

Conflicting Perceptions of Power Relations among Workers from Multicultural Backgrounds

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This study seeks to investigate distribution of power in the workplace among multicultural workers in Japan and examine how diverse communicators view power relations. Power in interaction can come from a variety of sources, including expert knowledge, status, social role, and language ability (Liu, 2011). Because communicators from diverse backgrounds tend to have culture-specific assumptions, perceptions, expectations and practices in addition to their limited language proficiency reflected in intercultural communication, an imbalance of power relations among them could occur in the workplace. Therefore, by investigating what could constitute power relations in the multi-cultural workplace, this study aims to explore the experiences of participants with respect to power perceptions and constructing cultural identities. Further, by looking at some aspects of intercultural communication competence, this study suggests how affective perspectives such as intercultural sensitivity, empathy, open-mindedness, and nonjudgmental attitudes can help reduce the power asymmetry among multicultural communicators in the workplace.

METHOD

Data Collection and Procedure

The researcher audio-recorded naturally occurring conversations in meetings among colleagues in a research institution in Japan. The data for analysis were collected during one-year, beginning in the spring of 2010 (from 04/01/2010 to 03/13/2012), at the headquarters of XXX Research Institution. Three types of data were collected: (1) audio-recordings of two of the staff meetings among scientists from different backgrounds; (2) in-depth person to person interviews (two interviews six months apart); and (3) observations and ethnographic notes. In this study, the researcher observed talk and interactions among scientists from different backgrounds in a staff meeting of a department which was held twice a month. Natural data was collected in the form of approximately 15 hours of audio-recorded material and observations. In addition, 8 hours of individual interview data were collected.

Based on the collected data of audio-recorded naturally occurring conversations, observations and interviews, the researcher employed both quantitative and qualitative analysis of spoken discourse in meetings and of the interview responses. The researcher collected the data using an ethnographic approach, a method which derives from anthropology.

Participants

In this setting, a total of seven individuals working in the same department at a research institution participated in this study: two senior American scientists, one Taiwanese junior scientist, one Japanese senior scientist, two Japanese junior scientists and one Japanese administrative assistant. Background information about the participants is shown in the table below.

TABLE 1.

Nationality (Pseudonym)	Gender	Age	Educa-tion	Job title	yrs/RC	Native Language
American Gary	male	58	PhD	Acting Chief /Senior Scientist	10	English
American Don	male	55	PhD	Former Section Chief /Senior Scientist	21	English
Taiwanese Lin	female	44	PhD	Junior Scientist	6	English/Chinese
Japanese Kakita	female	u/a	BA	Admin. Assistant	20	Japanese
Japanese Yamamoto	male	60	PhD	Senior Scientist	29	Japanese
Japanese Koji	female	41	PhD	Junior Scientist	5	Japanese
Japanese Yusuke	male	41	PhD	Junior Scientist	2	Japanese

The two American senior scientists are: the 58-year old acting chief, Gary, and 55-year old former section chief, Don, who have both lived in Japan for over 20 years. Gary, whose position is Acting Chief, recently got promoted to the current position. Gary is a current Section Chief in the department, but Don's company rank is equivalent to Gary's since he has been with the institution for over 20 years compared to 10 years for Gary, and Don acted as a section chief in the past. Both participants were brought up and spent the majority of their adult years in the U.S. before they came to Japan to work for this institution. The most senior scientist in this department is 60-year old Japanese senior scientist, Yamamoto, who has spent almost all of his life in Japan. He has visited the U.S. and stayed there to do research for approximately two years a long time ago. Ever since, Yamamoto has never gone back to the U.S. and has stayed in this department of the institution for over 29 years.

A Taiwanese female junior scientist, Lin came to Japan 6 years ago and started to work for this institution after spending 15 years in the U.S. She was brought up in Taiwan and spent most of her childhood years there, then moved to the U.S. to study at a university. Lin earned

her graduate degrees from an American university and worked for an institution in the U.S. Her native language is Chinese.

The two Japanese junior scientists are 41-year old, Koji, and another 41-year old, Yusuke. Both participants were brought up in Japan and spent most of their adult life there. Koji spent eight years in the US while he went to university there, while Yusuke earned his degrees in Japan and spent only two years in the U.S. to do his internship. Koji is considered to be a little more senior to Yusuke in that Koji has been with the institution longer (five years) than Yusuke (two years).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Themes Identified and Participants' Perceptions of Power Relations

In order to investigate the conflicting perceptions of power and interactional dominance, five reoccurring themes reported during the interviews were identified. They are cultural style, knowledge, language, adaptation and, hierarchy. Examples of the kinds of utterances in each category are as follows:

- (1) Cultural style: e.g. *"Japanese people tend to hold back in the meetings."*
- (2) Knowledge: e.g. *"Knowledge sharing is important in our field. If I want to learn and know more, I ask questions."*
- (3) Language: e.g. *"Language is such a big problem for me at work."*
- (4) Adaptation: e.g. *"I would like to learn English more so I can communicate more effectively with American colleagues."*
- (5) Hierarchy: e.g. *"Only key people speak in our meetings."*

Table 2 shows the number of times themes were referred to by each speaker during their two 20-minute interviews combined.

TABLE 2. Frequency of reference to themes by speaker

	Cultural Style	Knowledge	Language	Adaptation	Hierarchy
Gary	2	3	0	1	0
Don	1	1	3	4	1
Lin	3	2	0	3	1
Yamamoto	4	1	8	6	2
Koji	1	0	3	2	0
Yusuke	5	0	2	1	1

Based on information shown in Table 2, individual figures are used in the following discussion to indicate visually what each participant perceived to be the major attribution to power relations in the meeting. Themes discussed in the interviews will be explained one

speaker at a time. Figure 1 indicates the distribution of themes Gary, an American section chief, referred to during his interview.

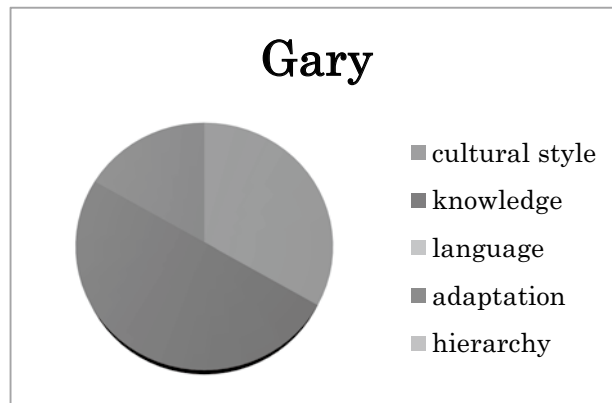


FIGURE 1. Themes identified by Gary

As can be seen in Figure 1, Gary referred to knowledge and cultural styles more often than other categories in his interview. In fact, according to him, language (English or Japanese) does not seem to be a problem in interactions in the workplace. Of all the categories, Gary regards knowledge as being of the foremost importance in the staff meetings. Below is an excerpt from the interview with Gary.

