptable to the team members in the two societies. He might have needed trial translations and/or joined cross-cultural training sessions if available or needed. His LME colleagues might have helped with the translations culturally and linguistically. He needs to have the required business knowledge relevant in source-language and target language societies, besides the cultural and linguistic requirements. The sectoral findings suggest that these types of abilities are necessary for rendering workable cultural translations in cross-cultural business settings.

Finally, the concept of cultural competence is also applicable to the target-language audience. The cultural translation is workable because, for instance, the target audience is culturally able to accept the translated elements of horensō. Without this acceptance, the translation cannot be considered workable. The translated horensō requirements might have appeared to be just another additional reporting task from the audience's viewpoint. The LME receptors might have seen it as ineffective or unnecessary but agreed to follow it only because it is their supervisor's request. Since the target audience consists of multiple

individuals in the translation setting, the majority's acceptance may be considered evidence that cultural translation is reasonably workable. Some receptors might have been aware of the cultural difference coming out from the business practice. This awareness may be the combination of cultural and professional knowledge, broadly speaking. The proposed framework of cultural translatability can help with further analysis by cultural construct and/or specific practice.

This section has examined the concept of cultural competence for cultural translation. The findings suggest that a workable translation contains necessary attributes of culturally driven source text and conforms to the cultural values of preference and culturally independent specificities such as business practicalities in the setting. To deliver such a translation, a culturally competent translator needs the ability to render a culturally proximate specificity feasible for all involved parties. In other words, a translator with cultural competence can be a cultural facilitator who is "fluent" in source-language and target-language cultures.

9.2.3 Purpose of cultural translation

Broadly speaking, purposes of translation can be examined from the two standpoints of 1) a translator(s) and 2) those who commission translations (Vermeer, 2004). These standpoints are not always mutually exclusive, as the translator may commission themselves to work on a translation project. This chapter focuses on the purpose of translation - the reason why a translation is created. As mentioned at the outset, this thesis focuses on business translation that involves business practice situated at the organization level. This focus is for discussion purposes only, as a translation purpose may only be associated with the individual level if/when it involves no business practice.

The sectoral findings suggest that the purpose of cultural translation may be culturally driven or culturally independent. This thesis focuses on culturally driven purposes to fulfill the aim of research, not to claim that anything culturally independent is inapplicable to cultural translation. Chapter Six has examined Japan's two attempts: the initial one to adopt the merit-based system during the 1990s (Yamada, 2020) and the current one to adjust the seniority system (Case 6-3) in the context of membership-type employment. The attempts have been made primarily because the Japanese firms want to reduce labor cost. This overarching purpose alone is culturally independent. It has nothing to do with Japanese cultural values of preference, such as collectivistic ways of thinking. Membership-type employment has a costly aspect in that it discourages job cuts, and its primary objective is the fairness in the CME sense through the seniority-based system, not the pursuit of efficiency through the merit-based system. Culturally independent practicalities or thoughts, such as cost curtailment above, can trigger a cultural translation.

Although the two attempts share the same overarching purpose, they are slightly different in practice. The initial attempt's purpose is to transform the seniority-based system into the merit-based system. It can be referred to as an ethnocentric purpose of translation. The current attempt is to see if the Japanese firms can incorporate the tool of a job description into the seniority system. This practical purpose is blended with a mix of ethnocentric and polycentric orientations, combined with the culturally driven element in the sense

that the translated text retains a reasonable level of cultural compatibility with the Japanese cultural values of preference. Figure 17 illustrates the two attempts:

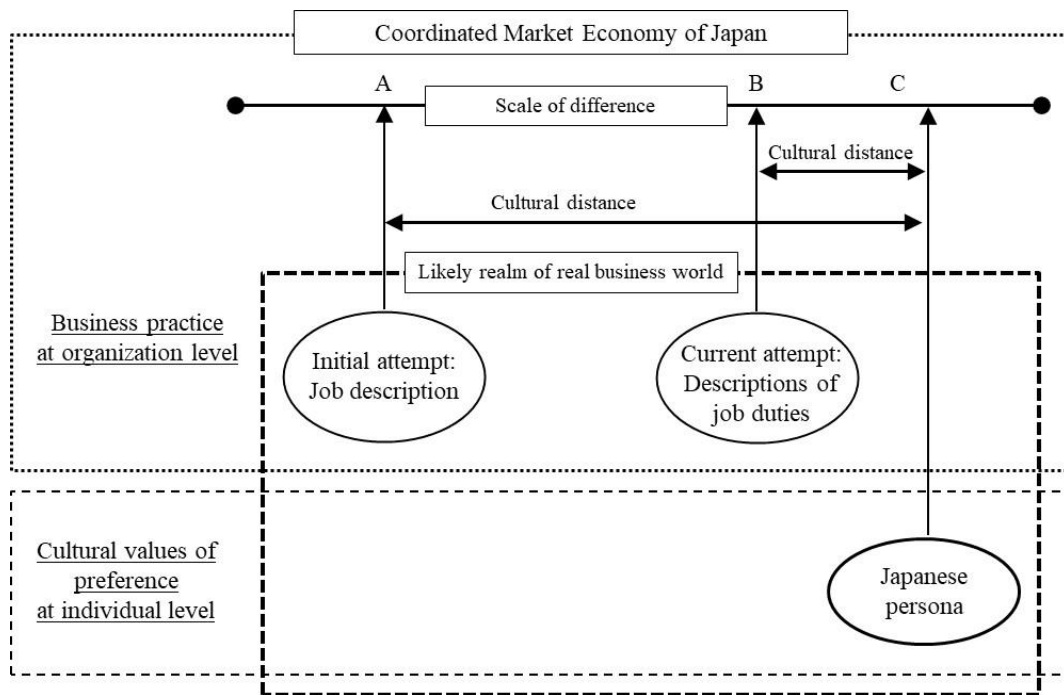


Figure 17: Japan's attempts of cultural translation

As presented, the proposed framework is capable of illustrating the two attempts with different purposes. Each of them has a specific cultural distance from the Japanese persona (Point C), which is the whole set of Japan's cultural constructs, including collectivism and relatively large power distance. The term *persona* best represents a society's character consisting of different yet interrelated cultural specificities. A society's individual-level persona is the majority view, including collectivism in the case of Japan.

The two attempts are placed at different locations according to their purpose of translation. The initial attempt (Point A) was made to transform the seniority-based system into the merit-based system. It failed during the 1990s (Yamada, 2020): Alternatively said, the LME practice of the merit-based system raised the issue of cultural translatability coupled with little cultural compatibility with the Japanese cultural values of preference (Cultural Distance A-C). It is located closer to the LME extreme as it is an LME specificity that has a high level of cultural compatibility with the LME cultural values.

The current attempt of cultural translation of job descriptions (Point B) is to integrate them as "descriptions of job duties", which are not "job descriptions" in the LME sense. This cultural translation is to adjust the Japanese seniority system in the Japanese way, not primarily to regulate fluid work force in the LME sense. The current attempt is placed rather closer to the CME extreme (Cultural Distance B-C) because it is to keep the Japanese system, while making the system slightly more of LME. It does not necessarily indicate that the Japanese firms have transitioned from membership-type to job-type employment. The purpose of cultural translation is explainable with a specific location in the proposed framework.

In reality, there can be many different yet interrelated purposes of cultural translation. In the employment context, possible purposes may include recruitment to fill open positions due to a pandemic, higher efficiency through skill improvement, and diversification through external recruitment. These purposes alone are culturally independent. However, as examined above, they can become culturally driven, depending on how they are applied in the translation setting. The proposed framework makes the clarification of translation purposes possible.

The preceding discussion suggests that the translation purposes change over time and vary by location. Furthermore, social circumstances and/or trends, such as an economic downturn or a social movement towards the freedom of job change, can influence employer/employee decisions and consequently change translation purposes. Accordingly, the definition of a feasible translation is unlikely the same even across the Japanese organizations. If the target audience wants to transform the seniority-based system into the merit-based system, their feasible translation can be a full translation of an LME job description. If the target audience wants to keep the seniority-based system as their main system and use job descriptions as a complement to it, their feasible translation is not as comprehensive as one typically used in LMEs. If the target audience only wants diversity in the rank-and-file or external recruitment to fill specific positions such as IT specialists, their translations will only be used for those specific objectives. Each target audience has their own purposes of cultural translation.

As demonstrated, the firms have various purposes of translation that partly stem from their diversity today. Regarding the Japanese firms, as mentioned in Chapter Three, the nation has had watershed events that have affected Japanese style management especially in the last century. For instance, many Japanese companies had to give up on long-term employment, especially lifetime employment. In the financial sector, the Big Bang relaxed the legal framework to allow foreign firms to enter the Japanese markets. As a result, Japan has typical Japanese firms with typical Japanese style management coexisting with those that are not. Foreign-owned firms typically operate under LME style management. This segment includes those LME firms in the CME of Japan. Those major policy reforms are culturally independent but triggered many cultural translations.

This section has discussed the purpose of translation which is influential as it defines the notion of feasible translation in a translation setting. The proposed framework effectively illustrates the cultural compatibility that clarifies the translation purpose. Having answered the Main Research Question, the following section will develop the concept of cultural translatability.

9.3 Explaining cultural translatability

The concept of cultural translatability, which is provisionally defined as the feasibility of translating cultural specificity from one society to another, can be multifaceted. To develop it, this section will discuss it from three angles: cultural translatability as an issue causing difficulties in cross-cultural understanding, a catalyst for cultural translation, and cross-cultural learning for audience in an international context.

9.3.1 The issue of cultural translatability

This thesis has so far viewed the concept of cultural translatability as an “issue” for analytical purposes in order primarily to test the concept and its framework. Based on the answers presented in Section 9.1, the issue can be described as a low level of translation feasibility that makes the target-language audience perceive that translated text does not make reasonable sense culturally, even if it is linguistically adequately translated. This section will explain this description.

