HOKKAIDO UNIVERSITY

Title	Forms of written arguments : A comparison between Japan and the United States
Author(s)	Suzuki, Shinobu
Citation	International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 34(6), 651-660 https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2010.02.005
Issue Date	2010-11
Doc URL	https://hdl.handle.net/2115/44392
Type	journal article
File Information	IJIR34-6_651-660.pdf

Running head: FORMS OF WRITTEN ARGUMENTS

Forms of Written Arguments:

A Comparison between Japan and the United States

Shinobu Suzuki[a]

[a]Hokkaido University, Graduate School of International Media, Communication, and Tourism Studies, N17 W8, Kita-ku, Sapporo

e-mail: shinobu@imc.hokudai.ac.jp
Phone: international +81-11-706-5385
Fax: international +81-11-706-7801

Abstract

Studying cultural differences in argument forms helps us understand the nature of communicative problems that inevitably arise in intercultural conflict and negotiation. Although a number of studies have been conducted in the past to examine cultural differences in arguments, we still do not have sufficient evidence to support that cultural groups actually differ in the manners in which they construct arguments. Given the situation, this study empirically examines whether and how cultural groups differ in forms of written arguments. Based on the theoretical framework of verbal communication styles proposed by Gudykunst and Ting-Toomey, this study employs two dimensions along which two cultural groups, Japan and the United States, are likely to differ: direct-indirect and elaborate-succinct. Five indicators of argument forms that represent values on either of the two dimensions are used to analyze differences in argument forms between the two cultural groups. A survey was conducted in Japan and the United States. A total of 329 responses from college students, including 239 from Japan and 90 from the United States, were analyzed to test the hypotheses offered in this study. Consistent with the hypotheses, results indicate that the arguments written by the Japanese respondents are significantly more indirect and succinct than those written by the U.S. counterparts. The implications of these findings for future research are discussed.

Keywords: argument forms; cultural differences

Forms of Written Arguments:
A Comparison between Japan and the United States

1. Introduction

We need to express our points of view in various settings of our lives, for such purposes as influencing views of others, coming to an agreement among group members, or letting others know where we stand on a specific issue. Given the situation, making argument or engaging in argumentative communication is an important aspect of our daily lives. Indeed, argument has been a focus of researchers' attention for a long time. Although researchers' interest in argument started early in the study of formal logic, it has diverged in the past decades (Hample, 1990; Zarefsky, 1990) to include inquiries into informal argument that ordinary people pursue in everyday life. Also, there have been researchers interested in the relationship between culture and informal argument. Studying cultural differences in informal argument will help us understand the nature of communicative problems that inevitably arise in intercultural conflict and negotiation. Also, it will contribute to the study of argument by testing or questioning the boundaries of predominantly Eurocentric models of argument.

Some researchers have pointed out that cultural groups, particularly the East and the West, differ in how people make arguments through impressionistic observation (e.g., Becker, 1988; Mizutani, 1981; Nakamura, 1964). They argue that people in the East do not tend to embrace the notion of logic and lack the tradition of argument in the Western sense of the word, mainly because of the Eastern values and histories. Going beyond such general discussion of East-West differences in argumentative communication, Okabe (1983) identified specific aspects of communication and rhetoric in which the East and the West most likely differ, which have implications for the cross-cultural study of arguments.

Other researchers have pursued empirical investigations. Some of them have examined

differences in individuals' perceptions of their own argumentative traits (M. S. Kim, Aune, Hunter, H. J. Kim, & J. S. Kim, 2001; Pruty, Klopf, & Ishii, 1990; Suzuki, 1990) across different cultures. Some other researchers dealt with actual messages of oral arguments to pursue cross-cultural comparison of macro organizational patterns (Glenn, Witmeyer, & Stevenson, 1977; Warnick & Manusov, 2000). These types of studies provided either mixed results or did not provide sufficient evidence to support the presence of cross-cultural differences. In relation to the study of written arguments, researchers of contrastive rhetoric have attempted cross-cultural comparisons of expository writings through an ethnographic study (Kaplan, 1966), a qualitative case study (Hinds, 1990), and an empirical quantitative analysis (Kobayashi, 1984). However, we do not know whether the findings from these studies on expository writings are applicable to the study of argumentative texts.

Given the brief overview of past research on the relationship between culture and argument, it is clear that we have not obtained sufficient evidence yet to believe that cultural groups actually differ in how they make arguments and specifically how they might differ from one another. Therefore, the purpose of the present study is to examine whether and how ordinary people in different cultural groups differ in how they construct written arguments. Particularly, this study focuses on forms of arguments, because form is one of the five nuclear components of communication and rhetoric, according to Robert L. Scott (1969). Form concerns the problem of ordering and organizing a discourse.

The present study compares two cultural groups: Japan and the United States. That is because differences between the two cultures have been discussed by a number of past studies in terms of value assumptions underlying communicative behaviors and perceptions of some communicative styles (e.g., Gudykunst & Nishida, 1983, 1984, 1986; Hall, 1976; Hofstede,

1980; Klopf, 1991). Comparing the Japanese culture with the U.S. culture in terms of argument forms, therefore, will be a good test of whether Eurocentric notions of argument forms are applicable across different cultures. Written arguments, which will be examined in this study, are formed privately. Following Suzuki (in press), this study supports the idea that if human thinking has basically an argumentative character, "we can expect private thinking to be modeled on public argument (Billig, 1996, p. 141)." Thus, we can reasonably expect that the study of written arguments should have implications for the study of arguments in other contexts as well.

In the following sections, I will review literature on the relationship between culture and argument. I will also provide definition of argument that is used in this study. I will explain how argument forms are to be described in this study, introducing two major dimensions along which the two cultures are likely to differ, which are based on the framework proposed by Gudykunst and Ting-Toomey (1988). I will posit hypotheses before I go on to the explanation of methods, results, discussion, and conclusion.

