

Multifaceted Effects of Language, Culture, and Organizational Support on Asian Expatriate Cross-Cultural Adjustments

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Abstract

This study explores interrelationships among three constructs (language, culture, and organizational support) and their consequent associations with expatriates' adjustments to overseas assignments. The study builds on and extends prior research in two ways: (a) identifying the relative and interactive influence of the three constructs and (b) examining whether these constructs apply to Asian expatriates. Three hundred and thirty-one expatriates from five Asian countries answered the online questionnaires. A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) test, a post hoc test, and Pearson's Correlation Coefficients were employed to examine differences and relationships. The results of the MANOVA test reveal significant differences among the five groups. Post hoc tests further examined the between-group differences and the results show significant differences between the Japanese and the other four groups in all aspects of language proficiency, cultural competence, and organizational support. Moreover, the Pearson's Correlation Coefficients indicate both language proficiency and organizational support correlate strongly with expatriates' overseas work adjustments, while cultural competence correlates only weakly.

Introduction

Expatriate adjustment theory (Aycan, 1997; Black, 1988; Feldman & Thomas, 1992) has determined and described expatriate adjustment to a host country as a multifaceted process (Peltokorpi, 2007, 2008, 2010). Past research on expatriate adjustment has focused primarily on examining the relationships between expatriate adjustments and the identified predictors, such as language, culture, or organizational support. Language and culture are two important lenses through which to view expatriate adaptation to new cultures. Of factors that are likely to affect expatriate adjustment, culture received the most attention. Much of this research has confirmed that culture has an intervening influence on message encoding and decoding between interlocutors. Cultural theorists suggest that a shared common language or lingua franca may not guarantee error-free understanding of mutual communication because cultural values manifest through communication styles and tend to act as barriers when decoding explicit and implicit messages (Henderson, 2005). While the past three decades of research on expatriate adjustment have led to thorough and insightful theories regarding the impact of culture and intercultural competence on Western-focused expatriate adjustment, little research has specifically examined issues of the adjustment for Asian expatriates (see Du-Babcock & Xu, 2011; Xu & Du-Babcock, 2012).

Emerging literature has addressed the importance of language in expatriate adjustment. The separation of language from culture has enabled researchers to demonstrate the strong, consistent influence of language on a wide range of issues in MNCs, such as intercultural communication (Peltokorpi, 2007), social identity (Lauring, 2008), and power and language policy decisions (Tanaka, 2008; Vaara, Tienari, Piekkari, & Sääntti, 2005; Louhiala-Sahuinen, Charles, & Kankaanranta, 2005). Although the importance of language

has been acknowledged in intercultural business communication (see, for example, Babcock & Du-Babcock, 2001; Du-Babcock & Babcock, 1996, 2007a; Du-Babcock, 2007b), it has been “weakly integrated in intercultural business communication” and cross-cultural competence literature (Peltokorpi, 2010, p. 178).

Among three variables identified as determining factors that are likely to affect expatriate adjustments (language, culture, and organizational support), organizational support received relatively little attention from researchers until a decade ago. Early research examining the effects of organizational support has focused primarily on cross-cultural adjustment and training (Aycan, 1997; Black & Mendenhall, 1990; Caligiuri, Phillips, Lazarova, & Bürgi, 2001), social support from host country employees (Shaffer, Harrison, & Gilley, 1999), and logistical support from multinationals (Aycan, 1997; Black & Gregersen, 1991). Studies by Takeuchi, Wang, Marinova, and Yao (2009) and by van der Heijden, van Engen and Paauwe (2009) stress the effects of perceived organizational support (POS) on expatriate performance by suggesting that this aspect remains relatively under-researched within the cross-cultural context and that the findings are inconclusive. Although research on perceived organizational support (POS) has laid a foundation for highlighting its importance in facilitating expatriate adjustment, little research has examined the POS effect from a communication perspective. To fill this research gap, the present study examines how organizational support from headquarters and host country national (HCN) personnel facilitates overseas adjustment of Asian expatriates.

The term of *organizational support* in the present study defines from three aspects consisting of: (1) institutionalizing a language policy for English as a corporate language, (2) corporate language and cross-cultural training, and (3) information communication technology (ICT) that enhances the communication with headquarters (HQ) and between subsidiary companies. Feely and Harzing (2003) suggest that language barriers trigger negative consequences to foreign market expansion, the headquarters-subsidiary relationship, and staffing policies. Therefore, to enhance the communication and coordination of multinational corporations, systematic efforts need to be made to deal with the complexity of language problems, such as adopting a corporate language, and providing language training (Andersen & Rasmussen, 2004; Marschan-Piekkari et al., 1999).