Part Two has shown that some of the culturally driven practices exhibit a very low level of translation feasibility that makes cultural translation difficult as-is. In other cases, the issue is manageable to varying degrees in which the case actors have translated the cultural specificity in some way: for example, the practice of horenso is translated, explained, and implemented with less requirements from the Japanese standpoint (or more requirements from the American standpoint) as illustrated in the proposed framework. In making those partial translations, the actors have found feasible solutions to overcome the issue of cultural translatability in cross-cultural settings. Table 40 is an attempt to explain the dynamics by summarizing the findings of different translation scenarios:

Perspectives	Does a translated text linguistically make sense?	Does a translated text culturally make sense?
Viewpoint from source-language audience	Yes: high feasibility	Yes: high feasibility
Viewpoint from target-language audience	Yes: high feasibility	No: low feasibility

Table 40: Feasibility scenarios of cultural translatability

Table 40 suggests that the issue of cultural translatability may be described as a low level of translation feasibility that makes the target-language audience perceive that translated text does not make reasonable sense culturally, even if it is linguistically adequately translated, and it makes sense linguistically and culturally to the source-language audience. This thesis regards this interpretation as the working definition of the issue of cultural translatability.

Table 40 is the simplest possible summary of the findings and is not to argue that all translation scenarios are binary as cautioned throughout this thesis. The feasibility of translating cultural specificity is dynamic, depending on the case: for instance, the concept of horenso is not translated in one case, while the partially translated concept makes reasonable sense culturally to the target-language audience in another. Discussed later in this chapter, various factors - what part is translated, who translates it, how it is conveyed, and/or who accepts it in what setting - depend on the context. In short, the issue is refractory in some cases, while it is tractable in other cases. Nevertheless, all the cases contain culturally driven specificities that are perfectly linguistically translatable between LMEs and the CME of Japan yet exhibit the issue of cultural translatability to varying degrees. Taken together, the grounded finding is cultural translatability, which is the concept to refer to the feasibility. The findings collectively support the hypothesis.

Section 9.1 has provided the answers to the research questions, which can be used as supplementary explanations for the dynamic nature of translation feasibility. The answers to Research Question 1 suggest

that, although a CME practice can be translated to and implemented in LMEs, LMEs already have a symmetrically opposite practice that functions in tandem with LME cultural values of preference. The sectoral results suggest that a translated CME practice is unlikely to take over the symmetrically opposite practice in LMEs, unless there is a reason: for example, target-language audience perceives it as a better option than the existing practice or are asked to accept it in specific settings. The CME practice of membership employment will not become a dominant pattern of employment practice in LMEs, where job-type employment is believed to be normative. The proposed framework can illustrate the different types of practice as symmetrical opposites for a better understanding of the scenario.

The answers to Research Question 2 suggest that, depending on the case, a CME practice has an adverse relationship of cultural incongruity with LME cultural values of preference, besides the lack of a mutually supporting one. For example, the CME practice of horensō and forced multi-tasking (having no job description) are frowned upon in LMEs. These results agree with the preceding interpretations: LME cultural values of preference, such as individualistic ways of thinking, are symmetrically opposite to collectivistic ways of thinking. This thesis considers that the lack of cultural congruity explains the lack of “naturalness” (Nida and Taber, 1969) in translation. The proposed framework has illustrated the dynamics - a CME cultural value being closer to the CME extreme and an LME one leaning towards the other side - between two extremes in the respective societies.

In Part Two, the proposed framework is used in two different ways to 1) show a snapshot image of cultural congruity (or incongruity depending on the case) and 2) a change made over time. For example, Chapter Six has shown a change of CME employment practice as a shift towards the LME extreme at the organization level. These support the versatility of the framework of cultural translatability.

9.3.2 Catalyst for cultural translation

The preceding section has developed the concept of cultural translatability as an issue that causes translation difficulties. On the other hand, the issue appears to become a catalyst in specific settings and facilitate cultural translation by directly or indirectly motivating target-language audience. This section will discuss this possibly constructive aspect of cultural translatability.

Chapter Six has examined Japan’s membership-type employment that currently embraces a set of symmetrical opposites: Japanese style job descriptions and multi-tasking. They currently coexist in the system because the Japanese have started trying out job descriptions since around 2020 (Fujii, 2020). This movement, which seems to be an experiment to many, is their attempt to “renovate” their system primarily for labor cost curtailment by making it more of job-type employment. Translated practices appear to stimulate the involved parties, who are motivated to experiment it for the given objective.

The preceding experiment appears to be a staged process: 1) symmetrical opposites come into existence, 2) target-language audience identifies the opposite and the gap between the opposites, and 3) the gap facilitates negotiation and, if possible, a feasible translation. The existence and identifiability of the symmetrical opposites, and the resultant perception of the gap between them appear to promote cultural translation if the newly brought specificity attracts an audience. The feasibility of cultural translation, which

is the definition of the concept, can be useful for the involved parties in the setting. For instance, it makes the translator and target audience aware that a low feasibility potentially requires and/or entails more negotiations, changes, and uncertainties, which may not always be welcomed.

This catalytic effect supports the basic premise of alternative viewpoints discussed in Chapter Two. It shines through a Chinese proverb “A fish can’t see water” on which Gillian Tett comments “...it’s very hard for us to see ourselves unless we step out of ourselves and look back afresh” (McKinsey & Company, 2021). The catalytic effect of a symmetrical opposite makes target-language audience aware of not only what differs from, but also what is highly taken for granted: “water” in the preceding proverb. It can offer an opportunity of looking back at the incumbent system for possible improvements. The proposed framework helps in emphasizing and comparing symmetrically opposite culturally driven specificities.

The catalytic effect corresponds to the dichotomy of emic and etic perspectives: in simple terms, the insider and outsider views, respectively. The emic Japanese standpoint perceives multi-tasking as the most appropriate practice in the extreme sense. The etic Japanese view looks at job descriptions differently. Some may experiment with it to see if it improves the seniority-based system, whereas others may show no interest. This line of analysis also supports the multi-level structure of the proposed framework of cultural translatability, built with two extremes of a linear continuum (generated from etic research) that captures the social realities (study subjects for emic research) sitting between them.

9.3.3 Cross-cultural learning

Chapter Two has offered the working definition of cross-cultural learning: valuable knowledge on culturally driven specificity not only resides in one country of origin but also migrates to another through learning. The sectoral findings imply that cross-cultural learning can often be a result of partial translation of outside specificity, rather than a permanent removal of local specificity. The previous section has offered a sample: the Japanese business sector learning about the tool of job descriptions that did not exist before in the CME of Japan. The tool is initially translated from LMEs to “transform” the system from membership-type to job-type employment. However, the findings together indicate that such transformation is highly likely impossible partly because it contradicts other local practices such as mandatory job rotation (Fujii, 2020). As such, the Japanese version of the tool appears to be used to improve their seniority system by making it more merit-based for cost curtailment and/or “fair” rewards (Human Capital Online, 2021). If the Japanese find the partial translation of the tool effective, it can be said successful because the objective is reasonably satisfied, and/or the translated specificity is considered beneficial. Figure 18 illustrates this context-specific cross-cultural learning as the optimal point gained through cultural translation shown in the proposed framework of cultural translatability.

As presented in Figure 18, the optimal point is somewhere between the symmetrical opposites and is a result of the shift towards the other side. This shift can be seen as cross-cultural learning, which has resulted from many activities, including debates and negotiations. The proposed framework is useful for the practical use of cultural analysis and understanding of cultural translation.

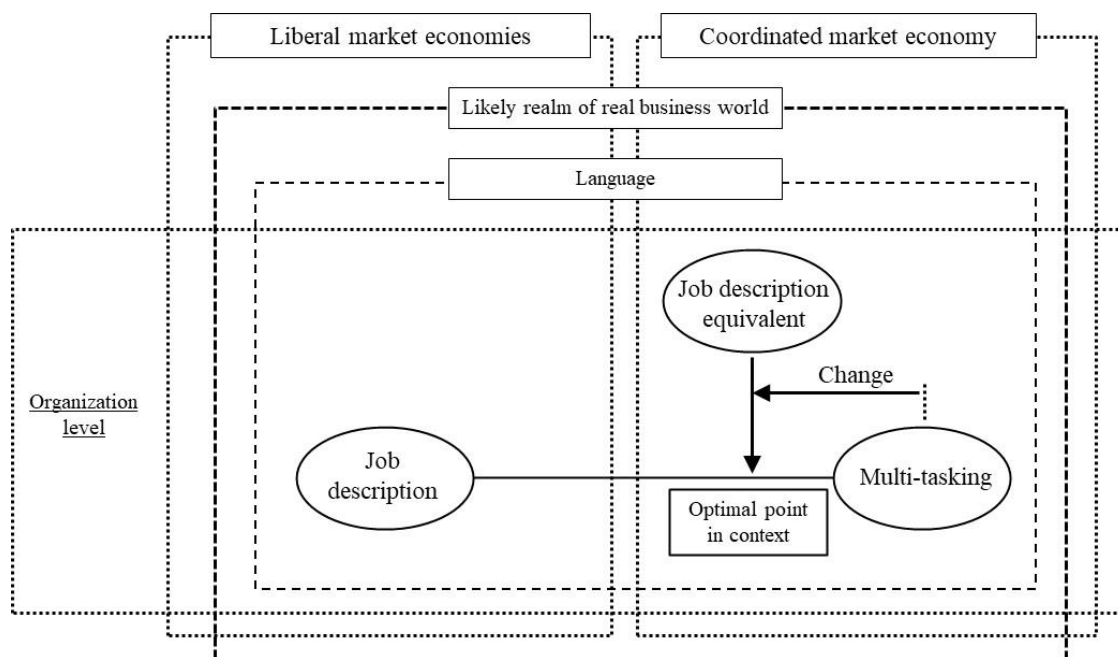


Figure 18: Optimal point of cross-cultural learning in the context

To reiterate, the notion of optimal translation is relative and specific to the context, which includes target-language audience as a major evaluator. Some audience may perceive a cultural translation as educational and helpful in improving their operation, while others may stay away from it. This audience-specific decision is one of the determinants of cultural translatability that the following section will discuss.