A lot of people are not comfortable with sharing what they are working on research in Japan. Because they don't want to reveal how much they know or they don't know. They don't want to accept critical comments. That's not good because it affects our quality. Peer review is a big thing in America. I am not sure about the Japanese scientific establishment. (July, 2011)

In this excerpt, Gary gives an explanation to illustrate how his ideal of work may conflict with the expectations and practices of some Japanese scientific establishments. He says that Japanese scientists do not reveal their knowledge partly because they do not want to receive critical comments. Further, Gary makes a judgmental comment, saying "That's not good...". According to him, knowledge seems to be the most important factor, as exemplified by his saying "Peer review is a big thing in America". When I asked Gary whether he perceives language as being part of the contributing factor to the distribution of talk in staff meetings, he responded: "I don't think so, Japanese scientists who work here with us in our department have lived in the U.S., so I don't think that's the problem, well, maybe for some, I am not sure..." (July, 2011). In this statement, he seems to minimize the language barrier that may be experienced by Japanese scientists, arguing that their English proficiency levels should be high enough to operate in their work. However, at the same time, Gary does seem to recognize one Japanese

scientist's language problem although he does not specify who he is referring to. Although he does not categorically reject the idea, Gary does not want to continue with this topic anymore and ends with a hedged qualification partly because he may have hesitated to admit to any problems with language issues in the department.

In contrast to Gary, Don, an American senior scientist, who was a former section chief, referred to language more often in his interview, as seen in Figure 2.

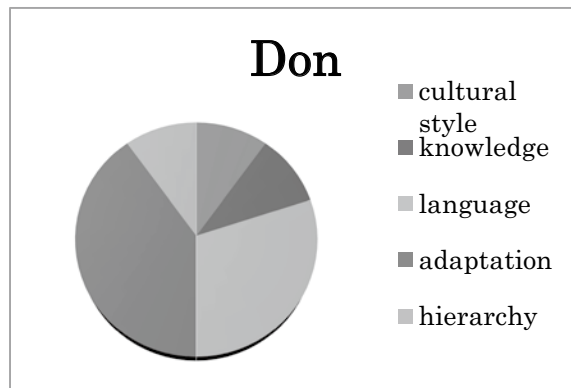


FIGURE 2. Themes identified by Don

Because he has been a section chief, in his interview he shares what his experience was like in relation to language issues, as follows:

I had to learn how to speak through a translator. It was challenging to make sure that any meaning was not lost because I was dealing with people who speak a different language. In the past, a section chief before me used to conduct meetings only in English. I felt at that time several Japanese senior scientists had some tensions with American scientists at our department. I could sense their frustration. Now the environment is very different, a big shift from that. For example, our current [American] chief tries to speak Japanese in the meetings. However, the chief we had before never made efforts to speak a word of Japanese although he spoke Japanese fluently. (July, 2011)

In this interview, Don talks about his experience with his former section chief before Gary. As seen in the underlined sentences, he perceives that language was a problem in the past due to his former section chief never speaking Japanese in the meetings. However, Don does not believe that language is currently an issue relating to unequal interaction in the meetings, saying that the environment is very different from the past and giving an example of his current chief speaking Japanese in the meetings.

In the interview with Lin, the Taiwanese junior scientist, she cites cultural styles and knowledge as important factors relating to power relations in the workplace while she perceives

language plays no part in interactional dominance in her department, as shown in Figure 3. Below is an excerpt from an interview with Lin.

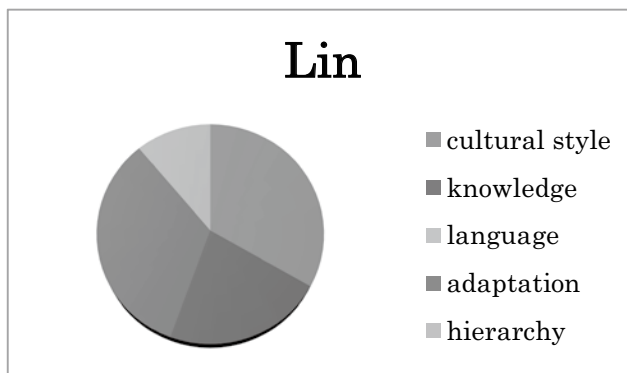


FIGURE 3. Themes Identified by Lin

In general, the young Japanese researchers tend to hold back and don't speak up. Some people just don't speak up. It's difficult to encourage all the people to speak and change their personalities. I don't think that language is a problem at all because I think everyone is given a chance to speak up what they want to talk. So, I don't think there is anything that needs to be done. (July, 2011)

Like Gary, Lin does not seem to perceive language as being a factor related to interactional patterns in the meetings. On the other hand, she refers to a cultural difference saying that young Japanese researchers tend to hold back and do not speak up. Lin seems to believe that Japanese scientists are given a chance to speak up, but in her view, they do not do it much due to their personality or cultural styles as seen in the underlined sentence above. Based on her interview, Lin seems to perceive that it is knowledge, personality and cultural styles that contribute to interactional patterns of dominance in the meetings, rather than language issues.

In contrast to the two senior American scientists and Lin from Taiwan, Yamamoto, the senior Japanese scientist, seems to perceive language as being the biggest factor contributing to interactional patterns in the meetings, as depicted in Figure 4.

