

Psychoeducational Intervention for Japanese Young People

— Communication Competence and Self-Esteem —

Haruo OKABAYASHI

Abstract: The present study tries to improve Japanese young people's communication competence which consists of assertion skill and listening skill through Psychoeducational intervention. Furthermore, in the present study, when the communication competence is improved, it might become easy to take communication among others, and it is assumed whether self-esteem would become high. Although it is found out by practice in a school of nursing that Psychoeducational intervention improves young people's communication competence, their self-esteem does not become high. Even if Japanese young people improve their communication competence, it is considered that it is hard for them to find out their own good point (e.g., kindness) that is related to their self-esteem. Japanese young people got into the habit of vicious thinking and behavior circle; therefore, they should leave the vicious circle, and they need a transfer training from the present study to their everyday life.

Key Words: communication competence, self-esteem, psychoeducational intervention

<日本語訳>

本研究は、看護学校において心理教育的介入を行い、アサーションスキルとリスニングスキルを中心としたコミュニケーション能力が向上するかどうかの検討を行った。さらに、本研究では、コミュニケーション能力が向上することによって、他者との間にコミュニケーションが取りやすくなり、自尊感情が高くなるのではないかと仮定した。実践の結果、心理教育的介入は、若者のコミュニケーション能力を高めることが見出されたが、自尊感情は高くならなかった。これは、日本の若者は、コミュニケーション能力が高まっても自分の良い点は見出しにくいところからきていると考えられる。日本の若者は、日頃から、悪循環していく思考一行動を取っており、そのような悪循環から抜け出す転移訓練が、日常生活において必要であろう。

キーワード：コミュニケーション能力、自尊感情、心理教育的介入

Communication of Japanese young people

Communication is simply a method of sending a message from one person or group of persons to another. It is of vital importance for people. Good communication will ensure that all the persons and organizations understand the message sent. However, recently in Japan, there are a number of young nurses who cannot communicate with the patients and the fellow workers, for example. Those situations, so called lack of communication of workers, make a trouble in a hospital and a school. In a hospital, when a young nurse asks a patient the detailed questions about his symptoms, she sometimes could not get what he means because her question is not clear and she does not listen to his points, either. Therefore, it is necessary to improve nursing school students' communication competence (Hirose, Ota, Inoue, & Nakamura, 2011; Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, 2007). Therefore, it is necessary to develop the young people's communication competence in a college of education (Ohashi & Abe, 2010; Yamada, 2006; Tamura & Ishikuma, 2002).

In the present study, the training of communication competence, especially assertive skill and listening skill, is held in a school of nursing. This study investigates, at first, if the training communication competence is effective for Japanese young people.

Self-esteem of Japanese young people

Self-esteem is defined as a person's characteristic evaluations of himself and his accomplishments (Gelfand, 1970). Low self-esteem is characterized by feelings of personal inadequacy, guilt, shyness, and social inhibitions; high esteem reflects feelings of self-confidence and satisfaction (Hovland, Janis, & Kelly, 1953). Brown(2006) pointed out that Japanese people typically score low on explicit measures of self-esteem, such as the Rosenberg self-esteem scale. And other researchers(e.g., Brown & Kobayashi, 2002; Campbell, Trapnell, Heine, Katz, Lavalee, & Lehman, 1996; Endo, 1992a, 1992b; Heine, 2005; Heine, Kitayama, & Lehman, 2001; Heine, Kitayama, Lehman, Takata, Ide, Leung, & Matsumoto, 2001; Kobayashi & Greenwald, 2003; Kudo & Numazaki, 2003; Kurman, 2003; Kurman & Sriram, 2002; Muramoto, 2003; Takata, 2003) found the same fact, and they argued the reason why Japanese self-esteem is low from each researcher's point of view. For example, Heine, Kitayama, and Lehman (2001) point out that Japanese society values self-improvement rather than self-satisfaction and therefore Japanese individuals derive feelings of self-worth from being self-critical. On the other hand, Kurman and Sriram (2002) find this position contradictory, in that it appears to claim that Japanese feel good about being inadequate. Actually, Japanese do not truthfully express their self-feelings due to modesty or some other reason. To be more concrete, they decline to strongly endorse the positive items, and do not strongly reject the negative items. They may respond that they are unsure of how they think and feel about themselves.

