

## **Foreign Language Proficiency as an Asset for Japanese Graduates**

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### Abstract

The present study discusses the findings from a survey of BA students in their 3rd year or higher, as well as MA degree program students, regarding their perception of Western corporate culture and internationalisation in relation to their foreign language major. The students surveyed (n=445) belong to one of 24 different foreign language programs. Besides demographics, the respondents were asked to state their level of agreement or disagreement concerning different scenarios they might expect to encounter during their first full-time position in a corporate firm. Data analyses were conducted with SPSS. A sample of students in non- foreign language majors was used as a control group (n=112). Significant findings are discussed within the theoretical framework of Stakeholder Theory in Education. Foreign language students have a higher perception and understanding of internationalisation than non-foreign language students. A statistical analysis of internationalisation among foreign language students showed the highest correlation for the following factors: *Evaluation of English for Career*, *Status of Foreign Language*, and *Business Interest*. The findings have a practical implication for human resource managers, as they indicate which type of students have the highest theoretical potential to help a firm striving for greater internationalisation. One limitation of this study is that survey respondents are affiliated with only one university. A future tracer study could test the model to see whether students with the highest level of agreement to internationalisation really are involved after graduation in the internationalisation process of the firms they are affiliated with.

**Keywords:** human resource management, western corporate culture, internationalisation, stakeholder theory in education, status of foreign language

## Introduction

Internationalisation has reached the attention of Japanese stakeholders such as politicians, human resource (HR) managers of multinational corporations [MNCs], as well as smaller organisations, university administrators, students, and consumers. Internationalisation concerns an organisation's internal and external measurements to conduct business and trade. Stakeholder groups affect each other in terms of opportunities and actions regarding internationalisation. For example, a weak economy renders negative repercussions for society, manifesting as growing hardships for constituents, for example increasingly fragile infrastructure. Similarly, in an underperforming education sector, underachieving graduates failing to conform to market demands inflict negative consequences upon society. Such negative factors are currently compounded by a rapidly aging Japanese society, a low birth rate, a shrinking domestic market, increasing competition from foreign markets, and resistance to integration and migration (Sekiguchi, Froese, & Iguchi, 2016).

To provide a sustainable economic framework, bureaucrats are dependent on the performance of the industrial sector and educational institutions (Lilles & Rõigas, 2017). Within education, universities secure more funds via government or industry grants in a flourishing economic environment. In return, universities can provide better education, teaching, and research outputs. HR managers subsequently rely on graduates with a high potential to contribute to their organisations' internationalisation and increased profitability.

Embracing English language proficiency in human resource management (HRM) often becomes synonymous with internationalisation. However, graduates must achieve proficiency before they enter the job market. In Japan, learning techniques, teaching methods, and educational outcomes remain varied, and English language proficiency is below the international average. For example, a report shows Japan ranking 40th from 46 countries in mean total scores for listening and reading (2015 Report on Test Takers Worldwide. The TOEIC Listening and Reading Test, 2017). Japan remains a monolingual country, principally due to the homogeneous nature of society. However, some companies (e.g., Rakuten, Nippon Sheet Glass, Nissan) have promoted "Englishization" to make English the corporate language. This is longstanding accepted practice for many foreign MNCs supporting a crucial internationalisation strategy and contributing to a "modern" corporate culture. The rationale for this change, in particular for MNCs, relates to the need for a more competitive business model to address ongoing concerns (Bartlett & Ghoshal, 1989; Sekiguchi et al., 2016). For this research purpose we, therefore, consider besides internationalisation also Western corporate culture as an important depending variable. MNCs have conducted significant research into internationalisation, although a gap remains between perceptions of current students concerning internationalisation and expectations of organisations seeking their talents. Investigation is required to understand how FL majors may make significant contributions to internationalisation goals.

Academics have also addressed the need for internationalisation in the university environment (Arimoto, Cummings, Huang, & Shin, 2015). In this respect, internationalisation has other implications, depending upon whether it is applied to individual fields of study or to a university-wide curriculum and administrative structure. In the case of foreign language (FL) programs, the primary goals consist of improving language proficiency whilst developing cultural intelligence (CQ). The success of such programs in executing the latter impacts upon the level of internationalisation. However, the strong focus of previous research is upon scholars and academics, whilst largely neglecting students as stakeholders. By

considering students and identifying which factors are correlated with a positive perception of internationalisation, this study aims to fill the practical gap for HR managers. Thereby, educational solutions can contribute significantly to the debate upon Japanese internationalisation strategies and FL proficiency.