2. Cross-cultural research on argument forms

Nakamura (1964) discusses the differences in thinking styles between the East—which includes Japan, Tibet, India, and China—and the West. He claims Eastern people rely on intuitive logic, while Western people rely on analytical logic. Referring specifically to the Japanese culture, Nakamura argues that the Japanese way of expressing things aims at making emotional and intuitive appeals rather than being logically correct. Consistent with Nakamura's line of argument, Mizutani (1981) points out the possibility that the Japanese culture lacks the custom of expressing factual relationships logically or expressing matters in a rigorous manner, based on his anecdotal evidence. Becker (1988) claims the Far East, which includes Japan and

China, lacks the custom of argumentation and he attributes it mainly to its history, languages, and Confucianism.

Going beyond such general discussion of East-West differences in argumentative communication, Okabe's observation (1983) is insightful in that it identifies distinct differences in rhetorical choices between Japan and the United States. Specifically, he employs Robert L. Scott's (1969) nuclear concepts in communication in rhetoric. With regard to differences in argument forms, Okabe maintains that the Japanese culture prefers the use of dotted or point-like and climactic structure, going immediately to the conclusion, while the U.S. culture prefers the use of problem-solving or linear and anticlimactic structure, stressing the steps up to the conclusion. He explains that such differences are attributable to the differences in the cultural assumptions between the two groups. Namely, Japanese cultural assumptions are based on homogeneous, interdependent, and vertical social relationships, making the society communication-passive, while cultural assumptions of the United States are based on heterogeneous, independent and horizontal social relationships, making the society communication-active. Okabe argues that these differences are likely to affect thinking and communicative styles.

In addition to these impressionistic studies, some studies pursued empirical investigations of the relationship between culture and argument. There have been studies with a focus on argumentative traits. Prunty et al. found that the U.S. students were higher in trait argumentativeness (Infante & Rancer, 1982) than Japanese students, which is consistent with the finding by Suzuki (1990). However, when M. S. Kim et al. (2001) compared three cultural groups—Korea, Hawaii, and the mainland U.S.—as a part of their model testing study, they found no significant differences in the overall argumentativeness scores. These studies

examined people's predispositional trait to be argumentative, but not actual argumentative discourse or messages, which the present study concerns.

Some other studies attempted cross-cultural comparison of macro organizational patterns of spoken arguments. Glenn, Witmeyer, and Stevenson (1977) compared the United States, the Soviet Union, and Arab representatives who attended the United Nation's Security Council in terms of three basic macro-structures—the factual-inductive, the axiomatic-deductive, and the affective-intuitive—that they used in their spoken arguments. They maintain that each culture has its dominant structure. However, it is hard to generalize the finding because the sample of the study is severely limited. Wanick and Manusov (2000) compared four different cultural groups (African Americans, Asian Americans, Asians, and European Americans) in terms of the macro-structures of their spoken arguments: deductive, inductive, abductive, and narrative. Their finding that Asians were more likely to reason deductively was contrary to what they had expected from previous research. Also, they did not find significant differences among the groups in the frequencies with which other macro-structures were employed.

Other researchers examined written texts of expository nature. Kaplan (1966) observed the organization of paragraphs in ESL student essays written in the students' second languages and identified five different types for English, Semitic, Oriental, Romance, and Russian groups. This study was ethnographic in nature and its generalizability is suspect. Later, Hinds (1990) claimed that Japanese, Korean, and Chinese, and Thai cultures favored "quasi-logical" organization, which was characterized by delayed introduction of purpose. This observation was based on the qualitative analysis of selected newspaper commentaries and qualitative case analysis of expository texts. Again, the generalizability of the finding is questionable. Kobayashi (1984) compared expository writing assignments between the Japanese and the U.S.

students and found that Japanese college students tended to use a specific-to-general pattern, while the U.S. students tended to use a general-to-specific pattern. Her finding provides a piece of evidence to support that people have cultural preferences for certain patterns in organizing their texts. However, because the study dealt with expository texts, it is not known how much it is true for argumentative texts.

The literature review of past studies suggests that we do not have sufficient evidence to support that there are differences in forms of written arguments across cultures, or between Japan and the United States. In addition, we do not know how cultural groups differ in specific forms of written arguments. Therefore, we need to work on these issues. Before I proceed, I will define the term argument as used in this study.

2.1 Definition of argument

Following Suzuki (2006), argument was defined in this study as: "a set of statements to express the communicator's opinion or belief, which may involve reasoning and logical appeals (p. 196)." The definition is somewhat different from the traditional definition of argument which emphasizes logic and rational appeals (Reinard, 1991, as cited in Suzuki, 2006). It reflects a more comprehensive view of argument which encompasses other goals as informing or expressing than persuading or influencing others. Next, I will illustrate the two dimensions of communication styles that were employed in the present study. These dimensions were taken from the framework proposed by Gudykunst and Ting-Toomey (1988).

2.2 Theoretical framework: Direct-indirect and elaborate-succinct dimensions of communication styles

It is meaningful to look at cross-cultural differences in argument forms in terms of dimensions of communication styles because it helps us understand the differences in a

systematic manner. Gudykunst and Ting-Toomey proposed four stylistic modes of verbal

communication that are useful in comparing cultural groups. They argue that children learn the

various patterns and styles of language interaction through socialization process to become

competent communicators in different contexts. The four dimensions they proposed were:

direct-indirect, elaborate-succinct, personal-contextual, and instrumental-affective. The present

study employs the first two dimensions: direct-indirect and elaborate-succinct. These two

dimensions are employed because they are more relevant for the analysis of argument forms

than the other two; the personal-contextual dimension concerns the difference in the sense of

role identity across cultures and the instrumental-affective dimension concerns the difference

in the listener's intuitive sensitivity to meanings beyond words. The direct-indirect and the

elaborate-succinct dimensions are detailed in the following.

