Cross-Cultural Social Skills of Turkish Students in Japan: Implications for Overcoming Academic and Social Difficulties During Cross-Cultural Transition

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Abstract

The present study examines the social skills of Turkish students during their cross-cultural transition to the academic and social cultures of Japan. One of the purposes of this study is to partially fill the gap in the literature by exploring and identifying Turkish students' social skills during their stay in Japan. Another purpose of the study is to differentiate social skills, particularly used in educational settings – such as the classroom environment – from those exhibited in other contexts. This study also aims to provide universities with potential solutions to design better support and provide aid to Turkish students through their transition stages. A semi-structured interview was selected as the primary data collection tool for the present research. A total of 21 students from Turkey who were in higher education or had already obtained a degree from a university in Japan volunteered to participate in this study. Each interview transcript was individually examined via qualitative analysis, aiming to identify and categorize cross-cultural social skills. The analysis produced separate hierarchical levels of categories related to both the academic and social cultures of Japan. The findings revealed that Turkish students tend to use different types of social skills in different settings which are labelled "social skills specific to academic culture in Japan" and "culture-specific social skills." Additionally, the cross-cultural social skills of Turkish students are classified in respect of their use (i.e., acquired skills, avoided skills, and maintained skills), based on a previous study.

Keywords: cross-cultural adaptation, cross-cultural social skills, qualitative research, Turkish students in Japan

Introduction

The number of international students that prefer to study in Asia has dramatically increased. Among East and South-East Asian countries, Japan is the primary host (The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2014). The international student population in Japan has been growing steadily since the early 2000s and constitutes a significant proportion of higher education students. According to the Japan Student Services Organization (2017), international students represent 6% of all students in higher education in Japan, and a total of 267,042 students representing more than 30 nations attended 779 institutions in 2016 (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology of Japan, 2016) including graduate schools, universities, junior colleges, colleges of technology, professional training colleges, university preparatory courses, and Japanese language institutions.

Universities in Japan host a substantial number of international students, including Turkish students. According to both the Global Flow of Tertiary-Level Students (UNESCO, 2019) and The Embassy of The Republic of Turkey in Tokyo (2017), the number of Turkish students in higher education is 152. Although there is a substantial body of research that focuses on international students from Asian and Western countries in Japan (Guo, Yiwei, & Ito, 2014; Maruyama, 1998; Simic-Yamashita & Tanaka, 2010), there is little research that investigates cross-cultural experiences of Turkish students in Japan; the present research focuses on Turkish students' social skills, which have significant influence on their cross-cultural adaptation process (Bochner, 2003).

Although certain factors may persuade students to study in a specific country, adjusting to a new culture may still be necessary for a certain period to successfully complete the transition. This period comprises social, cultural, emotional, and academic adjustments (Duru & Poyrazli, 2011). Searle and Ward (1990) suggest that cross-cultural adaptation comprises two distinct dimensions—psychological (emotional/affective) and sociocultural (behavioural) adjustments. Researchers indicated that although the two forms of adjustment are associated with each other, they are primarily predicted by different types of variables. Additionally, they indicate that there is a distinction between psychological and sociocultural adjustments during a cross-cultural transition. It has been indicated that psychological adjustment is affected by personality, life changes and social support variables, whereas sociocultural adjustment is associated with expectations and perceived cultural distance. In other words, while psychological well-being is more linked to clinical factors, social skill acquisition is related to social learning and cognitive variables.

Although there is no sufficient single definition of social skills and the variety and selection of dimensions classified as social skills are enormous, many researchers of social skills acknowledge that key social skills are represented by the basic sending and receiving of information (Riggio, 1986). It is assumed that basic social skills are "learned social abilities and strategies; thus, the term *skill* is used broadly" (Riggio, 1986, p. 650). Social skills are also described as the rules, conventions and assumptions that regulate interpersonal interaction, particularly verbal and non-verbal communication, and they vary across cultures (Argyle, 1994).

One implication is that sojourners who do not have culturally relevant social skills and knowledge will have trouble in starting and preserving harmonious relations with host people, or, in the case of immigrants, with mainstream members. Sojourners' culturally inappropriate

behaviours will elicit misunderstandings and may lead to offense. Research has demonstrated that people with lower cultural skills are less likely to accomplish their professional and personal goals. For instance, expatriate executives may cause alienation in their local partners and lose market share, international students may not successfully complete courses, hospitality industry workers may elicit offense in tourists, and the job prospects of migrants may be negatively influenced (Argyle, 1994).

Bochner (2003) has conducted studies on the social networks of various groups of sojourners to confirm that poor social skills have negative influences, which are intensified by the distance segregating the visitor's (or the minority's) culture from that of the host (or majority). He proposes that a critical component in a sojourner's adjustment is the extent to which sojourners have host-culture friends – the reason being that these friends act as informal culture-skills mentors. Those visitors who socialized mainly with co-nationals underperformed on a variety of parameters than sojourners who had formed non-trivial relationships with their hosts.

The culture learning approach stresses the behavioural components of culture contact. The approach is equally relevant in describing encounters both within and between cultures, and it has an interactive aspect rather than just focusing on the visitor or newcomer – it points out a path for corrective activity. Skills and knowledge required for an individual to function effectively in a second-culture environment involve learning the historical, philosophical, and socio-political foundations of the target society, and internalizing related behaviours. Focusing on behaviour rather than personality relieves the individual of the shame caused by insufficient adaptation to the second-culture environment by laying the blame on competency rather than personality. Moreover, learning new skills is simpler than a change in personality (Bochner, 2003).

Cross-cultural encounters bring about culture-specific stress that is unique to a cultural environment (Tanaka, 2005). For example, in their study Chapdelaine and Alexitch (2004) investigated the difficulty in developing social skills in which Furnham and Bochner's (1982) model of culture shock was tested. Data was collected from a total of 156 male international students in a Canadian university. The results of the study indicated that the students experienced a higher level of social difficulty in Canada than in their countries of origin, which implied that the students have experienced culture shock. Moreover, the results revealed that the students did not experience social difficulty in their countries of origin. In addition, lower degrees of social interaction with host people were found to be linked to higher degrees of culture shock. Higher degrees of cross-cultural differences in social interaction were found to be linked to lower levels of social interaction with host people. The authors indicated that social interaction with host people alone directly predicted culture shock and accounted for a substantial degree of variation. Therefore, it is suggested that, through meaningful social interactions with host people, international students are more likely to acquire and develop the culture-specific social skills that would facilitate efficient cross-cultural interactions (Chapdelaine & Alexitch, 2004; Furnham & Bochner, 1982).

Wilson, Ward, Fetvadjiev, and Bethel (2017) conducted a study about sociocultural adaptation, adjustment (psychological and international), social skills, cultural engagement, and cultural intelligence of international people. They collected data from 316 individuals (international students, expatriates, immigrants, and refugees aged 16 years and older living a host country for five years or less at the time of the study). They found that sociocultural adaptation was positively and significantly associated with social skills, cultural engagement, and cultural intelligence. Additionally, social skills were found to be strongly linked to social interaction.

In another study, it was found that, as the level of cultural distance increased, individuals were more likely to experience sociocultural adjustment problems. This result suggested a proportional increase in both cultural disparity and difficulty in learning necessary social skills (Searle & Ward, 1990).