This paper addresses the following research questions:

1. What are the perceptions of FL students regarding Western corporate culture and internationalisation in comparison with their peers in non-FL majors?
2. What effect do features of FL major students and programs (study abroad experience, the status of the language, personal interest in the FL, future outlook, and perception of utility) have on the scores for Western corporate culture and internationalisation?

### Literature Review

The research review focuses on internationalisation and its chosen predictors, career choice, FL education, and Stakeholder Theory in education.

#### Internationalisation and its Chosen Predictors

Arimoto et al. (2015) detailed the changing Japanese academic profession. Various authors considered the phenomenon of “change” due to demographic factors, and a realignment of stakeholder relationships. These discussions concern a 1992 survey, repeated in 2007.<sup>1</sup> Huang (2015) points out that by 2007 more than 70% of faculty members in both national and private universities rejected the necessity for a fresh impetus to internationalise their university curriculums. Within the changing university environment, institutions have moved from catering exclusively to society’s higher echelons to achieving universal provision of higher education, stimulated by a shrinking population. Superfluous capacity ensures that applicants achieving the minimum entrance requirement can find a place. This will impact upon teaching quality due to varying levels of student readiness to embark upon higher education programs. Private universities and those in rural areas must cope with these issues sooner than National Universities and institutions with a prestigious reputation. Arimoto et al. (2015) conclude that internationalisation of Japanese university research and education-related activities has improved since 2000. However, awareness of internationalisation over the same time period has not kept pace. Arimoto et al. (2015) suggest there may be negative associations among Japanese university educators regarding internationalisation.

Academics also emphasise the need for change in the Japanese economy and point to the pressure many firms face from globalisation (Lippert & Kenichi, 2015; Lippert, 2016; Yamao & Sekiguchi, 2015). Such research provides a comprehensive overview of companies’ internationalisation strategies and resulting issues concerning staff demotivation. For Lippert and Kenichi (2015), hesitation paired with resistance to change is traceable to the *Kaisha*-company mind-set rooted in a high-context culture with unwritten rules. It therefore becomes a barrier to successfully adapting to internationalisation. Today, the *Kaisha*-mind-set, which helped Japanese growth during the 1960s and 1970s is, for Lippert (2016), often no longer appropriate. According to Lippert and Kenichi (2015), hesitation over sending employees abroad stems from inadequate FL proficiency and consequent low CQ.

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<sup>1</sup> The First International Survey of the Academic Profession in 1992, sponsored by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching in the United States and including 14 countries. Arimoto along with Futau conducted a similar survey in 2007.

To fill the practical and academic gap and consider why many firms still follow traditional routes by relying upon the local market, Yamao and Sekiguchi (2015) measured the impact on “change” and “progress” with English as an organisation’s internationalisation language. Whilst the authors assume that English-speaking employees have the potential to support internationalisation, their findings illustrated difficulties for non-Anglophonic countries, in particular Japan, in switching to English. Such development can change the power relationship within an organisation by severely affecting the authoritative hierarchy and, consequently, the *Kaisha*-mind-set. HRM practitioners and academics see this as one of the major barriers to effective Japanese internationalisation. Building on insights provided by this research, the question is raised: how can CQ skills and assets of FL graduates contribute to solve such dilemmas?

### **Career Choice**

Regarding the age factor, Humburg (2017), like Lee and Ohtake (2014), investigates career choice using the BIG 5 characteristics. He argued that assessing behavioural characteristics of 14 year-olds permits comparison with the subsequent choice of subject studied, as personality has yet to be influenced by pursuing a particular field of study, for example through either peer pressure or stricter adherence to stereotypes. Therefore age, as an influencing factor that shapes undergraduates’ perceptions of corporate culture and internationalisation, is considered as they advance in the curriculum and age is included as a control variable.

Schaar, Selke, Ang, & Ogasa (2015) investigated career choice, and a tracer study examined career paths of FL graduates in a Malaysian-German BA program. The survey questioned curriculum improvement and established that graduates sought additional courses with “real life” relevance (e.g., business aspects). The possibility exists to conceptually develop the study by including “business as personal interest in language” as an indicator for career success, or at this stage, as a marker for greater aptitude for internationalisation. The tracer study also revealed that lifelong learning and in particular further studies in Master or MBA, which are providing additional international flair and knowledge for the learners, have a positive impact on income and career development.