2.2.1 Direct-indirect dimension

Gudykunst and Ting-Toomey (1988) as well as other researchers in the past (Gudykunst

& Kim, 1992; Okabe, 1983; Samovar, Porter, & McDaniel, 2007) have pointed out the

distinction between direct and indirect communication styles across different cultures. The

direct-indirect communication style refers to the extent speakers reveal their intentions through

verbal communication. It is related to the importance of context (Hall, 1976) in each culture. In

low-context cultures, the majority of meaning and information must be transmitted through

verbal messages. Therefore, communicators in low-context cultures tend to employ explicit,

active, and confrontational style of communication. In contrast, information is preprogrammed

in the receiver and in the setting in high-context cultures, with only minimal information is in

the transmitted message, which creates rather suppressed attitudes toward explicit, active, and,

confrontational verbal messages. The attitudes should be manifest in the indirect style of

communication in high-context cultures.

2.2.2 Elaborate-succinct dimension

This dimension concerns "the quantity of talk that is valued in different cultures" (Gudykunst and Ting-Toomey, 1998, p. 105). The elaborate style is characterized by the use of rich and expressive statements in verbal communication. In contrast, the succinct style values understatement, simple assertions, and silence. This dimension is also seemingly related to the importance of context in each culture. In low-context cultures, where "most information must be in the transmitted message to make up for what is missing in the context" (Hall, 1976, p. 101), communicators must convey their intended meaning through the use of explicit verbal messages by going into details, which leads to the use of relatively a large quantity of verbal communication. However, in high-context cultures, where less information needs to coded and transmitted through verbal communication, people tend to employ succinct style, resulting in the use of relatively a small amount of verbal communication. The following section details how these two dimensions—direct-indirect and elaborate-succinct—are relevant to analyzing differences in argument forms between Japan and the United States.

2.3 Forms of arguments

This study employs two different forms of arguments as the indicators of the indirect-direct dimension: (a) climactic vs. anticlimactic macro-structure and (b) horizontal vs. vertical macro-structure. It also employs three different forms of arguments as the indicators of the elaborate-succinct dimension: (c) the use of the serial-type micro-reasoning structures, (d) the proportion of the compound-type micro-reasoning structures to argument length, and (e) the total number of argument units. The first four indicators were those used in Suzuki's study (in press). According to Suzuki (2006), macro-structure means arguments' global

organizational patterns, while micro-structure refers to "the configuration of specific supporting or extending relationships among units of arguments, which composes at least a part of an argument (p.198)."

The use of climactic vs. anticlimactic macro-structure should be an indicator of direct-indirect dimension for the following reason. Okabe (1983) maintains that the Japanese culture prefers the use of climactic structure, while the U.S. culture prefers the use of anticlimactic structure. It is possible to interpret the climactic structure as an indirect form because the individual who employs the structure may be "saving the most interesting points for the end of the series (Okabe, 1983, p. 30)." In a climactic argument, the central claim is likely to be placed toward the end, rather than in the beginning. In a sense, it is typically a non-confrontational and indirect form of structuring an argument, a sign that the individual who employs the structure is taking great care before arriving at his or her point. In contrast, anticlimactic form, which is typically the pattern favored by the U.S. culture according to Okabe, is a direct and confrontational form of argument. Therefore, climactic vs. anticlimactic macro-structure should be an indicator of the indirect-direct dimension.

In addition to the climactic vs. anticlimactic macro-structure, horizontal vs. vertical macro-structure (Suzuki, 2006, in press) was used as the second indicator of the indirect-direct dimension. Horizontal macro-structure is a non-reason-based argument, in which the central claim is not supported by any reason. It is possible that an individual provides no reason when he or she is cautious and tentative, trying not to be too direct. In contrast, vertical macro-structure is a reason-based argument, in which the central claim is supported by at least one reason. It is possible that an individual provides reasons when he or she wants to be explicit and direct in delineating the main claim of his or her argument.

With regard to the elaborate-succinct dimension, Okabe (1983) claims that that Japanese prefers the use of dotted or point-like structure, going immediately to the conclusion, while the U.S. culture prefers the use of problem-solving or linear structure, stressing the steps up to the conclusion. It is possible to consider this difference as the contrast between the elaborate form and the succinct form. If we follow what Okabe maintains, we can infer that the argument that is typically Japanese is likely to be succinct in terms of how its reasons are structured. Therefore, the two types of micro-reasoning structures—the serial-type and the compound-type—should be two argument forms that serve as good indicators of the elaborate-succinct dimension.

Also, argument length can also be a form of argument that serves as an indicator of the elaborate-succinct dimension. That is because an argument tends to be long when it has a process-oriented organization, stressing "steps leading up to 'what,' namely the 'how' and 'why'" (Okabe, 1983, p. 30), which should be typical of low-context cultures such as the United States. In contrast, an argument tends to be short when it has a product-oriented organization, skipping process and "goes immediately to the conclusion" (Okabe, 1983, p. 30), which should be typical of high-context cultures such as Japan. Thus, the total number of argument units, which equals the argument length, was used as one of the three indicators of the elaborate-succinct dimension.

2.4 Hypotheses

Based on the literature review, the following hypotheses were offered. The first major hypothesis was:

HP1: Japanese people are more likely to use indirect argument forms than the U.S. people.

