



Challenges of adapting to organizational culture: Internationalization through inclusive leadership and mutuality

Soyhan Egitim

Faculty of Human Life Design, Toyo University, Japan

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Diversity
Inclusive
Internationalization
International faculty
Japanese university
Leadership
Organizational culture

ABSTRACT

Many universities in Japan have expanded their international faculty as part of their internationalization efforts. However, little is known about how the reform-driven expansion has influenced organizational culture and leadership practices. The present narrative case study aims to offer insights into international faculty members' personal accounts of their adaptation challenges and proposes ways to enhance their integration. Narrative interviews were held with eight international English teachers from a non-English department of a Japanese university. The interview questions were informed by Burke and Litwin's (1992) Casual Model of Organizational Performance and Change (see Fig. 1). Creswell and Creswell's (2013) six-step method was used for the qualitative data analysis. The findings suggested the hierarchical organizational culture remained uninfluenced despite the faculty expansion. This was attributed to uncertainty avoidance to maintain harmony and ensure a smooth operation. Therefore, leadership practices were also focused on standardization of teaching and course design through micromanagement practices. The participant accounts indicated that exclusive leadership along with the existing hierarchy resulted in isolation. However, the feeling of isolation was perceived both positively and negatively. Finally, through the participants' self-reflection, lack of linguistic and intercultural competency appeared to be a hindrance to their integration. Thus, it may be necessary to focus on inclusive leadership and intercultural competence building to accomplish mutuality for the successful integration of international faculty members and create new avenues for the leadership to harness diversity.

In the face of the rapidly changing global economic environment, the increasing need to integrate geographically dispersed knowledge in organizations has become a pressing need (Kitagawa & Oba, 2010). These global trends have also impacted the way higher education institutions operate. Universities from around the world have ramped up their internationalization efforts (Bowles & Murphy, 2020; Soler, 2019; Wahlers, 2018). In 2014, the Japanese Ministry of Education, Sports, Science, and Technology also announced its internationalization reform plans in response to the changing global trends. One of the objectives of the reforms was to emphasize English communication through English Medium Instruction (EMI) programs across Japanese universities (Ota, 2018). Following the 2014 reforms, universities have focused on expanding their international faculty as part of their internationalization efforts to remain globally competitive. The internationalization of the working environment has brought new challenges as faculty and personnel are forced to manage differences and unpredictability in increasingly diverse work and classroom environments (Egitim, 2021b).

The aim of this study is to explore the adaptation challenges of international faculty members from a non-English department at a

Japanese university. At the time of this study, the department had thirteen international faculty members, none of whom was hired on a permanent basis. The teachers were responsible for teaching content-based English language courses and performing research in their respective fields.

As the department's internationalization process continued, the differences in language and culture appear to have created challenges for the diversifying working environment. Since the international faculty members were from Western cultural backgrounds where individual needs and goals were prioritized over the group (Comfort & Franklin, 2014), the new hierarchical working environment with an emphasis on group's needs and goals have posed adaptation challenges (Aubrey et al., 2015; Inaba, 2020; Sugimura, 2020). In this regard, the researcher determined that personal experiences of the international faculty could shed light on the challenges with their integration and offer a future direction for research. Therefore, the study sought to answer the research questions of,

E-mail addresses: soyhanegitim@gmail.com, soyhan@toyo.jp.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssaho.2021.100242>

Received 20 October 2021; Received in revised form 8 December 2021; Accepted 8 December 2021

Available online 4 January 2022

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1. How do international faculty members perceive and make sense of the organizational culture and leadership practices in a non-English department at a Japanese university?
2. How do international faculty members make sense of their own role in their integration into the hierarchical working culture?

The research questions were informed by the Burke-Litwin Casual Model of Organizational Performance and Change (CMOPC) to analyze how the internationalization efforts influenced the existing organizational culture and leadership practices (1992) and determine the potential issues arising from the reform-driven international faculty expansion. Upon the analysis, the researcher proposed an action plan to accelerate the integration of the international faculty and create new avenues to harness diversity.