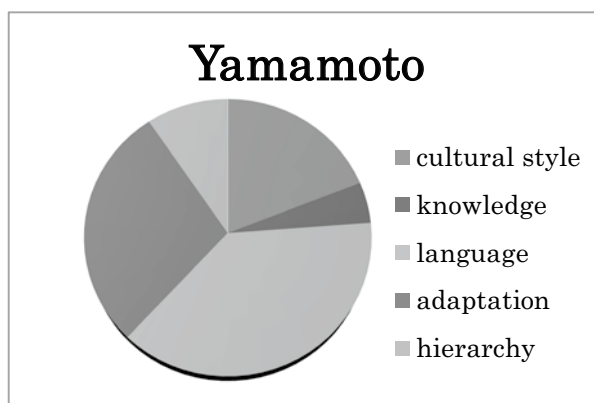


FIGURE 4. Themes Identified by Yamamoto

Yamamoto told the interviewer that the language barrier is a much larger problem than discussion of cultural differences. The following excerpt is taken from an interview with Yamamoto. (The interview with Yamamoto, like those with the other Japanese participants, was conducted in Japanese; this and all the excerpts from Japanese interviews were translated into English by the author.)

Language is a big problem for me. English is very important here. Unlike those young ones who spent some time in the U.S., my English is very limited. If I want to say what I intend to say, it naturally becomes Japanese just like they speak English. Accented English is particularly difficult to understand. I could possibly comprehend, but responding back in English with my thoughts is very difficult. When it comes to technical stuff, someone like me has a very hard time. You must have English speaking competence, but everyone's level is different. Before you talk about intercultural problems, the language problem is a huge problem. Even though the translator is there, when it comes to technical stuff, I can't follow what they are saying. (August, 2011)

Throughout the interview, Yamamoto describes how language is a big problem for him in the workplace. Yamamoto explicitly describes language as having a major impact on his workplace and his professional identity, as discussed in more detail in the later section "Comparison between Meeting Interaction and Reported Perceptions".

Similarly to Yamamoto, Koji, a junior Japanese scientist, refers to language as the most important factor in the interactional power relations in the department meetings, as shown in Figure 5.

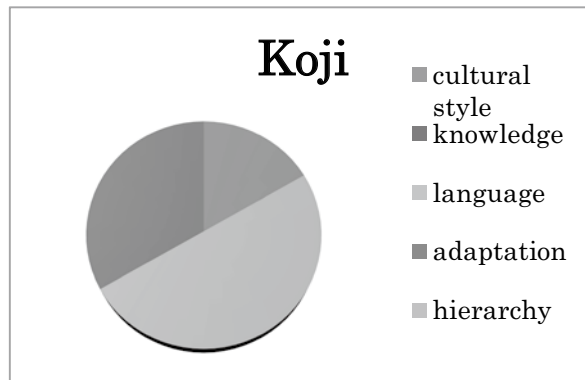


FIGURE 5. Themes Identified by Koji

In his narrative, Koji states “leaders [American scientists] should be more sensitive to our needs. They should be aware that it’s challenging for us to catch up with what they are saying, but they keep American styles.” In the same interview, he explained his view as follows:

They should adjust to our needs. There are many occasions when I can’t follow what they are saying. You [directed to the researcher] sat and observed in the meetings. American scientists should speak more slowly and clearly, for example. In this field, if they talk about something that is not our research field, it’s very difficult to understand technical things. Of course, I can understand English as long as it’s a basic level, but when they speak about expert knowledge, they should know. (August, 2011)

Koji, like Yamamoto, seems to be saying that the field of science has its own language. According to him, it is the scientific language that makes it extremely challenging for him to understand what American scientists say in the meetings. Further, he added that it is also the reason he feels that he cannot contribute anything at all in the meetings. In terms of English level, Koji’s English seems to be much higher than that of the two other Japanese scientists. Although he spent more than five years in the US and had the highest English proficiency level compared to Yamamoto and Yusuke, Koji expressed strong frustration about not being able to convey his knowledge in his L2. In his interview, a major theme was that the English used by his profession is the language of science in his L2, which is very different from the English he uses on a daily basis.

In the interview with Yusuke, the most junior Japanese scientist, themes of cultural styles followed by language were discussed the most, as indicated in Figure 6.

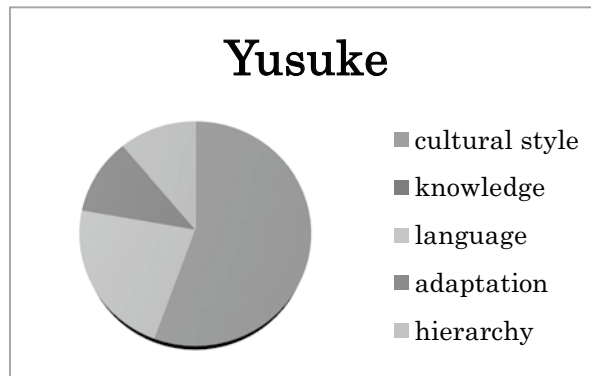


FIGURE 6. Themes Identified by Yusuke

Yusuke reported that there is definitely a language problem in the meetings, but unlike Yamamoto and Koji, he believes that he needs to improve his English instead of the American scientists changing their dominant “American” styles:

In Japanese, it's so easy to speak indirectly when you have to say something you don't really want to say it straight-forwardly. I think sometimes I might sound too direct because I don't have fluency in English. I think communications styles in the meetings are completely American...I think it's natural because all the key individuals are American. Basically, I feel that they [American scientists] show respect. I just simply don't have enough skills to speak well in English. I was the most junior, so in the beginning I was so overwhelmed. I didn't know whether I should speak up. Honestly speaking, I used to have a hard time finding a chance or judging the right time to speak up in English. It took me a while to realize that it's all right to speak up with what I want to say. But it's different from Japanese meetings. Dr. F [Koji] has lived in America much longer than I have, so I am sure he feels more comfortable with his English in the meetings. (July, 2011)

Unlike Koji, Yusuke does not report any frustrations about the American scientists. While he admits that there is a big language issue in the meetings, Yusuke claims that it is he who should improve his English skill and adjust to the dominant (American) styles because his leaders are American. Although Yamamoto is a senior scientist like Gary and Don, and has been with the institute longer than anyone in the department, Yusuke does not seem to perceive him as one of his leaders here. Furthermore, in his interview, he refers several times to the differences between Japanese and American communication styles. He seems to have learned that it is all right to speak up in the meetings, but he admits that his participation is minimal due to his poor English proficiency.

As seen in this section, the results reported that perceptions of power relations in the meetings differ greatly among participants from different backgrounds. The findings also indicated that perceptions of the Japanese scientists differed substantially according to their

generation, English proficiency level and experience. The next section will examine these differences more closely by comparing and contrasting conflicting and shared perceptions of power reported by speakers.

Conflicting and Shared Perceptions of Power Relations in the Meetings

In this section, I compare participants' perceptions reported in the interview in order to analyze how much they were shared and conflicting with each other.