The importance of corporate training before and/or after departure has shown an impact on the success of expatriates in overseas assignments. Shen and Darby (2006) examined the effect of Chinese multinationals' training practices and found that Chinese multinational firms provided limited training for expatriates and, consequently, that cross-cultural training had only a moderately significant impact on Chinese expatriates' adjustment (see also Gao, 2008). The findings of these studies have been inconclusive, suggesting that more empirical research is needed to examine the relationship between organizational support via corporate training practices and on expatriate adjustment experiences during overseas assignments.

Differences in culture, communication styles, and language have been identified as factors that are likely to affect expatriate adjustment (e.g., Dowling & Welch, 2004; Peltokorpi, 2010; Welch, Welch, & Piekkari, 2005), but little scholarly research has addressed the impact of perceived organizational support (POS) (Bhaskar-Shrinivas, Harrison, Shaffer & Luk, 2005; Kawai & Strange, 2014) and even less has examined POS from the perspective of Asian multinational corporations. To help fill the gap, the present study looks at the combined effects of three identified factors - language, culture, and perceived organizational support - among expatriates from five Asian countries. It is hoped that the present study can be useful for both researchers and practitioners in two ways. First, the results of this quantitative study answer the research enquiry as to whether differences exist between the identified

factors (e.g., language, culture, and organizational support). Second, while there has been relatively extensive academic interest in Western expatriates' cross-cultural adjustment in the Asia-Pacific region (e.g. Du-Babcock, 2000; Huang, Chi, & Lawler, 2005; Peltokorpi & Froese 2009, 2012; Selmer, 2005, 2006a, 2006b; Wan & Takeuchi 2007), more empirical evidence is needed to examine Asian expatriates' adjustment processes in a Western context. With the rise of Asian economic superpowers in the global business arena, Asian-based MNCs now send large numbers of expatriates to their overseas business units. The present study, which draws on 331 Asian expatriates from five Asian countries, should enrich our understanding of the interactive effects and importance of language, culture, and organizational support for communication in facilitating Asian MNC expatriates' successful adaptation to their international assignments.

In sum, the purposes of the present study are: (1) to determine whether there are differences among expatriates from five Asian countries in their perceived overseas work adjustments, and its relationship to the language, culture and organizational support, and (2) to examine the effects of language proficiency, culture competence, and organizational support during overseas adjustment periods for Asian expatriates.

Review of Literature

In the present study, three factors that have been identified as likely to affect expatriate adjustments are discussed. These three identified factors are language, culture, and perceived organizational supports (POS). In this study, organizational support for communication takes the forms of an established corporate language (English) working environment policy, corporate training (language and culture) for expatriate employees and local employees, and information communication technology (ICT). The review of the POS literature focuses on the effects of corporate language policy, corporate training, and the importance of information communication technology on enhancing communication efficacy between company headquarters and expatriates.

Language Factors

Studies have increasingly recognized host language competence as an important factor facilitating expatriate adaptation (Caligiuri & Lazarova, 2002; Graf, 2004; Selmer, 2006a; Xia & Feng, 2009). Research addressing the importance of corporate language as part of expatriate preparations has examined how language ability benefits expatriate adjustment in an environment that is culturally and socially different. Chi and Yeh's (2006) study examining Taiwanese expatriates' adjustment in the U.S. found that English-language proficiency was one of the key determining factors in expatriate adjustment. In related expatriate research, language proficiency is found to have an influence on cross-cultural adjustment (Peltokorpi, 2008; Selmer, 2006a; Xu & Du-Babcock, 2012), job satisfaction (Parker & McEvoy, 1993), and intentions to complete expatriate assignments (Shaffer, Harrison, & Gilley, 1999). Selmer (2006a) examined the relationship between Chinese language ability and adjustment among Western business expatriates assigned to China. A study by Marschan-Piekkari et al. (1999) also reflects on the importance of language competence in the expatriates' role and states that "In the host country, the expatriates become the interface, through language, between headquarters and the local subsidiary" (p. 386). All of these studies suggest that expatriates should make an effort to enhance language competence, with priority given to either the host country language or English, in order to perform at a satisfactory level in their overseas assignments (Selmer, 2006a; Xia & Feng, 2009).

Given that western expatriates lack competency in Asian languages (with the exception of younger individuals who are now studying Asian languages in increasing numbers) and Asians are likely to possess intermediate English competency, communication may well take place in English as English is

the *lingua franca* of the business world (Crystal, 2003; Chew, 2009). Companies are increasingly choosing English as their corporate language in a multiple-language environment (Nickerson, 2005). For example, Chinese MNC Lenovo chose English as its corporate working language after it purchased the PC unit of IBM. Uniqlo announced English as its official corporate language in 2012. Although a common corporate language may mask a wide range of continuing language problems (Marshcan-Piekkari et al., 1999), English will probably continue to be the primary option as a corporate language for Chinese or other Asian multinationals for the future, due to the serious shortage of employees who can speak foreign languages other than English (Xia & Feng, 2009).