Figure 18 has illustrated the local-level tool of job descriptions in the framework of cultural translatability. The framework can also be used for a system-level specificity. For instance, after Meiji Restoration occurred in 1868, Japan started adopting technologies developed outside Japan(Chapter Three). This cross-cultural learning led to the rapid industrialization, which created the foundation of Japanese business. Chapter Three has introduced the Big Bang in the 1990s, which is when the Japanese government made a series of legislative changes to internationalize the Japanese financial system. It loosened the regulations in such a way that the revisions allowed foreign financial institutions to enter Japan. In some sense, the Big Bang has been a series of opportunities for the Japanese government and banks to learn about the ways of banking outside Japan. As a result, the Big Bang has made the Japanese main bank system (MBS) more of LMEs' arm's-length system (ALS) in specific ways as reported in Chapter Eight. Figure 19 illustrates this overall change in the upper right quadrant of the proposed framework of cultural translatability.

Akin to the practice-level example of job descriptions, the MBS has found the optimal point somewhere between the symmetrical opposites. The optimal point is dynamic, constantly moving back and forth as the MBS's sub-systems change: Some of them can change significantly in response to relevant forces or negotiation results, while others may rather be constant or elastic. When negotiation is influential, the framework may be seen as a battlefield for opposing specificities. In any case, the proposed framework is capable of illustrating a change of culturally driven specificity as a shift between two extremes of a linear

continuum. It can also be used to discuss and/or illustrate possible or future changes of a given metric, which is, in the preceding example, Japan's MBS.

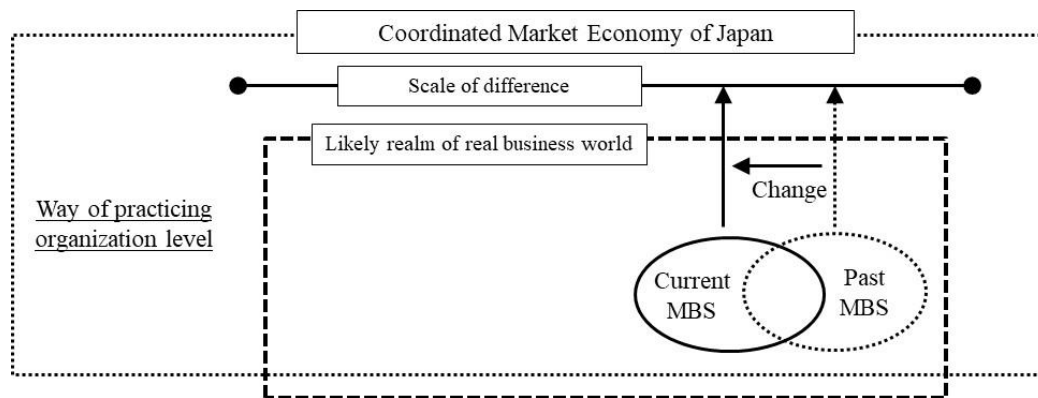


Figure 19: System-level change illustrated in the framework of cultural translatability

Cross-cultural learning is pointed out across academic disciplines. For example, in the field of history, Gordon (2014) argues that Japan has a long history of borrowing elements from other societies and making them “Japanese” by blending it with what they have. In the subfield of business history, Ohtsu and Imanari (2002) offer narratives of repetitive attempts made for the past few decades in the twentieth century to blend foreign business practices for making it “Japanese” from the viewpoint of the Japanese.

The concept of cross-cultural learning corroborates the two-step approach (Chapter Two). It is known that there exists no perfect method to research culture, which is an extraordinarily wide concept (Thomas and Peterson, 2017). To mitigate this known problem, this thesis has first created the proposed framework to address the comparable cultural constructs, which address the majority views, reported from positivist projects with etic perspectives. Part Two has examined individual data from emic perspectives by illustrating them in the framework. The two-step approach has encompassed the emic views and identified the gap between the individual view and the extremes of cultural constructs for best locating the individual view illustrated in the proposed framework.

This section has discussed the three factors of cultural translatability - cultural compatibility, cultural competence, and the purpose of translation - followed by three ways to view it. All these are dynamic: They are interrelated to each other and can change over time. The following section will elaborate on the dynamics of cultural specificities with reference to cultural translation.

9.4 Characteristics of cultural specificities

The sectoral findings suggest that culturally driven specificities are durable yet dynamic by nature. This section will reveal their complex nature by applying the proposed framework of cultural translatability. It will focus on the change, dynamics, and interrelatedness of cultural specificities.

9.4.1 Changes and reversions

Culturally driven specificities can change. For example, Chapter Six has analyzed the tool of a job description that Japan started to use for changing the seniority system. It has made the CME employment system more of LME in that sense. This thesis refers to it as change, which alone depicts a specificity's change of becoming more of another culture in a specific context. In the proposed framework, it is illustrated as a one-way movement from one position to another on a linear continuum between two extremes as shown in Figure 20. The term *change* semantically includes similar words, such as *shift* and *adjustment*, to indicate the context-specific dynamics of becoming more of source-language culture as a result of cultural translation. Another example is the no-bidding model that General Motors launched in the LME (Chapter Seven). The model is more of CME, though it did not transform the automaker into a CME actor.

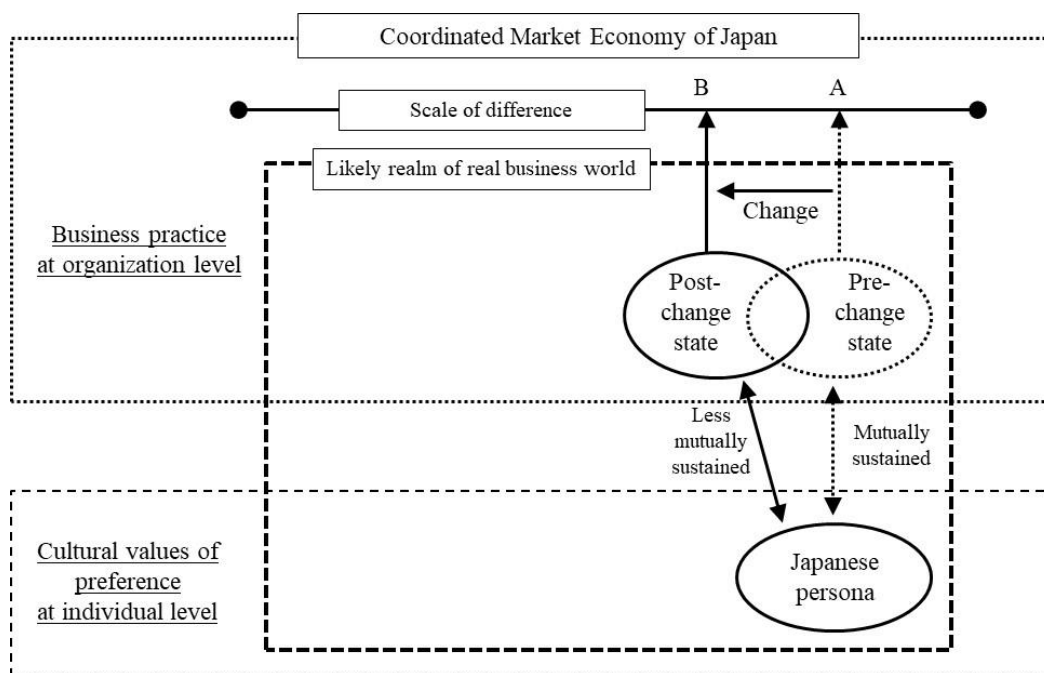


Figure 20: A change of the seniority system in the 1990s

Chapter Six has offered a background of the change: The seniority system is fair in the Japanese sense as it gives preferential treatment to the experienced. At the same time, it is unfair especially in the LME sense that, unlike the merit-based system, it does not necessarily promote less experienced yet highly performing employees. To mitigate the drawback, the Japanese attempted to implement merit-based promotion in the late 1990s (Yamada, 2020). This implementation can be considered an attempt through cultural translation of merit-based promotion, which is known as a typical LME framework and was not conventional in Japan. In Figure 20, Points A and B represent the pre- and post-attempt state in the early and late 1990s, respectively.