First, the results reported above indicate that both senior American scientists and the junior Taiwanese scientist perceived power relations as coming from knowledge and experience, not language proficiency. In their interviews, they emphasized that knowledge is the most important factor in their field and attributed interactional dominance in the meetings to greater relative knowledge. While they all seemed to believe that there are some cultural factors that play a role, none seemed to perceive language proficiency as a factor relating to power relations in the meetings. For example, Gary, the section chief emphasized how important knowledge sharing is and perceived that lack of participation by the Japanese scientists is due to cultural styles. In his view, the Japanese scientists do not speak up because they hesitate to reveal their lack of knowledge or receive critical comments.

In contrast, Don, who was a former American section chief, seemed to understand that there had been a big language issue at his workplace. However, in his narrative, all the problems were in the past, due to insensitive styles demonstrated by the section chief at that time. Don seemed to believe that things among the scientists from different backgrounds are much better now partly because the Japanese language is often used by the current chief.

Lin, the Taiwanese junior scientist, completely denied that language could be a factor for power relations. She is a non-native speaker of English herself, like the three Japanese scientists; however, she spent over twenty years in the U.S. and seems to have integrated successfully to styles in American institutions due to her background. Lin explicitly expressed in her interview that she does not perceive language as being at all related to interactional dominance in the meetings. In her view, all the Japanese scientists are given enough opportunities to speak up by the American section chief. She simply believes that Japanese junior scientists do not speak up because they hold back and hesitate to express their viewpoints due to their cultural style as well as the lower rank they occupy in the hierarchy.

In contrast, all three Japanese scientists perceived that use of their L2 in the meetings greatly limited their ability to participate fully in the meetings. While there were obvious differences in perceptions of power sources between American and Japanese scientists, it is interesting to note that there were also differences in the perceptions among Japanese scientists themselves.

Yamamoto felt that because the two junior Japanese scientists were young and flexible, and had lived in the U.S., he was the only Japanese who was so frustrated with the language problem. However, as was seen in the interview with Koji, he shared a lot of frustration about not being able to follow what American scientists were saying in the meetings.

In Koji's case, he felt it was the scientific language in the L2 that made it difficult for him to understand and follow discussions in the meetings. Further, Yusuke thought Koji did not have significant language issues like him, and that Koji felt much more comfortable in the meetings due to his higher English proficiency. However, the interviews clearly indicated that Koji in fact felt much more frustrated than Yusuke about the language issue.

As the results of the comparison of reported perceptions clearly indicate, perceptions of power relations differ greatly based on participants' generation, experience and L2 proficiency level. These conflicting perceptions could potentially cause misunderstandings, frustrations, miscommunication and even mistrust. Therefore, recognizing them can be helpful for workers in a multicultural workplace to communicate with each other more smoothly. After looking at shared and conflicting perceptions of power relations, the following section will focus on how participants demonstrate acculturation and construction of their professional identity in their interviews.

Acculturation and Construction of Professional Identity

This section will focus on how each participant demonstrates acculturation and construction of their cultural and professional identity in their interviews. The aim is to analyze how individuals negotiate and construct their identities in an intercultural setting.

Over the course of over twenty years of living in Japan, Don, the former section chief, seems to have demonstrated successful cultural integration, as reported in his interview. He explained his experience about learning to adjust to a new work environment in Japan as follows:

I had to learn how to speak through the translator. It was challenging to make sure that any meaning was not getting lost because I was dealing with people who speak the same language...I would also like to get involved in ringi, you know the Japanese style of decision-making style. I know they [administrators at the highest echelon] will never invite me, but...[voice trailing off] (July, 2011)

Don accepts his new professional identity saying he had to learn how to speak through a translator. Although he did not know the Japanese language at all and everything around him was new at work, he tried to learn the language and how to speak through a translator. He explained that it required him to speak slowly and clearly and repeat the same thing in different ways. Many American scientists have come to Japan to work for this institution and most of them have left after staying for three to five years. In fact, Gary and Don are the only Americans affiliated with this institution who have stayed in Japan for more than 20 years. This fact alone tells us that Don has successfully integrated himself into his profession in Japan. His Japanese language proficiency is high, and he seemed to be most animated when he discussed Japanese culture in his interview. Don also expressed that he wanted to participate in “ringi” (Japanese decision-making system) someday although he admitted that he would

probably never be invited to participate. Don shows his willingness to accept his new Japanese identity by indicating his wish to become involved in *ringi*. In citing *ringi*, he particularly refers to the *nemawashi* process, which is informal consultation in preparation for meetings (Deresky, 2006). In this initial process, only key individuals informally gain consensus before it becomes a more formal authorization procedure. Although Don wishes to become involved in this informal process he also seems to understand well that despite his seniority, non-Japanese are not usually welcome to participate in this process. This also indicates Don's high level of understanding of the concept of *uchi* (insider) and *soto* (outsider) that is common in Japan (Itakura, 2001, p. 47). He seems to realize that because he is a foreigner, he is considered to be *soto* (an outsider) no matter how long he has lived in Japan.

According to Deresky (2006), the Japanese decision-making process differs greatly not only from the U.S. process but from that of many other countries, especially at the highest level of their organizations. After living in Japan for more than twenty-five years, Don seemed to have learned the concept and did not complain or show any frustration about not being included in the Japanese decision making process of *ringi* during his interview. This also shows that Don has developed tolerance towards cultural differences in Japan although he sees that things are dealt with quite differently from the way he was used to in the U.S. It indicates his successful negotiation of his identity.

Unlike Don who has lived in Japan for many years, Lin had not developed a strong intercultural sensitivity, as can be seen in her interview. The following excerpt from Lin's narrative highlights her theme relating to cultural style and identity.

In Japan, some meetings are all formality. A lot of things already have been worked out behind doors. It's all superficial because only the key persons will talk. As a foreigner, I need to learn to be quiet in that kind of meetings since I don't know what has been already discussed. In those kind of meetings, it's more hierarchical and more respectful speech. If I speak up, it's not appropriate. In staff meetings, in general, the young Japanese researchers tend to hold back and don't speak up. I speak up and ask questions because I want to learn.

