Learning Skills Required for Expatriate Cross-Cultural Adaptation: An Intercultural Competency Taxonomy Based on Experiential Learning Theory

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Abstract

A great number of skills necessary for expatriates’ adaptation on overseas assignments have been empirically discovered since Cleveland, Mangone, and Adams (1960) catalogued the intercultural skills of those who work abroad. However, most examinations of these skills in the field of cross-cultural and expatriate management studies have been separate from expatriates’ learning that importantly concerns skill development. Furthermore, such expatriate skills in that domain have not been conceptually organized and assimilated with the social sciences. Thus, the primary purpose of this study is to understand such expatriates’ skills from a standpoint of expatriates’ learning in line with the framework of the social sciences. In the present study, the intercultural skills of this group were theoretically categorized using Kolb’s (1984) experiential learning theory. As an extension of this theoretical work, I attempted to propose expatriates’ adaptation strategies in the framework of an expatriate competency taxonomy based on that theory. These adaptation strategies may provide new insights into expatriates’ learning styles from a perspective that involves the interplay between persons and their environment.

Key words: Expatriates’ learning styles and modes, intercultural skills, expatriates’ adaptation strategies, and Experiential learning theory.
Introduction

The successful adaptation of expatriates may depend on how well they can learn from experience in overseas assignments (Ratiu, 1983; Porter & Tansky, 1999; Spreitzer, McCall, & Mahoney, 1997). As a product of this learning, expatriates can acquire essential skills and knowledge in a series of numerous challenging jobs and situations (Spreitzer and el at, 1997). The accumulation of experiential learning entails such skill development necessary for effective managerial behavior in work settings (McCall, Lombardo, & Morrison, 1988; Streitzer, el at, 1997). More generally, the continuous process of learning from experience generates the development of skills and knowledge properly suited to the specific job demanded by the surrounding environments (Kolb & Wolfe, 1981; Kolb, 1984; Boyatzis & Kolb, 1991). This acquisition of job skills is undoubtedly reflected in the primary process of human adaptation to the external and internal world (Kolb, 1984). It also involves the facilitation and development of a general class of more particular skills necessarily required from proximate environmental circumstances (Kolb, 1984).

For over 40 years, however, many studies have focused on discovering end-state skills of expatriates’ adaptation or effectiveness, which are not linked to expatriates’ experiential learning. Outstanding reviews of intercultural skills that have been done by Dinges and Baldwin (1996), Benson (1978), and David (1972) helpfully instruct us about such a research trend in the domain of cross-cultural and expatriate management studies. Consequently, the myriad expatriate job skills required for successful adaptation or effective performance has come to be postulated (Leiba-O’Sullivan, 1999) with a lack of integrative discussion concerning the involvement of expatriates’ experiential learning.
These discovered skills, moreover, have not been well organized or conceptually classified with a social theory (Dineges & Baldwin, 1996). Some researchers such as Ronen (1986), Teagarden and Gordon (1995), or Ones and Viswesvaran (1997), usefully analyzed the past studies of successful expatriate or sojourners attributes including their intercultural competences. The main focus of their examinations, however, concerns a comprehensive categorization of these attributes for training (Ronen, 1986), corporate selection strategies and expatriate success (Teagarden and Gordon, 1995), and personality determinants of expatriate job success (Ones and Viswesvaran, 1997). Importantly, Dineges and Baldwin (1996) argue that research on expatriates' intercultural skills may suffer from serious limitation because of “its insularity from the social sciences and the lack of interdisciplinary perspective in design, measurement, and interpretation of results” (p.121). They insist that this limitation will have to be overcome.

To understand which skills are essentially needed for expatriate adaptation or intercultural effectiveness, it seems to be indispensable to examine these skills from the standpoint of experiential learning along with a sound theory that rigorously conceptualizes its process and relevant constructs. By using Kolb's (1984) Experiential Learning Theory (ELT), this study therefore aims at comprehensive understanding of expatriates’ skills in light of expatriates’ learning. Towards this end, I will first attempt to organize and categorize intercultural skills that were empirically found to be crucial elements in expatriate adaptation or intercultural effectiveness, based on the ELT. Then, as an extension of this theoretical taxonomy, I will try to propose expatriates’ adaptation strategies by incorporating the perspective of the transaction between the person and the environment. Such an approach calls for a crucial consideration—that of home learning
styles and their impact on expatriate experience in their adopted countries. This second discussion may well provide insight into those adaptation strategies from a standpoint of learning styles as well as illustrating concomitant intercultural competencies. Before beginning this analysis working from previous empirical results, it will be useful to briefly discuss Kolb’s ELT.

**Kolb’s Experiential Learning Theory**

Among learning theories, Kolb’s ELT is one of the most influential theories in the area of learning and educational management (Kayes, 2002; Yuen & Lee, 1994). In addition to such a disciplinary area, the number of studies about ELT, as well as research citing this theory, has been over 1,600 and has appeared in various social and medical science fields such as: Education, Computer Science, Medicine, Nursing, Psychology, Accountancy and Law (Kolb & Kolb, 2002). This fact enables us to believe that Kolb’s ELT continues to positively and widely contribute to the development of social sciences; and, that it has done so significantly in the past.