As the review of literature in Section 2.2.1 indicates, not much information needs to be conveyed through explicit verbal communication in high-context cultures like Japan, because a large part of it is already in the contexts in which communication takes place. Therefore, people's attitudes toward verbal communication in high-context cultures like Japan tend to be less active and direct than those in low-context cultures like the United States. People in high-context cultures should have less need to be confrontational and direct in communication than those in low-context cultures. Given that, two sub-hypotheses were offered regarding HP1. They concern the use of climactic vs. anticlimactic macro-structure and the use of horizontal vs. vertical macro-structure. The relevance of using these two argument forms as indicators of the direct-indirect dimension is discussed above. The two sub-hypotheses for HP1 were:

HP1a: Japanese people are more likely to use climactic macro-structure than the U.S. people in their arguments.

HP1b: Japanese people are more likely to use horizontal macro-structure than the U.S. people in their arguments.

The second major hypothesis was:

HP2: Japanese people are more likely to use succinct forms of argument than the U.S. people.

As the review of literature in Section 2.2.2 indicates, people in high-context cultures such as Japan should have less need to communicate their intentions through explaining them in great details, thus they tend to communicate less than people in low-context cultures, where most information should be communicated verbally. Therefore, arguments constructed by Japanese people are likely to be more succinct than those constructed by the U.S. people. Specifically, three sub-hypotheses were offered regarding HP2. They concern the use of the

serial- and compound-type micro-reasoning structures and argument length. The relevance of the three argument forms as indicators of the elaborate-succinct dimension is discussed above. The three sub-hypotheses for HP2 were:

HP2a: Japanese people are less likely to use the serial-type micro-reasoning structures than the U.S. people in their arguments.

HP2b: Japanese people are less likely to use the compound-type micro-reasoning structures than the U.S. people in their arguments.

HP2c: Japanese people are likely to use a smaller number of units in their arguments than the U.S. people.

3. Method

3.1 Participants

Data for the Japanese sample were collected in a survey that was conducted as a part of a larger research project, in which a questionnaire was distributed to Japanese college students in the northern part of Japan. Data for the U.S. sample were collected for the present study. They were students studying at a college in the Midwestern part of the United States. The participants responded to the questionnaire on a voluntary basis. As a result, 254 Japanese students including 149 men and 105 women responded to the questionnaire. Out of the 254 responses, 229 including 130 from men and 99 from women turned out to be usable. A total of 100 U.S. students including 46 men and 54 women responded to the questionnaire. Out of the 100 responses, 90 including 42 from men and 48 from women turned out to be usable. Non-usable responses included those from individuals with other national origins than Japanese or the United States and those that were incomplete. The average age of the respondents was 19.06 *(SD* = 2.68) for the Japanese sample, while it was 19.73 *(SD* =1.26) for

the U.S. sample.

3.2 Procedure

A survey questionnaire was prepared in both English and Japanese. Two bilingual speakers of the two languages including the author checked the two versions to make sure that they were equivalent in meaning. After that, the questionnaire was administered to the respondents during regular class periods. In the questionnaire, the respondents were given a page of blank space and asked to explain, in their mother tongue, their position on whether or not capital punishment should be retained in their own country. The instruction was: "Please write an essay of one page length in the space below giving your opinion about the view 'Capital punishment should be retained in the United States (or Japan).'" The questionnaire also asked the respondents' age, sex, nationality, and major.

3.3 Coding

A research assistant put the respondents' written arguments into a file. The author segmented the data into units of analysis. The unit of analysis was a thought turn, which was operationalized basically as an independent clause. The author unitized all the data. Also, a bilingual independent coder coded 20% of the data that were randomly selected after several training sessions with the author. The independent coder was blinded to the hypotheses of this study. The unitizing reliability (Auld & White, 1956) for the data was found to be .94.

After the unitizing task was completed, the author assigned a number to each unit in an ascending order. She coded each unit following the scheme proposed by Suzuki (2006, in press). A bilingual independent coder coded 20% of the data that were randomly selected. The coding procedure is detailed in Suzuki (2006, in press). Cohen's kappa for the four main categories, which were important in calculating values for the argument forms, of NC (nuclear

statement), HC (horizontally-continuing statement), VS (vertically subordinate statement), and

NR (non-relevant statement) was found to be .83.

3.4 Calculating values for indicators

The present study employed five indicators of argument forms. The four structural

indicators detailed in Suzuki (in press) were: (a) horizontal vs. vertical macro-structure, (b)

climactic vs. anticlimactic macro-structure, (c) the use of serial-type micro reasoning structures,

(d) the proportion of the compound-type micro-reasoning structures to argument length. In

addition to the four indicators, the present study employed (e) the total number of units as an

additional indicator. See Appendix for three coded sample arguments followed by the

descriptive notes of how the values for the five indicators are calculated.

3.5 Analysis

To test HP1a, HP2b, and HP2c, where the dependent variables were continuous, t-tests

were conducted. To test HP1b and HP2a, where the dependent variables were categorical,

Chi-square analysis was conducted. The present study set the level of significance at .05

(two-tailed).

Regarding HP1a, which concerns the use of climactic vs. anticlimactic macro-structure,

the degree of climacticity was measured by the location of the central claim (NC) represented

by the order in which it appeared in an argument, divided by the total number of units in the

argument, following Suzuki (in press). Given that, the later the central claim is presented, the

more climactic the argument is, which is represented by a greater value of the indicator. Also, if

an argument consisted of only one statement, it was excluded from the analysis because it was

difficult to know how climactic the argument was. Because the dependent variable is

continuous, a t-test was conducted to test HP1a.

Regarding HP1b, which concerns the use of horizontal vs. vertical macro-structure, Suzuki (in press) notes that horizontal macro-structure has the central claim (NC) that is not supported by any reason or vertically continuing (VS) statement, while vertical macro-structure has the central claim supported by at least one reason. Horizontal macro-structure was coded as 0 and vertical macro-structure was coded as 1. Because the dependent variable is categorical, Chi-square analysis was conducted to test HP1b.