### **Foreign Language Education**

In the *English Education Reform Plan Corresponding to Globalization* (MEXT, 2013), Japanese policy makers outlined steps for improving English as a FL education program in the public school system. This was a galvanized response to globalisation and indicates policy makers’ underlying assumption that English and FL proficiency contribute to economic development. Japan remaining a monolingual society questions past measures aimed at improving English proficiency, such as the Japan Exchange and Teaching program. The *English Education Reform Plan* is not immune to criticism (e.g., Kobayashi, 2013), discussion of low English proficiency relating to Japanese economic performance from 1970 to 2012. A key organisational concern is that Japanese graduates are becoming less inclined to work overseas. Many Japanese companies seek foreign talent that can help them cope with globalisation challenges. However, Japanese graduate FL skills are not readily utilised and are not viewed as an asset. This approach, which ignores FL skills as a career enhancer and includes a male gender bias for managerial promotion, is ultimately detrimental. Female employees with high FL proficiency experience find difficulty in achieving appropriate peer

recognition, (Kobayashi, 2013). Therefore, Kobayashi's paper is highly relevant to the research project as female students achieve higher FL grades.<sup>2</sup>

Scholars have called for analyses of English education within a broader framework of policy, politics and ideology (Kobayashi, 2013; Morizumi, 2016). To establish a balance between progressive and conservative thinking among policy makers, Morizumi (2016) notes that improving English proficiency is paired with the affirmation of Japanese identity in English education. However, for Kobayashi (2013), recent efforts in expanding English education are too late. Such Japanese academic opinions concerning language education highlights the problematic Japanese mind-set regarding English.

The literature also indicates mounting pressure upon previously important foreign languages in Japan. Schöningh (2015) discussed the shift in language policy and interest in Japan for German, traditionally the second most-studied FL in terms of numbers after English. Other studies support this pessimistic analysis and demand a modernized curriculum, (which corresponds with students' aspirations in Schaar's et al. (2015) findings). For example, Chinese has become more prominent, and some companies established special training programs within their headquarters (Nakamura, 2016). Therefore, it is relevant to include FL status within this study, and to raise the question: does a role remain for shrinking foreign languages in the changing Japanese university environment?

### **Stakeholder Theory in Education**

Stakeholder Theory has received, since its introduction by Freeman in 1984, more attention (Freeman, 1984; Freeman, Harrison, & Wicks, 2010). One of the main misunderstandings with this theory is often its mixing up with corporate social responsibility due to its aversive concept against shareholders' wealth maximization. The theory explains that an organisation's success and survivability depends upon its capability to satisfy both its economic and non-economic objectives. Therefore, the concept is applicable in the university performance context. A university which does not serve the needs of society fails to succeed in its reason for being in business. Upon implementation of the *National University Incorporation Law* in 2004, Japanese national universities, which were formerly government controlled, became "national university corporations". A primary legislative goal was to make universities more responsive to society's needs in an increasingly competitive and globalised age. Understandably, stakeholder management plays a crucial role in the operation of higher education institutions, as multiple stakeholder groups and their attendant aspirations require close monitoring, plus inclusion in decision making processes (e.g., curriculum design, evaluation, and internationalisation). The extent to which implementation of stakeholder management has been successful remains underexplored. Woolgar (2007) investigated university-industry linkages after the 2004 law. He measured how industry generated income varied depending upon university staff competency. One finding was that universities often failed to provide graduates with industry required skills, despite this being a legislative driving rationale. The phenomenon of changing expectations within higher education, and sometimes the failure of institutions to meet such expectations, is not peculiar to Japan. In many countries, universities previously under government control are facing mounting pressure due to a growing awareness of stakeholder management and expectations of greater commitment to people and society (Mampaey & Huisman, 2015). Murasawa's

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<sup>2</sup> Tollefson (2016) discusses the language policy direction for Japan in another direction, i.e. foreign workers in the care and health sectors. It could be investigated how Japanese foreign language graduates benefit from the presence of such foreign language speakers, (e.g., Tagalog and Bahasa Indonesia) in internal internationalization.

(2015) analysis of academic professions reaches similar conclusions concerning stakeholder responsibility. With decreased governmental oversight, universities attempt to accomplish effective staff evaluation, partially by setting individual Key Performance Indices. Hammond (2016) suggests that pressure on higher education staff is rooted in the effort to remain internationally competitive in response to economic globalisation, which is linked back to Stakeholder Theory. For Murasawa (2015), the absence of significant results is not surprising when analysing the impact of evaluation on research input, such as grants, and output, such as publications and patents, and on teaching orientation. The incorporation of national universities and its consequences for university management exhibits parallels to tensions between eastern and western work culture in some Japanese companies. For example, age-based remuneration may be favoured over western pay-by-merit, and perceived as a better incentive. Similarly, notions of responsibility in Japanese firms often differ from western standards (Takahashi, 2004; Todeschini, 2011). These findings relate to the present research, as they indicate further risk of conflict within internationalisation.