There is a close relationship between self-esteem and mental health. High self-esteem is regarded as essential for good mental health and psychological functioning (Brown, 2006). People with healthy self-esteem have a tendency to take care of themselves by eating well, exercising, and generally being good to themselves and to other people.

Therefore, in the present study, the change of Japanese young people's self-esteem through Psychoeducational intervention in a psychology class will be observed. That is, secondly, the present study investigates if the training communication competence averages up Japanese young people's self-esteem score.

Psychoeducational intervention

The term "psychoeducation" was first employed by Anderson, Gerard, Hogarty, and Reiss (1980) and was used to describe a behavioral therapeutic concept consisting of 4 elements, briefing the patients about their illness, problem solving training, communication training, and self-assertiveness training (Bäuml, Froböse, Kraemer, Rentrop, & Pitschel-Walz, 2006). The roots of psychoeducation are to be found in behavioral therapy, although current conceptions also include elements of client-centered therapy and cognitive behavioral therapy in various degrees. Recently psychoeducation lays special emphasis on education in subject areas that serve the goals of treatment and rehabilitation (Okabayashi, 1997; Ishikuma, 1999). So psychoeducation involves teaching people about their problem, how to treat it, and how to recognize signs of relapse so that they can get necessary treatment before their difficulty worsens or occurs again.

Purpose of the present study

From the above all, the purpose of this study is to investigate whether Japanese young people who are nursing school students are improving in the communication competence through the psychoeducational intervention, and to investigate whether their self-esteem will be higher as the communication competence raises.

Intervention and Measurement

Participants

In a school of nursing setting, participants are 38 first year students (6 males & 32 females; age 18~29).

Procedure

The procedure is shown in Figure 1 briefly. The aim of this intervention is to obtain communication competence that consists of assertive skill and listening skill.

Pre-stage. Self-esteem is typically measured as a continuous scale. The Rosenberg (1965) 10-item scores each item on a four-point response system that requires participants to indicate their level of agreement with a series of statements about themselves. At Pre-stage, each participant's self-esteem is measured using the scale of Rosenberg (1965) translated into Japanese (Hoshino, 1970).

Intervention stage. At Intervention stage, in order to identify the baseline of the participants' communication competence, 1st Discussion (Case discussion) is held. They watch the VTR that Ms. A (age 24) is a long absence from work because she does not have good relationship with her co-workers, and Ms. B (age 26) who acted domestic violence to her parents, and shifted the responsibility onto them. The participants discuss what they think of Ms. A and Ms. B, and what they think about themselves. According to the participants' discussion and their brief report, two observers evaluate each participant's communication competence according to four ranks (note: the evaluation Pearson r correlation coefficient between one observer and another home room teacher is .879, $p=.000$).