Cultural Factors

Expatriates need to make cultural adaptations where there is cultural distance between expatriates' home country culture and host country culture. Wider cultural distance may impede and complicate interpersonal relations between expatriates and host country nationals (HCNs) (Johanson & Vahlne, 1977). Expatriates may encounter serious challenges in understanding the implicit or explicit cultural behaviors of local personnel. Such difficulties inhibit effective organizational communications and would eventually impede the job performance of expatriates. Cultural distance makes it challenging for expatriates to develop social ties with (HCNs) and consequently, influence expatriate's networks in foreign subsidiary (e.g., Toh & Denisi, 2007). Studies also have confirmed that expatriates who develop close relationships with HCNs are generally better adjusted and more productive (Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985; Selmer, 2006b), that the interactions with HCNs facilitate expatriate adjustment, and that social contacts and exchanges can also be linked to successful foreign assignments (Aycan, 1997; Caligiuri, 2000).

Two studies examined how cultures (national and corporate) affect the success of expatriate adjustment from the Chinese perspective. Cao (2008) studied how culture influences the post-merger performance of a China-based multinational corporation and addressed the role of the national and organizational cultures of the expatriates from the acquired firms in the shaping of organizational communication behaviors in Chinese mergers and acquisitions. The results suggest that organizational culture prevails over national culture in affecting marketing information communication behavior under a centralized cross-cultural integration strategy; whereas, national culture prevails over organizational culture in affecting marketing information communication behavior under a decentralized cross-cultural integration strategy. Xu (2010) observed that a lack of intercultural communication competence affects information processing within the organization, causes misunderstanding, and even leads to conflicts between headquarters and subsidiaries.

Perceived Organizational Support (POS) and Expatriate Adjustment

Organizational support refers to the support received from headquarters/a parent company, from HCNs personnel at work, and from the local community as seen in the daily interactions of expatriates outside of work. The general thrust of the past research is that home country organizational support can have an impact on the overseas adjustment and job effectiveness. In addition to organizational support from the home country organization, host country organizational support in the domains of work, human interaction, and general living conditions is also critical to the success of expatriate adjustment (Black & Gregersen, 1991). The success of the host country organizational support lies in the extent to which expatriates are comfortable with living in their host country (Black & Gregersen, 1991), or the degree of fit between the expatriate manager and his or her environment (Aycan, 1997). Studies examined the relationships between effective adjustment and the interactions between expatriates and HCNs (Black et al., 1999; Kraimer et al., 2001; Shaffer & Harrison, 2001) suggest that HCNs may assist in expatriates' adjustment in a host country (see also, Olsen & Martins, 2009). In contrast, Toh and DeNisi's (2007) study reveal that other relevant factors (e.g., institutional ethnocentrism) may

affect the willingness of an HCN to provide support to expatriate and thereby hinder expatriate adjustment (see also Johnson, Lenartowicz, & Apud (2006).

In sum, organizational support can act to facilitate or hinder expatriate adjustment and job effectiveness. The review of the literature reveals that organizational support may increase expatriates' desire to remain in an organization and improve their job performance (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002), and that expatriates with a high POS are likely to feel that their work is appreciated and acknowledged. The findings also show that the higher the POS from the home and host organization, the better expatriates' overseas adjustment. However, the inconclusiveness of the findings suggests that organizational support may be a facilitating factor that is helpful but not absolutely necessary, and can be seen as negative if headquarters interaction is seen as controlling or intrusive rather than helpful and supportive. In the present research study, organizational support is defined by aspects of corporate language (English) working environment policy, corporate training, and information communication technology. In the next section I will review the relevant literature relating to these three aspects.

Corporate Language (English) Working Environment Policy

Studies by Maclean (2006) and Luo and Shenkar (2006) suggested the strategic importance of corporate language policy in multinationals. Feely and Harzing (2003) pointed out that language barriers can pose negative consequences to foreign market expansion and may weaken the headquarters-subsidiary relationship. To enhance the communication efficacy, multinational corporations should make systematic efforts to institutionalize corporate language policy and provide language training (Andersen & Rasmussen, 2004; Marschan-Piekkari, Welch, & Welch, 1999).