Purpose of the Study

There are various reasons as to why the present research focuses on Turkish students in Japan. Firstly, while Turkish international students go through similar cross-cultural adaptation processes as other international students (Duru & Poyrazli, 2007), they exhibit different characteristics in terms of individualistic and collectivistic values (Göregenli, 1995; 1997). Although Turkey is classified as a collectivistic country like Japan (Hofstede, 1980), Turkish culture, in which both individualistic and collectivistic values coexist (Göregenli, 1995; 1997), is a blend of Western and Eastern cultural elements, and both traditional and modern characteristics can be observed as a synthesis in Turkish society (Sunar & Fişek Okman, 2004). For instance, in a study on interpersonal behavioural difficulties of Japanese people living in Turkey (Nakano & Tanaka, 2019), dissimilarities between Japanese cultural norms and Turkish cultural norms were presented. The study indicated that Japanese people living in Turkey had trouble in a variety of cultural norms such self-expressions or private space, which do not overlap between these two cultures. Secondly, there are limited studies available (e.g. Bektaş, 2004; Bektaş, Demir, & Bowden, 2009; Davis, 1971; Duru & Poyrazli, 2007; Duru & Poyrazli, 2011; Kagitcibasi, 1978; Kilinc & Granello, 2003; Mathews, 2007; Poyrazli, Arbona, Bullington, & Pisecco, 2001; Tansel & Güngör, 2002; Tatar, 2005) that investigate cross-cultural adaptation of Turkish international students. They focus on topics such as academic strain, class participation, English language competency, and acculturative stress. As mentioned previously, although there is a substantial body of literature on various factors regarding cross-cultural adaptation of international students, social skills have been examined by few researchers. In addition to this, there is no available research which investigates social skills of Turkish people studying or living in Japan within the accessible psychology literature. In other words, research on Turkish students in the Japanese cultural context is very limited. It is crucial to understand the adaptation problems of these students to frame their unique challenges in a new academic setting and society, and to offer guidance for a better adaptation to both environments. Thirdly, cross-cultural studies on Turkey and Japan will be a step outside of Western-dominated, cross-cultural psychology literature (Berry, Poortinga, & Pandey 1997), helping provide a deeper understanding of the two cultures from a cross-cultural psychology perspective. The main purpose of this study is to describe, examine and interpret 21 Turkish international students' use of social skills both in academic and social settings.

Social skills in this study is defined as "behavioural changes that occur while living in/adjusting to Japanese culture or acquired culture-specific behaviours in academic and/or social settings in Japan" based on relevant definitions regarding social skills (Argyle, 1994; Bochner, 2003; Riggio, 1986). The study investigates social skill phenomena by drawing on interviews with Turkish international students in Japan. The interviews were centred around the social skills use of the Turkish students who were in higher education and Turkish people had already obtained an academic degree from a graduate school in Japan. Exploring a crucial aspect of cross-cultural adaptation of Turkish students, the study aims to increase Japanese faculty and students' awareness of the difficulties international students experience in adapting to Japanese academic culture and social life. Through a better understanding of the factors influencing international students' use of social skills, Japanese faculty and peers can support their efforts to understand the local culture and thus become more competent users of social skills. Students

who are planning to come to Japan for studying from other countries may also benefit in terms of being more informed about the social skills commonly used in Japan.

The research questions addressed in the study were as follows:

a) In the context of Japanese universities, what kind of social skills do Turkish international students use in academic settings such as a classroom environment?
b) In the context of Japanese universities, what kind of social skills do Turkish international students use for interpersonal communication with hosts (e.g., academic adviser)?
c) In social life, what kind of social skills do Turkish international students use in Japan?

Method

The Journal Article Reporting Standards (JARS) of American Psychological Association (APA) for Qualitative Research Design (JARS-Qual) (2018) were utilized to report the findings of the present study. To examine the social skills of Turkish students, a qualitative approach is employed as research methodology. In quantitative research, phenomena are explained by drawing from numerical data. This approach includes hypothesis testing, controlling variables, measuring, identifying cause and effect. Its purpose is to generalize results to predict future events through statistical analysis (Petty, Thomson, & Stew, 2012). On the other hand, the term qualitative research is used to explain "a set of approaches that analyse data in the form of natural language (i.e., words) and expressions of experiences (e.g., social interactions and artistic presentations)." (Levitt, Bamberg, Creswell, Frost, Josselson, & Suárez-Orozco, 2018, p. 27). Qualitative research focuses on human experience and provides understanding meaning within a given context. This approach uses texts rather than numbers and it interprets experience and meaning to develop understanding. It also admits the role of the researcher in the construction of knowledge (Petty, Thomson, & Stew, 2012). In an exploratory study, qualitative research is suitable to uncover phenomena and to develop a better understanding regarding humans' perceptions, behaviours, and experiences (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2012). Despite generally being gathered from fewer sources than quantitative datasets, each source in a qualitative dataset has rich, detailed and heavily contextualized descriptions. Because of these characteristics, data sets in qualitative research are employed in comprehensive analyses. Open-ended exploration is valued over verification of hypotheses. Furthermore, specific histories or settings in which experiences take place are highlighted rather than predicting findings to occur across all contexts. Besides, methods that require researchers' reflexivity (i.e., self-examination) about their influence upon research process are recursively incorporated into examination (Levitt, Bamberg, Creswell, Frost, Josselson, & Suárez-Orozco, 2018). Since a qualitative method of research allows for exploring in greater depth, semi-structured interviews represent the main method used in data collection studies.

Participants

The researcher interviewed a total of 21 Turkish participants (12 females and nine males) for this study. In qualitative research, there are no hard-and-fast rules to specify enough participants. The number of participants range from one up to 60 or 70, representing multiple contexts. Factors such as time, funding, participant availability, participant interest will influence the sample size included in a research sample. Two general indicators – representativeness and redundancy of information – are used to determine if a sample is of sufficient size. While the first indicator, representativeness, is related to the extent to which selected participants represent the range of potential participants in the contexts, the second

focuses on hearing the same thoughts, perspectives and responses from most or all participants. This stage is commonly known as data saturation (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2012). The size of the final sample was essentially determined by data saturation in this study. It was concluded that the data were almost saturated, and no new properties emerged after Participant 21 was interviewed, and therefore, data collection was finalized. The study participants consisted of the Turkish students who were in higher education and Turkish people had already obtained an academic degree from a graduate school in Japan. The education levels of the students are distributed as follows: One bachelor's degree, two master's students, one master's degree, 11 PhD students, four PhD degrees and two postdoctoral researchers. Twenty of the students were either in postgraduate education in Japan or had already obtained an academic degree from a graduate school in Japan at the time of the interview, except one student, who stayed in Japan only for two semesters on an exchange program during undergraduate studies.

Of the total sample, 13 of the students were from a natural sciences or engineering background (five females and eight males), and the rest were from the humanities or social sciences (seven females and one male). Students ranged from 25 to 37 years of age, with a mean age of 29.09 years (SD = 3.30). The average length of stay in Japan was 52.14 months (SD = 32.89; range = 12-151 months) at the time of the interview completion (See Table 1). The students were asked to report their Japanese language proficiency levels. The Japanese language proficiency levels were distributed as follows: Eight advanced (38%), eight intermediates (38%) and five beginners (24%). Of 21 students, six (29%, five females and one male) were Japanese language majors and reported their Japanese language proficiency level as advanced. The students were also asked to report their English language proficiency levels.