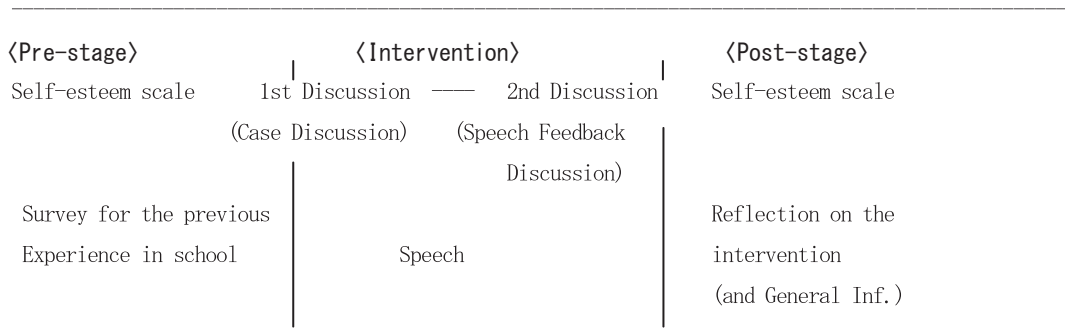


Figure 1 Procedure in the present study

In Speech session each participant chooses a theme from the following themes: “The relationship between I and my friends”, “The relationship with my family”, “Who I am”, and so on. While a speaker makes sure the point of his speech, the listeners are required to get the point of other persons' speech, and evaluate it according to three ranks: “the point of the speech is clear?”, “the title is consistent with what a speaker says?”, “the idea is good?”, “speaker's attitude is OK?”, “the speech structure is good?”, and “on the whole, the speech has succeeded?”. Also, the listeners are required to write suggestion to improve a speaker's assertion skill. Each participant receives the evaluation form from the listeners and analyzes the data. After analyzing the data and looking back upon each participant's own assertion skill and listening skill, each participant makes a resume for his speech. According to the resume, the participants make a discussion about each participant's communication competence (2nd Discussion: Speech Feedback Discussion). The observer evaluates the participants' communication competence according to four ranks same as the 1st Discussion.

Post-stage. At the Post-stage, each participant's self-esteem is measured again. Also each participant is asked to reflect what he thinks on the intervention and general classes except this class (see Figure 2).

Results

Through the intervention of Communication Competence, the communication competence is improved from the stage of 1st Communication ($M=1.69$, $\sigma=0.563$) to the stage of 2nd Communication ($M=2.71$, $\sigma=0.554$) with significantly difference ($t(37)=14.573$, $p=.000$). On the other hand, post self-esteem score ($M=21.95$, $\sigma=5.327$) is not significantly higher than pre self-esteem score ($M=23.26$, $\sigma=4.260$), that is, fell a little bit ($t(37)=-1.972$, $p=.056$).

Pre-stage. The relationship between the participants' previous school experience and their present self-esteem scores is shown: there is no significant difference on the self-esteem score among the elementary school experience groups. There is significant difference on the self-esteem score among the junior high school experience groups about the item "I did not want to go to school" ($F(1, 37)=10.503$, $p=.004$). That is, the self-esteem score of "I did not want to go to school" group is significantly lower than the score of the other groups. Also, the self-esteem score of "Actually I did not go to school" group is significantly lower than the score of other groups. About the high school experience there is no significant difference on the self-esteem score among the groups. About school bullying experience there is no significant difference on the self-esteem score: "Bullying" $F(1, 41)=2.367$, $p=.132$; "Being bullied" $F(1, 41)=1.116$, $p=.297$; "Seeing bullying around me" $F(1, 41)=3.221$, $p=.080$.

Nine participants (23.7%) have confidence in the relationship with others; 21 participants (55.3%) do not have confidence; 8 participants (21.1%) can't give a definite answer. Some of them say, "I am shy"; a few say, "I am a friendly person." Also they say, "I do not try to communicate with others. I wait for someone trying to talk to me." Some of them do not feel good on group behavior. It is considered that most of the participants feel anxiety about the relationship with others.

Intervention stage. In the 1st Discussion, it is not easy for the participants to speak out their opinion and exchange their views each other. They stated their superficial impression about of Case A and Case B, and they did not say their real intentions to others. After the observers evaluated each participant's communication competence to identify their communication baseline, the instructor points out in communication setting (1) participants need to commit a task more deeply to catch the point (ego-involvement), (2) participants need to catch the point what they are trying to say (assertion skill), and (3) participants need to catch the point of other people's trying to say (listening skill).

Speech. In front of a classroom each participant practices speech in turn. As the title of speech, 18 participants (47.4%) choose "friendship", 10 (26.3%) choose "family relationship", 3 (7.9%) choose "myself (my characteristics)", and 7 (18.4%) choose other relationship (ex. with teacher). Participants noticed their classmate's new side of character through his speech. At that time some listeners said, "That's not your character" on their friend's speech. That means the friend's speech is much more serious than usual talk. The instructor guides them that they have to identify another side of character because a person has various sides of character. Recently, generally speaking, Japanese young people might tend to label their friends easily: this person is a bullying type, and that person is a bullied type. They say, "It is easy for a 'labeled person' and a 'labeling person' to keep up with each other because both persons think they know each other." When the difference between a labeled character and a real character is getting bigger, their relationship might be broken easily. In this intervention, anyway, considering the listeners' response, each participant looks back his speech especially as a point of view in communication competence.