When MNCs institutionalize corporate language policy, the choice of language is likely to be influenced by the language that is spoken by the employees. In a multiple-language environment, companies increasingly choose English as their corporate language (Charles, 2007). For example, after Lenovo, a Chinese MNC, purchased the PC unit of IBM, the company announced that English was chosen as its corporate working language (Chen, 2004). Likewise, in Japan Rakuten and Uniqlo, two large Japanese corporations, announced the adoption of English as their official corporate language in 2012. With the success of adopting English as a corporate language by Rakuten and Uniqlo, Honda Motor Co. has decided to switch its official corporate language for international communications within the company to English by 2020 (<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/opinion/2015/07/18/editorials>). English has become the de facto "global" language and it is natural to speculate that most multinationals in Asia are likely to adopt English as their preferred corporate language. Therefore, an English-language work environment is chosen as an important factor to examine in relation to how Asian expatriates perceive the importance of implementing English as a corporate language policy.

Corporate Training

Past research on corporate training has shown that expatriate employees receiving pre-departure corporate training tend to perform well in their overseas assignments (e.g., Caligiuri, 1997) and better develop intercultural competencies, thereby facilitating the coordination between their headquarters and the foreign subsidiary. These corporate training initiatives include language training (Tung, 1982), cross-cultural training (Black & Mendenhall, 1990; Landis, Bennett, & Bennett, 2004; Mendenhall & Oddou, 1986; Selmer, 1997), and technical and management training (Tung, 1982). Of these training initiatives, language and cultural training are the two commonly chosen pre-departure corporate training initiatives.

Xu's (2010) study confirms and suggests that corporate language training before the departure enhances expatriates' English competence and therefore helped Chinese expatriates in their overseas assignments. Other studies in relation to the effects of language training suggest that language competence is a predictor of the effectiveness regarding international assignment adjustment (Caligiuri et al., 2009; Luring, 2008; Mol, Born, & Molen, 2005, Selmer & Luring, 2015). Bhaskar-Shrinivas, Harrison, Shaffer and Luk's (2005) study concurred and found that language competence is positively correlated with both work and interaction adjustments. Taking the results of these studies together, it is evident that fluency in the designated corporate language (either in host-country language or in English) is an important factor for expatriate adjustment since language seems to be an essential instrument through which expatriates develop their understanding of a new culture (Selmer, 2006b; Selmer & Luring, 2015).

Cross-cultural training is another aspect of common corporate training that receives relatively more attention than that of language training. Research shows that expatriates receiving pre-departure cross-cultural training adjust better in their overseas assignments. A study by Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al. (2005) has revealed significant and negative relationships between cultural distance and the adjustment. Other research has also confirmed that the cultural distance between home and host countries are likely to affect expatriate adjustment in working attitudes, values, and customs (see, for example, Reus & Lamont, 2008; Selmer, Chiu, & Shenkar, 2007; Stahl & Caligiuri, 2005; Toh & DeNisi, 2007). The assumption is that the greater the cultural distance, the harder the adjustment would be (Black, Mendenhall, & Oddou, 1991). Therefore, providing a cross-cultural training to assist expatriates in adjusting to a new environment with wider cultural distance between home and host country becomes critical (Van Vianen, De Pater, Kristof-Brown, & Johnson, 2004).

Information Communication Technology

Multinational companies cannot operate effectively without information communication. Therefore, another important aspect of organizational support is information communication technology (ICT). Studies by Andersen and Foss (2005) and by Lee (2010) examining the impact of ICT on multinational operations found that the use of ICT facilitated communication among managers across functions and geographic boundaries, while enhancing the coordination of multinational activities. Conrad and Poole's (2005) study suggests that ICT has several important effects: it opens up communication and increases accessibility to essential information, promotes the international expansion of organizations, and fosters inter-organizational connections. Watson Wyatt (2008) identified information communication technology as an important foundational tool for an organization to develop its communication system. Such technology, which usually takes the form of telephone, e-mail, voice mail, instant messenger, video-conferencing, and electronic boardrooms, helps the multinational corporations to overcome spatial and temporal barriers between headquarters and subsidiaries (Xu, 2010).

Based on the literature reviewed, the present study aims to examine the three identified factors: language, culture, and organizational supports – that affect Asian expatriates' adjustment to overseas assignments. Two research questions are put forth to guide the analyses of the present research.

RQ 1: Are there any significant differences among expatriates of five Asian countries in their perceived overseas work adjustments and their relationships to the language, culture, and organizational support?

RQ2: What are the relationships among the three identified factors and the overseas assignment adjustments of Asian expatriates?