Table 1: Demographic Information of the Turkish Participants in the Study

N	Gender	Age	Major	Education Level	Country of bachelor's Degree	Country of master's Degree	Country of Ph.D. Degree	Country of Postdoctoral Research
1	F	28	Humanities	PhD Student	Turkey	Japan	Japan	N/A
2	F	31	Humanities	PhD Student	Turkey	Japan	Japan	N/A
3	M	26	Engineering	PhD Student	Turkey	Japan	Japan	N/A
4	F	37	Engineering	PhD Degree	Turkey	Turkey	Japan	None
5	M	37	Engineering	Postdoctoral Research	Turkey	Turkey	Japan	Japan
6	F	26	Social Sciences	Master's Student	Turkey	Japan	N/A	N/A
7	F	27	Social Sciences	PhD Student	Turkey	Japan	Japan	N/A
8	F	26	Natural Sciences	PhD Student	France	France	Japan	N/A
9	M	30	Engineering	PhD Degree	Turkey	Japan	Japan	None
10	F	29	Humanities	PhD Student	Turkey	Japan	Japan	N/A
11	F	27	Humanities	PhD Student	Turkey	Japan	Turkey	N/A
12	M	29	Engineering	PhD Student	Turkey	Turkey	Japan	N/A
13	M	26	Humanities	Bachelor's Degree	Turkey	N/A	N/A	N/A
14	F	25	Humanities	Master's Student	Turkey	Japan	N/A	N/A
15	M	30	Engineering	PhD Degree	Turkey	Japan	Japan	None
16	F	30	Engineering	Master's Degree	Turkey	Japan	None	N/A
17	M	27	Natural Sciences	PhD Student	Turkey	Japan	Japan	N/A
18	M	33	Engineering	Postdoctoral Research	Turkey	Turkey	Japan	Singapore
19	F	29	Engineering	PhD Student	Turkey	Japan	Japan	N/A
20	M	28	Natural Sciences	PhD Degree	Turkey	Japan	Japan	None
21	F	30	Natural Sciences	PhD Student	Turkey	Turkey	Japan	N/A

Data Collection Procedures

The institution to which the researcher was affiliated with and where the present research was conducted did not have an Applied Ethics Research Centre and/or Institutional Review Board for research in humanities and social sciences at the time of data collection. Therefore, the researcher could not apply and submit for any reviews for the applicability of the research. However, she followed the Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct provided by the American Psychological Association (2017) to ensure psychological well-being of the participants by avoiding any potential harm during the research.

Data for this research were collected during a 1.5-year period in 2017 and 2018 through interviews with Turkish students. The first author, A.I.S., conducted the interviews for this study. All the interviews were conducted in Turkish to allow participants to express their opinions more clearly and comfortably. The semi-structured interview was selected as the primary data collection tool for the present research which assisted the interviewer to maintain the course of interviews, avoid drifting of the interviews to a completely unrelated topic and encourage the participants to talk by bringing certain concepts or topics into the interviews. Interviews were guided by social skills theme and use of social skills in academic and non-academic contexts and interpersonal relationships. Therefore, a set of questions was designed by the researchers based on relevant literature with the aim to explore Turkish participants' use of social skills and gather more focused information on the phenomenon. Questions asked in the interviews can be exemplified as follows: "When you come into contact with Japanese lab mates/classmates or adviser, do you adjust your behaviours?", "How do you approach your Japanese lab mates/classmates and communicate with them?", "How different are your behaviours, approach or participation in classes in Japan from your behaviours in Turkey?", "How different your behaviours in interpersonal relationships with Japanese people? For example, expressing your opinions indirectly." Targeted questions provided guidance to acquire specific information; however, there remained sufficient flexibility in the interviews to easily digress, because interviewees were encouraged to speak about topics beyond the interview questions, if preferred. The flexibility helped to explore these issues in depth, making the interviews semi-structured (Scapens, 2004). The interviewer also asked additional questions depending on the answers of the respondents to obtain deeper and wider information. To summarize, one-to-one, semi-structured interviews were conducted in Turkish to explore Turkish international students' use of social skills in Japan. The interviews were designed to assess social skills used in both academic and social settings. As academic adjustment is also associated with cross-cultural adjustment and academic adjustment has a positive influence on students' cross-cultural adjustment (Poyrazli, & Kavanaugh, 2006), learning and using social skills specific to Japanese academic settings such as classroom environment were also explored. Before interviewing, the researcher scheduled the time and date according to the participants' availability. Those who lived in a different city or outside of Japan agreed to be interviewed online. Of 21 interviews, 17 (81%) were conducted on Skype and four (19%) face-to-face. Participants were interviewed individually after they filled in the demographic information sheets provided either as a printed or electronic document. Participation was anonymous and voluntary. Additionally, before starting the interviews, participants were asked for their permission to record them with an audio recorder.

Data Analysis Procedures

Data analysis was done concurrently with data collection; therefore, an iterative process was applied. After all the 21 interviews were completed, each audio-recorded Turkish interview transcript was compiled to ensure that the data was full and accurate. The interview audio files that were transcribed verbatim to Turkish. Additionally, all transcripts were read several times

to eliminate typographical errors. After all the 21 interview transcripts had been read several times, each transcript was examined manually. In analysing data, a typical procedure for qualitative research was employed (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2012); each transcript was then analysed individually, with the aim to identify social skills, which are defined as "behavioural and emotional changes that occur while living in/adjusting to Japanese culture or acquired culture-specific behaviours in academic and/or social settings in Japan" in this study. The transcriptions of the interviews were read several times, seeking for those social skills mentioned by the students. Transcripts were first coded to indicate social skills, and possible labels were assigned to identified social skills. As the data analysis progressed in terms of relevance, these labels were allocated to broader, more comprehensive themes, concepts, and categories to reflect the complexities of social skill use. By refining these categories, a hierarchical organization of categories was created to demonstrate the framework of social skills.

Various strategies are essential for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research (Morse, 2015); these strategies were summarized by Shenton (2004). Credibility, a key criterion, refers to internal validity in quantitative research, and it is used to ensure that the study conducted measures or tests to ensure that the study conducted measures or tests its own aim (Shenton, 2004). To guarantee credibility, peer debriefing and member checks (Anney, 2015) were employed as a strategy in this study. Two academic fellows independently reviewed the accuracy of methodology and process. The fellows were asked to review the analysis process several times. They reviewed the labels that were assigned to the transcript excerpts in terms of relevance. Upon receiving the feedback, the researchers moved to allocating labels to broader, more comprehensive themes, concepts, and categories. The fellows then reviewed the relevance of labels to the broader categories and category names. Several labels with their assigned excepts were allocated to different categories and some category names were improved based on the feedback to reflect the complexities of social skills use experiences of the participants. Additionally, the applicability of social skills was reviewed by three native Japanese academic fellows who understand Japanese academic/educational environment; therefore, effectiveness and viability have been confirmed.

Findings

In the interviews, the interviewer explained what she meant with "behavioural changes" and "behaviours specifics to Japanese academic settings and Japanese social settings" and provided examples of social skills for further clarification without using the term as participants might not be familiar with it. Of 21 participants, two participants (Participant 6 and Participant 18) reported that they did not acquire and use any social skills, neither in academic settings nor social life. Five participants (Participant 3, Participant 4, Participant 15, Participant 16, and Participant 21) stated that they partially acquired and use specific social skills (e.g., bowing) in certain contexts (e.g., formal occasions). As mentioned previously, this study aimed to explore if Turkish students used any kinds of skills specific to Japanese academic settings and social settings and how they used those skills. The study also aimed to find out if Turkish people avoided or maintained any social skills specific to their native culture. In the interviews, two participants (Participant 19 and Participant 20) expressed that their personality traits fit the Japanese culture; therefore, they did not need to develop new ways or acquire any social skills. However, one of two participants (Participant 20) reported demonstrating certain behavioural regulations such as being more punctual. To sum up, most participants (19 participants; 90%) reported experiencing certain behavioural changes; this paper aims to report the findings regarding the categories and sub-categories of cross-cultural social skills identified in the analysis.

The purpose of the study was to explore use of social skills in the context of Japanese universities and social life. The analysis of participants' responses suggested two major categories in terms of contextual use of cross-cultural social skills: social skills in academic settings and social skills in social settings. Moreover, the analysis resulted in different hierarchical levels of categories related to the academic and social cultures in Japan. The findings indicated that Turkish international students tended to use different types of social skills in different settings. Two major categories were labelled "social skills specific to academic culture in Japan" and "culture-specific social skills." The labels were generated by the researchers in this study and improved as the analysis progressed. The hierarchical organization of categories created in the analysis process is provided below:

1. Social Skills Specific to Academic Culture in Japan
    1.1. Manners in Class/Laboratory Context
    1.2. Hierarchical Manners
2. Culture-Specific Social Skills
    2.1. Private Space
    2.2. Indirect Approaching
    2.3. Social Interaction
    2.4. Social Involvement
    2.5. Structured Socialization
    2.6. Thoughtful Expression
    2.7. Brief Contact
    2.8. Self-Regulation in Social Life
        2.8.1. Behavioural Regulations in Social Life
        2.8.2. Emotional Regulations in Social Life

The first major category is labelled "social skills specific to academic culture in Japan" and includes skills acquired in the context of Japanese universities. It refers to skills mainly shown in academic and educational settings. It consists of two sub-categories, namely "manners in class/laboratory context" and "hierarchical manners."