In the 2nd Discussion, using the data of listeners' response, participants have discussion, so called "feedback

discussion”, about their communication competence. Each participant speaks out his opinion, and all participants exchange views each other. The observers evaluate each participant’s communication competence using a 4-point scale anchored by 4 (very good) and 1 (very poor).

Post-stage. At the Post-stage, participants’ self-esteem score is measured again using the same scale as Pre-stage. Also each participant is asked to reflect what he thinks on the intervention and other general questions. Items 1, 2, and 3 are about general classes except this class (each item on a three-point response system: negative, middle, positive): item 1 is “I take part in a class”(2.56), item 2 is “I understand class contents”(2.03), item 3 is “There are some uninteresting classes”(2.21). Items 4, 5, 6, and 7 are about speech in this class: item 4 is “I would convey my point to other persons in my speech”(2.34), item 5 is “I could get point of other persons’ speech”(2.87), item 6 is “I understand what kind of person my friend is”(2.84), and item 7 is “I had sympathy for other persons’ speech”(2.97). Items 8-19 are about this psychology class: item 8 is “The clarity of this intervention class aim is good”(2.87), item 9 is “I understand the contents of this intervention class”(2.76), item 10 is “I feel involving in this intervention class”(2.50), item 11 is “It is nice to take this intervention class”(2.95), item 12 is “This intervention class is a chance to take another look at myself”(2.79), item 13 is “This intervention class is a chance to consider friends”(2.74), item 14 is “This intervention class is a chance to consider the relationship between I and my friends”(2.66), item 15 is “This intervention class is a chance to consider the relationship between I and my parents/family”(2.53), item 16 is “I find my characteristics through this intervention class”(2.61), item 17 is “I take part in this intervention class”(2.82), item 18 is “I find my kindness”(1.92), and item 19 is “I find friends’ kindness”(2.71).

Many participants reported “I have not thought about myself before. This intervention is the first time to think about myself and the relationship with others”.

Item 7 “I have sympathy about other persons’ speech” ($M=2.97$; $\sigma=0.162$), item 5 “I can tell my point in speech” ($M=2.87$; $\sigma=0.475$), item 8 “I understand this class content” ($M=2.87$; $\sigma=0.475$), item 6 “I understand friends through their speech” ($M=2.84$; $\sigma=0.495$), and item 17 “I feel taking part in this class” ($M=2.82$; $\sigma=0.457$) are very high. On the other hand, item 18 “I find my kindness” is very low ($M=1.92$; $\sigma=0.673$). Also item 2 “I understand classes except this Psychology class” is low ($M=2.03$; $\sigma=0.753$).

Seventeen participants (44.7%) answer “I have confidence in myself through this class”, 13 participants (34.2%) answer “So-so”, and 8 participants (21.1%) answer “No”. Of the 17 participants who answer “I have confidence through this class”, 9 participants (52.9%) answer “I have confidence in my self-control”, 4 participants (23.5%) answer “In my relationship with other parson”, 3 (17.7%) participants answer “In my apprehension for other parson”, 2 participants (11.8%) answers “In understanding the social system”, 1 participant (5.9%) answers “In my language communication”, and another participant answers “In my personality” (multiple answers allowed).

In free description participants answer “I find myself that I have not noticed before” (15.8%), “This is a good chance to look at me over again and improve myself” (5.3%), “It is good for me to think about me”(2.6%), “I feel warm relationship in this class”(2.6%), and “This is my first time to think about myself seriously” (3.1%).

Discussion

The results in the present study can be summarized succinctly: (1) Japanese young people improve their communication competence through the intervention which aims to improve assertion skill and listening skill, and (2) their self-esteem scores have not improved through the intervention.