Research Method

The study employed a triangulated research method to explore the potentially causal interrelationships between the three identified factors and their consequent associations with expatriate adjustments. Two sets of research data were collected. The quantitative data set contains 331 expatriates from five Asian countries (i.e., Singapore, China, Japan, Korea, and Malaysia). Of the 331 participants who have had more than one overseas assignment, 100 of them are from Mainland China, 100 are from Japan, 48 are from Korea, 43 are from Singapore, and 40 are from Malaysia. The online questionnaire was posted via Rakuten Insight Singapore Pte. Ltd. (Hong Kong) Website. The questionnaire, designed by the researcher, was in English and then translated into Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Malay. Native speakers of the respective language checked whether the translation was in line with the English version by using the back translation method. The questionnaire consists of four parts. Part 1 includes the demographic data. Part 2 contains 10 statements of which 4 statements were open-ended questions in relation to the overseas assignments and adjustments. Part 3 contains 8 statements in relation to language and 8 statements in relation to culture. Part 4 contains 7 statements dealing with organizational support. Part 5 contains 3 open-ended questions on organizational supports.

The quantitative data examine the similarities and differences between the overseas assignment adjustments among expatriates from five Asian countries. The data also examines the effect of three identified constructs (language, culture, and organizational supports) on expatriate adjustments. The analysis contains three parts: (1) a MANOVA test compares the three constructs among the five countries; (2) a post hoc test measures between-country comparisons of three constructs among five countries; and (3) the Pearson's Correlation Coefficients examine the effect of the three constructs on overseas assignment adjustments.

The questionnaire data also consists of open-ended questions related to overseas assignment adjustments and organizational support. Questions related to the overseas assignments are: (1) the number of months taken to adjust to the new environment, (2) the factors inhibiting the overseas adjustments, (3) successful strategies in coping with difficulties, and (4) unsuccessful incidents and what could be done to improve future adjustment. Open-ended questions related to organizational reports are: (1) organizational support received before taking on the overseas assignment, (2) effects of organizational support, and (3) what can be done to enhance this support in terms of its effect on your professional development. The collected qualitative data other than English are translated into English for further analysis. In total, there are about 28,000 words. For this article, the study reports and analyzes only the quantitative data.

Findings

The findings for the two research questions focus on (1) whether there are any significant differences in the expatriates' overseas adjustment among the five groups of respondents in terms of three identified variables, namely language, culture, and organizational support; and (2) whether the three variables have any relationships with the overseas adjustment.

RQ 1 examines the effects of the three identified variables on expatriates' overseas adjustments. To answer this research question, the researcher first employed the Multivariate Analysis of Variance

(MANOVA) to compare the mean scores for the language proficiency, cultural competence, and organizational supports among the five groups of Asian respondents. Second, a post hoc test was performed to measure between-group comparisons.

MANOVA Test to Compare the Mean Differences Among Five Countries

The results of the MANOVA, shown in Table 1, indicate significant differences at the 0.01 level among the five research groups in the aspects of overseas work adjustment (F=9.401, p<.01), language proficiency (F=18.232, p<.01), cultural competence (F=9.804, p<.01) and organizational support (F=20.574, p<.01).

Table 1

Multivariate Analysis of Variance Test to Compare Overseas Adjustment among the Five Researched Groups

	F	P value
Composite mean score of overseas work adjustment	9.401	.000**
Composite mean score of overseas language ability	18.232	.000**
Composite mean score of overseas cultural competence	9.804	.000**
Composite mean score of overseas organizational supports	20.574	.000**

** p <.001 (two-tailed)

A post hoc test was used to further examine the between-group differences. In regard to the overseas work adjustment, significant differences were found between the Chinese and the Japanese (M=5.22 vs 4.54, p<0.01) and between Chinese and Koreans (M=5.22 vs 4.85, p<0.05). As for the perceived host- or English-language proficiency, the mean scores of the Japanese expatriates is the lowest compared to the other four groups (Singaporeans, Chinese, Koreans, and Malaysians), and the differences were significant at the .01 level. However, no significant differences were found between the four groups.

The post hoc test for cultural competence also shows significant differences between the Chinese and Japanese (M=4.6 vs 4.01) and between Malaysians and Japanese (M=4.65 vs 4.01) at the .01 level, while the difference between the Koreans and Japanese (M=4.96 vs 4.01) is significant at the 0.05 level. Significant differences were also found in the perceived organizational supports: the mean scores of the Japanese respondents were significantly different from those of the other four groups at the 0.01 level. Difference was also found between the Chinese and Singapore groups (M=4.83 vs 4.38, p<.05).

Research question 2 examines the causal relationships of the three identified constructs and the overseas assignment adjustments. To answer RQ2, Pearson’s correlation coefficient was conducted, and the findings are presented as follows.