### **Western corporate culture**

Organisational corporate culture serves to maintain integrity within company subsidiaries. In a 1968 study, repeated in 1972, Hofstede, G., Hofstede, G., & Minkov (2010) explore differences in national cultures and consequent divergent views upon management in 72 countries within one MNC (IBM). Such differences are predicated upon deeply-rooted values and traditions of respective cultures. Managers' and employees' values shape their expectations of how companies should be managed and how relationships between individual members should be defined. Fukuyama, (1996) and Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2012) further developed cultural diversity by demonstrating that Japanese HRM practices are fundamentally different to those of companies originating or operating in North American and European cultures (Kopp, 1994). For example, they claim that organisations with rigid hierarchies survive best under stable conditions. In turbulent times, as Japan is currently experiencing, organisations with flat hierarchies cope more effectively. They believe that failure to address causes of counterproductive trends before their effects appear can prove detrimental to organisations and their entrenched cultures. Western corporate culture is fundamentally different from that in Japan. Based upon required HRM practice change illustrated above, acceptance of Western corporate culture was measured as an indicator of students' potential to support internationalisation. However, the feasibility of alternative approaches is acknowledged, for example measuring willingness to adopt Chinese corporate culture, with its heavy governmental and political influence as an indicator of potential to contribute to internationalisation.

### **Internationalisation**

No common definition of internationalisation exists. Dülfer and Jöstingmeier (2008) define it as the process of export, licensing or overseas direct investment. Perlitz (2004) considers internationalisation as a phenomenon encompassing various aspects of commercial enterprise such as products, customers, and employees. Within Japanese HRM, both internal and external internationalisation are demarcated. Yoshihara (2005) describes internal internationalisation as foreign employee involvement in headquarters decision making. Alternatively, external internationalisation concerns all aspects of MNCs operating overseas, which is achieved through either localisation, such as employing host country nationals to manage Japanese MNC subsidiaries, or globalisation, providing fair and equal promotional opportunities regardless of nationality. Both strategies achieve greater internationalisation by either increasing local responsiveness or promoting global integration (Bartlett & Ghoshal, 1989). In this study the term is used to refer to both internal and external internationalisation.

### Status of a foreign language

Languages are normally grouped by measuring either the number of native speakers or the economic strength of the countries where they are spoken. Linguists divide languages into broad categories: “growing” and “shrinking” or “big” and “small” (Ammon, 2015; Swann de, 2001). In this study, languages are categorised as either “growing” or “shrinking” according to the number of current native speakers. Growing languages include English, Arabic, Chinese, Spanish, Bahasa Indonesia, Hindi, and Farsi, and shrinking languages include German, French, and Danish.

Based upon impediments discussed above, raised issues, previous findings, and gaps in the research, the following hypotheses are developed:

**H1a:** Japanese FL major students are more likely to accept Western corporate culture than their peers in non-FL majors.

**H1b:** Japanese FL major students are more likely to accept tasks and efforts related to internationalisation than their peers in non-FL majors.

**H2a:** Factors related to features of the FL (overseas study experience, language status, personal interest in FL, future outlook, and perception of utility) have a positive correlation with scores of readiness for Western corporate culture.

**H2b:** Factors related to features of the FL (overseas study experience, language status, personal interest in FL, future outlook, and perception of utility) have a positive correlation with scores of readiness for internationalisation.