Lin came to Japan six years ago, so compared to the two senior American scientists she is the newest to Japan as well as at this institution. She learned about the *ringi* system in Japan, as described in this excerpt; however, unlike Don, Lin has not negotiated her new identity as a Japanese resident, as shown by her calling the system "superficial". In the underlined sentence, she refers to the *nemawashi* process in the *ringi* system, as described earlier. Lin realizes that she needs to be quiet in those more formal meetings in order to fit in. This narrative shows that Lin is trying to negotiate her identity as a scientist living in Japan in this sense since speaking up in those meetings can be considered "inappropriate" in her new culture. Interestingly, after she expresses acceptance of the role of being quiet in those meetings, Lin then apparently changes her view and denies a willingness to negotiate her style in staff

meetings. She explains that although Japanese scientists tend to hold back and do not speak up in staff meetings, she speaks up in that kind of meeting in order to learn. Her decision not to be quiet indicates her unwillingness to negotiate her identity in this context. At the end of her interview, Lin expressed her confusion about Japanese people, questioning whether she ever knows how Japanese scientists feel about what she says because she does not get immediate reactions.

While all three Japanese scientists tended to agree that their use of their L2 in the staff meetings limited their participation level, Yamamoto's narrative highlights his unsuccessful professional integration mainly due to his poor language proficiency in English. Further, his personal and professional identity was threatened partly due to not being able to engage with others in his L2. As Wenger (1998) states, "a person's identity is fundamentally constituted through forms of competence" (p.120). According to Wenger, when individuals are full members in a community of practice, they experience competence and are recognized as competent by others in the community. That means, people know how to engage with others and to use resources in an appropriate manner. However, a great challenge faced by a learner (including a learner of a new language and culture) is that when the person moves from one community of practice to another it is necessary to reconcile the different conceptions of competence.

Yamamoto was the most senior and experienced member of his department; however, when the work setting changed, he faced a great challenge and threat to his personal as well as professional identity, as expressed in the following excerpt:

If the meetings are all conducted in English, someone like me has a hard time...In the past, there were no meetings in which you had to discuss things openly. Dr. P [the former section chief before Gary] was someone who wouldn't take opinions from us. Once they started to take opinions from us, the language barrier got bigger. I was more comfortable when there were no staff meetings. It used to be all a top-down approach and they reported to us what had been decided. Gradually people started to share opinions, which created our communication gap. Then, it comes down to the majority dominating...and you know those are Americans, of course. (August, 2011)

As can be seen in Yamamoto's narrative, he seems to have faced a great challenge to adjust to a new communication style. He felt marginalized and even rejected the possibility of negotiating a new identity by saying "if I say what I want to say, it naturally becomes Japanese just like they speak English" (as cited above). Yamamoto might have felt it was unfair that he had to accommodate and speak their language instead of their speaking his language. He also explained that he used to feel more comfortable with the old style meeting where he was not expected to give his opinions and discuss things openly. Not knowing how to deal with and act according to the norms and values in the new environment could have been extremely hard to accept as a professional. As Wenger (1998) points out, a person's identity is constituted through forms of competence. It is possible that Yamamoto could not successfully engage with

colleagues and use his resources in an appropriate manner in a new environment as the most senior scientist due to his poor English and his unwillingness to negotiate his identity. Deters (2011) states that conflicting beliefs and values about learning constitute a major constraint because they are central to a person's identity (p.121). Unfortunately, partly due to the professional identity crisis Yamamoto experienced at his work as explained earlier, and mainly due to his language barrier as well as his unsuccessful integration into his new environment in the workplace, according to one of his Japanese colleagues, his work started to deteriorate and he became unable to work functionally on a daily basis. We need to recognize that such an extreme result of failure to adapt to a new culture can lead to a tragic case. Therefore, there is an urgency need to learn how to develop intercultural competence, as explained in the next section.

Development of Intercultural Competence

In constructing professional identity, participants who demonstrated more successful acculturation were those who had developed more intercultural competence. Therefore, after looking at the participants' acculturation process and construction of professional identity above, I will shift my focus in this section to the acquisition of intercultural competence. In this section, how some participants demonstrate intercultural competence in the interview will be explained.

Of all the scientists who work in the department observed in the study, Don and Yusuke seemed to demonstrate more intercultural development than the others. Based on the interview data, Don appears to have adopted more adaptable and flexible attitudes than Gary in some ways. For example, Don says "an ideal section chief is someone who is bilingual who can translate back and forth for everyone." Further, he mentioned that he tries to speak to Japanese scientists in person after the staff meetings since Don realizes that Japanese in general prefer to speak in person rather than speaking up in the meetings in front of everyone. He seems to show deep understanding of the Japanese custom and demonstrate flexible attitudes.

In contrast to Don, as mentioned above, Gary reported that Japanese tend not to speak up since they do not want to be criticized. He perceives it as a negative attitude because in America, peer review is important and avoiding criticism could negatively impact their work quality. Gary seems to demonstrate a certain degree of "ethnocentrism"--- a concept that refers to "the tendency to identify with our group (e.g. ethnic or racial group) and to evaluate out-groups and their members according to those standards" (Gudykunst and Kim, 2003, p. 137). Further, according to Barna (1998), "it applies to a situation when our lack of knowledge about other groups leaves us with no option other than to draw upon the information already stored in our minds to interpret what is happening, which can lead us to interpret strangers' behavior from our cultural frame of reference, perhaps misunderstandings in the process" (p. 173).

In addition, Gary might be engaging in the process of Othering, especially when he generalizes about Japanese being hesitant to speak up and makes a judgmental comment saying "that's not good". Holliday (2011) describes Othering as follows:

The process of othering is complex and in many ways basic in the formation and maintenance of group behavior. It can be defined as constructing, or imaging, a demonized image of 'them', or the Other, which supports an idealized image of 'us', or the Self. Othering is also essentialist in that the demonized image is applied to all members of the group or society which is being Othered. Othering operates at all levels of society, as a basic means whereby social groups sustain a positive sense of identity... . (pp. 69-70)

Although the word "demonizing" in the quote is too strong a descriptor for Gary's behavior, he seems to form and maintain his American belief as "ours" and construct a Japanese way as "theirs" by criticizing the other way.