1. Literature review

1.1. Organizational culture change

The fundamental reason behind an organization's existence is to maintain stability and growth for longevity (Burke, 2017). This vision nurtures an organizational culture that determines the way people act and behave. However, the emphasis on long-term continuity is in contrast with the highly unpredictable and discontinuous external environment. In other words, prolonged cumulative change and risk avoidance indicate that the organization does not respond to the demands of the external environment. Hence, real issues remain unaddressed (Burke, 2017; Weick, 2012; Weick & Quinn, 1999). The resistance to change also accounts for Japanese universities' gradual decline in global rankings. According to the data released in the recent rankings, Japanese universities lagged behind some of their Asian counterparts from China, Korea, and Singapore (Sawa, 2019). Yonezawa (2019) argued that Japanese universities' dependence on the national language and culture for administration, research, and education accounts for their current positions in the global rankings. Yonezawa (2019) also blamed the traditional employment model for hindering universities' internationalization efforts as it forces students to make inward-oriented employment choices and hence, treat English as an academic subject rather than an effective tool for global communication (Egitim, 2020).

Given that advances in knowledge and technology perpetually drive innovation and reshape the external environment, the need for continuous adaptation to the external environment is self-evident. Weick (2012) described organizations as "organized impermanence" to highlight the necessity for continuous adaptation and change or else, resistance to change could put organizations at the risk of failure (p. 3).

However, when a large-scale change happens, its impact is significant on organizational culture and leadership practices. From a Japanese perspective, organizational resistance to change eliminates potential uncertainties and risks associated with change and hence, harmony is maintained. Harmony is a deep-rooted cultural concept in Japanese society (Sugimura, 2020) and the unpredictable nature of large-scale change has the potential to disrupt unity and conformity. Thus, internationalization creates a major conundrum for organizations in Japan.

1.2. Organizational culture of Japanese universities

Despite adopting United States-originated civics education, it's still possible to observe the characteristics of deep-rooted Confucianism in the Japanese higher education system (Paramore, 2016). Confucian norms emphasize power distance between superiors and subordinates. Management is based on a single authority where decisions are made at the top and then communicated through a chain of command (Bebenroth & Kanai, 2010; Inaba, 2020). The aim of this approach is to prevent the distraction of employees and ensure that harmony is maintained. Le

Ha (2013) argued that national cultural identity was also influential on the organizational culture of Japanese academic institutions.

Japanese cultural identity is constructed by certain conventional values such as collectivism and conformity (Sugimura, 2020). Collectivism refers to the idea of valuing the group's interests over individuals. Thus, maintaining collective values remains a key contextual component of traditional Japanese organizational structure and continues to impact daily operations. Conformity remains a highly significant component of collectivism as individual group members are committed to sacrificing themselves for group success (Sugimura, 2020). This group dynamic promotes hierarchy with the aim of managing organizational operations without distraction. However, with the mounting pressure and demand to respond to the changes in the external environment, universities in Japan found themselves in a complex situation. On the one hand, there is increasing pressure for internationalization, but on the other hand, universities maintain their commitment to traditional methods that align with their organizational culture (Inaba, 2020; Rose & McKinley, 2017; Sugimura, 2020).

1.3. Internationalization of Japanese universities

The internationalization of higher education remains as the main objective of universities from around the world. The notion of internationalization refers to incorporating "international, intercultural, and global" elements into the purpose, functions, or delivery of tertiary education (Rose & McKinley, 2017, p. 113). Internationalization, which is referred to as *kokusaiika* in Japanese, has remained the main focus of the Japanese government since 1982 (Rose & McKinley, 2017). The increasingly complex global environment with constant pressure and demand for global competitiveness and excellence has placed further pressure on higher education institutions to step up their internationalization efforts.

The internationalization of higher education within the Japanese context is associated with the promotion of the English language (Inaba, 2020). High English competence is viewed as the gateway to knowledge and innovation and thus, the public tends to view English education as the nation's best chance of remaining competitive both regionally and globally (Inaba, 2020). The success of the European internationalization model based on EMI was also a major influence on the Japanese universities' internationalization efforts. In 2009, the Global 30 project was launched with the aim of "increasing the number of international students from 124,000 to 300,000 by 2020" (Rose & McKinley, 2017, p. 115). This was followed by the Go Global Japan Project in 2012, aiming to develop global human resources by fostering globally competent Japanese students with excellent English language skills. In 2014, the Japanese Ministry of Education, Sports, Science, and Technology also announced their English education reform with a focus on promoting globalized education in universities with further initiatives for those 30 selected universities to create new faculties and programs based on EMI and establish an educational environment on par with global standards (Inaba, 2020; Rose & McKinley, 2017). As a result, Japanese universities also expanded their international faculty to help accomplish these objectives (Huang, 2018).