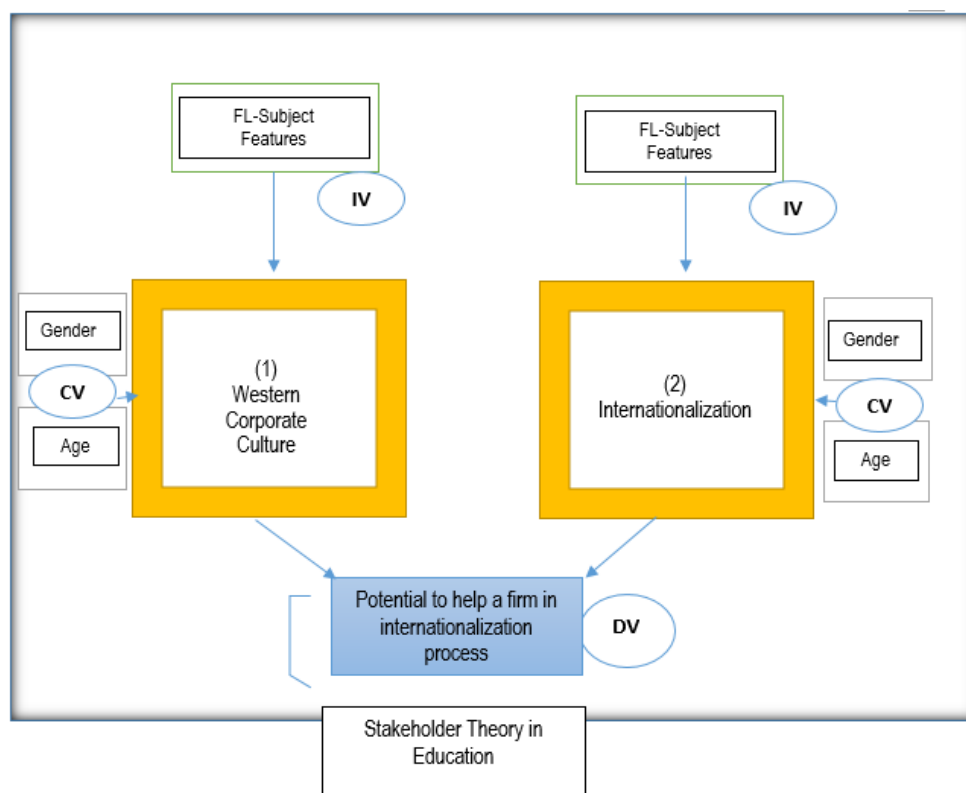


Figure 1: Theoretical Framework

*Independent Variables (IV):* (1) personal interest in FL major, (2) overseas study, (3) future outlook, and (4) perception of the utility of English/FL

*Control Variables (CV):* (1) Gender, (2) Age

*Dependent Variables (DV):* (1) Western corporate culture, (2) Internationalisation



## Methodology

The selected target population were undergraduate students from Osaka University in the 3rd, 4th, or higher years (as well as several MA students). The sampling was made from all students by individual approach in public places like the library, canteen, waiting lounge and by asking co-academics to distribute the questionnaire before or after class. The School of Foreign Studies at Minō campus (headed by the Graduate School of Language and Culture) offers BA programmes in 24 FLs to approximately 3,000 students.<sup>3</sup> Osaka University School of Foreign Studies offers the most comprehensive Japanese FL programme after Tokyo University of Foreign Studies.

To understand attitudes towards Western corporate culture and internationalisation, a previously tested questionnaire was adopted and modified for use in the Japanese context. Herstatt et al. (2007) developed a tool to measure the potential for international marketing in small and medium sized German companies. Their questionnaires target managers and employees. Part 1 issues were chosen to measure the socio-cultural gap within companies. The questions in the original questionnaire described typical scenarios within the concept of Western corporate culture such as directness of addressing issues to superiors. As Japanese adoption of Western corporate culture presents a potential conflict due to clashes with Japanese traditional management styles on several fronts, many of the topics used were applicable to the research questions. Responses to Part 2 are important indicators regarding internationalisation. The questions in the original questionnaire were very similar and meant to measure the capability of a firm to adopt to international assignments. Both were amended and extended, and the 1 to 5 point Likert Scale was extended to 9 points to permit greater variance. Responses were translated from German into Japanese and back by two separate individuals. The anonymous questionnaire was in three parts: (I) demographics, including respondents' expectations of FL future requirements (Q1–Q9); (II) items regarding Western corporate culture (Q10.1–Q10.7) internationalisation (Q11.1–Q11.11); (III) general items regarding job seeking strategies (Q12–Q21). The questionnaire included a concluding qualitative statement which respondents were to complete, “*I study my foreign language major because . . .*” Respondents could also provide their contact detail for consideration as participants in a further research focus group. The same procedure was applied in the non-FL major control group questionnaire.

In the first stage of analyses we gathered demographic data, followed by a comparison of foreign language versus non-foreign language students' perception towards Western corporate culture (Model 1, Table 2) and internationalisation (Model 2, Table 2). In the second analyses we then compared FL students' perception towards Western corporate culture and internationalisation according to the status of the FL (Table 3). The variables of interest were: overseas study, business interest, status of FL, English for career, gender, and age. Finally we conducted a qualitative analysis and did a frequency count on field of interest in the studied FL (Table 4) to support our possible findings and recommendations.