In contrast to Gary, Don seems to demonstrate "ethnorelativism" since he shows intercultural sensitivity towards the needs of Japanese colleagues. According to Houghton (2012), "when people process information about the world, including about other people, they can attempt to develop more accurate representations about them, which can bring identity into play" (p.32). Following Houghton's observation, we can infer that Don has processed the culturally different values that his Japanese colleagues hold and developed clear understanding as to what they represent without judgment. Furthermore, Bennett (1993) describes that "with ongoing exposure to cultural difference, cognitive development takes place as similarities are noticed and super-ordinate conceptual constructs are created that incorporate previously irreconcilable elements into more complex cognitive structures" (p. 21). She explains that as people expose themselves to cultural differences, they start to notice more similarities and start to decrease judgmental tendencies. Once people start to focus on similarities then they no longer feel threatened by differences. According to Bennett, at this stage, these people may actively attempt to elaborate new concepts to accommodate differences, rather than simply preserving existing values. This happens with non-evaluative acceptance of behavioral and value difference including language, as they believe that there are no absolute standards of rightness or goodness any longer.

Although Don realizes that Japanese tend to hesitate to speak up in the meetings partly due to cultural differences, in the interview he explained that he visits Japanese junior scientists' offices in person after the meetings. Don explained that he eventually discovered that Japanese colleagues actually speak a lot in person privately, but in the meetings, they tend to hold back for whatever reasons they may have. This non-judgmental stance and the development of adaptive skills seem to play an important role in intercultural communicative competence. Thus, Don demonstrates the ability to empathize and learn to take the perspectives of the Japanese scientists. His empathetic attitude and willingness to take others' perspectives play an important role in intercultural development.

While Yusuke shows some intercultural competence, Koji does not demonstrate his openness and flexibility towards the differences in communication styles. Below is an excerpt from the interview with Koji that illustrates how he does not show his openness and flexibility towards the differences in communication styles:

I think American leaders should be more sensitive to our needs. They should be aware that it's challenging for us to catch up with what they are saying, but they still keep American styles... (July, 2011)

In this narrative, Koji does not show any willingness to change his Japanese ways, but instead expects the American leaders to accommodate their ways for him. Despite the language difficulty, Koji could still show more adaptation skills in his attitudes towards his intercultural work environment. Despite the fact that Koji lived in the U.S. longer than Yusuke and his language proficiency level is higher, he shows more frustration and a less flexible stance than Yusuke. In contrast, Yusuke described the workplace meetings as follows:

All the key individuals are American. So, it [the style of the meeting] is completely American. Especially, when it comes to important projects for the research center, it's conducted all in English...I think it's natural. I would like to learn more English and good timing to speak up in the meetings. (July, 2011)

Yusuke seems to believe that he is the one who should learn the language used in the meetings and the use of English is natural in the meetings because all the key individuals are American. His narrative shows that Yusuke is positive and willing to expose himself to the new culture and the language. It appears that he is demonstrating more empathy by taking the perspective of the American leaders, and is willing to develop more adaptive skills than Koji.

Finally, Yamamoto did not display any willingness to adapt his ways to a new environment. On the contrary, because he experienced such a profound language shock, it prevented him from integrating successfully into a new work environment. With the learning of a second language, especially when it is forced upon an individual by a move to a new language speaking community, there is risk of suffering a language shock, as experienced by Yamamoto. In Yamamoto's case, he did not physically move to a new language speaking community, like immigrants move to an English speaking community. Thus, this example shows that even within one's own native country, one could face this kind of disorientation without leaving one's homeland.

Shumann (1976) notes that psychological distance in second language learning is determined by how the individual feels in the process of learning the second language. He explains that "the severity of language shock is influenced by how the individual learner reacts when confronted with new words and expressions" (p.267). For instance, if the learner feels confused or lost, how the learner deals with such feelings becomes important. In relation to culture shock, Shumann describes that "the learner experiences culture shock when he finds that his problem-solving and coping mechanisms do not work in the new culture...this situation causes disorientation, stress, fear, and anxiety" (p. 267). When it becomes more severe, he reports that it could lead to rejection which diverts attention and energy from second language learning. Then, the learner attempts to find a cause for his disorientation and may reject himself, the

people of the host country, the organization for which is working, and even his own culture. (p. 267)

Based on the description by Shumann, it is possible that Yamamoto underwent both language and culture shock at his workplace, which may have caused his professional identity crisis and his disorientation.

The findings reveal that some participants demonstrated a higher degree of intercultural competence than others. As we have seen in this section, empathic attitude and willingness to take others' perspectives play an important role in intercultural development. At the same time, another important aspect noted in this section is, as seen in Yamamoto's case, that unsuccessful integration could lead to a serious professional and identity crisis. After analyzing how some participants demonstrate intercultural competence in their reported interviews, the following section compares participants' perceptions and actual meeting data to explore the complexities of power relations.

Comparison between Meeting Interaction and Reported Perceptions

In this section, I attempt to explore the differences between what participants reported in their interviews differed and what occurred in the actual meetings observed. A focus is on the aspects of intercultural competence discussed in the previous sections. Lin was chosen as the first example to demonstrate how what she reported in the interview accords with and at the same time differs from what actually occurred in the meeting. As cited earlier, Lin commented on differences in speaking up in meetings in her interview as follows.

As a foreigner, I need to learn to be quiet in that kind of meetings since I don't know what has been already discussed. In those kind of meetings, it's more hierarchical and more respectful speech. If I speak up, it's not appropriate. In staff meetings, in general, the young Japanese researchers tend to hold back and don't speak up. I speak up and ask questions because I want to learn. (July, 2011)

As explained above, according to the interview data, she perceives that Japanese junior scientists hold back and do not speak up in meetings. In some ways, as a foreigner, Lin reports that she needs to learn to be quiet like Japanese colleagues since she thinks it is not appropriate if she speaks a lot, given her lower rank in the hierarchy. However, at the same time, she reports that she speaks up and asks questions because she wants to learn and gain new knowledge. In the actual meeting, despite her reported knowledge about the inappropriateness of her speaking up in Japanese culture, Lin frequently attempts to step in especially when Gary invites and elicits information or volunteers. Below are two examples that show Lin's willingness to speak up in the meetings.

EXCERPT 1

- 1.Gary: Dr.X over in the genetics department it's a study of...eh... mutations and thyroid of mice xxx in xxx, and I am gonna have to pick up somebody...does anyone have an interest in that? It's H who is really working with...[
- 2.Lin: [If somebody advises me, then I will try [to
- 3.Gary: [yeah... it might be a good thing for you to undertake in in terms of broadening your...I think it will probably be a good thing.