Pearson's Correlation Coefficients to Examine Effects of Three Identified Constructs on Overseas Adjustments

Pearson’s correlation coefficient was conducted to answer RQ 2, which examines the relationships among the three constructs and overseas assignment adjustment. The results indicate that both language proficiency and perceived organizational support correlate strongly with the expatriates’ adjustments (r = .546 and .548, respectively), while cultural competence correlates only weakly (r=.123).

In order to closely examine factors that influence the expatriates' overseas assignment adjustments, Pearson's Correlation Coefficients were further conducted to scrutinize the causal relationships between the overseas adjustments and sub-statements that are related to language proficiency, cultural competence, and organizational supports. The results are presented in the next section.

Effects of Language Proficiency on Expatriates' Overseas Assignment Adjustments

Table 2 presents the correlation results of the language sub-statements on expatriates' overseas assignment adjustment. The results reveal that expatriates who rated their overseas host-country or English-language proficiency as "high" (LA8) tended to be more satisfied with their overseas assignment ($r = .427, p < 0.01$) and felt more confident in coping with stress ($r = .429^{**}, p < 0.01$). Expatriates with perceived high host country or English-language proficiency also felt that they could get along well with host country nationals ($r = .349, p < 0.01$) and maintain good communication with headquarters during their overseas assignments ($r = .379, p < 0.01$).

Expatriates who felt that their good English or host-country language competence facilitated their experience of living overseas (LA2) were likely to rate their degree of satisfaction on their overseas assignments as high ($r = .381$). These expatriates also felt that they could cope with the stress well ($r = .431$), get along well with host country nationals ($r = .371$) and maintained good communication with HQ ($r = .438$) at a significance level of 0.01. Good language proficiency facilitated their adjustment to the new environment by helping them know about the economic and legal systems of the host country ($r = .308$) as well as keep abreast of recent changes in the host country ($r = .354$). Being able to convey ideas and state points clearly in English/the host-language (LA 3) and enabling them to be understood by local personnel (LA4) were also considered important factors by expatriates ($r = .478$ and $r = .466$ respectively).

Effects of Cultural Competence on Expatriates' Overseas Assignment Adjustments

The second part of the Part 3 questionnaire contains 8 sub-statements in relation to culture. The Pearson's Correlation Coefficients were employed to examine the relationships between eight sub-statements of cultural competence and expatriates' overseas assignment adjustments. Table 3 presents the Pearson correlation coefficient for the relationships between the sub-statements on cultural competence and expatriates' adjustment to overseas assignments. Expatriates who rated their feeling of confidence in coping with the stresses of adjusting to the new culture as high (C8) also rated themselves high in their satisfaction with their overseas assignment ($r = .474$), getting along well with host country nationals ($r = .428$), being willing to learn about the economic and legal systems ($r = .406$) of the host country, and keeping abreast of the changes in the host countries ($r = .444$). Results also show that expatriates who knew their own national culture well (C1) or the culture of the host country well (C2) were likely to be satisfied with their overseas assignment adjustment in all aspects.

Effects of Organizational Supports on Expatriates' Overseas Adjustments

Part 4 of the questionnaire contains 7 sub-statements dealing with organizational support. The findings from examining the extent to which organizational support affects expatriates' adjustment are presented in Table 4. The essence of the organizational support includes institutionalizing the policy of English as a corporate language (POS1), the effects of English/host-language training (POS2) and Cross-cultural training (POS4), and the importance of information communication technology in enhancing communication with HQ (POS7).

The sub-statements related to the organizational supports also examine whether and how the English or host-country language training (POS2) provided by HQ helps expatriates' overseas assignment adjustments. The results show that corporate language training only moderately affected the expatriates' overseas adjustments in terms of being satisfied with the overseas assignments ($r=.339$), being confident in coping with the stress ($r=.334$), and getting along well with host country nationals ($r=.322$).

The same statistical analysis also applied to examine the effects of cross-cultural training (POS4) on their overseas assignment adjustments. The results reveal a strong correlation between the cross-cultural training and good communication with HQ ($r=.477$). The effects on expatriates' overseas adjustments and communicating with host country nationals are however moderately correlated, ranging between 3.23 and 3.67 at a significant level of 0.01.

The investigation of whether information communication technology (ICT) was critical in enhancing expatriates' communication with HQ (POS7) reveals a consistently strong correlation between ICT and expatriate work adjustments. Among all items related to organizational supports, information communication technology was considered the most important and is highly correlated with overseas assignment adjustments with r values between .402 and .443. The results show that expatriates strongly believe that information communication technology enhances their communication with headquarters and this in turns help them better adjust ($r=.424$) and feel more confident in coping with the stress brought about by the overseas assignments ($r=.443$).