As participants notice the point of speech and model a good speech of their classmates, participants’ communication competence is getting better. Actually the participants have improved their assertion skill and listening skill through the intervention.

It was hypothesized that if the participants obtain the communication competence, they become easy to

communicate each other, and their self-esteem would get higher because good communication makes good relationship. However, their self-esteem score didn't rise from Pre-stage to Post-stage. It is said that Japanese young people see friends as a source of conformity and prefer psychological distance to them (Ueno, Kamise, Matsui, & Fukutomi, 1994). Surface friendship, with high conformity but more psychological distance to each other, might characterize contemporary youth relationship in Japan. Because Japanese young people are afraid of being hurt, they tend to go round with others superficially (Fukushige, 2007). Japanese young people believe deep human relations hurt themselves. Also they feel others' evaluation too much (Ueyama & Yonezawa, 2006). So, they indulge others (Ueno, et al., 1994). Brown (2006) suggests that modesty is one reason Japanese individuals may not express high self-esteem. Brown mentions Japanese culture; however, as mentioned above, the recent Japanese young people's characteristic is "they may fear the consequences of expressing self-esteem if they believe that such expressions are disliked by other people". In the present study, some of the participants answer "This is the first time to think about myself and my friends deeply. I have not thought about myself until now." Japanese young people may also be unsure of what they think about themselves. That is, their self-concepts may be unclear. Lack of self-knowledge and lack of certainty about one's characteristics and capabilities have been found to manifest themselves in low self-esteem scores (Baumgardner, 1990).

In these circumstances the typical vicious spiral thinking and behavior of Japanese young people is shown in Figure 2. The spiral cycle makes the phenomena of school bullying, school refusal students, and also lower self-esteem.

Self-esteem is related with self-concept. The effective variable that refers to the view one has of one's self. A person with a positive self-concept considers himself or herself worthwhile; a negative self-concept means the person feels worthless (Owen, Blount, & Moscow, 1978). Self-concept is the set of a person's beliefs about and evaluations of himself as a person. In the present study many participants think this training is a starting point to brush up them. Therefore, their self-esteem score has not improved, yet.

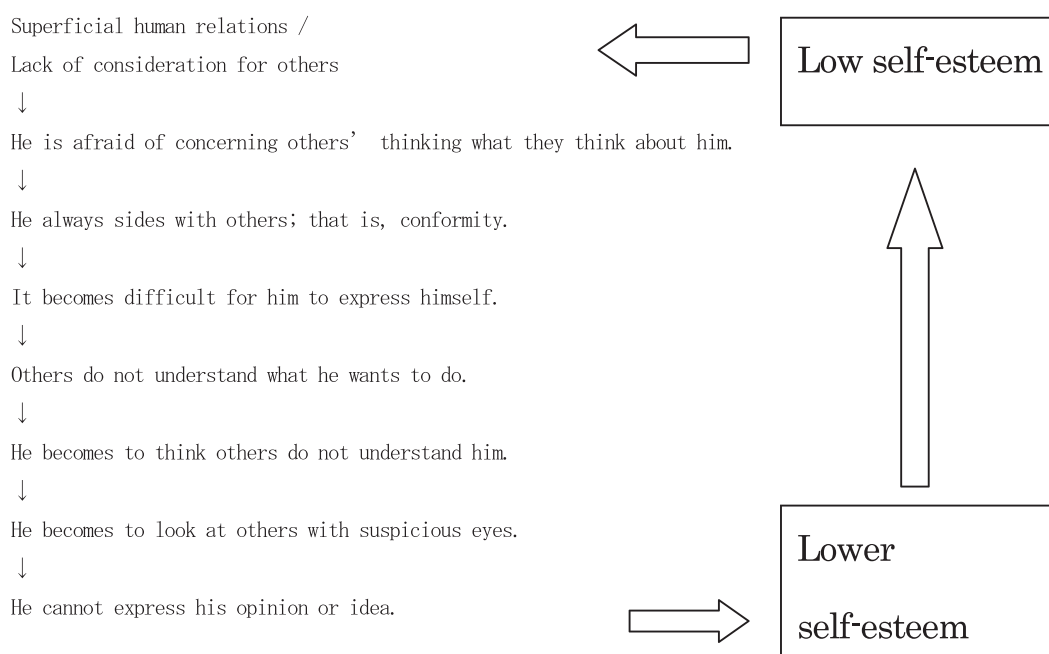


Figure 2 The typical vicious spiral thinking and behavior of Japanese young people