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<sup>3</sup> FLs offered are English, Arabic, Bahasa Indonesia, Farsi, Urdu, Swahili, Hindi, Chinese Mandarin, Burmese, German, French, Spanish, Hungarian, Italian, Portuguese, Danish, Swedish, Russian, Korean, Thai, Vietnamese, Mongolian, Tagalog, and Turkish.

### Data Analyses

Data were collected at Minō and Toyonaka campuses of Osaka University in July 2016 with assistance from Japanese and foreign academic staff, plus supporting students who received compensation. The response rate was over 90% both for FL major respondents (n=445) and the control group of non-FL major respondents (n=112).

Table 1: Foreign Language Major, (+) growing (-) shrinking, responses for all 24 FL majors in total number and percentage (n=557), with control group of non-FL majors (n=112)

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
English (+)	51	9.2	9.2	
Arabic (+)	14	2.5	2.5	11.7
Bahasa Indonesia (+)	15	2.7	2.7	14.4
Farsi (+)	22	3.9	3.9	18.3
Urdu (+)	14	2.5	2.5	20.8
Swahili (+)	9	1.6	1.6	22.4
Hindi (+)	16	2.9	2.9	25.3
Chinese (+)	20	3.6	3.6	28.9
Burmese (-)	27	4.8	4.8	33.8
German (-)	42	7.5	7.5	41.3
French (-)	6	1.1	1.1	42.4
Spanish (+)	32	5.7	5.7	48.1
Hungarian (-)	10	1.8	1.8	49.9
Italian (-)	22	3.9	3.9	53.9
Portuguese (+)	3	.5	.5	54.4
Danish (-)	10	1.8	1.8	56.2
Swedish (-)	15	2.7	2.7	58.9
Russian (-)	17	3.1	3.1	61.9
Korean (-)	12	2.2	2.2	64.1
Thai (-)	11	2.0	2.0	66.1
Vietnamese (-)	18	3.2	3.2	69.3
Mongolian (-)	18	3.2	3.2	72.5
Tagalog (-)	19	3.4	3.4	75.9
Turkish (-)	22	3.9	3.9	79.9
Non- FL Major	112	20.1	20.1	100.0
Total	557	100.0	100.0	

Cronbach's Alpha (CA) tests for datasets dealing with Western corporate culture (Q10.1 - 10.7) and internationalisation (Q11.1 - Q11.11) were .790 and .847, respectively. One item targeting internationalisation, Q11.9, was removed as it was negatively correlated or near zero with other Q11 components; this improved CA to .888.

### Test of Hypotheses 1a and 1b

Testing Hypotheses 1a and 1b, *t*-tests was performed on the means for Western corporate culture and internationalisation for FL majors and non-FL majors, shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Means Comparison between FL Majors and Non-FL majors

Major	Model 1 (Q10)		Model 2 (Q11)	
	N	Mean (S.D.)	N	Mean (S.D.)
FL majors	442	41.97 (7.96)	441	60.79 (12.79)
Non-majors	112	41.76 (8.37)	104	50.88 (13.82)
<i>t</i> -scores		.241		7.00***

\* $p < 0.10$ ; \*\* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.01$

For comparison of means of perception of Western corporate culture, there is no significant statistical difference between FL majors and non-FL majors. FL majors do not score on average significantly higher on issues in Q10 (Western corporate culture) and the *t*-test (.241) fails to reject the null hypothesis. However, the mean for FL majors is almost ten points higher for Q11 (internationalisation), and the difference is statistically significant ( $t=7.00$ ). With regard to Q11, Q11.2 was not distributed to non-majors (in addition to Q11.9) as it pertained exclusively to language utilisation. This test confirms support for Hypothesis 1b; Japanese FL major students are more likely to accept tasks and efforts related to internationalisation than their peers in non-FL majors. However, the test does not support Hypothesis 1a; Japanese FL major students are more likely to accept Western corporate culture than their peers in non-FL majors.

### Test of Hypotheses 2a and 2b

To test Hypotheses 2a and 2b, an OLS regression was performed for FL major students using the dependent variables Q10 (Western corporate culture) and Q11 (internationalisation), plus independent variables Overseas Study, Business Interest, Status of FL, and Utility of English for Career. As control variables, Age and Gender were used as in Table 3.