To test HP2a, which concerns the use of the serial-type micro-reasoning structures, Chi-square analysis was conducted. According to Suzuki (in press), the use of the serial-type micro-reasoning structures indicates the depth of reasoning used to support the points offered in an argument. That is, a serial-type micro-reasoning structure represents a micro-structure in which a statement is supported by a reason, or VS (vertically supporting) statement, which is further supported by one or more reasons in a serial manner. In Suzuki's study (in press), it was originally planned to treat this indicator as a continuous variable to represent the degree to which the serial-type micro-reasoning structures were used relative to the length of each argument. Because the distribution of the data for this variable departed from normality in the study, however, it was decided to treat the variable as categorical; 1 representing the use of at least one serial-type micro-reasoning structure in an argument, while 0 representing the lack this micro-reasoning structure.

To test HP2b, which concerns the use of the compound-type micro-reasoning structures, a *t*-test was conducted. The proportion of the compound-type micro-reasoning structures to argument length indicates the scope of reasoning used to support the points offered in an argument, controlling for argument length. The compound-type micro-reasoning structure means a micro-structure in which a statement is directly supported by two or more reasons or

VS (vertically supporting) statements. The value for the indicator was obtained for each argument following Suzuki (in press). If two different reasons directly support a statement in an argument, the indicator's value for the argument is two. If three different reasons support a statement in argument, the score is three, and so on. If multiple compound-type micro-reasoning structures are used in an argument, their values are summed up to calculate the total score. Then the score was divided by the total number of units in the argument to avoid confounding the value with the argument's length.

To test HP2c, which concerns the length of argument, a t-test was conducted. The fact that an argument has a larger the number of units means that its length is greater.

4. Results

Table 1 shows means and standard deviations for the variables. Table 2 shows correlations among the variables. The first major hypothesis posited that Japanese people would be more likely to use indirect argument forms than the U.S. people. To test the hypothesis, two sub-hypotheses were offered.

HP1a: Japanese people are more likely to use climactic macro-structure than the U.S. people in their arguments.

As a result of a *t*-test, the Japanese respondents were found to be significantly more likely to use climactic macro-structure than the U.S. respondents ($t = 7.99$, $df = 307$, $p < .001$). The mean climacticity score for the Japanese respondents was .59 ($SD = .36$), while the mean climacticity score for the U.S. sample was .27 ($SD = .25$).

HP1b: Japanese people are more likely to use horizontal macro-structure than the U.S. people in their arguments.

Chi-square analysis revealed that the difference in the use of horizontal vs. vertical

macro-structures between the Japanese and the United States was significant (χ^2 = 8.89, df = 1,

p = .003). That is, the Japanese respondents were significantly more likely to use horizontal

macro-structure (19%) than the U.S. respondents (6%). They were significantly less likely to

use vertical macro-structure (81%) than their U.S. counterparts (94%). Because the results

provided evidence to support both of the two sub-hypotheses, the major Hypothesis 1 was

answered in the affirmative.

The second major hypothesis was: Japanese people are more likely to use succinct forms

of argument than the U.S. people. To test this hypothesis, three sub-hypotheses were offered.

HP2a: Japanese people are less likely to use the serial-type micro-reasoning structures than

the U.S. people in their arguments.

As a result of Chi-square analysis, it was found that the Japanese respondents were

significantly less likely to use the serial-type micro-reasoning structures (14%) than the U.S.

counterparts (34%) (χ^2 = 17.77, df = 1, p = .001).

HP2b: Japanese people are less likely to use the compound-type micro-reasoning structures

than the U.S. people in their arguments.

As a result of a *t*-test, the Japanese respondents were found to be significantly lower in

the mean score of this indicator than the U.S. respondents (t = -3.57, df = 327, p < .001). That

is, the Japanese respondents were significantly less likely than the U.S. respondents to use the

compound-type micro-reasoning structures, with the length of argument being controlled. The

mean score for the Japanese sample was .14 (SD = .21), while the mean score for the U.S.

sample was .23 (SD = .19).

HP2c: Japanese people are likely to use a smaller number of units in their arguments than the

U.S. people.

Lastly, a *t*-test was conducted to compare the number of units used in each argument between the two groups. The results indicated that the Japanese respondents used a significantly smaller number of units in their argument than the U.S. respondents did ($t =$ -13.34, $df = 322$, $p < .001$). The mean value for the Japanese sample was 4.87 ($SD = 2.49$), while the mean value for the U.S. sample was 9.29 ($SD = 3.10$). Because the results provided evidence to support all the three sub-hypotheses, the major Hypothesis 2 was answered in the affirmative.

5. Discussion

The present study was an attempt to investigate empirically whether the two cultural groups—Japan and the Unites States—differ in the forms they use in their written arguments and specifically how they differ from each other if the two groups differ. Two dimensions along which the two cultural groups would differ were employed: the indirect-direct dimension and the elaborate-succinct dimension. Overall, evidence was provided to support the two major hypotheses posited in this study: the Japanese respondents were less likely to employ direct forms of argument than the U.S. respondents (HP1), and the Japanese respondents were less likely to use elaborate forms of argument than the U.S. counterparts (HP2). These results are generally consistent with Gudykunst and Ting-Toomey's description of the relationship between cultures and the two dimensions of communication styles: direct-indirect and elaborate-succinct. That is, people in high-context cultures like Japan are more likely than those in low-context cultures like the U.S. to employ indirect forms of argument. Also, Japanese people are more likely than people in the U.S. to use succinct forms of argument.

These findings are also consistent with Okabe's (1983) observation regarding the forms of communication and rhetoric between the Japanese and the U.S. cultures. That is, according

to Okabe's observation, the Japanese culture prefers the use of dotted, point-like and climactic structure, going immediately to the conclusion, while the U.S. culture prefers the use of problem-solving or linear anticlimactic structure, stressing the steps up to the conclusion. The findings obtained in this study are generally in line with Okabe's observation. However, if we look more closely at the results for the sub-hypotheses of this study, we will recognize that we should not overestimate the differences in argument forms between the two cultures. I discuss the findings for the sub-hypotheses.