Conclusion

It is possible for Japanese young people to obtain the communication competence through the psychological intervention; however, it is difficult for them to gain self-esteem because their vicious spiral thinking and behavior, which is shown in Figure 4, is so tight. They should break away from the vicious spiral.

Expressing self-esteem, whether publicly or privately, is a form of self-presentation, given that people do form impressions of other people based on how they describe themselves. People who are concerned with the impressions they make on other people may attempt to behave in ways that elicit favorable impressions. Describing oneself concerns about the evaluation that could potentially be elicited by one's self-description might be expected to nudge the respondents' responses in a more socially desirable direction. Leary (1991) describes this sort of concern as "fear of negative evaluation". Fear of negative evaluation may not encourage self-assertion, depending on what the respondent believes the people who he or she fears being evaluated by value (MacDonald, Saltzman, & Leary, 2003). Before speech session of the present study, some participants say, "I am afraid of negative evaluation by others; therefore, I do not express my opinion clearly." However, after speech, they say, "It was groundless fear." It is considered that they need transfer training of experience by the present study in their daily life.

References

- Anderson, C.M., Gerard, E., Hogarty, G.E., & Reiss, D.J. (1980). Family treatment of adult schizophrenic patients: a psychoeducational approach. *Schizophrenia Bulletin*, 6, 490-505.
- Baumgardner, A.H. (1990). To know oneself is to like oneself: Self-certainty and self-affect. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 58, 1062-1072.
- Bäumli, J., Froböse, T., Kraemer, S., Rentrop, M., & Pitschel-Walz, G. (2006). Psychoeducation: A basic psychotherapeutic intervention for patients with schizophrenia and their families. *Schizophrenia Bulletin*, 32, S1-S9. <<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2683741/>> (August 18, 2006)
- Brown, R.A. (2006). Self-esteem, modest responding, sandbagging, fear of negative evaluation, and self-concept clarity in Japan. *Information & Communication Studies*: Bunkyo University, 35, 35-46.
- Brown, J.D. & Kobayashi, C. (2002). Self-enhancement in Japan and America. *Asian Journal of Social Psychology*, 5, 145-168.
- Campbell, J.D., Trapnell, P.D., Heine, S.J., Katz, I.M., Lavallee, L.F., & Lehman, D.R. (1996). Self-concept clarity: Measurement, personality correlates, and cultural boundaries. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 70, 141-156.
- Endo, Y. (1992a). Personalized standard of self-esteem. *Japanese Journal of Educational Psychology*, 40, 157-163. (In Japanese with English abstract)
- Endo, Y. (1992b). Negative ideal self as a standard of self-esteem. *Japanese journal of Psychology*, 63, 214-217. (In Japanese with English abstract)
- Fukushige, K. (2007). Changing friendship: Modern youth relationship. Y. Takahashi, K. Fukushige, H. Izumi, M. Harada, R. Kuroiwa, K. Kobayashi (Eds.), *Modern Japanese Relationship: Approach from the baby-boom junior generation*. Tokyo: Gakubunsha. pp. 27-61. (In Japanese)
- Gelfand, D.M. (1970). The influence of self-esteem on rate of verbal conditioning and social matching behavior. In T.D. Spencer, & N. Kass (Eds.), *Perspectives in child psychology, Research and Review*. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company. pp. 316-323.
- Heine, S.J. (2005). Constructing good selves in Japan and North America. In R.M. Sorrentino & D. Cohen (Eds.), *Culture and social behavior: The Ontario symposium*. Vol. 10, pp.95-116. Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. <<http://www.psych.ubc.ca/~heine/docs/ontario.rtf>> (December 3, 2004)
- Heine, S. J., Kitayama, S., & Lehman, D. R. (2001). Cultural differences in self-evaluation: Japanese readily accept negative