Manners in class/laboratory contexts refer to skills for adjusting to the host's cultural teaching and learning practices and fitting the educational environment. The skills in this category are demonstrated in classroom and laboratory environments during lectures or seminars. The skills acquired by Turkish students are mainly related to classroom participation. Participants showing these skills realized that to better fit the Japanese educational environment, their participation and answers should be less assertive and more indirect. The social skills developed by the participants are provided below:

1. *Pausing before answering a question asked by the instructor to not stand out, and waiting for the teacher to pick someone to answer*
2. *Being less expressive of their own ideas or opinions in classrooms*
3. *Avoiding asking questions during class to not disrupt the classroom environment*
4. *Using indirect expressions while expressing opinions to laboratory/seminar mates, instructors, and supervisor*
5. *Before asking a question or commenting on a topic, trying to explain why they think that way and ask such a question (a skill called "maeoki," which means "preface" or "introduction" in Japanese)*
6. *While asking a question, explaining they have understood and then directing a question on unclear points (i.e., making longer explanations/sentences)*

7. *Explaining every step when requesting something about research from a laboratory mate for clarification*
8. *Restraining oneself in class (e.g. not making jokes during class)*
9. *Saying "thank you for your hard work" (an expression called "otsukaresama desu" in Japanese) to show appreciation to class/laboratory mates at the end of a course or seminar, before leaving the classroom/laboratory*

An example of a student's statement for behavioural skills in a classroom/laboratory context is provided below:

> *I've been expressing so much indirectly. Like the Japanese, so, how can I say, I've developed a strategy, I've observed the relationship between Japanese students and instructors. When the instructor asks questions, Japanese students don't answer immediately or don't answer very confidently, even though they are sure of themselves. They first response with "Oh, is that so?" and say "umm" or something like that. They keep thinking. I started doing it. I noticed something when I did it. Instructors began to become kinder. When the instructor directs you a question and when you act like that, the instructor starts explaining. She/he also gives an example. You then begin to understand. For example, if I had answered directly, I might have misunderstood. If the answering is too direct, the instructor perceives your act as harsh. I noticed that. For example, when you keep quiet, the instructor begins explaining. If you're very active in classes, you stand out too much. I noticed that. Staying quiet works better here than does explaining your opinions. I'm doing it. (Participant 1)*

Hierarchical manners refer to the skills that the participants use when they interact with their superiors, usually with their academic supervisors. Almost half of the participants reported that they adjusted their manners, behaviours, and the language they use when they speak to their superiors. The skills of hierarchical manners that students demonstrated are provided below:

1. *Adjusting oneself while speaking with the supervisor (e.g., changing your attitude, acting like the Japanese)*
2. *Speaking formal Japanese to the supervisor*
3. *Avoiding praising the supervisor*
4. *Apologizing to superiors to avoid conflicts even for small mistakes*
5. *Avoiding talking about one's private life to the supervisor*
6. *Avoiding asking direct questions to the supervisor*
7. *Avoiding disagreeing with the supervisor*

Students' statements are given below to exemplify hierarchical manners skills:

> *Of course, I act carefully when I speak to my adviser. My adviser loves people who speak; but because of my personality, especially as the person's hierarchical level increases, I pay attention to the words and topics I speak due to norms regarding respect and politeness. There may be changes in the linguistic level. Sometimes I try to use keigo (honorific speech in Japanese) or I try to use sonkeigo (respectful Japanese language). […] I think I have Japanese-like reactions. I think I pull myself back. As I just said, as the person's hierarchical level increases, how to say, I check my words before I speak. Of course, I'm very open to (discussing) the details about my own research, but sometimes I don't know how to react to when the adviser shares his experiences. I'm obviously playing a Japanese in those moments. (Participant 10)*

> *There is one thing that my adviser has been angry with me lately. The adviser is saying something, and I am opposing it. He is saying something else, and I'm starting with "but that is not…" I always start with "but" and "no". The adviser told me that "What is your problem? When I say something a normal student replies with 'Yes, I will do it.' and the conversation ends there. Why do you always start with 'no' in the conversation?" And after that I always started to start my sentences with "yes". I always tried to give positive answers. (Participant 12)*

The second category is "culture-specific social skills," which are cross-cultural skills specifically acquired and used during the period of cross-cultural transition to Japan. These skills were mainly related to interpersonal encounters, including one-to-one relations and social interactions in public. This category comprises eight sub-categories, namely "private space," "indirect approaching," "social interaction," "social involvement," "structured socialization," "thoughtful expression," "brief contact," and "self-regulations in social life"; the last has two sub-subcategories, which are "behavioural regulations in social life" and "emotional regulations in social life."

The skills concerning *private space* include skills about keeping the distance from host people in interpersonal relationships and avoiding speaking about one's private life with them. Turkish students mentioned that Japanese people tend to keep other people at a distance. Turkish students perceived Japanese people to be more reserved than Turkish people; therefore, some participants were more cautious of their private life to avoid creating discomfort. The relevant skills for keeping private space are provided below:

1. *Avoiding talking about one's private life in front of Japanese people*
2. *Being more discreet with asking private questions (e.g. salary) to Japanese people*
3. *Giving up on inviting Japanese people to one's home*
4. *Being more reserved in interpersonal relations with Japanese people*

To exemplify the private space skills, a student's statement is reported below:

> *…Other than that, I introduce myself as Japanese do. I learned to not ask too direct questions. For example, there are sensitive topics in Turkey too, like you don't ask a person how much money she/he earns. I have learned to pay attention to things that I need to avoid asking here too. I learned to not invite people to my house. It's pitiful, but I'm used to what I'm talking about. I have realized that's how I treat my non-Japanese friends, too. (Participant 17)*

Indirect approaching refers to the skills which promote following an indirect and agreeable communication style when approaching Japanese people or in social contexts in which an assertive style of communication is not encouraged. The skills regarding indirect approaching that participants developed are provided below:

1. *Being less straightforward towards Japanese people while making friends*
2. *Being more indirect in interpersonal relationships*
3. *Confirming by saying "yes" while listening to others although not agreeing with what is being told*

An example of a student's statement is provided below to demonstrate indirect approaching skills:

> *What I realize in general is that the straight approach definitely frightens the Japanese. So, I learned to hold my tongue and be calmer and more like them. And sometimes, if I say too much, I feel so hypocritical that I don't like it. If I don't love someone, I say I don't. If I don't want to do something, I say I don't want to. If I say what I want to do, I really want to do it. But when I was talking to the Japanese, I realized that I said "alright" to things I didn't want to do but I should do, because if they run away, it gets very difficult to communicate again. I thought, in a kind of funny way, if that's the case at the academy, or what other people are doing in companies. A difficult situation. So, in general, I use the method of holding my tongue to strengthen communication. (Participant 17)*

The category *social interaction* includes skills regarding how to interact with Japanese people in interpersonal relationships. The relevant social skills are listed below:

1. *Finding common ground (e.g. hobbies) and trying to make friends based on common interests*
2. *Bringing souvenirs from places visited (called "omiyage" in Japanese)*
3. *Developing ways such as the Japanese style self-introduction to approach people*

A student's statement exemplifying social interaction skills is given below:

> *I didn't develop new ways. But I seem to have adapted to their ways. Omiyage (Japanese souvenir) – when you go somewhere, you buy something and give it as a gift. That way, I think, I make them love me. If you ask me if I've developed anything else, no. What I'm doing is observing what they're doing, imitating them a bit. I've learned a complete imitation of Japanese. (Participant 3)*