Table 3: OLS Regression of Q10 & Q11 on the Independent Variables

Independent Variables	Model 1 (Q10)	Model 2 (Q11)
	Unstandardized/Standardized Coeff. (St Error)	
Overseas Study	-.013 / -.001 (.82)	2.972 / .107 (1.21)**
Business Interest	2.805 / .161 (.79)***	6.596 / .231 (1.17)***
Status of FL	-1.558 / -.092 (.76)**	-2.597 / -.094 (1.12)**
English for Career	1.475 / .223 (.30)***	4.254 / .392 (.44)***
Gender	-1.803 / -.105 (.78)**	-2.811 / -.099 (1.16)**
Age	1.556 / .227 (.33)***	1.916 / .170 (.49)***
Constant	31.66 (3.08)	32.565 (4.58)
<i>F</i>	13.72***	32.76***
Pearson's <i>R</i>	.400	.559
<i>R</i> Squared	.160	.313
Adjusted <i>R</i> Squared	.148	.303

\* $p < 0.10$ ; \*\* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.01$

The regression models in Table 3 indicate convincing results. Test of Hypothesis 2a is represented by Model 1, the regression of acceptance of Western Corporate Culture (Q10) into independent variables. The model is statistically significant ( $F=13.72$ ) with a strong positive correlation of .400. All independent variables are statistically significant at least at the 5% level except for Overseas Study, a dichotomous variable (0=no, 1=yes). The coefficients for Business Interest and Utility of English for Career (the perception that English is important for career development) are both positive, which indicates that the more highly held beliefs resulted in higher acceptance of Western Corporate Culture. Status of Foreign Language (coded as 1=shrinking, 2=growing) has a negative coefficient, which results in those studying shrinking languages scoring higher on acceptance of Western Corporate Culture.

Of the two demographic variables, Age and Gender (coded as 1=male, 2=female), Age performs as expected, with older students more readily accepting Western Corporate Culture. For Gender, coding orientation and the negative coefficient indicates that male respondents more readily accept Western Corporate Culture.

For Model 2, Hypothesis 2b was tested with a regression of acceptance of Internationalisation on the same independent variables. The model is also statistically significant ( $F=32.76$ ) with a strong, positive correlation of .559. Unlike Model 1, Overseas Study is statistically significant, and all independent variables are statistically significant at least at the 5% level.

The coefficients for Business Interest and Utility of English for Career are both positive, which indicates that respondents with higher scores will also do so on acceptance of Western Corporate Culture. Status of Foreign Language has a negative coefficient, signifying that students studying shrinking languages score higher on Internationalisation. The demographic variables have matching sign coefficients to Model 1, leading to corresponding interpretations for Model 2: male students score higher on acceptance of Internationalisation, as do older students.

The last analysis was regarding interest in the studied language. The qualitative results were twice re-coded and show that fields of interest are generally more focused on utilization of FL skills in the business world outside academia (Table 4).

Table 4: Q20 “I study my foreign language because . . .”

Re-code 1		Re-code 2	
Key words	Counted numbers	Key words	Counted numbers
personal interest	70	culture	99
intercultural interest	68	personal interest	89
career	38	career	79
communication	25	knowledge	40
degree	22	language	40
knowledge	21	communication	23
opportunities	14	education	22
geopolitics	14	study and research	20
business	9	business	17
language	9	linguistics	7
linguistic	2	history	7
art/culture	3	international relations	4
		literature	3
		job hunting	3
		work	2
		arts	2
		politics, economy	2
		music, graduation,	1 each
		grammar, UN, hobby,	
		travel, translation,	
		globalisation, fun	

### Discussion of Findings

Responses have been provided to the two questions formulated in the literature review: (1) how can the CQ skills and assets of FL graduates contribute to internationalisation?; (2) does a role remain for shrinking foreign languages in the changing Japanese university environment? Research findings associated with questions and hypotheses are detailed below.

#### The Importance of the Studied Subject (RQ1)

The analyses (Table 2) indicate significant difference in the perception and understanding of internationalisation between two groups of respondents, i.e. FL majors (n=445) and non-FL majors (n=112). As indicated above, internationalisation is often considered synonymous with English biased foreign language proficiency in relatively monolingual Japan. The findings illustrate the relationship between FL proficiency and the potential to support an organisation in achieving internationalisation, (H1b was supported). These findings suggest that organisations may benefit from language and CQ assets offered by FL graduates. The successful comparison of the two student groups makes the discussion of other findings meaningful. Contrary to expectations, the results for perception of Western corporate culture were not significant and thus H1a was not supported.

The unequivocal consensus that English is key to future careers supports the current research debate surrounding Japanese university English language education from the perspective of ELF and global business education (Terauchi & Araki, 2016).