Table 2

Correlations of the Sub-statement of Language Proficiency on Expatriates' Overseas Work Adjustments

Variable	WA1	WA2	WA3	WA4	WA5	WA6	LA1	LA2	LA3	LA4	LA5	LA6	LA7	LA8
WA 1	1													
WA 2	.641**	1												
WA 3	.592**	.524**	1											
WA 4	.518**	.489**	.451**	1										
WA 5	.501**	.509**	.540**	.453**	1									
WA 6	.562**	.579**	.532**	.513**	.601**	1								
LA1	.425**	.445**	.324**	.424**	.233**	.296**	1							
LA2	.381**	.431**	.371**	.438**	.308**	.354**	.735**	1						
LA3	.478**	.482**	.400**	.475**	.348**	.395**	.705**	.744**	1					
LA4	.446**	.493**	.385**	.458**	.317**	.374**	.701**	.773**	.725**	1				
LA5	.456**	.453**	.393**	.437**	.267**	.312**	.724**	.721**	.774**	.705**	1			
LA6	.432**	.417**	.415**	.429**	.380**	.387**	.444**	.490**	.535**	.498**	.522**	1		
LA7	.243**	.265**	.232**	.227**	.214**	.197**	.455**	.423**	.453**	.420**	.436**	.354**	1	
LA8	.427**	.429**	.349**	.379**	.250**	.282**	.748**	.752**	.755**	.736**	.755**	.491**	.460**	1

Keys: WA indicates overseas work adjustment; WA1 indicates overseas work adjustment sub-statement 1; LA indicates language proficiency; LA1 indicates language proficiency sub-statement 1; * p<.05; **p<.01 (two-tailed)

Table 3

Correlations of the Sub-statement of Cultural Competence on Expatriates' Overseas Work Adjustments

Variable	WA1	WA2	WA3	WA4	WA5	WA6	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	C7	C8
WA 1	1													
WA 2	.641**	1												
WA 3	.592**	.524**	1											
WA 4	.518**	.489**	.451**	1										
WA 5	.501**	.509**	.540**	.453**	1									
WA 6	.562**	.579**	.532**	.513**	.601**	1								
C1	.497**	.418**	.447**	.457**	.462**	.465**	1							

C2	.409**	.441**	.419**	.415**	.459**	.434**	.551**	1						
C3	.465**	.507**	.452**	.462**	.433**	.505**	.628**	.546**	1					
C4	.483**	.434**	.485**	.317**	.414**	.447**	.500**	.536**	.512**	1				
C5	.450**	.486**	.509**	.365**	.523**	.574**	.548**	.597**	.603**	.554**	1			
C6	.414**	.341**	.347**	.429**	.340**	.329**	.505**	.491**	.527**	.384**	.499**	1		
C7	.430**	.457**	.400**	.337**	.461**	.444**	.481**	.553**	.556**	.561**	.515**	.496**	1	
C8	.474**	.525**	.428**	.384**	.406**	.444**	.519**	.592**	.590**	.490**	.603**	.433**	.493**	1

**p<.01 (two-tailed)

Table 4

Correlations of the Sub-statement of Organizational Supports on Expatriates' Overseas Work Adjustments

Variable	WA1	WA2	WA3	WA4	WA5	WA6	POS1	POS2	POS3	POS4	POS5	POS6	POS7	POS8
WA 1	1													
WA 2	.641**	1												
WA 3	.592**	.524**	1											
WA 4	.518**	.489**	.451**	1										
WA 5	.501**	.509**	.540**	.453**	1									
WA 6	.562**	.579**	.532**	.513**	.601**	1								
POS1	.381**	.421**	.312**	.403**	.297**	.298**	1							
POS2	.339**	.334**	.322**	.491**	.297**	.325**	.567**	1						
POS3	.373**	.343**	.381**	.500**	.323**	.295**	.593**	.621**	1					
POS4	.323**	.371**	.340**	.477**	.367**	.365**	.528**	.655**	.620**	1				
POS5	.423**	.383**	.377**	.495**	.365**	.336**	.548**	.564**	.596**	.587**	1			
POS6	.350**	.273**	.312**	.351**	.237**	.173**	.469**	.503**	.505**	.514**	.439**	1		
POS7	.424**	.443**	.420**	.442**	.389**	.402**	.518**	.550**	.541**	.460**	.549**	.380**	1	
POS8	.442**	.434**	.432**	.555**	.404**	.384**	.726**	.772**	.799**	.775**	.754**	.678**	.687**	1

**p<.01 (two-tailed)

Discussion and Conclusions

The purpose of the present research was first to compare the mean scores of expatriates from five Asian countries on the three identified constructs (language, culture, and organizational supports) related to their adjustment to overseas assignments. Second, the research examines the relationships among the three constructs and overseas assignment adjustment. The results of the MANOVA test show significant differences among the five groups of expatriates. Post hoc tests were also performed to further examine the between-country differences. Post hoc tests were performed to further examine the between-group differences. The results of the post hoc tests reveal significant differences between the Japanese and the other four groups in all aspects of language proficiency, cultural competence, and organizational support. In addition to the MANOVA test, ANOVA was also applied to examine each individual construct.