Social involvement refers to the skills concerning avoiding getting involved in other people's lives, even in critical situations, particularly in public. Those participants who acquired the skill stated that they avoided reacting to situations in which they saw someone needing help, or situations in which interventions might be necessary for the people involved, such as interpersonal conflicts in public. The relevant social skills concerning social involvement are listed below:

1. *Being less involved in others' lives*
2. *Seeing someone in trouble and passing by without reacting*
3. *Not offering help to others unless asked for/requested to not bother people*

An example of a student's statement to show social involvement skills is provided below:

> *In Turkey, it is to poke one's nose into things, right? A lot of people comment on things that aren't about them. If necessary, they get involved. What is that? I believe that in Japan, people adopt the approach of "minding your own business" and "minding my own business" very well. For example, if it is my own business, if it is my private issue, it means it is "minding your own business" to outsiders. They too know that. They mind their own business and not get involved. For example, I witnessed a crazy fight between some guys at the train station. Nobody separated them. They were fighting like crazy, punching and kicking. But people turned their heads away to avoid standing out. The duty of separating them of course belongs to the police and the security guard. You know, "minding your own business" and "minding my own business" rules are very*

> *well defined. Everybody's following it. As something I had thought of, the concept of "minding your own business" and "minding my own business" [exists in order] to not stand out in society. I don't poke into the issues of others anyway, but here, I like it because everyone minds their own business with extra attention. Nobody interferes with anyone. Everyone keeps oneself to oneself. But the extremity of it is a little too much. If they are fighting, we should say "Oh, friends, what are you doing?" and if it is possible, they should better be separated in my opinion. But for example, I don't know, if I was in Turkey, if I'd try to separate them or not get involved. Because I am in Japan. (Participant 16)*

The skills concerning *structured socialization* include how to act when making plans with Japanese people. The participants who used this skill reported to be less spontaneous in their interpersonal relationships. They reported that they began to set appointments if they wanted to meet with Japanese people for an event and conveyed more details regarding the event. The social skills used by the participants are provided below:

1. *Being less spontaneous in interpersonal relations, particularly for occasional meetups*
2. *Setting appointments ahead (2-3 days to 1 week)*
3. *Conveying more information and providing more details regarding the event when making plans with Japanese friends*

To exemplify structures interaction skills, a student's statement is shown below:

> *I noticed that while [in Turkey] you easily contact a friend; in Japan, if I meet with a friend, I make an appointment. I had the habit of notifying at least a week in advance if I wanted to do something without an appointment or if I wanted to invite him/her. I noticed that if I was invited somewhere, I was invited a week in advance. (Participant 11)*

The category *thoughtful expression* indicates the communication skills displayed when speaking to Japanese people in social contexts. Participants who developed these communication skills addressed the importance of "reading the air" (analysing the circumstances) to understand how to behave and talk in social contexts and avoid offense and misunderstanding. Moreover, the participants stated that they usually gave more detailed and longer explanations to provide a clear understanding to Japanese people. The relevant social skills about thoughtful expression are provided below:

1. *"Reading the air/atmosphere" (a commonly used skill called "funiki wo yomu" in Japanese)*
2. *Making detailed explanations when explaining something (a skill called "maeoki" which literally means "preface" or "introduction" in Japanese)*
3. *Repeating what one explains for clarification*
4. *Explaining one's true feelings, desires and public opinion depending on the context (a commonly used skill called "honne" and "tatemae" which literally mean "true sound" and "built in front" in Japanese, respectively)*
5. *Making jokes on cultural differences to create a warm atmosphere*

A student's statement is provided below to exemplify thoughtful expression skills:

> *KY ("Kuki wo Yomu" meaning "reading the air" in Japanese). You need to pay*

> *attention to this. It also develops over time. The second is honne-tatemae ("honne" meaning "true sound" and "tatemae" meaning "built in front" in Japanese). You need to learn the honne-tatemae practiced by people all around in the first place. You need to use it naturally. I don't know if it's a skill, but there is such a technique or something like that. (Participant 5)*

Brief contact refers to the skills shown in the case of brief contact in social contexts, including greeting. Participants who adopted this skill reported that they avoided using Turkish social skills such as hugging and shaking hands. They stated that they were mimicking Japanese style greeting such as bowing to familiar people, while avoiding social interaction in social contexts with unfamiliar people. The relevant social skills on brief contact are provided below:

1. *Avoiding Turkish social skills that include physical contact such as hugging and shaking hands*
2. *Bowing*
3. *Avoiding social interaction such as greeting in certain social contexts (for example in elevators)*
4. *Avoiding eye contact*
5. *Using Japanese-style greeting*
6. *Japanese-style self-introduction*

An example of a student's statement for brief contact skills is demonstrated below:

> *Normally there are some skills that I use in Turkey, but not here (Japan). I am a person who likes to hug and touch; but here there are none. It's really none and you really miss your friends. I'm so lucky I came with my wife, and she also came with me, but one really misses friends. (When I'm collaborating with the Japanese) You've done a great job; you've done something nice. I feel like hugging. Nothing happens. I feel like shaking hands, but I cannot. (Participant 13)*

The last category *self-regulation in social life* includes cross-cultural skills regarding behavioural and emotional changes. It has two subcategories which are named "behavioural regulations in social life" and "emotional regulations in social life."

Behavioural regulations in social life refer to skills that participants adopted by mimicking Japanese manners, after observing Japanese people in social contexts. Additionally, some of the participants stated that they acquired some of these social skills (e.g., nodding with head for confirmation while listening to others) based on their experiences in interactions with Japanese people and/or based on the expectations of Japanese people from interpersonal relationships with them. The relevant social skills regarding behavioural regulations in social life are provided below:

1. *Smiling more often than usual*
2. *Confirming with saying "yes" (literally translated as "hai" in Japanese) while listening to someone*
3. *Nodding with head for confirmation that they follow when listening to others*
4. *Using Japanese gestures (e.g. nodding)*
5. *Apologizing more often*
6. *Thanking more often*
7. *Sending a message in case of being late for an appointment*

8. *Following Japanese social rules, codes, etiquettes, and manners in public space (such as public transportation)*
9. *Trying to follow Japanese etiquettes in formal occasions such as business meetings*
10. *Adjusting one's behaviours according to the expectations of the Japanese*
11. *Mimicking Japanese manners when interacting with the Japanese*
12. *Being more punctual*
13. *Being more planned*
14. *Being more respectful*
15. *Being more polite*
16. *Being more formal*
17. *Acting like a Japanese*
18. *Being more considerate of others (e.g. not sending messages at an unearthly hour)*
19. *Not making excuses for mistakes*

To exemplify behavioural regulations in social life skills, students' statements are provided below:

> *I've learned to apologize here. I so often say "I'm sorry." or "Thank you." The importance of such things. I always try to pay attention to these, that is, to thank a lot, to apologize very often, to show a lot of respect. (Participant 7)*

> *I don't shake hands very often here, so I'd say I acquired little bit of Japanese mimics like nodding and bowing. I'm the only doctorate student of my adviser. Other students are in master's courses. Naturally, they usually ask me for help. Especially when we have seminars, the adviser makes a request to me first and tells me to provide feedback. I can't hold myself there. I don't have such habits; I didn't change them. I tell what I think. I didn't acquire any skills such as restraining, changing, softening my thoughts. But when I meet or speak in a social context, I have acquired skills like nodding or bowing. (Participant 21)*

Emotional regulations in social life refer to skills on restraining emotional expressions and reactions in social contexts and trying to stay expressionless and reactionless as much as possible, particularly to unexpected or exciting situations and experiences. Participants who developed this skill reported that they began to not express their emotions both behaviourally and verbally as much as they used to do. Additionally, they reported feeling emotionally more regulated than they were in Turkey. The skills used by the participants are provided below:

1. *Being emotionally less expressive and reactive; restraining emotional responses*
2. *Being more rational than emotional*
3. *Controlling facial expressions; staying expressionless (an expression called "muhyojo" in Japanese)*
4. *Trying to understand the other party's feelings and thoughts because of Japanese people's tendency to not express their feelings and thoughts*

A student's statement exemplifying emotional regulations in social life skills is shown below:

> *It's really hard to control emotions, and your facial expressions, you know. Joy, sadness, disappointment – all the same. But when I witnessed an unexpected behaviour from a friend) I reacted as if I always acted the same way and I was like "Oh, is that so?" I felt it in me there. Well, how to say, emotions are things that you can't control really.*

> *You can't control your emotions, but you control how you manifest them, that's the hardest part. You know, I've began to control them too. I don't know if it has made me happy or unhappy, but it makes me acquire such skills. This came to mind. In other words, the only thing that doesn't change is change itself. So, it's normal, what I do sounds normal to me. (Participant 14)*

Patterns in Cross-Cultural Social Skills Use Based on the Findings

The findings suggest several patterns in Turkish students' social skills use, and these patterns are consistent with a previous study of Tanaka and Okunishi (2016). They conducted a study on social skills use by international students in Japan. In the study by Tanaka and Okunishi, students evaluated a list of social skills and how commonly these skills were used in their home country. After the analysis, the skills were classified into four categories which are maintained skills (skills used in Japan and acknowledged as being used in their home country), acquired skills (skills learned in Japan, but not used in their home country), avoided skills (skills used in their home country, but not recognized in Japan) and neglected skills (skills rarely used both in Japan and in their home country). Therefore, the patterns observed in the social skills use of Turkish students can be classified based on their study except one category, neglected skills, that has not been investigated in this study. Additionally, the findings suggest a pattern for successful cross-cultural adaptation without modifying any social skills.

Turkish students are found to 1) acquire social skills specific to host culture and use these skills depending on the context, 2) maintain social skills that were used in their home country, 3) avoid using certain social skills of their home culture in the host country.

The social skills acquired by Turkish students are specific to academic culture in Japan and shown in the context of Japanese universities, particularly within a classroom/laboratory environment. In addition, regarding socialization, interpersonal communication and behavioural regulations, social skills specific to Japanese culture were acquired and demonstrated by Turkish students, depending on the social context. In terms of the teaching and learning strategies emphasized, there are similarities between Turkish and Asian cultures (Bichelmeyer, & Cagiltay, 2000) where education is teacher-centred, and students are expected to talk in class when invited by the teacher (Gu, 2009). Moreover, Turgut (1997) suggested that oral participation is not usually encouraged in Turkish educational culture. However, considering that the majority of participants moved to Japan for graduate education in which students are expected to take the initiative to ask questions that will promote their understanding, they might not comply with educational norms of native culture and act outside traditional student roles. Furthermore, although the sample size in this study is small ($N = 21$) because of the nature of the qualitative research, considering the number of Turkish students in tertiary-level education in Japan, which was 152 (The Embassy of The Republic of Turkey in Tokyo, 2017) at the time of data collection, the sample size comprised 13.82% of all Turkish international students. Therefore, it can be suggested that the findings of this study may be relevant to Turkish students who currently study in Japan or prospective Turkish students who consider studying in Japan.

Participants (Participant 19 and Participant 20) who reported maintaining social skills that were displayed in their home country stated that both their personality traits and social skills fitted Japanese culture. They indicated that they did not need to adjust – acquire or avoid – their behaviours to fit Japanese culture or interpersonal relationships with hosts. Responses of these two participants suggested that they maintained what they were usually doing when they were in Turkey. Participants' statements are provided below to exemplify maintained social skills:

> *There is no such thing that I did in Turkey but not in Japan, or I didn't do in Turkey but started to do in Japan. No such thing. I think that's why I could adapt myself here easily. Because I'm not a very lively person, I'm more like calm. I think that's why I'm easily accepted among my Japanese friends. I had a few international friends coming and leaving. When I observed my relations with them, I realized that they did not have very good relations with the Japanese. I think it's because of the social skills you're talking about. It changes according to the culture and the living environment. The international people who come here can easily stand out. I think I'm a little more nonchalant, because I have a calmer personality. I was like that in Turkey. I'm the same here. (Participant 19)*

> *What I did in Japan was the same as what I usually do in Turkey. Well, 99% of the skills I use in Turkey and the skills I used in Japan are the same really. I still stand a queue in Turkey, for example. I pay a little more attention to personal space. Moreover, for example, I certainly don't talk on the phone while on the train. I'm strict about it. I didn't talk on the phone not even once, or I'm careful to not talk loudly. Other than that, I offer seats (to other passengers). What else do I do in everyday life? I try to normally socialize with Japanese as much as possible. I'm speaking, I'm chatting, I'm explaining stuff. I'm talking about Turkey, for example. And it was a very popular topic when I was there (Japan). […] I wouldn't say 100% assimilation, but I try to follow Japanese rules in Japan as much as possible. The good thing is that these rules don't contradict my personality anyway. So, I don't like talking loudly on the train. All I've ever done is something so general, but that's all I do. (Participant 20)*

The findings revealed that Turkish participants avoid using certain social skills of their home culture both in educational settings and other social settings, when interacting with Japanese people. These findings implied that participants preferred to comply with the social rules in Japan. It suggested that the skills that participants avoid using are not similar or overlap between Turkish culture and Japanese culture. For example, participants stated that they expected more physical contact among Japanese people. Participants' statements are provided below to exemplify avoided social skills:

> *I think I lost all my social skills here. I told you, I'm supposed to hug (a Turkish friend), I'm bowing instead. I learned bowing. Japan did not add much to me in that sense, because there's nothing (no social skills) here. Like I said, I lost. (Participant 3)*

> *Bowing. In Turkey, you bow your head, but not like in Japan. I've learned to do it. I realized that I felt more comfortable doing it. I shake hands in my normal social life, but in fact, I especially liked to not shake hands with the Japanese; because they are distant. It makes such an impression on me as if I had to keep a distance. I've internalized this habit so much that when I return to Turkey, I bow. Handshaking or hugging sometimes sounds hard; but when new Turkish people I meet here leave, especially women—I have not met any men— we definitely hug each other before leaving. That doesn't change. But I don't do it with the Japanese. If I'm so happy or glad about something, I've realized that I can't hold myself and not hug, but they can't hug. It feels weird. Well, I've restrained it anyways. (Participant 17)*

Lastly, a pattern for successful adaptation to host culture without modification of social skills use is observed in two of the participants. One participant reported that she did not *modify* herself and acquire or became devoid of any social skills, as in her statement, *"I think, none*

[no skills used for interpersonal relationships]. I don't think I modified (myself) that much. None." (Participant 6)

However, she stated that she brought souvenirs to her supervisor when she visited a place. She reported not restraining herself when interacting with her superiors (i.e., hierarchical manners). She reported that:

> *As I said, I have two seminar classes. One of them is international. Everybody's like very relaxed. There is no problem with that class. Nope, I don't have any problems in either of the classes. And I don't speak Japanese either. The Japanese language has honorific speech, but since the English language does not have it, I don't have any problems. No, I don't restrain myself. I restrain myself in front of the instructors (here in Japan) as much as I restrain myself in front of the instructors in Turkey. (Participant 6)*

In addition, however, she reported not having an assertive communication style, compared to her Turkish classmates at university in Turkey. She added that she did not like criticizing and she avoided harsh criticism in class discussions when she was in Turkey. Therefore, it is assumed that, although the participant reported not acquiring or avoiding social skills in Japan, the social skills that she used in Turkey were particularly fit to the academic culture in Japan, similarly to two of the participants previously mentioned. She stated that:

> *I didn't really like to criticize before, either. But at my home university in Turkey, people were very, very critical. Still, I wasn't going too harsh on anyone. Here, for example, the other day I disagreed with a friend about a topic. I disagreed with my friend's argument. So, I presented my own argument. Every time the instructor briefly summarizes each person's argument, and then she suggests a thesis about the argument and says that "Your friend states something like that." After I presented my argument, the instructor said, "By presenting such an argument, that is completely opposite to our friend's argument, Participant 6 disagreed with him. She presented an argument against him and opposed to his argument." I said, "Let's not say it was completely against him, but something like that." Then the instructor said "Friends, you do right by refuting the arguments of others. Do not hesitate. You can directly say to that person that his/her argument is wrong. We are doing science here. Do it as you wish. The friendship stays outside. Here you can criticize everyone directly as a professional." She is Japanese, too, the instructor. She tells us to not use indirect language. I'm not a very critical person in general. I usually filter my talking. (Participant 6)*

Another participant who reported not modifying himself stated that he had an assertive communication style. Similar to the participant previously mentioned, he reported not using any hierarchical manners when speaking to his superiors. He mentioned that:

> *I was warned several times by my Japanese laboratory mates. I directly say whatever comes to mind. Academia should be designed to facilitate discussion environment. My adviser is very well-known not only in Japan, but also in the world. He has been granted the Emperor's medal or something like that recently. That man is highly respected. Just imagine the amount of respect shown to the title of a normal professor, and image that amount shown to that man, whether you multiply it by a hundred or whatever. I was having direct discussions with that man. When he said something, I was disagreeing with him by saying it wouldn't be like that. The mates in the laboratory warned me that*

> *the adviser would be angry. But he wasn't that kind of person, as I said. I was very lucky. My attitudes seemed strange to them [Japanese laboratory mates], because they thought I was talking confidently, which was certainly not the case. Because according to them, even saying "I wonder if that could be so." is considered a burst of self-confidence. (Participant 18)*

Discussion

The main purpose of this study was to describe, examine and interpret Turkish international students' use of social skills in both academic and social settings. Based on previous studies of international students' social skills use in Japan, various patterns emerged according to how social skills are acquired, avoided, or maintained by Turkish international students. In addition to these patterns, the findings suggested Turkish students used different types of cross-cultural social skills in different settings, which are labelled social skills specific to academic culture and social culture in Japan.

Manners in class/laboratory contexts, which refer to skills for adjusting to the host's cultural teaching and learning practices and fitting the educational environment, are one of the major categories of social skills specific to academic culture. The skills regarding classroom communication such as "being less expressive of ideas or opinions in classroom", "avoiding asking questions during class to not disrupt the classroom environment" and "pausing before answering a question asked by the instructor in order to not stand out, and waiting for the teacher to pick someone to answer" are consistent with expectations in teaching and learning cultures of large power distance societies. As Gu (2009) outlined, in large power societies education is teacher-centred and students are supposed to speak up in class only when they are invited by the teacher. Although levels of power distance of both countries are similar and located at around the middle of the scale (Hofstede Insights, 2019), the findings suggested that the study participants' use of skills – either acquired or avoided – were inconsistent from expectations considering similarities in power distance levels of two countries. Turkey has been classified as a collectivistic country as Japan (Hofstede, 1980), Turkish people display distinct characteristics in terms of individualistic and collectivistic values (Göregenli, 1995; 1997). Turkish culture, in which both individualistic and collectivist ideals exist side by side (Göregenli, 1995; 1997), is a mixture of Western and Eastern cultural features, and both traditional and modern traits can be seen as a blend of Turkish society (Sunar & Fişek Okman, 2004). Considering the mixed characteristics of Turkish culture, similar behavioural patterns might be existent in participants of this study. Furthermore, a study on classroom participation by Turkish graduate students in the U.S. (Tatar, 2005) found out that Turkish students exhibited various participations patterns. Turkish students were not all silent which was contrary to the studies predominantly documented the silence of Asian students.

In terms of social skills specific to academic culture, which is another of the major categories, the findings revealed that skills regarding *hierarchical manners* are demonstrated by Turkish students particularly towards their academic supervisors. This finding is consistent with the findings of a previous study (Tanaka & Okunishi, 2016) on social skills use of international students in Japan. That study indicated that students who had stayed in Japan for more than three years had significantly higher scores of showing modesty and showing an appropriate attitude toward superiors, than those students who had been staying in Japan for less than a year. Moreover, the students whose duration of stay in Japan was more than three years displayed better attitudes towards surrounding people and used the Japanese way of calling others more than those students whose duration of stay in Japan was two to three years. The

finding is constant with the finding. Considering that average length of stay of participants in this study was around four and a half years, their appropriate use of hierarchical manners towards superiors is consistent with the results of Tanaka and Okunishi (2016). In addition, participants indicated that they gradually adjusted to cultural differences, Japanese system and following Japanese procedures with the passage of time. Most participants frequently stated they have normalized and internalized Japanese culture during adjustment process, emphasizing the significance of experience of living in the culture. In a study on interpersonal behavioural difficulties of Japanese people living in Japan (Nakano & Tanaka, 2019), Japanese participants stated that, although Turkish people are easily influenced by the opinions of their superiors, the distance between instructors and students is closer, compared to Japan. Considering that levels of power distance of both countries are similar and located at around the middle of the scale (Hofstede Insights, 2019), Turkish participants in Japan and Japanese participants in Turkey might have similar experiences in terms of hierarchical relations.

In addition to these, the culture-specific social skills that emerged in this study are consistent with the previous studies on social skills use of international students in Japan. Tanaka and Fujihara (1992) investigated behavioural difficulties among international students in Japan to determine essential social skills for cross-cultural adjustment. The participants' responses revealed that they mostly had trouble with indirect expressions, social manners, suppressed expression, relationship with the opposite gender, attitude towards foreigners, and group-oriented behaviours. Students from Europe and students from Latin America reported having difficulty in understanding suppressed expression, while students from Southeast Asia stated that they had difficulty in understanding attitudes towards foreigners. Furthermore, students from Southeast Asia tend to perform better in indirect expressions, and the students who had stayed in Japan for a substantial amount of time showed in group-oriented behaviours. The findings of this study indicated the use of cross-cultural social skills, including *indirect approaching, thoughtful expression, self-regulation in social life* by Turkish students, although Turkey is considered a collectivistic country like Japan (Hofstede, 1980). However, the results of the studies by Göregenli (1995, 1997) suggest that Turkish culture does not fall into either side of the individualism-collectivism dichotomy with regards to all the dimensions of social behaviour described by the relevant literature and by target groups. In addition to these, it was suggested that Turkish culture is a combination of Western and Eastern cultural elements, and the synthesis of both collectivistic and individualist cultures (Sunar & Fişek Okman, 2004). A combination of spiritual, altruistic, other-centred, community-oriented, and interdependent values – values that tend to be associated with Eastern cultures – and individualistic, rational, logical, pragmatic, and materialistic values – values that are often associated with Western cultures – is observed in Turkish people (Kilinc & Granello, 2003). Therefore, it can be stated that Turkish students who tend to exhibit both individualistic and collectivistic features more likely acquired social skills specific to Japanese culture during their cross-cultural transition.

Furthermore, Turkish students reported avoiding specific social skills specific to Turkish culture and acquired the relevant social skills instead of the avoided ones, particularly in physical contact. Turkey is classified as a high contact culture "in which, people tend to touch each other more often, maintain closer interpersonal distance, make more eye contact, and speak louder" (Oxford Reference, 2019). Compared to Turkish culture, which is high both in physical contact and intimacy in interpersonal relationships, Japanese culture is assumed to be a low-contact culture (Sussman & Rosenfeld, 1982). Consequently, cultural differences in the degree of contact resulted in adopting *brief contact* skills and avoiding physical interaction, particularly in greeting Japanese people. A study on interpersonal behavioural difficulties of Japanese people living in Japan (Nakano & Tanaka, 2019) suggest that Japanese people living

in Turkey experienced difficulty handling frequent physical contact in Turkish culture, particularly in greetings such as hugging and kissing. Japanese people reported feeling uncomfortable with body touches. The findings of the present study, on the other hand, indicated that Turkish participants tended to avoid physical contact in Japan, as physical contact is not common to Japanese culture.