Despite the significance of the English language for Japanese universities' internationalization efforts, its impact on organizational culture and management has remained somewhat limited. This limitation is particularly evident in non-English departments where both the faculty and students prioritize courses directly related to students' majors to equip them for their future employment. Since the traditional Japanese employment model is inwardly focused, the importance of English communication skills is further downgraded in non-English departments (Inaba, 2020; Yonezawa, 2019). As a result, students from those departments may view English as another hurdle to overcome along the way.

According to Sato (2020), meetings and administrative procedures are largely handled in Japanese in non-English departments. In addition,

standardizing curricula and course design brings further restrictions for international faculty. Given international faculty members are generally from Western educational backgrounds, these limitations may be viewed as contradictory with the increasing diversity in universities. When these limitations are paired with a lack of adaptability on the part of the international faculty, they may experience stress, anxiety, and perhaps feeling of exclusion during their integration process (Comfort & Franklin, 2014).

2. Methods

2.1. Research method

The present research employed the narrative case study approach to understand the participants' experiences through their personal stories and how they made meaning of those narratives within the same environmental context. Case studies offer the perspective to understand the context and the process in context, yet it does not provide the tools to describe the experiences of individuals (Sunday et al., 2020). Hence, adding the narrative element to the present study provided thick descriptions through the participants' personal accounts, and helped understand the implicit meaning attached to their experiences, thoughts, and feelings within a particular context (Wang & Geale, 2015).

2.2. Participants

Narrative case studies require deep and insightful reflection of participants' personal accounts so that researchers can obtain thick descriptions of human experiences (Pringle et al., 2011; Sunday et al., 2020). Eight was determined to be an appropriate sample size to emphasize the deeper meaning and sensemaking through individual accounts. The participants were introduced to the researcher by a colleague who worked with them in the same department. The researcher was informed of the university's internationalization efforts and the adaptation challenges of the international faculty, yet never heard any direct personal account prior to this study. These conditions along with the ongoing global pandemic led the researcher to use the purposive sampling technique as the participants had the potential to offer rich data on the phenomenon. Both male and female participants were interviewed. At the time of this study, none of the participants were tenured, yet all of them held either a master's or a doctorate degree in an English language education-related field (Table 1).

Table 1
Participant profiles

NAME	GENDER	AGE	NATIONALITY	EDUCATION	Major	Position	Japanese Ability
Dan	Male	50's	USA	MA	TESOL	Associate Professor	Basic
Sean	Male	40's	Australia	Ed.D.	Education	Associate Professor	High Intermediate
Blake	Male	50's	New Zealand	MA	Linguistics	Full-time Lecturer	Basic
Glen	Male	50's	Canada	MA	Linguistics	Full-time Lecturer	Basic
Trevor	Male	50's	USA	MA	Linguistics	Full-time Lecturer	Low Intermediate
Tom	Male	60's	England	MA	Linguistics	Full-time Lecturer	Basic
Mick	Male	40's	Canada	Ed.D.	Education	Associate Professor	Low Intermediate
Darla	Female	50's	England	Ph.D.	TESOL	Associate Professor	Low Intermediate

Note. The data regarding study participants' names, gender, age, nationality, educational background, faculty positions were gathered through several introductory interview questions.

2.3. Data collection and instrument

Narrative interviews were held with each participant on the online video conferencing platform called Zoom due to the global pandemic. Each interview lasted approximately an hour. The interviews followed a semi-structured protocol based on open-ended questions. These interview questions allowed the participants to elaborate on their experiences, perceptions, and personal stories (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). In addition, prompts and follow-up questions were used to enrich the dialogical exchanges. Each interview lasted approximately 1 h, and only one interview was held with each participant. The interviews were held in English, and the researcher took notes of repeating patterns for data analysis. The interview questions were informed by the CMOPC (Burke & Litwin, 1992). The CMOPC framework was designed to demonstrate the key dimensions to successful organizational change and how they should align together causally to achieve a change in performance (French et al., 2021). In this regard, the application of the CMOPC framework was helpful to identify the causal relationship between organizational culture, change, and employee performance. Gaining a deeper insight into the causal link between these dimensions led to the proposed leadership practices that have the potential to provide a new framework for the internationalization process. The questions focused on eliciting deep and meaningful responses regarding the organizational culture and leadership practices in relation to internationalization efforts. The participants were also allowed to reflect on their own role in their integration and shared suggestions to promote an inclusive working environment (see Fig. 1).