EXCERPT 2

- 1.Gary: So others, anything else?
- 2.Lin: I think it's probably a message or something we all found out...there are two volumes of the...[
- 3.Intern: [I don't know which one I have.
- 4.Gary: Oh, OK. That might be where they are because they are missing from the shelf, and they are not signed out and I don't think... we were just worried that we still have those somewhere.
- 5: Lin: Because those, sometimes we are checking [out...
- 1.Gary: [So, we should sign your name on the sign out sheet so we'll know where they are, and then if someone needs to borrow this. OK anything else? You look like you have something to say (looking at the administrator)?

In Excerpt 1, Lin immediately speaks up in line 2 when Gary addresses everyone to see if anyone is interested in undertaking the project he proposed. Although in line 1, Gary mentions that he has to pick someone in the department to work on the project, it is Lin who volunteers to undertake the project, giving no time for anyone else to volunteer. In line 2, Lin indicates that she needs someone's advice with the project. This interaction accords with what Lin reported in her interview. Lin clearly expressed that she realizes that it is inappropriate to speak up in Japanese meetings especially given her lower rank (junior scientist); however, she justifies her reason for speaking up as being because she wants to learn. This example illustrates a correspondence between what goes on in the meeting and Lin's reported perception.

On the other hand, in Excerpt 2, Lin contradicts what she reports in the interview. In line 1, Gary invites everyone in the department to see if there is anything to be brought up after he finishes reporting and discussing all the necessary matters. As soon as he said "so others, anything else?", Lin gives no pause but brings up the issue of encyclopedias missing from the shelf. The intern who had the encyclopedia steps in and tells Gary that he has one of them although he does not know which volume he has. After Gary as the section chief explains the

situation of how people were worried about where the volumes were in turn 4, Lin again speaks up and seems to try to give an example of some situation of checking out the encyclopedia in turn 5. This time, Gary interrupts her and successfully controls his turn action saying “so, we should sign your name...”. While he takes the floor back from Lin, Gary exercises his power by giving a directive speech to everyone about the protocol of signing out the encyclopedia in the office. This example indicates a contradiction with what Lin reports in the interview since Lin is speaking up in the meeting even on an occasion where it does not involve her learning. Further, it is interesting that in turn 6, in order to prevent Lin from speaking up again, Gary specifically looks at the administrator and invites her to speak up by saying “you look like you have you have something to say”. Through this non-verbal cue, Gary is also demonstrating his power to control who speaks in the meeting.

The next example shows how what was reported by Gary in the interview differs from what he actually does in the meeting interaction. At the same time, it demonstrates how what Koji claims in the interview accords with what goes on in the meeting. According to the interview with Gary, he reported that Japanese hesitate to speak up in general although there are exceptions. Because he recognizes that not everyone feels comfortable with the same communication styles, Gary claimed that he tries to be open to what they [Japanese colleagues] need and want because he believes that problem-solving is very important. On the other hand, Koji reported in the interview that leaders [American scientists] should be sensitive to their [Japanese scientists] needs. He complained that there are many occasions where he cannot catch up with what American scientists are saying because they speak fast and use American styles of communication.

In the excerpt below, it shows that Gary does not demonstrate sensitivity or openness to what Japanese scientists need and want. Although he realizes problem-solving in an intercultural environment is very important, Gary does not seem to modify his dominant standard American ways or choose the appropriate register in the meetings.

EXCERPT 3

- 1.Gary: So, anyone can think of a name? ((2 second pause)) Coz I need to send something back to Dr.S tomorrow, probably, for a proposed session.
- 2.Koji: Is there...some requirement to include a Japanese presenter?
- 3.Gary: I think for balance, it's important to have someone from Japan on that, in addition to the three majors. Well, there will be four main presenters, so there will also be a person who would be a certain discussant, a summarizer. Haha ((laughs)).
- 4.Koji: Kazutaka...Ike[da
- 5.Gary: [Oh, Kazutaka Ikeda. Well, maybe he will be one possibility. Would you like to...maybe just ask him sort of

informally, ask him if he would be interested, if he has suggestions or, that would be best approach. Well, would it be best for you to contact him or for me to contact him, first and initially, Okay?

6.Koji: By tomorrow?

7.Gary: Yeah, if possible. We'll go back and look and see what Dr.S required. We could always probably say, we'll fill out the name soon. Haha((laughs)).

I don't think we have to, but for, for one thing that the, the availability of at least Dr.S may depend on to some extent on funding...and I don't know for sure that I'll be able to get funding for him to come here in August 201X because that is another fiscal year out in the future and we haven't even, we have funding for him to come next year, but it's really hard to get that. I mean it's almost what fiscal year 201x is going to look like.

8.Koji: eh...

As can be seen in this excerpt, Gary as a native speaker of English does not seem to know how to modify his way of speaking when speaking to non-native speakers of English. For example in line 5, Gary's request for Koji seems very vague since Gary uses too many hedges such as *maybe, just, sort of* in one sentence. In addition, Gary does not seem to make efforts to grade his English for Koji by keeping his message clear and short. In one sentence, Gary first asks whether Koji is willing to ask Kazutaka Ikeda to come to present as a speaker. In the same utterance, Gary requests Koji to ask Kazutaka Ikeda in an informal way and ask if he would be interested or has suggestions. Then, in the same utterance, Gary states that it is the best approach. When someone wants to make a point clearly, one should naturally tend to keep it simple and slow down; however, Gary speaks very fast and his English is saturated with difficult subtle nuances. Unless listeners have been well trained formally or by experience to understand that type of spoken English, non-native speakers would be very confused and be under a lot of pressure to follow the intended meaning.

In line 7, Gary starts with a negative sentence first saying that "we haven't even" then he switches to "we have funding". This message is not clear as to whether they have funding or not since Gary changes a negative sentence into an affirmative. In line 8, Koji has nothing other than "eh..." since he might be confused about what Gary said about funding after he skipped clarifying about how to proceed in asking Kazutaka Ikeda to come to speak. This example illustrates how Gary does not modify his way of speaking English to Koji. The particular meeting interaction shows that it accords with what was reported by Koji in the interview about how American leaders do not show any sensitivity to meet his needs. At the same time, it shows a discrepancy between what goes on in the meeting and what Gary

reported about him being open to what Japanese scientists need and want. As a master of the language, Gary may have a responsibility to some extent for the communication channel and need to grade his English for his colleagues and subordinates who speak English as their L2 in order to have smooth communication across cultures.