With regard to the indirect-direct dimension (HP1), the result provided evidence to support HP1a, which concerns the Japanese preference for more climactic macro-structure as compared to the U.S. preference for more anticlimactic macro-structure. In a sense, the finding is similar to Kobayashi's (1984) finding from her cross-cultural analysis of expository texts, in which she found that Japanese students tended to use a specific-to-general pattern, while the U.S. students tended to use a general-to-specific pattern. If the statement of an individual's opinion, or the central claim, is similar to a general statement in expository texts, the respondents in the present study seem more likely to follow a specific-to-general pattern, which represents a climactic macro-structure, than the U.S. respondents.

I did find that the Japanese respondents were more likely to use horizontal macro-structure than the U.S. respondents (HP1b). 19 % of the Japanese respondents used horizontal macro-structure, while only 6% of the U.S. respondents used the structure. However, it is also true that as many as 81% of the Japanese respondents did employ vertical, or linear and reason-based, macro-structure, in which the central claim was supported by at least one reason. It means that the majority of the Japanese respondents preferred to use the vertical macro-structure. It appears that Japanese people prefer indirect argument form in comparison

to the U.S. people. However, the difference between the two cultures may not be as much as what we may tend to think.

With regard to the elaborate-succinct dimension (HP2), I did find that the Japanese respondents were likely to use more succinct forms of arguments than the U.S. respondents, which is generally consistent with what was expected. That is, if individuals prefer a problem-solving form of argument, stressing the steps up to the conclusion, they need to structure multiple reasons in elaborate manners and explain more to make a point than those who prefer the opposite, going more quickly to a conclusion. The result for HP2c, which concerns argument length, was consistent with this perspective. The results for HP2a and HP2b, which concern the use of micro-reasoning structures, are also consistent with the hypotheses. Particularly for HP2b, where I was able to test the difference in the use of the compound-type micro-reasoning structures controlling for argument length, I still found significant differences in the degree to which this type of micro-reasoning structure was used.

If we look more closely at the results, however, we will know that a considerable proportion of the Japanese respondents did employ these two types of elaborate micro-reasoning structures. For the serial-type, 14% of the Japanese respondents as compared to 34% of the U.S. respondents used this structure at least once in their argument. For the compound-type, 36% of the Japanese respondents as compared to 68% of the U.S. respondents used this structure at least once in an argument. Given the findings, it is true that I did find differences in the degree to which elaborate micro-reasoning structures were used between the two cultures, it is also true that a considerable proportion of the Japanese respondents did reason as the same elaborate manners as the U.S. counterparts did.

6. Conclusion

To conclude, this study provided empirical evidence to support cross-cultural differences in argument forms between the Japanese and the U.S. cultures along the two dimensions: the indirect-direct dimension and the elaborate-succinct dimension. Also, I made suggestions as to specifically what indicators we should look at to examine the differences along the two dimensions. The dimensions and the indicators will be applied in comparisons of argument forms in other contexts. Further, I also found some similarities in argument forms between the two cultures, and cautioned against overemphasizing cross-cultural differences, disregarding similarities that do exist.

This study contributes to the knowledge of intercultural communication. It has demonstrated that it is possible to compare specific forms of argument in a systematic manner across cultures by applying a descriptive framework (Suzuki, 2006; in press). Through the analysis, this study has clarified which claims made by past researchers regarding East-West differences in arguments are to be supported with empirical evidence. Providing people with more accurate knowledge about how differently and similarly people from different cultures make arguments will make them more prepared to cope with communication-related aspects of intercultural conflict and negotiations. People who are involved in diplomacy and business in international or intercultural settings, for example, must be skilled in making arguments so that their arguments will have persuasive appeal to their diplomatic or business partners from different cultures. Further, having accurate knowledge about their partner's arguments would greatly benefit them because it would help them understand their partner's position, avoiding some conflict.

We must acknowledge that using culture as a framework in analyzing argument practices is not without a problem. By using such categories as "East," "West," "the Japanese," and "the

U.S.," we may run the risk of over-generalizing groups of people, paying less attention to differences in values within specific groups of cultures or to people who belong to more than one cultural group. It is true, however, that past research on cross-cultural or intercultural communication has made us mindful of the fact that cultural groups often do differ in a number of respects, helping us cope with intercultural interactions in better ways. In that sense, the present study has implications for cross-cultural or intercultural communication research, providing empirical evidence regarding differences in argumentative practices between the two cultural groups.

Furthermore, this study has implications for the study of argument. The study of argument has centered on a Eurocentric model that emphasizes inductive and deductive patterns of justification (Warnick & Manusov, 2000). Despite dissatisfaction with such model by some scholars (Hinds, 1990; Johnstone, 1996; Warnick & Manusov, 2000), we have not gained much empirical evidence to support alternative models within the framework of inter- or cross-cultural communication. This study is valuable because it examined a non-Eurocentric form of argument, such as horizontal macro-structure, as a part of the study and tested how widely the form is employed in different cultures. In addition, this study demonstrated how much cultures differ in terms of other more conventional forms of argument, such as climactic-anticlimactic macro-structure and micro-reasoning structures. In these respects, the present study has contributed to the study of argument by questioning and testing the boundary conditions of a traditional model of argument.

This study is limited in the following respects. First, the issue that was presented to the respondents was a single social issue. It is possible that individuals make arguments in different manners depending on the type of issues. Second, this study looked at culture as the

only variable to explain the differences in argument forms. Suzuki (in press) found that argumentative traits and situational factors can explain the use of argument forms. To understand the mechanism in which arguments are formed, we need to take these factors together into consideration to construct a more comprehensive model that explains the use of argument forms. It will be necessary that future research will address these issues to gain further understanding of the relationship between culture and arguments.