2.4. Protocol

Prior to the interviews, the participants were asked to sign a consent form. All the risks and benefits of participating in the study were explained to the participants. The interviews were recorded via Zoom's recording function. To ensure anonymity, the participants were referred to with their pseudonyms during the interviews and throughout this paper.

2.5. Analysis

The interviews were recorded, transcribed, coded, analyzed, and reviewed by the researcher first, and then each transcript was sent to their respective participant to verify their accuracy. The transcripts were read and coded at both an individual level and a level of comparison. The researcher used the six-step data analysis method by Creswell and Creswell (2013), which consists of familiarization, coding, generating

themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and recording. The interview data was analyzed and interpreted based on Burke and Litwin's (1992) CMOPC. The model emphasizes organizations' dependence on their external environment and the way the external environment influences organizations' internal dynamics. When an organization brings large-scale change due to external circumstances, a number of internal factors may influence the change process. Thus, the CMOPC model provided a framework to interpret the interactions of the internal parts and their influence on the change process triggered by the external environment (Fig. 1).

3. Findings

The six-step analysis revealed three emergent themes from the data. The emergent themes centered around the organizational culture of the department, the leadership practices, and the participants' revelations through self-reflection. The results pointed to the importance of mutuality and inclusive leadership to address the social and sentimental needs of the participants so that not only successful integration could be achieved but also, the leadership could better utilize diversity.

3.1. Organizational culture of the department

The participants ($N = 8$) were asked to elaborate on their perception of the organizational culture in the department. The participants used words such as "power distance," "hierarchy," and "harmony" in their responses. It was suggested that decisions were made by the committee, yet none of the participants had any knowledge of how decisions were made since the international faculty was held exempt from the

department and faculty meetings.

Both Sean and Blake noted that they were scheduled to teach classes during the meeting hours. Once Sean attended a meeting during the school break only to be told that he was exempt and there was no need to attend any more meetings. According to Sean:

One day I decided to attend one of the meetings during the semester break to see how the meetings were held. I was told that I did not need to join meetings to maintain fairness to other international faculty members who did not have sufficient Japanese language skills to participate in the meetings.

Several participants also confirmed that the meetings were held in Japanese due to the faculty members' inability or unwillingness to hold meetings in English. Some participants also emphasized that there was "no merit" to attending the department meetings due to the language barrier. Both Blake and Glen noted that they were content not attending the meetings due to their lack of Japanese language ability. Since the international faculty was not part of the meetings, decisions were announced to them later by email. Several participants noted that general email announcements were also made in the Japanese language, and therefore, sometimes emails were overlooked by the international faculty members. Darla noted, "Since I receive more than a few Japanese emails everyday, there is a good chance I might sometimes miss important updates." Mick elaborated on one of his experiences:

I once missed an email about my contract extension. Luckily, I got a phone call from the office and managed to sign and submit my contract before the deadline. It's not that my contract wouldn't be