As previously mentioned, the findings of a study on interpersonal behavioural difficulties of Japanese people living in Turkey (Nakano & Tanaka, 2019) indicated dissimilarities between Japanese cultural norms and Turkish cultural norms, which resulted in experiencing interpersonal difficulties. The study presented that Japanese people living in Turkey experienced difficulties with "frank self-expression," "behaviours such as manners or common sense," and "relationships with people." Regarding frank self-expression, Japanese people reported experiencing a lot of body touches in Turkey. Moreover, they stated that they were frequently invited by Turkish people to their homes. The findings of the present study are consistent with the findings of the study by Nakano and Tanaka (2019). For example, Japanese participants in Turkey reported having difficulty in assertive style of communication, in which Turkish people directly express their opinions by pointing out mistakes and dissatisfaction. The participants reported feeling uncomfortable with open and direct self-expressions of the hosts. They also stated that the proximity of interpersonal distance is low in Turkey. In addition, the findings indicated the frequent use of excuses in Turkish culture (Nakano & Tanaka, 2019). The Turkish participants in the present study were found to use social skills of *indirect approaching, thoughtful expression,* and *behavioural regulations in social life*. In terms of interpersonal relations, an indirect approach combined with indirect communication style and body language specific to Japanese culture was found to be used in Japan. Keeping a personal distance from hosts was also reported by the participants.

The present study indicated the cultural differences in perceptions of privacy. Turkish participants reported avoiding asking questions about private life such as salary and family; they acquired social skills of *private space* in Japan. The findings of the present study are also consistent with the findings of Nakano and Tanaka (2019). Their study also revealed that Japanese people had difficulty with cultural differences in perception of privacy. For instance, the findings showed that Japanese participants were often asked questions about private life such as salary, romantic partners, and family relationships. Participants reported feeling frustrated with the host people's attitudes of lack of consideration.

Furthermore, Japanese participants experienced difficulty in cultural differences with topics and style of conversation. They stated that Turkish people often make jokes and use humour during conversation. Participants reported not being able grasp the contexts because of the frequent use of in-jokes and thus, being unable to react to the conversation. Participants were also confused when asked questions about politics and war, and how they met with their romantic partner (Nakano & Tanaka, 2019). Consistent with this finding, this study revealed that making jokes, particularly during classes, is avoided in Japan. Therefore, social skills of *manners in a class/laboratory* specific to Japan were acquired. The findings of the present study, however, revealed that Turkish students experienced difficulty "reading the air" and understanding the topics and conversations in social contexts; therefore, social skills of *thoughtful expression* were adopted. As both Turkish culture (Karakuzu & Irgin, 2016) and Japanese culture are high-context cultures (Hall & Hall, 1990), social skills of high-context communication such as "reading the air" are essential to able to follow and understand conversations, and to fit the environment.

Additionally, regarding behaviours such as manners or common sense, Japanese participants indicated a loose commitment to rules such as slow perception of time, lack of schedule and planning in Turkish culture. Participants reported having difficulty with the optimistic thinking of Turkish people. They also stated that Japanese people may emphasize time and planning too much, and excessively consider risks. Another difficulty that the Japanese participants experienced was about interpersonal relations. Specifically, Japanese participants had difficulty with the unpredictable ending of social occasions such as home visits, regardless of the timing of occasions in a day (Nakano & Tanaka, 2019). The findings of the present study showed that Turkish participants acquired social skills of *structured socialization* and *behavioural regulations in social life*. For example, being less spontaneous in interpersonal relations, setting appointments two–three days to one week sooner, engaging in details of the events and conveying more information to the invited person, and being more punctual are the social skills that were acquired by Turkish participants in Japan. The findings suggest that cultural differences in time management and scheduling may result in experiencing difficulty with interpersonal relations, leading to acquiring or avoiding certain social skills specific to host culture.

Pedagogical Implications

The findings of the study have several implications for Japanese universities, as well as for Turkish and other international students.

The study investigates social skill phenomena by drawing on interviews with Turkish international students in Japan. By exploring a crucial aspect of adjustment/cross-cultural adaptation of Turkish students, the study aims to increase Japanese faculty and students' awareness of the difficulties international students experience in adapting to Japanese academic culture and social life. Through a better understanding of the factors influencing international students' use of social skills, Japanese faculty and peers can support their efforts to understand Japanese culture and thus become more competent users of social skills. Students who are planning to come to Japan for studying from other countries may also benefit in terms of being more informed about the social skills commonly used in Japan.

The results of a survey (Edwards, 2008) conducted in Australia revealed that international students tend to spend more time at university per week excluding time in class as compared to their domestic counterparts. Considering the amount of time that international students spend on campus, it can be suggested that their main source of social network is university. Furthermore, adjustment difficulties can lead international students to fail academically (Duru & Poyrazli, 2011). Cross-cultural adaptation of international students can be evaluated in relation with academic adjustment (Poyrazli & Kavanaugh, 2006). Therefore, learning social skills specific to host culture is essential for a successful adjustment to the academic culture of the host university and for a successful cross-cultural transition to the host culture.

Basic social skills mean learned communication abilities. Therefore, it is suggested that people can develop and facilitate these basic skills. People can develop more efficient social performances with practice and training in basic dimensions of social skills and in the interrelationships of social skills (Riggio, 1986). In social skills training, individuals' unique social difficulties will be identified, and they will be provided the knowledge and social skills necessary for efficient interaction (Chapdelaine & Alexitch, 2004). Tanaka (2012) held a cross-cultural psycho-educational program to facilitate cross-cultural social skills learning of international students studying in Japan. The program was designed as to provide cognitive and

behavioural learning of culture-specific behaviours regarding interpersonal relationships. The students' responses were collected during, immediately after, and one year after the program. The students reported gaining cultural awareness and deeper understanding of the host culture as a short-term effect of the session. They also stated that they acquired new social skills, which led to improvement in self-efficacy and positive feelings. One year after the program, the participants reported using some social skills they had learned in the session, depending on the context and opportunities. The psycho-educational program is suggested to be used as a tool to facilitate cross-cultural adjustment of international students in Japan. International students could develop better relations with host people and improve their sociocultural adjustment by using the social skills they learn in the program. Psycho-educational program could help enhance international students' psychological adjustment by acquiring social skills necessary to avoid misunderstandings with hosts. Students could feel comfortable in the unfamiliar settings and experience self-growth by learning necessary social skills. Therefore, psycho-educational programs to facilitate social skills learning can be provided by Japanese universities to international students, including Turkish students in Japan, as well as strategies to cope with social difficulty during cross-cultural transition, including academic adjustment.

Suggestions for Further Research

This study identified and described cross-cultural social skills of Turkish international students in Japan. Considering that very limited research in Japan has investigated student populations from different nations and cultures other than Western cultures, it might be interesting to discover the cross-cultural experiences of international students from various cultures. The findings of this study call for more extensive cross-cultural examination to be able to explore the roles of different factors on social skills use of international students, particularly Turkish students in Japan. In addition, further research on the social skills of international students from different countries is crucial for testing their transferability (in qualitative research in preference to external validity/generalizability, Shenton, 2004). As previously mentioned, Tanaka and Okunishi (2016) employed a list of social skills and how commonly these skills were used by international students in Japan. Although this study did not apply the list of social skills to the participants, it might be interesting and helpful to examine the use of social skills of Turkish students with a larger-scale quantitative study in the future.

Limitations of The Study

As a qualitative study with 21 participants, the findings may not be generalizable due to the small sample size; however, transferability to other situations may be carefully considered. Since it is a pioneer study on Turkish international students in Japan, the representativeness of the sample should be carefully evaluated. The study focused on one cultural group, and other cultural groups or settings might yield different results.

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