Appendix

The preparation of the data for the analysis of this study followed the procedure used in Suzuki (2006, in press). First, each argument was divided into units of analysis or thought turns. After that, a number is assigned to each unit in an ascending order. Then, each unit is coded using a scheme. It was decided which code should be assigned to each unit, considering the its relationship to other units. The codes include: the argument's central claim or nuclear (NC) statement, a horizontally continuing (HC) clause, extending or expanding another statement to which it is connected, a vertically subordinate (VS) clause, supporting another statement by means of reasoning, and a non-relevant (NR) clause, which has no direct relevance to the argument of interest. Horizontally continuing and vertically subordinate clauses, respectively, were classified further into five subcategories. Subcategories for horizontally continuing clauses were: (-CL) for clarification, (-RE) for repetition or rephrasing, (-AD) for addition, (-CI) for circumstance, and (-QU) for qualification. Subcategories for vertically subordinate clauses were: (-GE) for generalization, (-CE) for cause and effect, (-AN) for analogy, (-DI) for discount, and (-QL) for quasi-logic (see Suzuki, 2006, in press, for details). The following are examples of coded arguments followed by descriptive notes of how the values for the five argument forms were calculated.

Examples of Coded Arguments
Argument A

unit number	argument	code & unit number it connects to
(1) I am aware that some people disagree with the view that capital punishment should be retained.		[HC-QU (2)]
(2) Depending on the evidence and circumstances, I believe capital punishment is okay.		[NC]
(3) For example, it is okay to execute a serial killer who confessed to the murder and who says that he or she wants to be executed.		[HC-CL (2)]
(4) On the other hand, it is not okay to execute a person who was convicted with insufficient evidence with no confession.		[HC-CL (2)]

Note. Argument A has (a) a horizontal macro-structure (coded as 0), because its main claim, NC, is not supported by any reason. Its (b) climacticity score is .50 = 2 (the location of the NC) / 4 (the total number of units). The argument's (c) use of the serial-type micro-reasoning structure is 0 (1 = used at least one serial-type micro-reasoning structure; 0 = used no serial-type micro-reasoning structure). The argument's (d) proportion of the compound-type micro-reasoning structure to argument length is 0 = 0 / 4. The argument's (e) length is 4 = the total number of units.

Argument B

unit number	argument	code & unit number it connects to
(1) I believe that capital punishment should be retained in our country,		[NC]
(2) although I personally do not have much experience when it comes to capital punishment.		[HC-QU (1)]
(3) There are a number of procedures and counterpart procedures that will prevent the execution of innocent individuals.		[VS-QL (4)]
(4) Therefore, it is impossible to execute an innocent person.		[VS-QL (1)]
(5) In that sense, applying capital punishment does not involve any serious risk of executing innocent people who have been falsely accused.		[HC-CL (4)]
(6) Retaining capital punishment is, indeed, not a bad idea.		[HC-CL (1)]

Note. Argument B has (a) a vertical macro-structure (coded as 1), because its main claim, NC,

is supported by at least one reason. (b) climacticity score is .17 = 1 (the location of the NC) / 6 (the total number of units). The argument's (c) use of the serial-type micro-reasoning structure is 1 (1 = used at least one serial-type micro-reasoning structure; 0 = used no serial-type micro-reasoning structure) because the NC is supported by reason (4) which is supported by reason (3). The argument's (d) proportion of the compound-type micro-reasoning structures to argument length is 0 = 0 / 4. The argument's (e) length is 6 = the total number of units.

Argument C

unit number	argument	code & unit number it connects to
(1) There is nothing as fundamental to the human condition as right to life.		[HC-CI (2)]
(2) Even criminals who committed heinous crimes have right to life.		[VS-QL (5)]
(3) Some people believe that it is dangerous to keep murderers alive,		[HC-QU (4)]
(4) But keeping people in jail for life is pretty much the same as far as safety is concerned,		[VS-QL (5)]
(5) Therefore, I think capital punishment should not be retained on any level.		[NC]

Note. Argument C has (a) a vertical macro-structure (coded as 1), because its main claim, NC, is supported by at least one reason. Its (b) climacticity score is 1.00 = 5 (the location of the NC) / 5 (the total number of units). The argument's (c) use of the serial-type micro-reasoning structure is 0 (1 = used at least one serial-type micro-reasoning structure; 0 = used no serial-type micro-reasoning structure). The argument's (d) proportion of the compound-type micro-reasoning structures to argument length is .40 = 2 (reasons (2) and (4) directly support the NC) / 5 (the total number of units). The argument's (e) length is 5 = the total number of units.

References

Auld, F., Jr., & White, A. M. (1956). Rules for dividing interviews into sentences. *Journal of Psychology, 42,* 273-281.

Becker, C. B. (1988). Reasons for lack of argumentation and debate in the Far East. In L. A. Samovar & R.E. Porter (Eds.), *Intercultural communication: A reader,* Belmont, CA:

Wadsworth Publishers.

Billig, M. (1996). *Arguing and thinking: A rhetorical approach to social psychology* (2nd ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Glenn, E. S., Witmeyer, D., & Stevenson, K. A. (1977). Cultural styles of persuasion. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 1,* 52-66.

Gudykunst, W., & Kim, Y. Y. (1992). *Communicating with strangers: An approach to intercultural communication.* 2nd ed. NY: McGraw-Hill.

Gudykunst, W. & Nishida, T. (1983). Social penetration in Japanese and American close friendships. In R. N. Bostrom (Ed.), *Communication Yearbook, 7,* Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Gudykunst, W. & Nishida, T. (1984). Individual and cultural influences on uncertainty reduction. *Communication Monographs, 51,* 23-36.