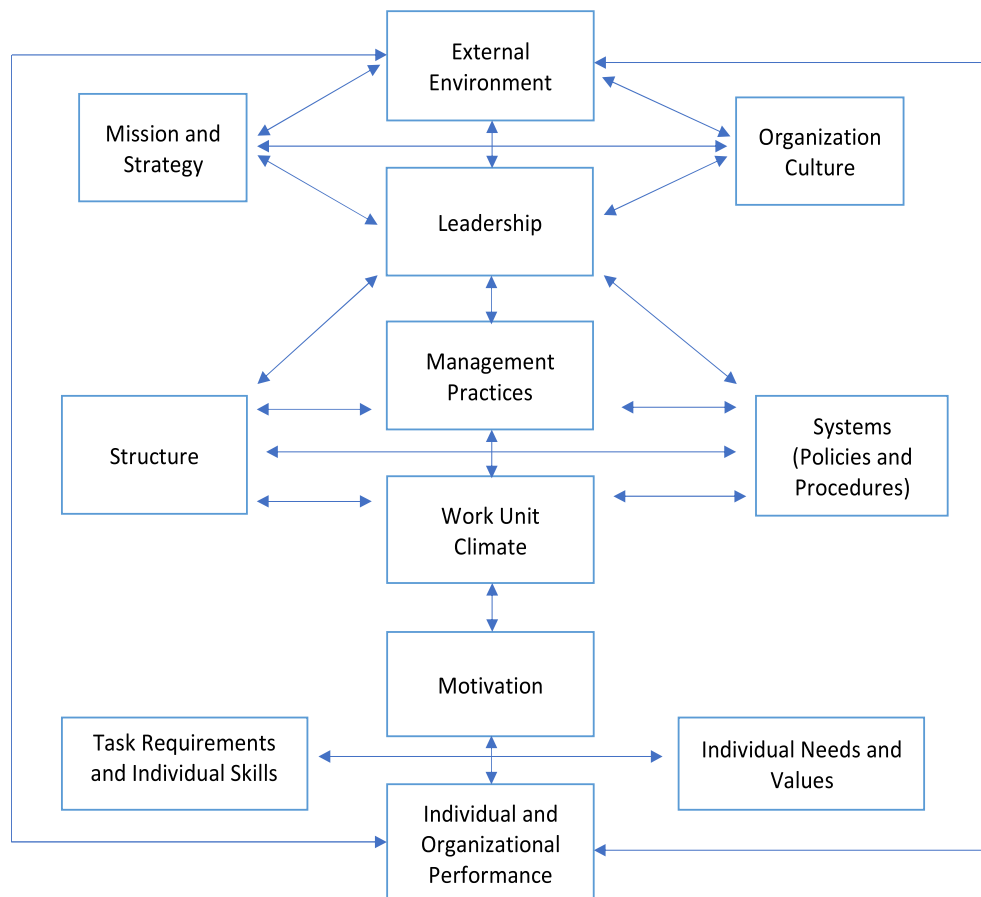


Fig. 1. The Burke-Litwin Causal Model of Organizational Performance and Change

Note. The interview questions were informed by the CMOPC (Burke & Litwin, 1992). The model was also employed as a conceptual framework during the researcher's interpretation of the emergent themes.

renewed or anything. I was just sorry that it created extra work for the office.

Glen, Blake, and Tom mentioned that they never checked their university email accounts due to their inability to read Japanese. However, they all noted that the office would eventually call them when there was an important update. Not being able to attend meetings and read emails placed extra stress on some of the participants and led to a feeling of exclusion during the global pandemic. The feeling of isolation was felt by many academics who were forced to teach classes online. However, Sean offered a bleaker picture saying there was a “complete lack of communication” between the teachers in the department. Since they were exempt from both department and faculty meetings, he had only received updates by email. Sean noted, “During the first few months of the pandemic, I felt like I didn’t belong to the organization despite being a full-time employee. No one contacted me to check how I was doing and if everything was okay with my classes.” Darla also attributed her own isolation to power-distance resulting from the hierarchical organizational structure which she felt became more evident during the pandemic.

3.2. Leadership practices

When the participants were asked about their perception of the leadership in the department, “top-down,” “exclusive,” and “hierarchical” were the words mentioned. Trevor emphasized “lack of opportunities” to express his perspective of the way operations are handled in the department. He noted that his input was never sought on textbook selections and class syllabus design despite being a teacher with the necessary credentials and experience. Trevor attributed this to the hierarchical system of the organization, where decisions were made under a single authority. Darla believed that the “exclusive” leadership practices were to maintain power and the status quo. Sean offered a different perspective and noted that, “The leadership’s main goal is to maintain harmony and ensure smooth operations which they believe is only possible through the hierarchical structure.”

Blake, Glen, and Tom emphasized that they were content with the current leadership style and the hierarchical structure of the organization. Blake said, “I am on the bottom of the hierarchy. So no one bugs me as long as I input my syllabus, teach my classes, and turn in my grades.” Tom also noted, “I feel really comfortable working in this environment. I don’t want to be a part of long intermittent meetings at which I have no idea what they are talking about.” Since these three teachers didn’t have sufficient Japanese language skills, they perceived the notion of exclusion as a positive phenomenon.