This thesis has examined another type of change, which can be termed *reversion*: a cultural specificity's movement of shifting back towards the original position on a linear continuum in the proposed framework. A reversion ensues a change of specificity, as it expresses a cultural specificity's movement retracing to the pre-change state. A reversion also involves pre- and post-reversion state. The term *reversion* semantically includes similar words, such as *readjustment* and *return*, to indicate the context-specific

dynamics of restoring target-language culture after the target audience evaluates a cultural translation. Figure 21 illustrates the Japanese seniority system’s reversion after the change shown in Figure 20:

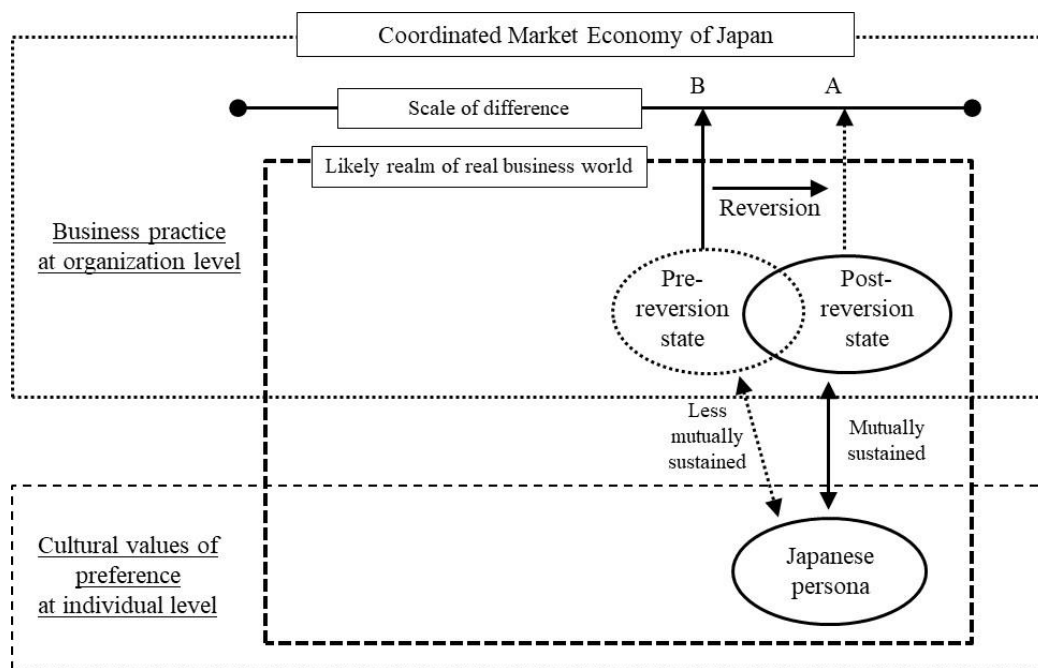


Figure 21: A reversion of the seniority system in late 1990s and early 2000s

As discussed earlier, the Japanese attempted to implement merit-based promotion in the late 1990s, but it faltered in the early 2000s (Yamada, 2020). The system retraced to the original position or there around (shifting backwards to the CME extreme after the initial change shown in Figure 20) in the early 2000s. In other words, the system has become more of CME again.

A change and a reversion may occur anytime possibly because of the influence of international transactions made across business or any related sectors. The proposed framework helps better understand each of the chain of movements. This section has so far used it twice to demonstrate the change and reversion of the seniority-based system. They can be understood as staged movements made gradually yet constantly during the period of nearly 10 years between the late 1990s and the early 2000s. The whole movements never happened overnight. Many cultural translations like these are made daily. Some of them may function with intertwined practices, while others may not. These dynamic changes of specificities precede subsequent reversions. This interpretation explains the reality that it can take a target audience time to evaluate a translated text when the scope of cultural translation is wide.

The preceding section has developed the concept of cultural compatibility in translation. It refers to the compatibility of culturally driven specificities between the organization and individual levels. Expressed as “Mutually sustained” and “Less mutually sustained” in Figure 20 and Figure 21, the concept can help understand why the merit-based system faltered, and the seniority system has remained in the CME of Japan. As analyzed in Chapter Six, Japan’s seniority system is representative of the cultural construct of power distance: power distributed relatively more to the senior than others. The construct explains the failure of Japan’s previous attempt to adopt the merit-based system during the early 2000s (Yamada, 2020): the merit-

based system disregards the seniority system's high level of power distance between the experienced and the inexperienced. This disregard is not accepted in the CME not only because large power distance is embedded into the seniority system, but also large power distance matters to Japan's persona (de Geus, 2002), which consists of Japan's value sets. Their learned interpretations include the idea that large power distance is culturally appropriate. No law mandates the Japanese firms to have the seniority or merit-based system. The choice is entirely up to the business professionals who make decisions based on their learned interpretations among other protocols, including culturally independent practicalities. Culture is not everything, but no other convincing explanation than cultural compatibility appears available in literature regarding Japan's choice not to have the merit-based system as the main evaluation system.

This section has discussed changes and reversions of culturally driven specificities and used cultural compatibility as the reason why reversions occur. The following section will further discuss the dynamic yet durable nature of cultural specificity.

9.4.2 Cultural elasticity

Chapter Three has mentioned an underdeveloped term in the field of business: cultural elasticity. Drejer et al. (2019) introduce it as "the ability to quickly change the shared values and behaviors in the organization so that they fit emerging business models" (p. 14). This description connotes a double-edged sword: "It facilitates the continuous learning of new ideas, visions, values, norms, language, assumptions, beliefs, and habits related to emerging business models" (Drejer et al., 2019, p. 14) on the positive side. On the negative side, some employees can be "stuck in old cultural patterns from previous (maybe failed) business models" (Drejer et al., 2019, p. 14). Although this description makes sense, it needs to be developed because it does not always stand as the definition of cultural elasticity. There can be three possible reasons: 1) It assumes that the new model is better than the old model, 2) it preconditions the shared values and/or behaviors to be easily changed for the majority, and 3) its scope mixes up culturally driven and culturally independent specificities. Literature commonly says that the quality of a business model is relative in a cross-cultural setting (Sako, 1992). The LME and CME systems are perceived as appropriate in LMEs and the CME, respectively, but not the other way around (Thelen, 2009). A new model, which is effective in one society, is not always so in another. As reported in Part Two, the shared values of preference are not always changed quickly, which is why the issue of cultural translatability looms. Prevalent literature argues that the cultural values of preference are generally durable (House et al., 2004). A reversion occurs when the old model has a higher level of cultural compatibility with the local cultural values of preference than the new model. This finding corroborates the current existence of the LME-CME distinction.

According to Herbst, Kounev, and Ruessner (2013), the term *elasticity* is originally defined in physics as "a material property capturing the capability of returning to its original state after a deformation" (p. 23). In economics, the term usually denotes "the sensitivity of a dependent variable to changes in one or more other variables" (Herbst, Kounev, and Ruessner, 2013, p. 23), such as demand and supply. For example, when demand decreases and returns to its previous position, supply tends to decrease in response and return to its previous position or similar. Based on the original definition in physics, the concept of cultural

elasticity can be defined as a cultural specificity's capability of changing and reverting to its previous state. This description is not perfectly comprehensive but is intended to capture the very nature of elasticity, corresponding to the concepts of a change and a reversion discussed previously.

The proposed framework has illustrated the cultural elasticity of Japan's seniority system as presented in the previous section. Japan's failed attempt to implement merit-based promotion in the late 1990s faltered in the early 2000s. This change, followed by the reversion, supports the proposed description of cultural elasticity that explains the dynamic relationship between cultural specificities.

Two decades later after the failed attempt, history is repeating itself: The Japanese firms are currently trying merit-based promotion again (Yamada, 2020) by incorporating job descriptions. This on-going experiment appears slightly different from the previous one: The current attempt's primary objective seems to be more of balanced coexistence of the two systems, rather than the full transformation from seniority-based to merit-based by using partial translations of job descriptions ("job descriptions" for ease of discussion). The current objective, or the purpose of cultural translation, seems more realistic than the previously failed one since it is not to transform the CME system into LME. The lesson of the failed attempt appears to suggest that the current objective may be achievable with a reasonable level of cultural compatibility kept within the CME, whereas the previous one was not. If successful, the on-going change can be said that it is culturally elastic: The seniority system has changed in response to the purpose of cultural translation to make it more of LME. Hypothetically, 100 years later, the system may become more of CME again, abandoning job descriptions. This can also be explainable with cultural elasticity: It has returned to the original state. The proposed framework can illustrate this change and the hypothetical reversion made over 100 years.

Chapter Six has examined the following quotes (Case 6-3) given by HR executive officers: Kagome wishes to "adjust the seniority system by using job descriptions as benchmark tools" and Santen Pharmaceutical considers that "Job-type and membership-type are not mutually exclusive, and merit-based promotions can coexist with membership-type employment" (Human Capital Online, 2021). The current stage of coexistence may be summarized as three patterns: The Japanese organizations 1) keep the tool of a job description as their on-going experiment to see if it works, 2) have adopted the tool, and 3) tried and decided not to use it. In the proposed framework of cultural translatability, the first group currently remains within the CME realm as they are undecided. The second group has shifted towards the LME side within the CME realm or possibly moved to the LME side, depending on the case. This group appears highly dynamic. They may have opted for the merit-based system or may have incorporated it as a secondary framework into membership-type employment. The third group has decided to remain within the CME. This group exhibits the high level of durability: They are not interested or have decided that it is unsuitable for their business after trying it out and evaluating the effectiveness of it. A variety of actor-specific cultural elasticity can be observed within a society. The proposed framework can illustrate each of the three groups.

The concept of cultural elasticity has relevance with Japan's historical developments. Their watershed events might have affected Japanese style management in the last two centuries: 1) Meiji Restoration in 1868, 2) the Great Depression in the 1930s, 3) the surrender of Imperial Japan in 1945, 4) the Big Bang in

the 1990s, and 5) the lost decade(s) in the 1990s and the 2000s. Except for the Great Depression, the watersheds generally pressed Japan to shift towards the LME side in the proposed framework. Japan has a long history of borrowing elements from other societies and making them “Japanese” by blending it through cultural translation. This blending can be interpreted as a series of changes and reversions of culturally elastic specificities. In the employment sector, the aggregate results can be expressed as the current state at a given point of time. The “current” state of practice constantly changes between the symmetrical opposites, seeking the optimal point through cross-cultural learning in the respective society as explained previously. These constant movements occur because they are culturally elastic.

Although cultural specificities are dynamic with constant changes and reversions, the sectoral findings suggest that the LME and CME systems are unlikely to transform themselves to become a symmetrical opposite through cultural translations: for example, job-type employment is unlikely to become membership-type employment. This view corroborates prevalent literature (Thelen, 2009; Williams and Zumbansen, 2011) and supports the structure of the proposed framework with two extremes of a linear continuum. The LME and CME systems, including decision-making, employment, and finance, are horizontally and vertically intertwined with others across levels, keeping the whole LME and CME generally stable in equilibrium. The term *persona* signifies what is kept in the respective societies.