Lastly, the excerpt below is shown in order to demonstrate how Gary and Don talk to each other using difficult native speakers' English that serves to exclude the other participants in the meeting. The register they employed sounded more like two-person interaction rather than a discourse used for a staff meeting in a multicultural setting. The meeting style demonstrated by Gary and Don corresponds with what all the Japanese scientists reported in their interview.

EXCERPT 4

(Don and Gary are sitting very close and facing each other)

1. Don: You know Dr.X was invited by Dr.Y to speak at a different session of XXXstudies, and he wanted us to get some money to help him.
2. Gary: Well, I am gonna try. We have to see...XXX it's a mess right now.
3. Don: I would say we would probably have to give priority to someone who would speak at another session. We would...there is a lot we can do. It has to be xxx as the higher priority.
4. Gary: OK, I will wait and see what you hear from Dr.X, but I'll, if I have to. I'll just say you know, we are still working on the xxx, the third speaker. I'll get something to Dr.S. So, that's all the topics that I have.

This excerpt is just one example of many interactions engaged in by Gary and Don like this. On many occasions, they sit very close, facing each other and go on for a long while about technical scientific issues. This particular excerpt was used as an example since it does not contain technical matters, which can be very sensitive to confidentiality concerning their institution. What is notable in this interaction is that Gary and Don seem to demonstrate symmetrical power relations. While only Gary was used as an example of a participant who uses power through his language in meeting interactions in the previous section, in fact Don also demonstrates power with Gary in this interaction. For example, in line 1, Don implies that some speaker Don knows needs some money, which requires Gary's involvement. Then, in line 2, Gary accepts and shows his willingness to try to get some money for him. Even after Gary shows agreement to try, Don pushes him more and explains that they should give some priority to the speaker. He uses the obligation word "should" by indicating Don is almost directing Gary to do something Don expects him to. Then in line 4, Gary replies with "OK" showing his agreement to Don's directive and even subordination. Given his highest position in the hierarchy of the department as a section chief, Gary could demonstrate power over Don.

However, because Don was a section chief before and has been with the institution much longer than Gary has, Gary might have to show his respect for Don's knowledge and experience in addition to his being a native speaker of the same language Gary speaks.

In their interview, Yamamoto, the senior Japanese scientist, reported that it is particularly difficult to understand when American scientists speak fast about technical things. Yamamoto states that someone like him (with a limited level of English) experiences a very hard time. He further reported that while he recognizes the expectation of having some English ability as a non-native speaker in the department, Yamamoto feels that American scientists should know that everyone's level is different. Although he was not as explicit as Koji, what he probably meant was that American senior scientists should modify their speaking styles and grade the level for someone like him. Koji stated that he cannot follow what American scientists say when they speak fast and talk about technical things. Like Yusuke, Koji also feels that the communication styles in the meeting are completely American. While Yusuke claims that it is natural since leaders in the department are American, Koji feels that American scientists should be more sensitive and adjust their styles for Japanese scientists.

The example given above indicates that what Japanese scientists reported in their interview correspond to what actually occurs in the meetings. American scientists demonstrate American styles, speaking fast and using difficult language looking at only each other while Japanese scientists cannot follow. At the same time, what occurs in the meeting in this example contradicts what Gary claimed in his interview. Gary reported that he tries to be open to what Japanese scientists need and want knowing everyone has different communication styles. However, as seen in the excerpt, Gary often carries on private conversations with Don as if no one else were present in the meetings.

As seen in this section, comparing interview data to meeting data revealed some interesting findings. It was valuable to conduct this comparative analysis since it showed that not only do perceptions about power relations differ among participants in the department, but also they could differ from what actually occurs in the meetings. Furthermore, by looking at similarities of two different types of data, I learned the importance of validating some of the reported perceptions to ensure that they match what actually goes on in the meetings.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, perceptions of power relations among workers from different backgrounds have been explored and analyzed. Findings indicated that perceptions reported in the interview data were conflicting among members based on their cultural and linguistic backgrounds. They also revealed that even Japanese participants' perceptions differed according to their generation, English proficiency level and experience. In relation to acculturation and construction of professional identity, it became clear that some participants demonstrated more successful integration than other members in the department partly due to their high level of intercultural competence. Finally, comparative analysis was conducted on the two different types of data: meeting data and interview data. Comparing them revealed that there were both

correspondences and discrepancies between participants' self-reflections in the interviews and how they actually behaved in their encounters with members from another culture. Obtaining actual workplace discourse is valuable alone since it provides insights gained through an analysis of what people actually do. However, comparing the meeting discourse data to what participants say they do provides valuable additional information about the complexities of power relations and professional identity construction in the multicultural workplace.

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APPENDIX

Symbols and Conventions for Transcription Used in This Study

[Starting overlaps/interruption
xxx	Inaudible syllables
XXX	Information deleted to protect confidentiality
[silence]	Silence
...	Pauses
(laughs)	Laughter quality
?	Rising or question intonation

要 約

異文化背景を持つ職業人の力関係に関する認識の違い

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本論文の目的は3つあり、(1)日本において、文化的・言語的背景が異なる話者が、主として英語でミーティングを行う際の、彼らの力関係と相互作用における優位性の認識を比較すること、(2)それらの話者の力関係に関する認識が、どの程度共有され対立しているかを明らかにすること、(3)各話者がインタビューの中で、いかに彼らの文化的・職業的アイデンティティーの文化変容と構築を行うかを検討することである。6ヶ月の間隔において2回のインタビューを6名の職業人話者に対して個別に実施した。参加者は、アメリカ人シニア科学者2名、台湾系アメリカ人ジュニア科学者1名、日本人シニア科学者1名、そして日本人ジュニア科学者2名である。補充データは3回のミーティングを民族誌学的な視点から観察したものを使用した。調査結果から、アメリカ人シニア科学者、ジュニア科学者の両方とも、力関係は知識と経験に起因すると捉えていることが示唆された。そして、これらの要因を地位や言語運用能力ではなく、ミーティングにおける相互作用の優位性に帰した。一方、これとは対照的に、3名の日本人シニア科学者・ジュニア科学者は、彼らのL2（第二言語：英語）の使用という状況が、ミーティングに存分に参加する能力を制限したと報告した。さらに、日本人科学者たちの認識は、自身の世代、経験とL2能力に応じて異なった。多様な背景を持つ話者間の相互作用における力関係を検証することは、我々に、このような認識の違いに気づかせるとともに、異文化間の相互作用で生ずる可能性のある誤解に対処する一助となる。