On the other hand, Mike mentioned that international faculty is mostly hired on a short-term basis with the aim of promoting globalization. Since they are not around long enough to build rapport with the tenured faculty, which is also hindered by the language barrier, opportunities to build meaningful relationships have become limited. Dan noted that the tenured faculty’s perception of the international faculty as temporary employees was likely to affect their motivation to “build deep and meaningful relationships” with them. As a result, leadership grew unresponsive to the needs and expectations of the international faculty.

The term “micromanagement” was also mentioned by several participants. Course syllabi, course objectives, grading schemes, textbook lists, and class management were regulated under the English program. However, none of the participants had a definitive answer to how those decisions were made. Sean mentioned that he was asked to select a coursebook from a list of coursebooks. When he asked one of the tenured faculty members whether he could use another textbook from outside

the list, his request was rejected.

Several participants also noted that they were asked to copy “prescribed Japanese sentences” into their course syllabi. Tom said, “I found myself in a bit of an awkward situation when I was asked to copy Japanese sentences that I didn’t understand to my syllabi.” Several participants also highlighted following a prescribed grading scheme as the most difficult aspect of their teaching. Darla found the grading scheme limiting, while Sean described it as the result of the department’s efforts to standardize the English language classes and make it easier to test students’ knowledge. Sean also noted that tests for some classes were also standardized by the department and the teachers were expected to focus on helping students achieve good scores on those tests.

The participants also noted that their input was not sought during syllabus design, grading schemes, and textbook lists. Trevor mentioned that the department’s focus on standardization was contradictory to the university’s internationalization efforts. Mick’s view was also supportive of Trevor’s. He emphasized the department’s resistance to change and noted, “There is no doubt surface-level diversity is achieved in the department yet if you dig deeper, you will start to see things are still done in the same way.” (Fig. 2).

3.3. Revelations through self-reflection

When the participants were asked to reflect on their role in their integration, several of them admitted they lacked sufficient Japanese language ability and, thus, intercultural understanding. Glen noted he was aware of his lack of Japanese language skills and the resulting challenges it created with his integration into the working environment. However, he also emphasized the difficulty of studying the language while working full-time and making a living. Darla reflected on her own struggles and noted that lack of Japanese language proficiency inhibited her involvement in projects. She said, “If I was fluent in Japanese, I would have less stress working here for sure.”

Mick, on the other hand, argued that the internationalization of universities should be reflected in the correspondence with the office referring to the dominance of the Japanese language in emails and regularly required forms in Japanese. Sean, who speaks high intermediate level Japanese, offered a different perspective on the same issue. Sean noted:

Japanese language ability is key to establishing rapport with the administrative staff and faculty personnel. Speaking the language certainly created opportunities for me to voice my opinions and concerns about classes. I never had any problems communicating with the office staff and got assistance with Japanese documents whenever I needed.

When the participants were asked to reflect on an imaginary situation where a person from a non-English speaking country working in the UK, Canada, or the US without English language proficiency, the consensus was that it would be nearly impossible to gain any deep-level intercultural understanding without the knowledge of the local language which in this case is the English language, therefore, the majority of the participants in this study admitted that lack of language proficiency was to be blamed for their compromised intercultural understanding and thus, their general sense of exclusion. Sean noted, “There are fundamental differences between Japanese and Western working environments. One needs to gain a profound understanding of *honne* (true feeling) and *tatemae* (façade) as well as *keigo* (formal Japanese) in order to fit in with the group and work in harmony.” (Fig. 3).