Cultural translation deals with cultural specificities according to specific translation purposes. All those actors exhibit cultural elasticity to varying degrees. This complexity seems to call for the need for cultural competence. For instance, if a translated text of a symmetrical opposite requires naturalness (Nida and Taber, 1969), the translation requires reasonable knowledge of target-language culture.

Using the proposed framework, this section has discussed the aggregate changes and reversions as cultural elasticity that may be observed over time. The framework can help researchers with an investigation into cultural translatability. The following section will discuss an important characteristic of cultural specificities - their interrelatedness - that further explains their cultural elasticity.

9.4.3 Interrelatedness

The sectoral findings suggest that culturally driven specificities are interrelated to each other, keeping themselves generally durable, while they can be dynamic enough to be translated. This chapter has earlier developed the concept of cultural compatibility that addresses the interrelatedness of cultural specificities between the organization and individual levels. The term *interrelatedness* semantically includes similar words such as *interconnectedness* for inclusive discussion. This section will further develop the interrelatedness at each level.

Chapter Three reviewed the literature idea on individual-level persona that the culturally driven specificities are in a dynamic equilibrium, which is alternatively referred to as the homeostasis of society (House et al., 2004). From the idea, this thesis has presupposed that the cultural constructs, such as individualism/collectivism and time orientation, are interrelated with each other. For example, the LME practice of job-type employment is compatible with the cultural values associated with the constructs of individualism, small power distance, short-term orientation, low uncertainty avoidance, and low context of

communication. By contrast, the Japanese practice of membership-type employment is compatible with the cultural values associated with the constructs of collectivism, large power distance, long-term orientation, high uncertainty avoidance, and high context of communication. These constructs appear to be interrelated to each other, constituting the individual-level persona in the respective societies (de Geus, 2002). In this thesis, culture consists of cultural values of preference, such as individualistic values of preference. Taken together, the whole set of cultural values in a society shape the value system of a society at the individual level. The sectoral findings support the idea. For example, Chapter Five examined the LME practice of escalation, as opposed to the CME practice of horenso. The LME practice is tailored to the primacy of individual ways of completing tasks (individualism), the primacy of speedy task completion (short-term orientation), the primacy of relatively large power given to individuals, enough to have individual autonomy for task completion (power distance), and such. The sectoral findings have demonstrated that different cultural values of preference collectively explain one culturally driven practice. In other words, a society has a dynamic yet durable set of interrelated cultural values of preference that function with culturally compatible business practice.

The sectoral findings suggest that culturally driven practices are interrelated to each other at the organization level, akin to the individual level. For example, Chapter Five has examined the concept of horenso which is not industry specific but observable in any business sector (Kameda, 2013). As presented earlier in Table 34, the CME's communication style (horenso), communication pattern (all involved members to be on the same page), and communication purpose (collective task completion) are interrelated to each other.

In a similar vein, Chapter Seven has reviewed three Japanese ties that bind keiretsu affiliates: "ownership networks, personnel flows, and expectations of mutual assistance" (Dow, McGuire, and Yoshikawa, 2011 p. 301), all of which are also observable in any business sector. This pervasiveness of unspoken CME codes of conduct, including horenso and the keiretsu ties, can be interpreted as the interrelatedness of culturally driven business practices. Those practices constitute the organization-level persona (de Geus, 2002). This interrelatedness of cultural practices sustains it.

From the CME viewpoint, those unspoken codes of conduct, such as being able to carry out horenso and abide by the keiretsu ties, can be equally or possibly even more fundamental than other skill requirements typically listed in the LME tool a job description. The notion of interrelatedness helps explain why the CME has not used the tool in the same way as LMEs. It also helps envisage the future outcome of cultural translation of the tool.

This section has discussed the interrelatedness at each level. Taken together with the concept of cultural compatibility that binds the levels, the whole society can be said to have the nexus of interrelated specificities standing at a specific level. The idea here has remained for more than 100 years at least since 1919, which is when William Stern drew a vertical ladder to explain it (de Geus, 2002). This chapter has added cultural rationale to Stern's time-honored concept.

9.5 Audience receptions

Part Two suggests that cultural translation can come with different types of repercussions. This section will discuss those from three angles: First, it will discuss different types of audiences. Second, it will explore target audience's positive and negative receptions and subsequent reactions toward a cultural translation. Finally, it will talk about a cultural translation's ripple effects on source-language audience.

9.5.1 Audience profile

Cultural translation serves various types of target audiences with different expectations for cultural translation. The sectoral findings suggest that all the factors of cultural translatability - cultural compatibility, cultural competence, and purposes of cultural translation - can be possibly tailored to the target audience for improving the feasibility of cultural translation. The proposed framework can be used for any type of target-language and source-language audiences.

For example, Case 5-1, among other cases, has a single individual as a target audience in a cross-cultural setting. In Case 5-1, a new CEO refused to perform horensō reporting requested through cultural translation. If the horensō requirements were relaxed to the same extent as Case 5-3 (a partially translated case), the CEO may have accepted the request. The proposed framework is capable of illustrating both cases.

Case 6-3's target audience can be the entire workforce at the two large organizations concerned. Their translation settings contain two cultural specificities: merit-based and seniority-based promotion. The two systems coexist as the organizations are attempting to adjust their seniority-based system by blending merit-based promotion with it. This attempt explains their expectations for cultural translation. The proposed framework can illustrate any part of the dynamics.

Chapter Eight has discussed the sectoral findings in a wider context at the organization level. Case 8-3 has investigated the applicability of the LME concept of relationship banking to Japan's main bank system. Case 8-3's target audience can be the whole sector of Japan's financial system. The proposed framework can illustrate the LME concept of relationship lending as an organization-level specificity for explaining its applicability to the CME of Japan. A cultural translation may be potentially significant in a case like this, which can have sector-wide impacts and/or involve very large monetary assets.

Cultural translation may affect source-language (SL) society. There may be possible influences of back translation, which is a reverse translation of target-language (TL) text into SL. This chapter will discuss this point in the last section.

9.5.2 Positive vs. negative receptions and subsequent reactions

The sectoral findings suggest that translated cases tend to receive positive receptions from a target audience, and cases with the issue of cultural translatability generally end up with negative receptions. This chapter has described the issue of cultural translatability as a low level of translation feasibility that makes target-language audience perceive that translated text does not make reasonable sense culturally, while it makes sense linguistically and culturally to source-language audience. However, if the target audience enjoys or expects the issue, they may take it in a positive way. These different scenarios - positive or negative - suggest

that the target audience have specific receptions based on their expectations. There can be neutral receptions, but this section focuses on the two types for discussion purposes. The proposed framework is capable of visualizing those cases of cultural translation.

Positive receptions seem to arise from translation cases that allow a target audience to retain their cultural values of preference. For example, Inazo Nitobe's book *Bushido* (1905) is well known that many influential non-Japanese readers, including President Theodore Roosevelt and President John F. Kennedy of the USA to name a few, enjoyed it. Although the book *Bushido* is an English translation of the Japanese original that contains numerous and intensely culturally driven specificities, it is well received because the target audience's objective is to acquire knowledge or enjoy the difference, rather than to assimilate the bushido/samurai codes of conduct for being a modern samurai. The LME audience's expectation for translation in this context is to have an informative book, which does not demand to transform their cultural values of preference from LME into CME. Using EPRG model discussed in Chapter Three, *Bushido* can be said to be an ethnocentric translation that is open to target audience's interpretation and/or expectation.

Applying the proposed framework to a case of cultural translation helps visualize how the translation is accepted in the context. For example, Chapter Five has reported on a cultural translation of horensō practice (Case 5-3) that does not raise the issue of cultural translatability. The manager (the translator) removed some of the symmetrically opposite specificities during the translation process. Consequently, the target audience (his team members) retained their cultural values of preference. The visualization mitigates the lack of mutual knowledge by presenting the symmetrical opposite that target audience, including future researchers, are possibly unfamiliar with.

Negative receptions tend to occur when, by contrast, the target audience attempts or is asked to surrender their culturally driven practice and adopt or assimilate a culturally symmetrical opposite as theirs: in simple terms, giving up on what they believe and taking on symmetrical opposites that contradict what they believe, in the extreme sense. The adoption or assimilation here includes an actual application of a translation that forces the audience to choose a symmetrically opposite culturally driven practice: for example, compelling an LME individual to abide by membership-type employment. Part Two has illustrated culturally driven practices that raise the issue of cultural translatability at a very high level (or a very low level of feasibility). Case 5-1 illustrates an LME manager who refused to perform horensō and consequently lost his job. In this case, he was requested to adhere to an English translation of horensō practice. The purpose of this translation was to make him understand horensō as practiced in Japan and perform the Japanese practice. The translation made adequate sense linguistically but did not serve the ethnocentric purpose because it did not make sense culturally to the manager. Horensō was a symmetrical opposite from his perspective, which was in proximity to the LME extreme in the framework.

Different audience perceptions, positive or negative, can result in different reactions. A target audience may or may not assimilate a cultural translation's content and/or its cultural values embedded in it. The types of reactions may be expressed as internalizing and rejecting. The term *internalize* is chosen for discussion purposes, and this thesis does not exclude other similar terms. Similarly, the act of rejecting may be

expressed with its synonyms: for example, refusing, disdaining, and so on. The terms are meant to be inclusive for flexible discussions.

Positive and negative receptions seemingly correspond with internalizing and rejecting, respectively. It is likely so but is not always the case. As discussed above, Inazo Nitobe's book *Bushido* (1905) received generally positive perceptions. However, the target audience's primary objective is not likely to internalize the codes of bushido/samurai but more likely to enjoy the differences from target-audience culture. This enjoyment does not necessarily constitute the willingness to internalize the source-language culture.