### **Features of Foreign Languages (RQ2)**

The regression models for Western Corporate Culture and Internationalisation are significant (Table 3). Only a minor difference between the two with respect to overseas study. The initial objective was to test whether the changing status of FL has an impact on either of these variables. It was established that students of shrinking languages score higher on acceptance of Western Corporate Culture and Internationalisation (H2a and H2b). Students of growing languages may consider it less important to exhibit flexibility, as many are from “privileged” languages and principally focus on their studied language. Shrinking language learners may inherit a more flexible and pragmatic approach to challenging circumstances due to either a shrinking population or an increasing dominance of English.

Respondents may also consider the economic strength of the locations in which their FL is spoken when responding to questions concerning their potential future career. Countries such as Germany and Italy, with a higher GDP than all Arabic countries, offer improved financial security and a stable economy in which students can rely on a fair market with law and order. Students having completed study abroad time in those Western countries may have a better positive opinion. In addition, potentially improved trade with richer countries may induce a superficial sense of security and make internationalisation less attractive. Further to Nakamura’s (2016) description of Chinese and Russian FL training programs in Japanese companies, it can be added that FL speakers possess the requisite CQ in addition to linguistic proficiency.

Students ranking business of significant interest within the FL curriculum also have higher age and overseas study experience, (control variables), and therefore greater acceptance of internationalisation. Future implications suggest that increased emphasis should be placed on business-related courses within FL curricula. If appropriate, the established English for Special Purposes approach could be modified for other FLs. In Japan, Western European languages, such as German or French, were held in high esteem, and their status only declined over the last 15 years as English, Chinese and Korean gained popularity. The focus upon learning German, for example, is under mounting pressure both from competing languages and students’ subliminal disinclination to study traditional and less admired subjects (e.g., literature and linguistics) (Table 4). In considering keywords extracted from the questionnaire qualitative question, it becomes apparent that career and personal interest are among the main drivers motivating students’ choice of foreign language major. In post-hoc e-mail discussion with respondents who had expressed interest in participating in a focus group, the meaning of their statements was queried, although only two responses were received.

The former Head of the Tokyo, Goethe-Institut Language Section requested consideration to reinvigorate the attractiveness that initially drew students to these languages, (Schöningh, 2015). However, FLs such as Chinese and Spanish may simply adjust their curriculums due to a weaker focus on one particular field because of the relatively short time during which these languages have experienced growing interest. This has resulted in a less developed network of subject experts and less powerful organisations that favour traditional language teaching, such as the grammar translation method which remains common in Japan.

Overseas study features of the foreign language programs and significantly impacts upon acceptance scores for internationalisation. Understandably, Japanese students who have studied abroad have gained greater exposure to environments away from home. However, Japan is experiencing a reverse trend whereby less able students are willing to study overseas,

which has a consequent negative impact upon the internationalisation of Japanese companies. As Kobayashi (2013) and Lippert and Kenichi (2015) indicate, Japanese corporations hire more foreign graduates and experts as their Japanese counterparts are less amenable to accept burdensome foreign assignments. There is a consequent future risk that fewer ambitious and foreign trained Japanese graduates will be available to support organisations' internationalisation processes.

### **Recommendations and Implications**

From the findings and literature review we can see that in theory Japanese foreign language students have a good understanding of internationalisation and possess a high potential to give firms aiming for expanding business abroad more strength. The Japanese economy needs such fresh spirit to maintain competitiveness. In a broader context, university boards of other Asian countries can learn from this paper that it is advisable to increase and strengthening international exchange programs. The findings deliver new arguments to negotiate for more funds and scholarship initiatives for students willing to study abroad. Another aspect of general application is the future strategy should become the possible inauguration of new foreign language programs versus maintaining those of erroneous, less, or shrinking importance. Internationalisation is still probably best learnt in fully developed market economies with less constraints by political or religious turmoil. Hence, countries like Denmark, Germany or France are still valid players in the global economy.

Regarding the academic gap, issues concerning changes in university operational processes are mentioned above (Mampaey & Huisman, 2015). As Japanese universities are now compelled to focus on key stakeholders needs, including students and labour markets, the findings can assist decision makers to improve their university's role society by updating FL curricula to meet society's changing needs.

### **Limitations**

Samples consisted of respondents from a single university, and respondents' answers are self-proclaimed. Another possible limitation concerns social pressure respondents felt to rate certain items as important or to appear open to internationalisation. For example, due to pervasive rhetoric within government policy, university mission statements espouse commitment to such ideals. In addition, respondents may have grouped the FL status according the economic strength of the locations rather than the number of native speakers. Conducting a similar survey, including additional universities with foreign language majors in order to achieve a larger sample, is an option that would test and validate the model. Most importantly, a tracer study of FL graduates should reveal if the model is consistent with the reality of Japanese professional life.

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