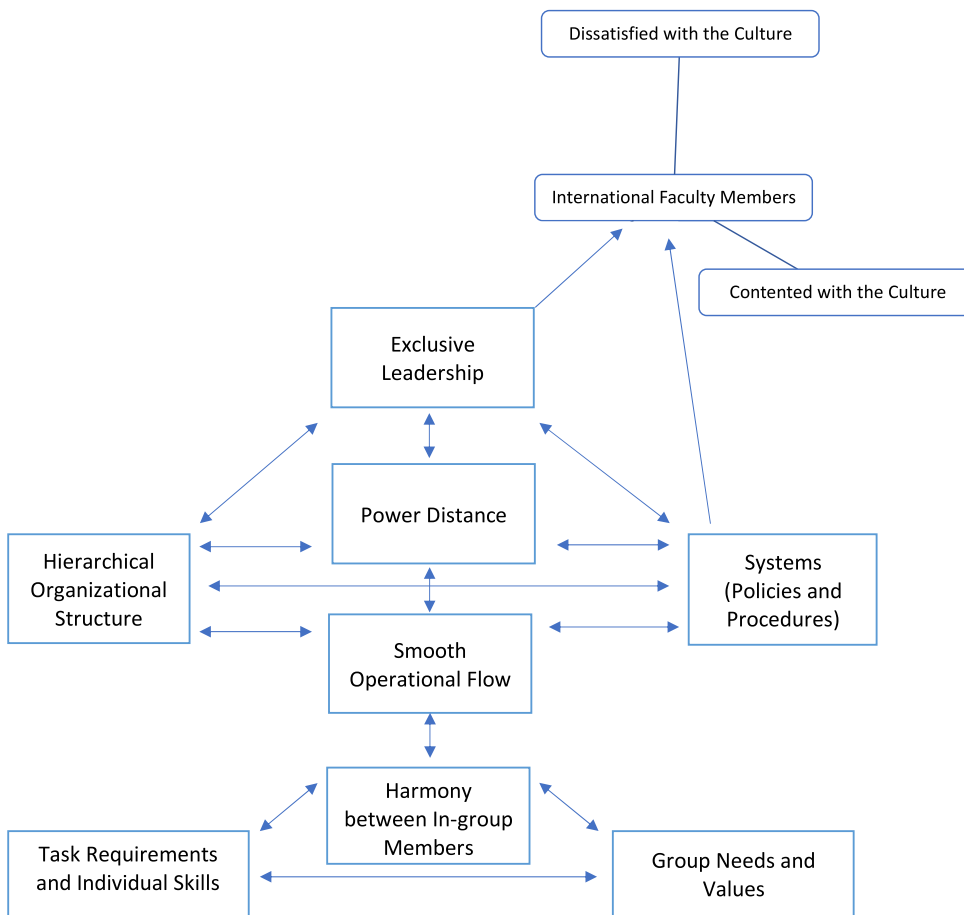


Fig. 2. Leadership, Organizational Culture, and In-group-Out-group Dynamics
Note. The figure was developed based on the CMOPC model (see Fig. 1) and intends to describe the internal dynamics of the organization, how they interact with each other, and the way international faculty members fit in with all these interconnected and interdependent parts of the system. The arrows represent the interaction flow between different parts of the system.

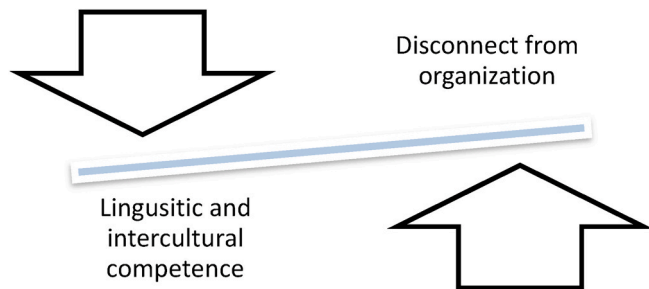


Fig. 3. Linguistic and Intercultural Competence versus Disconnect
Note. The figure shows the counterbalance between linguistic and intercultural competence and disconnect from the organization through the participants' self-reflection.

4. Discussion

While organizational culture based on hierarchy and power-distance helps maintain harmony and ensures a smooth operation, it may result in the negligence of social and sentimental needs and expectations of individuals. This perception was questioned by the participants who prioritized individualistic values of autonomy and self-direction, and disapproved the standardization stemmed from the hierarchical decisions. Pitlik and Rode (2017) identified non-obedience and independence as the two critical features of individualism and emphasized the disconnect between these values and hierarchical organizational structure.

Conversely, several other participants were content with the feeling

of exclusion as it seemed to have eliminated the additional stress and pressure intercultural interactions would otherwise create. These contrasting views among the international faculty members were particularly notable. In this regard, Komisarof's (2021) study on belonging suggested that exclusion may sometimes be treated as a positive phenomenon by the members of minority groups as, "People may satisfy their belonging needs through constructive forms of marginality" (p. 3).