This chapter has revisited the horenso practice (Case 5-3), which is translated, explained, and implemented with less requirements from the Japanese standpoint or more requirements from the American (target audience) standpoint. Imposing more requirements than "normal" is likely to receive negative receptions, but the target audience did not reject it. That is why the practice is translated, which generally suggests the internalization of the cultural translation, depending on the receptor.

9.5.3 Ripple effects in source-language society

Lastly, this section will discuss the possible ripple effects of a cultural translation on source-language (SL) society. In a wider context, there may be possible influences of back translation, which is a reverse translation of target-language (TL) text into SL. A translation may not even have to be translated back into SL. For example, a Japanese individual who is fluent in English and Japanese can read an English translation of Japanese text in English, without having it translated back into Japanese. For this reason, this section presumes that a TL text (TT) does not have to be translated back when it comes to the exploration of ripple effects of a cultural translation. The proposed framework can visualize such effects as it contains SL and TL societies in it.

Case 8-2 has performed textual analysis of a newspaper article, which highlights "razor-thin loan margins" in the banking sector (Uranaka, 2013). The case analyzes the pricing level, among other attributes, of a large corporate loan extended by a syndicate of Japanese banks. The newspaper comments from the LME viewpoint (Uranaka, 2013): "This is Japanese pricing at its worst. It is absolutely bonkers." This pejorative remark can be interpreted in different ways. In an LME context, large groups of audiences across sectors are likely to perceive the Japanese banking practice as "bonkers" since it is broadcast through the media. The ripple effects can be likely negative and rejecting as the Japanese practice has little cultural compatibility with the LME values of preference. The Japanese practice's cultural compatibility with the CME values of preference is apparently lost in translation or disregarded in the first place. This type of cultural text employs the critical approach, driven by the etic view.

This media news may have been viewed by a Japanese audience in SL society. A single newspaper may be unnoticed or appear insignificant to the Japanese banking sector, but a series of messages with the same types of news may catch attention and promote banking professionals to reconsider their loan pricing and increase their loan margins in the long run. Such ripple effects of translation may be simply rejected in SL society or may serve as a catalyst that potentially makes the Japanese banks reconsider their pricing. "Razor-thin margins" can be culturally appropriate in the CME of Japan but not necessarily effective for

generating profits. The appropriate level of business profitability is a culturally driven theme, but it may change over time. The notion of workable translation for the purpose of translation and the notion of beneficial translation for the audience may not always be the same. In any case, the Japanese banks' interpretation will depend on the factors of cultural translation, among others, discussed earlier in this chapter.

Chapter Ten: Conclusions

This thesis has proposed and tested the new concept and the framework of cultural translatability. In doing so, it has made conceptual developments that contribute to existing knowledge. This Chapter will recapitulate the contributions and limitations of research and discuss the implications of the findings for future research.

10.1 Contribution to knowledge

This section will summarize the three types of contributions: 1) the new concept of cultural translatability and its framework, 2) the factors that affect the feasibility of cultural translation, and 3) the advancements of literature concepts, in particular *cultural elasticity*, made in this thesis.

10.1.1 New category proposed

This thesis's overarching contribution is the new concept of cultural translatability and its framework. The concept is defined as the feasibility of translating cultural specificity from one society to another. It can be explained with three different considerations. First, referred to as the issue of cultural translatability, a low level of translation feasibility can be said that a linguistically adequate translation does not make reasonable sense in target language society, even if it makes sense linguistically and culturally to the translator. In such circumstances, the translator renders a linguistically intelligible translation that adequately conveys the source-language culture, but what is conveyed contradicts the majority's learned interpretation in target-language society. This explanation is to describe the issue of cultural translatability, not to say that all cultural translations raise the issue to the same extent.

Second, a challenging cultural translation can facilitate the translation process. It may sound counterintuitive, but it can motivate the translator and even target audience to know about source language culture. Chapter Nine has discussed it as the catalyst for cultural translation, which may entail an appropriate level or an enhancement of cultural competence. Chapter Three has reviewed the concept of cultural competence, which includes attitude (curiosity and openness), knowledge, skills of interpreting and relating, skills of discovery and interaction, and critical cultural awareness (Byram, 1997). These attributes, especially attitude and cultural awareness, appear to intersect the idea of catalyst for cultural translation.

Finally, loosely related to the second point, cultural translation can be part of cross-cultural learning of knowledge: for example, business/professional knowledge translated from one society to another in the multi-national corporate network. The proposed framework can illustrate a learned practice through translation vertically standing at the organization level, positioned at the possibly optimal point horizontally between the LME and CME extremes. A workable translation likely stands at that point, where it may be accepted in both societies.

The proposed concept is distinguished from linguistic translatability. This point is to emphasize and clarify what makes the translation feasibility low, not to claim that cultural translatability is irrelevant to linguistic items. This thesis has focused on the individual-level cultural values of preference behind the

behavior described in source-language texts. This focus pertains to what a corpus cannot tell us: how speakers process language in the mind or what the intention behind the use of a common pattern may be (Jones and Waller, 2015). The “intention” may not always or perfectly be accessible to anyone, but the employed methods have helped this thesis systematically analyze data in research cycles, generate the findings by cultural construct, and describe them as cultural values of preference to explain the feasibility of cultural translation. The explanations support the concept of cultural translatability.

The proposed framework is capable of addressing the concept of cultural translatability by systematically visualizing its factors. It has a simple yet versatile structure that helps capture the distance between specificities in the conceptual field, consisting of the three vertically aligned levels of individual, organization, and economy and, horizontally, two extremes of a linear continuum placed across the levels to ensure the framework’s capability. The distance can represent the degree of a cultural difference, which addresses the issue of cultural translatability. This thesis has delivered the usable foothold - the concept with the assistance of the framework - which satisfies the functional requirement of a theory: Being capable of explaining observed realities and predicting phenomena (Bryman, 2004).

The concept is proposed to fill the gap: the lack of an established theory to explain the issue, which has been the crux of the widely discussed theme of cross-cultural understanding of intangible culture in translation beyond tangible culture. The concept and its framework are proposed to foster productive dialogue between different disciplinary viewpoints. As mentioned in Chapter One, this thesis has had three principles - equitable, inclusive, and balanced - regarding the treatment of different scholarly viewpoints. These basic ideas signify the framework’s structure to embrace opposing viewpoints. The interdisciplinary review of literature has found that business studies and language studies have diffused yet distinct disciplinary norms, including a preference for an etic or emic approach. The framework can embrace both approaches by illustrating the unit of analysis and positioning it anywhere between two extremes in the framework. Systematic visualization will help clarify cross-cultural discussions and possibly synthesize opposing arguments.

The sectoral findings have boiled down to three factors that affect the feasibility of cultural translation: 1) cultural compatibility, 2) cultural competence, and 3) purpose of cultural translation. These are considered major factors of the feasibility, developed from prevalent literature concepts adopted to structure the framework by bridging business studies, communication studies, and language-related studies. Although not exhaustive, they will help analyze and explain the feasibility of cultural translation in a specific setting. The following section will summarize the factors of the proposed concept.

10.1.2 Factors of cultural translatability developed

The concept of cultural compatibility, one of the three factors that affect the feasibility of cultural translation, is advanced from *compatibility* (Rogers, 2003). This thesis’s findings can supplement the original concept, and the proposed framework can visualize the compatibility of cultural specificities between the organization and individual levels for an elevated understanding. The original concept is developed in three ways by 1) testing its current validity, 2) assessing its interdisciplinary applicability, and 3) clarifying the concept of a

value of preference that constitutes the attribute. The third point is made by distinguishing intangible culture from tangible culture. This thesis has added detailed explanations of cultural values with the clarification of the organization and individual levels to Rogers' original work. The developed concept is referred to as cultural compatibility (rather than compatibility) to indicate that it is advanced with the clarifications from the literature concept.

The proposed framework is capable of visualizing the makeups of cultural competence: knowledge at the individual level and behavior at the organization level. The concept of cultural competence is much discussed in literature, but little is provided concerning two fundamental questions: What constitutes 1) the knowledge of cultural competence and 2) culturally competent behavior? This thesis has answered these fundamental questions with the findings. The framework helps make sense with contextualized case samples of cultural specificities. Chapter Five has detailed the required individual-level knowledge and organization-level practice for being a culturally competent translator through the partially translated case (Case 5-3). Although the making of cultural competence can vary, case-by-case samples promote a context-based understanding of the concept.

The theme of translation purpose is also much discussed in literature. This thesis has contributed by clarifying that the purpose(s) of translation can be interrelated with other factors - cultural compatibility and cultural competence - that affect the feasibility of cultural translation. For example, in Case 5-3, the culturally competent translator renders an English translation of the CME practice, horensō, with the purpose of being accepted by the target audience whose cultural values distinctively differ from those of source language culture. This case-specific purpose makes the translator adjust the translation approach from full translation to partial translation by removing the components unlikely to be accepted in the LME setting. The idea here is to highlight the significance of having the suitable purpose of cultural translation for the setting, not necessarily to reject the norm of full translation in the translation sector. A translation setting can be explained from the audience's perspective too: for example, whether the target audience would prefer to have a high level of cultural compatibility between the culturally driven behavior described in source text (ST) and target-language culture (TC), whether the target audience has a reasonable level of cultural competence, and so forth. The idea here may be described as analysis of the translation setting to determine the purpose of cultural translation.

The purpose of cultural translation can also be explained with the orientation of translation, which tends to be ethnocentric and/or polycentric. The chosen orientation can characterize the target text (TT). The translator can opt for the suitable orientation for the translation purpose. For example, if the purpose is to convey a cultural specificity in ST as-is from source-language culture (SC) to TC, it will be said to have an ethnocentric purpose of translation.