Gudykunst, W. & Nishida, T. (1986). The influence of cultural variability on perceptions of communication behavior associated with relationship terms. *Human Communication Research, 13,* 147-166.

Gudykunst, W., & Ting-Toomey, S. (1988). *Culutre and interpersonal communication.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Hall, E. T. (1976). *Beyond culture.* New York: Doubleday.

Hample, D. (1990). Future directions in argumentation research. In R. Trapp and J. Schuetz (Eds.), *Perspectives on argumentation: Essays in honor of Wayne Brockriede* (pp. 298-314). Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press.

Hinds, J. (1990). Inductive, deductive, quasi-inductive: Expository writing in Japanese, Korean, Chinese, and Thai. In U. Connor and A. M. Johns (Eds.), *Coherence in Writing: Research and pedagogical perspectives* (pp. 89-109). VA, Alexandria: TESOL.

Hofstede, G. (1980). *Culture's consequences: International differences in work-related values.*
Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Infante, D. A., & Rancer, A. S. (1982). A conceptualization and measure of argumentativeness.
Journal of Personality Assessment, 46, 72-80.

Johnstone, B. (1996). *The linguistic individual; Self-expression in language and linguistics,*
Oxford University Press, New York.

Kaplan, R. B. (1966). Cultural thought patterns in inter-cultural education. *Language and*
Learning, 16, 1-20.

Kim, M. S., Aune, K. S., Hunter, J. E., Kim, H. J., & Kim, J. S. (2001). The effect of culture
and self-construals on predispositions toward verbal communication. *Human*
Communication Research, 27, 382-408.

Klopf, D. W. (1991). Japanese communication practices: Recent comparative research.
Communication Quarterly, 39, 130-143.

Kobayashi, H. (1984). *Rhetorical patterns in English and Japanese.* Michigan: UMI
Dissertation Services.

Mizutani, O. (1981). *Japanese: The spoken language in Japanese life.* Tokyo: The Japan
Times.

Nakamura, H. (1964). *Ways of thinking of eastern peoples.* Honolulu: East-West Center Press.

Okabe, R. (1983). Cultural assumptions of east and west: Japan and the United States. In W. B.
Gudykunst (Ed.), *Intercultural communication theory: Current perspectives* (pp. 21-44).
Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Prunty, A. M., Klopf, D. W., & Ishii, S. (1990). Japanese and American tendencies to argue.
Psychological Reports, 66, 802.

Reinard, J. C. (1991). *Foundations of argument: Effective communication for critical thinking.*
    Dubuque, IA: Wm. C. Brown Publishers.

Samovar, L. A., Porter, R. E., & McDaniel, E. R. (2007). *Communicating between cultures* (6th
    ed). Belmont, CA: Thomson.

Scott, R. L. (1969). *The Speaker's Reader: Concepts in Speech-Communication.* Glenview, IL:
    Scott, Foresman.

Suzuki, S. (1990). *A cross-cultural examination of argumentativeness and verbal
    aggressiveness: Japan and the United States.* Unpublished Master's thesis, Emerson
    College.

Suzuki, S. (2006). Gender-linked differences in informal argument: Analyzing arguments in an
    online newspaper. *Women's Studies in Communication, 29,* 193-219.

Suzuki, S. (in press). *Trait and state approaches to explaining argument structures.*
    Communication Quarterly.

Warnick, B. & Manusov, V. (2000). The organization of justificatory discourse in interaction: A
    comparison within and across cultures. *Argumentation, 14,* 381-404.

Zarefsky, D. (1990). Future directions in argumentation theory and practice. In R. Trapp and J.
    Schuetz (Eds.), *Perspectives on argumentation: Essays in honor of Wayne Brockriede* (pp.
    287-297). Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press.

Table 1

Means and Standard Deviations

	Japan	the Unites States
Horizontal vs. vertical macro-structure [a]	.81 (.39)	.94 (.23)
Climactic vs. anticlimactic macro-structure[b]	.59 (.36)	.27 (.25)
Serial-type micro-reasoning structures[c]	.14 (.35)	.34 (.48)
Compound-type micro-reasoning structures[d]	.14 (.21)	.23 (.19)
Argument length[e]	4.87 (2.49)	9.29 (3.10)

Note. Standard deviations are in the parentheses. The size of the Japanese sample was 239 and that of the U.S. sample was 90. However, for climactic vs. anticlimactic macro-structure, the sample size of the Japanese sample was 220 and that of the U.S. sample was 89.

[a] This is a dichotomous variable; horizontal macro-structure was coded as 0, while vertical macro-structure was coded as 1.

[b] This signifies the relative location of the central claim, represented by the order in which the central claim appears in the argument, divided by the total number of units. Arguments that consisted of only one unit were excluded from the analysis because it was hard to decide on the climacticity of these arguments.

[c] This is a dichotomous variable. When an argument used no serial-type micro-reasoning structure, it was coded as 0. When an argument used one or more serial-type micro-reasoning structures, it was coded as 1.

[d] the proportion of the compound-type micro reasoning structures in an argument to argument length

[e] the total number of units used in each argument

Table 2

Intercorrelations

Variables	1	2	3	4	5
1. Horizontal vs. vertical macro-structure	--				
2. Climactic vs. anticlimactic macro-structure	-.14*	--			
3. Serial-type micro-reasoning structures	.21**	-.10	--		
4. Compound-type micro-reasoning structures	.35**	-.07	.15**	--	
5. Argument length	.43**	-.41**	-.39**	.29**	--

Note. $N = 329$ except for climactic vs. anticlimactic macro-structure, for which $N = 309$. Significant at $p < .01$** and $p < .05$* (two-tailed).