The change avoidance was evident through the frequent use of Japanese in administrative procedures, international faculty's exemption from faculty and department meetings due to the language barrier, the emphasis on standardization of all teaching procedures, and the zero tolerance policy for individual preferences. In the case of this department, it is likely that the change avoidance was due to the unpredictability and instability associated with large-scale change which would threaten the existing harmony and smooth flow of operations.

Conversely, it is also possible that the leadership in the department might have hired the international faculty members with compromised Japanese language proficiency and intercultural understanding to demonstrate inclusive leadership practices. This approach can be viewed as a positive first step, yet leadership would need to focus on addressing social and sentimental needs of individuals through inclusive practices if they are to harness diversity.

Adapting inclusive leadership practices requires a significant paradigm change in one's leadership identity. The leader needs to look inward and engage in regular self-reflection. As a result, they can develop the habit of thinking beyond the limits of the underlying values, beliefs, and assumptions about leadership (Egitim, 2021a). Such deep reflection can help leaders develop a perspective to view issues through the lens of others. Understanding the challenges of the international faculty is the first step towards nurturing a more inclusive organizational culture.

The second step is to create a culture of collaboration by giving the international faculty members more power and responsibility. Since the international faculty members are responsible for teaching many of the English language courses, they have a direct impact on lesson quality, student satisfaction, and the university's success as an organization. Thus, recognizing them as leaders in their own field of expertise and providing them with psychological safety would not only help with their integration but also empower them as active contributors to the university's future endeavors.

In addition, forming a more culturally diverse committee with a focus on creating communication channels could help reduce the language barrier. Effective internal communication can lead to stronger internal relationships and hence, greater productivity and team performance (French et al., 2021; Kotter & Cohen, 2012). When the international faculty members recognize that they are provided with opportunities to offer their input on operations and voice their needs and concerns, they are likely to be more committed to the organizational values and objectives as the internal values fostered through individualism would be satisfied (Pitlik & Rode, 2017).

If the goal is to build solidarity and collaboration, intercultural adaptability has to be mutual. As several participants indicated, it is virtually impossible to gain any deep-level intercultural understanding without adequate Japanese language proficiency. In this regard, it would be beneficial to encourage international faculty members to take Japanese language courses and intercultural competence-building workshops through a university-led initiative. Enhanced Japanese language ability and intercultural understanding can accelerate their adaptation, lead to improvements in teaching performances, and hence, opportunities to build rapport with the tenured faculty, administrative personnel, and students.

4.1. Limitations

Due to the qualitative nature of this study, the findings are not meant to be generalized to a larger population. Instead, these findings are aimed to raise awareness of the potential challenges leadership in Japanese universities could face during their transformation into global institutions. One of the limitations of this study was that the data lacked the perspective of the tenured faculty members who were in leadership roles in the same department. Hence, it is possible that some of the participant accounts may be biased due to their position. A future study that brings in the leadership's perspective could offer valuable insights into other issues that the participants were not aware of in the department. In addition, little is known about how the adjunct Japanese faculty perceive their own belonging in the department despite being equipped with the necessary cultural and linguistic knowledge. Therefore, knowing the perspectives of adjunct Japanese faculty could provide valuable comparative data. Due to its narrow scope, the study did not investigate the link between motivation and the feeling of exclusion in this context. However, the findings showed that the feeling of exclusion was interpreted both positively and negatively. Hence, a future study could offer valuable clues on how international faculty members' motivation is affected by their perception of belonging at their respective academic institutions.

5. Conclusion

Individuals operate at their best when their sentimental and social needs are addressed. However, when individual needs contradict the working culture, dissatisfaction or the feeling of isolation may arise. This is how some of the international faculty members felt about working in the department. However, the immediate resolution does not appear to be initiating a large-scale organizational change to fulfill the government's ambitious internationalization reform plans, but instead, the leadership taking a more inclusive approach and promoting mutuality for adaptation efforts. Every individual, especially if they are expert in

their field, has the potential to offer invaluable knowledge as long as their voices are heard. International faculty members that are engaged and included have the potential to give the organization the much-desired opportunity to harness the talent and expertise brought by diversity and help them advance in a rapidly changing global environment. However, this is a mutual endeavor, and thus, the international faculty members need to reflect on their own role in their adaptation and assume more responsibility to enhance their cultural and linguistic awareness.

CRedit authorship contribution statement

Soyhan Egitim: thus, no other contributor needs to be, credit for any of the work done for this research study..

Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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