The preceding discussion on translation purpose is not to suggest that a suitable purpose always renders a "successful" translation. The word *success* or *successful* is a relative notion: A cultural translation can be successful from one perspective but may not be so from another. In addition, a workable translation may not always warrant a positive consequence. For example, Chapter Five has examined Case 5-1, in which a new CEO lost their job due to their refusal to perform the horensō practice. The translator(s) produced a

“successful” English translation of the Japanese codes of horenso in the sense that it was linguistically accurate. The target audience (CEO) did not act in accordance with the translated codes for the cultural reason: It made no sense to or contradicted the CEO’s LME values of preference. Furthermore, the effect of translation may not always be beneficial or immediately visible to a target audience. It may take time to evaluate the effects of a cultural translation.

The previous discussion suggests that, again, a culturally driven ST as-is is not equally acceptable in all societies. The idea is subject to the issue of cultural translatability, which addresses a symmetrical opposite of textualized culturally driven behavior in TC. On the other hand, a translation of culturally independent specificity can be translated without the issue. For example, the following is a culturally independent text: “♀ and ♂ represent a female and a male, respectively”.

In developing the factors of cultural translatability, this thesis has advanced pertinent literature concepts adopted to create the framework. The following section will summarize the conceptual advancements, focusing on cultural elasticity.

10.1.3 Development of concepts related to cultural translatability

This thesis has advanced the underdeveloped concept of cultural elasticity, among others. It is newly defined as a cultural specificity’s capability of changing and adjusting to its previous state. It is an important concept that explains the relative nature of cultural translatability. Prior studies commonly point out the relativity of translatability, but no concept is available to explain the reason why it is dynamic. This section will explicate it by recapitulating cultural elasticity in connection with other related concepts also developed in this thesis.

Cultural elasticity explains changes and adjustments of cultural specificity at any level. The proposed framework can illustrate such changes and adjustments to demonstrate cultural elasticity. The concept is useful because cultural translation takes place in a dynamic setting involving symmetrically opposite cultural specificities. Chapter Six has examined Japan’s attempt to translate and implement the LME specificity of merit-based promotion in the late 1990s. This business practice is culturally elastic: It was implemented through its cultural translation but faltered in the early 2000s, bouncing back to its original position or around on a linear continuum between the LME and CME extremes at the organization level.

Cultural elasticity exists in the nexus of culturally driven specificities. This thesis has contributed by clarifying the concept of cultural specificity and their interrelatedness. Prior research, especially business-related cultural studies, has released vast research on cultural constructs at the individual level. However, some studies suffer three critical issues: First, they tend to focus on either the individual or organization level, often mixing them up, consequently ending up with having less clarity and/or consistency with the preconditioned definition of culture. Second, they tend to mix up the emic and etic views, ending up with an ecological fallacy. Finally, the concept of culture is not appropriately applied for the research aim. For example, being strong-willed, which is a personality trait remote from the organization level, is presented as an example of individualism to discuss LME practice. Personality traits are not regionally patterned values of preference, though a fine line may exist between them.

This thesis has offered the multi-level framework to mitigate the three issues above and demonstrate the interrelatedness of cultural specificities across the levels, as well as those within a level. The cultural specificity of the seniority-based system bounced back in Japan towards its original position because of the decisions collectively made by all involved participants. The majority decision has supported the specificity, which is intrinsically connected with the CME cultural values of preference. This analysis can be visualized in the proposed framework. Cultural specificities are interrelated, which is why they are generally durable though dynamic.

Cultural elasticity can also explain the translation dynamics occurring over a relatively long period of time. Chapter Nine has discussed the relevance with Japan's historical developments made over the past 150 years. It is known that Japan has a long history of borrowing elements from other societies and making them "Japanese" by blending it through cultural translation. This blending consists of a series of changes and adjustments of culturally elastic specificities. The "current" state of practice constantly changes between the symmetrical opposites, seeking the optimal point through cross-cultural learning in the respective society. The concept can help understand the constant movements on the linear continuum of two extremes in the framework. In that sense, cross-cultural learning can result in or be described as the repetitive act of searching for the point where a translated practice is best acceptable and potentially most beneficial for the target audience.

Cultural elasticity is a dynamic part of a society's persona, which embodies the interrelatedness of cultural specificities. This thesis has developed the concept of persona (de Geus, 2002) by triangulating prevalent literature concepts and distinguishing intangible culture from tangible culture. For the economy level, this thesis has reviewed and adopted the interrelatedness characterized as LME/CME (Hall and Soskice, 2001; Thelen, 2009). Regarding the organization level, it has adopted and tested the ACR-OCR model (Sako, 1992) as summarized above. At the individual level, this thesis has focused on the cultural constructs examined in Chapter Three and clarified the cultural construct of uncertainty avoidance. All these cultural specificities collectively constitute the persona at a specific level (for example, cultural constructs at the individual level) or as the whole (de Geus, 2002), depending on the unit of analysis. Taken together, the whole set of cultural specificities in a society shape the dynamic value system. Cultural translation is a challenge to transpose a cultural specificity between such systems. The concept of cultural translatability helps with the challenge.

The framework's capability is built on the literature concept of Arm's-Length Contractual Relation ("ACR") and Obligational Contractual Relation ("OCR") or ACR-OCR model (Sako, 1992), among other concepts. This thesis has developed ACR-OCR in three ways: 1) testing its current validity, 2) expanding its applicability beyond the context of the original research, and 3) adding the individual and economy levels to it by integrating it into the proposed framework. Sako (1992) conducted a comparative study on the electronics industry, focusing on British trading relationships (ACR) and Japanese trading relationships (OCR). ACR-OCR is tested at that time of research with industry-specific data collected in the British and Japanese societies. To advance ACR-OCR, this thesis has tested the proposed framework against data solicited from four functional/industrial sectors: decision-making communication, employment,

manufacturing, and banking mainly in Japan, the UK, and the USA. The sectoral findings are triangulated to test the theoretical strength.

10.2 Limitations

This thesis has performed qualitative research. In general, qualitative research is bound in a case/research context, including time and space. Consequently, its findings are not generalizable beyond that. This thesis has focused on cultural translatability of business communication between English and Japanese. This focus has set the research boundary.

To improve the generalizability of the grounded findings, this thesis has designed the project in a coherent and logical way as discussed in Part One. This thesis has begun with a pilot analysis, which has rendered what to be tested - the proposed concept and its framework. The framework is built with prevalent and/or time-honored concepts selectively chosen from early and recent literature. It is capable of illustrating changes and reversions of culturally driven specificities made over the watershed events (Chapter Three). Such reversions occur because of the cultural elasticity of specificities. Importantly, the review of literature has also found that the basic arguments of early concepts/works are not necessarily outdated. This point should be kept in mind.

This thesis has investigated the cultural value(s) of preference behind the behavior described in textual data, going beyond the narrow focus on words or texts. No perfect research method is available to gauge cultural values precisely. Overlooked cultural constructs may exist since no researchers are perfectly knowledgeable about all cultures. Nonetheless, the findings suggest the five constructs - individualism/collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, short-term and long-term orientation, power distance, and high/low contexts of communication - have been reasonably effective to test the hypothesis. To minimize bias, this thesis has incorporated research cycles (Northey, Tepperman, and Russell, 2002). This systematic approach has helped this thesis triangulate the sectoral findings and improve the generalizability of the grounded findings.

This thesis has focused on culturally driven specificities. As such, the proposed framework of cultural translatability is structured to illustrate cultural specificities. It does not meaningfully handle culturally independent specificities that may influence decisions on cultural translation. However, the framework can be a supplementary tool to deal with translation in case it involves culturally driven and independent specificities.

10.3 Implications for future research

Although this thesis has its limitations as discussed above, the proposed concept and its framework have the potential to serve other language combinations. The concept is not specific to a single culture nor language. Neither is the framework, which is built with prevalent literature concepts. Future research can create its own research questions to test the concept and its framework against the findings from other language combinations.

This thesis has had the mission of setting a foothold with the theoretical underpinning. In doing so, it has offered three types of grounded interpretations on cultural translation: First, culturally driven texts of practices can be translated with some compromises made on either or both side(s). Second, the issue of cultural untranslatability lingers. Specific attributes are not always translated as-is, and they tend to retain their compatibility with the home-country values of preference. Finally, it is important to disaggregate the durable and changed elements of business practice and identify the appropriate units of analysis in the translation setting. These interpretations can be applicable to any culture/language combinations in qualitative/quantitative research. Future research can test the proposed concept and its framework, and research output will further promote meaningful discussions between relevant academic fields.

Last but not least, the concept of cultural translatability can be used as a tool to differentiate a theory from a regional philosophy, belief, or similar. This differentiation is critical for social science research. Babbie (2015) implies that some studies release their findings as a “universally applicable theory” to all societies, even though it is only tested against the cultural values of preference in the country/region of origin. Such a “theory” (or a “threat” in Babbie’s words) may not explain observed realities and predict phenomena in another society. Future research can test the applicability of a “universally applicable” literature concept, using the concept of cultural translatability.

The findings suggest that a “threat” may have positive or negative repercussions. It may turn out to be cross-cultural learning in target-language society. It may end up with a loss of society’s positive characteristics, which may have been culturally compatible with interrelated specificities in society. The notion of successful translation can be relative from one perspective to another. The outcome will depend on how the cultural translation is rendered, and/or how target society reacts to it. In any case, a workable cultural translation will stand between the extremes of a linear continuum. It may take time to see the outcome, which may exhibit mixed results especially before it becomes stabilized as part of an equilibrium in society. How much time it takes to stabilize has to do with how elastic the cultural specificity is. These interpretations stress the significance of cultural translation today.

This thesis’s key words include *culture* and *translatability*. Perhaps neither of them represents a popular research field. Yet, the proposed concept appears relevant to what matters in all the sectors investigated. Comparative (cross-cultural) analysis can be the first step not only for mutual understanding and respect but also for better knowing self in international settings.