The second set of research question investigates the relationships between the three constructs and overseas assignment adjustments. Results of the Pearson's Correlation Coefficients indicate that both language proficiency and organizational supports correlates strongly with the expatriates' overseas work adjustments, while cultural competence correlates only weakly. The interrelationships of language proficiency and overseas assignment adjustments show a strong correlation, indicating that language proficiency better predicts the overseas adjustment. coping with stress, getting along with host country nationals, and maintaining good communication with the headquarters.

Analysis of cultural competence statements also reveals a strong correlation with adjustments, indicating that expatriates with high cultural competence are likely to be more satisfied with their overseas assignments, feel confident in coping with stresses, get along well with host country nationals. Expatriates with high cultural competence tend to have better attitudes towards host country environment. As for the organizational support, the results show the importance of institutionalizing the policy of English as a corporate language, of English/host-language training and cross-cultural training, and of information communication technology in enhancing the communication with HQ.

Limitations

Although the overall findings of the present study are relatively significant, the results should be interpreted with caution due to its limitations. The present study is self-reported data in regard to respondents' perceived language ability, cultural competence, and organizational support. As such, the present study may have contained typical limitations related to the use of a self-rating questionnaire, such as respondents exaggerating or under-reporting their situations. Although self-reported data may have created some unavoidable shortcomings, empirical evidence has suggested that people can provide information by reflecting on their own views (Riggio & Riggio, 2001). The design of the sub-statements in each of the identified constructs can compensate the weakness of the self-reported data enabling the researcher to spot the inconsistency.

The second limitation of the study relates to the sample. The participants were recruited by a contracted research company, which may imply a biased research context. Although five research countries are categorized as collective cultures, the uneven number of the respondents may not be representative and cannot be generalized to another geographic contexts.

The third limitation of the present study relates to the methodological issue. It has been a decade since Bhaskar-Shrinivas and associates (2005) called for a need for longitudinal research, yet "fewer than five percent of the existing studies are longitudinal" (p. 273). To accurately reflect the effects of how the

three identified variables affect expatriate adjustments over time, there is a need to employ longitudinal designs that examine expatriate adjustments as a long-term process rather than a momentary event (Haslberger & Brewster, 2009).

Implications

The present study contributes to the international business and expatriate communication literature on language, culture, organizational supports, and expatriate overseas adjustment in three ways. First, the study contributes empirical quantitative data to the body of knowledge about Asian expatriate adjustments that will be valuable for researchers in general, and Asian expatriate adjustment in particular. Second, the study focuses on expatriate adjustments from five Asian countries, which means the findings will have relevance for Asian organizations in selecting and preparing expatriates for overseas postings. Third, the results of the study are relevant to those involved in the education and training of business professionals who will become employees in MNCs.

The current research has implications for both researchers and practitioners. For researchers, although expatriate adjustment has been widely researched, the current study reveals a need for more empirical research into the multifaceted (culture, language, and organizational-related) factors that are likely to facilitate or impede expatriate overseas adjustment. The study also ascertains and describes how language ability, cultural competence, and organizational support affect the adjustment of Asian expatriates (Singapore, China, Japan, Korea, and Malaysia).

Overall, this study contributes to the theoretical knowledge about expatriate overseas adjustment and to the emerging body of literature on language and intercultural competence in global business contexts. Particularly, the research shows how language and cultural competence together with organizational support can enhance the global operations of multinationals from Asia and facilitate overseas assignment adjustment of Asian expatriates.

Suggestions for Future Research

Against the background of these findings, I suggest that future additional research examine the necessary language, culture, and organizational support in other Asian multinational corporations and from different industries. It is also suggested that future research include both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods. Last, a longitudinal study of expatriation (e.g., collecting data at 6 months, 12 months, 18 months, and 24 months) can be critical to examine the essence of overseas adjustment in various stages of expatriation. Taking a longitudinal approach, future research can examine the communication efficacy of Asian expatriates in relaying organizational policy. As noted by Breiden, Mohr, and Mirza (2006), assignment to an overseas assignment is a continuous and dynamic process, and adjustment stages should be monitored on the job in order to accurately reflect the adaptation of expatriates.

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