- self-relevant information. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 32, 434-443.
- Heine, S.J., Kitayama, S., Lehman, D.R., Takata, T., Ide, E. Leung, C., Matsumoto, H. (2001). Divergent consequences of success and failure in Japan and North America: An investigation of self-improving motivations and malleable selves. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 81, 599-615.
- Hirose, H., Ota, T., Inoue, M., & Nakamura, H. (2011). Development of communication skill scale of nursing students. *Faculty Journal of Nursing and Human Nutrition: Yamaguchi Prefectural University*, 4, 47-53. (In Japanese)
- Hoshino, M. (1970). Affect and education II. *Child Psychology*, 24, 1445-1477. (In Japanese)
- Hovland, C. I., Janis, I. L., & Kelly, H. H. (1953). *Communication and persuasion*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Ishikuma, T. (1999). *School psychology: Psychoeducational support service through the team of teacher, school counselor, and protector*. Tokyo: Seishin-shobo. (In Japanese)
- Kobayashi, C., & Greenwald, A.G. (2003). Implicit-explicit differences in self-enhancement for Americans and Japanese. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 34, 522-541.
- Kudo, E., & Numazaki, M. (2003). Explicit and direct self-serving bias in Japan. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 34, 511-521.
- Kurman, J. (2003). Why is self-enhancement low in certain collectivistic cultures. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 34, 496-510.
- Kurman, J., & Sriram, N. (2002). Interrelationships among vertical and horizontal collectivism, modesty, and self-enhancement. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 33, 71-86.
- Leary, M. R. (1991). Social anxiety, shyness, and related constructs. In J.P. Robinson, P.R. Shaver, & L.W. Wrightsman (Eds.), *Measures of personality and psychological attitudes*. San Diego: Academic Press.
- MacDonald, G., Saltzman, J. L., & Leary, M. R. (2003). Social approval and trait self-esteem. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 37, 23-40.
- Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (2007). The meeting to enrich the nursing basic education. *Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare* <<http://www.mhlw.go.jp/shingi/2007/04/s0420-13.html>> (April 20, 2007) (In Japanese)
- Muramoto, Y. (2003). An indirect self-enhancement in relationship among Japanese. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 34, 552-566.
- Ohashi, N. & Abe, Y. (2010). A practical class on expression/communication for university teaching education activity. *Music, Fine Arts and Physical Education: Joetsu University of Education Repository*, 29, 289-299. (In Japanese)
- Okabayashi, H. (1997). *Psychoeducation*. Tokyo: Kaneko-shobo. (In Japanese)
- Owen, S.V., Blount, H.P., & Moscow, H. (1978). *Educational psychology: An introduction*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company.
- Rosenberg, M. (1965). *Society and the adolescent self-image*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Takata, T. (2003). Self-enhancement and self-criticism in Japanese culture. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 34, 542-551.
- Tamura, S., & Ishikuma, T. (2002) Self-esteem and help seeking preference: Junior high school teachers in Japan. *Japanese Journal of Educational Psychology*, 50, 291-300. (In Japanese with English abstract)
- Ueno, Y., Kamise, Y., Matsui, Y., & Fukutomi, M. (1994). Conformity and psychological distance in adolescent friendship. *Japanese Journal of Educational Psychology*, 42, 21-28. (In Japanese with English abstract)
- Ueyama, Y., & Yonezawa, Y. (2006). An attempt to construct scales of self-consciousness of evaluation by others: The relations to interpersonal motivations and interpersonal stress. *Journal of Center for Educational Research and Training, Faculty of Education, Wakayama University*, 16, 135-144. (In Japanese)
- Yamada, T. (2006). The effects of change in Japanese trainee teacher's communication style on class participation: Through exploratory action research. *Journal of International Student Center, Hokkaido University*, 10, 102-124. (In Japanese)