Glossary of Terms

Arm's-length contractual relation (ACR): The modal type of business relation specific to liberal market economies, characterized by the arm's-length exchange of goods or services in a context of competition and formal contracting (Hall and Soskice, 2001; Sako, 1992). The concept of ACR is originally proposed by Sako (1992) to address business relations in the UK. Based on the body of literature, this thesis presupposes the wider application of the concept to all LMEs beyond the UK (Chapter Two).

Arm's-length (banking/financial) system (ALS): The modal type of a banking/financial system specific to liberal market economies. Aoki and Patrick (1994) describe it as “a securities market-based system of external finance, primarily for large businesses, through competitive issue of equity, bonds, and commercial paper; and a banking-based system of loans, short term and longer term” (Chapter Nine).

Collective (noun): A group or organization that shares the same culture. This term refers to a group of individuals regardless of size (Chapter Two).

Coordinated market economy (CME): According to Hall and Soskice (2001), CMEs include Japan, certain continental European countries, and Scandinavian countries. This thesis focuses on Japan, where the Japanese language is commonly used, and collectivism is dominant (Chapter Two).

Cross-cultural learning: The acquisition of knowledge and/or skills regarding cultural specificity, exemplified by the idea that valuable knowledge on culturally driven specificity not only resides in a country of origin but also migrates to another through learning. (Chapter Two).

Culture: Learned interpretation of beliefs, norms, values of preference, and similar that is generally patterned and publicly shared among members of a society (Kluckhohn, 1951; Strauss and Quinn, 1997). This is the shortest possible working definition of culture for discussion purposes in this thesis and is not exhaustive. This thesis differentiates intangible culture and tangible culture: The former refers to culture as defined in this thesis, and the latter includes other specificities, such as art and food, often regarded as culture outside this thesis. This differentiation corresponds to the prevalent model of cultural iceberg consisting of invisible and visible components of culture (Hall, 1992). (Chapter Two)

Cultural compatibility: The degree to which members of the same society perceive a culturally driven practice as being consistent with the existing values of preference (Rogers, 2003). (Chapter Two)

Cultural construct: A system of thought: for example, individualism or collectivism (House et al., 2004). The term is also referred to as cultural dimension (Hofstede, 1991) and cultural value orientation (Schwartz, 1992). This thesis distinguishes a cultural construct and a cultural value (defined below) for discussion purposes. This distinction is for clarity, not to separate them. This thesis does not reject literature works using these two terms interchangeably (Chapter One).

Cultural elasticity: A cultural specificity's capability of changing and adjusting to its previous state (Chapter Nine).

Cultural specificity: Any culturally driven specificity, which has a wider semantic field than the term *cultural value* (described below). For example, cultural values and regionally specific business practices are cultural specificities. The term excludes culturally independent specificities in this thesis for discussion purposes (Chapter One).

Cultural translatability: The feasibility of translating cultural specificity from one society to another (Chapter Three). Based on the findings, this thesis regards a low level of cultural translatability as the issue of cultural translatability that makes target-language audience perceive that translated text does not make reasonable sense culturally, even if it is linguistically adequately translated, and it makes sense linguistically and culturally to source-language audience (Chapter Nine).

Cultural translation: Translating or a translation of a culturally driven specificity (Chapter Two).

Cultural value: A regionally patterned and publicly shared value of preference, which is a type of learned interpretation as described in the definition of culture. It is alternatively referred to as *cultural value of preference* for ease of understanding. It includes synonymous terms, including *cultural value orientations*. This thesis will use cultural constructs to refer to cultural values for discussion purposes: for example, individualistic values of preference (Chapter One).

Culturally driven: Exhibiting a culturally specific connotation(s) (cf. culture) (Chapter One).

Culturally independent: Not exhibiting a culturally specific connotation(s) (Chapter Two).

Giri: A diffused social obligation of equal-value exchange (Chapter Three).

Goodwill trust: A diffused expectation that trading partners possess a moral commitment to maintaining a trading relationship, not taking unfair advantage of one's circumstances (Sako, 1992) (Chapter Two).

Horenso: A continual and collaborative communication process between superiors, subordinates, and colleagues over the course of a habitual business practice pervading an entire workplace regardless of what activity is being undertaken at any given time (Kameda, 2013) (Chapter Five).

Interrelatedness: Diffused connectedness between related specificities: for example, collectivism, long-term orientation, large power distance, high uncertainty avoidance, and high context of communication, all of which collectively constitute the Japanese system of thought (Chapter Nine).

Job-type employment: The modal pattern of employment specific to LMEs, where employees exhibit commitment to the job position (Chapter Three).

Keiretsu: The Japanese tight-knit conglomerates with member affiliates bound by ownership networks, personnel flows, and expectations of mutual assistance (Dow, McGuire, and Yoshikawa, 2011) (Chapter Three)

Liberal market economies (LMEs): Australia, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, the UK, and the USA, where the English language is commonly used (Hall and Soskice, 2001), and individualism is dominant (Chapter Two).

Main bank: A financial institution that keeps money flowing to a group of industrial concerns operated under Japanese style management (Miyashita and Russell, 1994; Abegglen, 2006). This definition is not to claim that a main bank exists exclusively for their group but that they take it into account (Sakawa and Watanabel, 2021). (Chapter Three)

Main bank system (MBS): Japan's financial system characterized by the main banks as defined above. (Chapter Three)

Membership-type employment: The modal pattern of employment for full-time employees at the Japanese companies, especially the listed/public or large ones. Their employment tenure tends to be longer than

the LME counterparts mainly for two reasons: 1) Employees generally exhibit commitment to the employer through the sense of belonging with the shared social identity of the employer and 2) the employer (usually the HR decision-making manager) tends to support such employees' decisions to stay with them (Chapter Three).

Obligational contractual relation (OCR): The modal type of business relation specific to the coordinated market economy of Japan, characterized by goodwill trust (Sako, 1992) (Chapter Two).

Persona: Societal character at each level of society (de Geus, 2002): For example, Japan's individual-level persona is composed of collectivism and all other cultural constructs that together constitute the whole set of Japanese values of preference. Japan's organization-level persona is composed of culturally driven practices of MBS (described above) and all other culturally driven practices that together constitute the whole set of patterned Japanese business behaviors. Japan's economy-level persona is CME (described above) or "Japan, Inc." (Miyashita and Russell, 1994). This thesis uses the term *persona* for its usefulness. The reason is twofold: 1) It mitigates the reality that no research can provide a perfectly precise set of cultural constructs at the individual level (which is also the reason why this thesis only focuses on five constructs). This is true to other levels. 2) It corresponds to the multi-level structure of the proposed framework of cultural translatability for better understanding. As explained in Chapter One and Two, this thesis separates the individual and organization levels that represent the system of thought and that of behavior, respectively, for avoiding the mistreatment seen in some past research that mixes up a cultural value of preference (thought) and a culturally driven practice (behavior), ending up with having less clarity and/or consistency with the preconditioned definition of culture (Chapter Two).

Seniority system: The Japanese system which grants an individual more power or preferential treatment than those who have less years of employment: for example, salary/wage, decision-making, use of language, etc. Seniority is inherent in membership-type employment (Ohtsu and Imanari, 2002) and relatively more significant in Japan than LMEs (Chapter Six).

Social identity: An individual's sense of who they are based on their group membership(s) (McLeod, 2019). The concept is originally developed by Henri Tajfel (1981) (Chapter Three).

Society: A social group that shares the same culture.

Source language (SL): The language of the original text for translation (Hatim and Munday, 2004) (Chapter One).

Source language culture (SC): Culture specific to members of a society who commonly use the source language (Chapter One).

Source text (ST): The original text for translation (Hatim and Munday, 2004). This term is synonymous with *source language text* in this thesis (Chapter One).

Target language (TL): The language of the translation (Hatim and Munday, 2004) (Chapter One).

Target language culture (TC): Culture specific to members of a society who commonly use the target language (Chapter One).

Target text (TT): The translated text (Hatim and Munday, 2004). This term is synonymous with *target language text* in this thesis (Chapter One).

Translatability: The extent to which it is possible to translate from one language to another (Hatim and Munday, 2004). In this thesis, the concept encompasses similar terms, such as *transplant*, *transfer*, and *transpose*, that describe the dynamics in cultural translation (Chidlow, Plakoyiannaki, and Welch, 2014) (Chapter One).

Appendix

Interviewee profile

The following table lists the interviewees directly quoted or referred to in this thesis. It represents a sub-set of a larger body of interview data collected from 40 interviewees between 2014 and 2018. All numerical data are as of the interview dates. This thesis refers to a specific interviewee with a number in the far-left column: for example, Interviewee 1. Gender is shown in parenthesis individually in Column Country of origin. All interviewees are local hires unless indicated as Expat in Column Employer.

	Country of origin	Office Location (Years of Residence)	Employer	Job Title (Years of exp.)	Job Function
1	USA (male)	Los Angeles CA, USA	Japanese bank A	Assistant VP (17 years)	Japanese Corporate banking
2	Japan (male)	Chicago IL, USA (8 years)	Japanese bank A	Banking Officer (17 years)	Japanese Corporate banking
3	Canada (male)	New York NY, USA (20+ years)	Japanese bank A	Director (35 years)	Credit Examination Office of Americas
4	Japan (male)	New York NY, USA (10 years in US)	Japanese bank B	Vice President (16 years)	Planning for Corporate Banking
5	Japan (female)	London, England (9 years)	Japanese bank A	Credit Analyst (11 years)	Japanese Corporate banking
6	Japan (female)	New York NY, USA (13 years)	Japanese bank A	Vice President (18 years)	Japanese Corporate banking
7	USA (male)	Chicago IL, USA	Japanese bank A	Assistant VP (8 years)	US Corporate banking
8	Japan (female)	London, England (30+ years)	Japanese recruitment agency C	Senior Consultant (20+ years)	Recruitment

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