**The experiential learning process and cycle**

ELT represents Kolb’s assimilation and integration of the experiential works of Dewey, Lewin, Piaget, James, and Freire. Kolb (1984) argues that “learning is a holistic process of adaptation to the world” (p.31). His experiential learning model embodies this proposition and encompasses the totality of the human learning process whereby experience importantly plays a central role in the foundation for feeling, reflecting, thinking, and acting (Kolb, 1984). Kolb (1984) explains that persons, when learning, touch the bases of four adaptive learning modes that form the experiential learning cycle
(Mainemelis, Boyatzis, & Kolb, 2002). Immediate concrete experiences (CE) make the basis for observation and reflection (RO), which subsequently transforms the apprehensive experiences which are then assimilated into abstract conceptualization (AC), from which active experimentation (AE) is deduced. This active experimentation then entails creating here-and-now concrete experiences. When the cycle is completed, it begins anew. In the ELT learning cycle, the CE mode is dialectically opposed to the AC mode as a way of grasping experiences, while the RO mode is dialectically confronted with the AE mode in a transformation process of such grasping experiences (Kolb, 1984).

Four basic learning abilities and learning styles

To be an effective learner, the ELT tells us that the person is required to use each of the four fundamental learning abilities at the base of these four adaptive modes (Kolb, 1984). CE abilities call for being involved in experiences and dealing with immediate human situations in a subjective manner. The emphasis of CE abilities is to employ feeling, intuitively understanding present reality, and sensitivities to peoples’ feelings and values. Those with CE abilities are good at relating to people with an open-minded approach, value interpersonal relations, and perform well in unstructured and ambiguous situations. In contrast, AC abilities require using logic, ideas, and concepts. The AC abilities focus on thinking, analyzing, and building general theories. Those with AC abilities are good at making systematic plans, manipulating abstract symbols, and using quantitative analysis. Precision, the rigor of analyzing ideas, the scientific approach, and the quality of a neat conceptual model are most valuable to such people.

RO abilities require understanding the meaning of thoughts and situations by carefully watching and listening. The emphasis of RO abilities is to use reflective
understanding to uncover how and why things happen. Those with RO abilities are good at imagining the meaning of situations and ideas, seeing things from different perspectives, and appreciating different opinions. They value patience, impartiality, and considered, thoughtful judgment. In contrast, AE abilities demand actively influencing people and changing situations. The focus of AE abilities is to make practical applications and to be pragmatic with what works. Those with AE abilities are willing to take risks to get things done and seek to have responsibility for objectives and accomplishments. They are good at taking actions to influence external environments and like to see results.

A combination of two adaptive learning modes forms the four basic types of learning styles, each style possessing and reflecting, concomitant learning abilities (Kolb, 1984; Kolb & Fry, 1975). The Diverger learning style specializes in the two modes CE and RO, while the Converger learning style specializes in the two modes AC and AE. The Assimilator learning style specializes in AC and RO, whereas the Accommodator learning style specializes in CE and AE. These learning styles, significantly also, result from the interplay between the person and the environment (Kolb, 1984). Thus, persons possess a different type of learning style on account of their individual characteristics; while at the same time, learning styles are socially, culturally, and physically affected by the surrounding environmental traits.

Learning styles and skills as two adaptive competencies

Learning 'styles' involve four learning abilities and refers to generic adaptive competencies to the environment, while 'skills' encompass more situational, specific competencies required for effective performance on a variety of tasks (Kolb, 1984;
Boyatzis & Kolb, 1991 and 1995). With regard to the relationship between learning styles and skills, learning styles describe "higher-level learning heuristics that facilitate the development of a generic class of more specific skills" demanded from immediate environments (Kolb, 1984, p.93). Several studies largely support the correlation between the learning styles as generic adaptive competencies and the skills as specific adaptive competencies (Kolb, 1984; Kolb & Wolfe, 1981; Boyatzis & Kolb, 1991 and 1995; Mainemelis, Boyatzis, & Kolb, 2002). A typology of such skills, therefore, agrees with the learning style descriptions of ELT as follows (Boyatzis & Kolb, 1991 and 1995).

The CE mode of learning encompasses the development of an area of the interpersonal (CE) skill such as: relationship skills, leadership skills, and the skills of helping and understanding people (Kolb, 1984; Boyatzis & Kolb, 1991 and 1995; Rainey, Hekelman, Galazka, & Kolb, 1993). The RO mode involves the development of an area of the perceptual (RO) skill such as: sense-making skills, information gathering skills, and information analysis skills. The AC mode of is associated with the development of an area of the analytical (AC) skill such as: theory building skills, quantitative analysis skills, and technology management skills. Finally, the AE mode includes the development of an area of the behavioral (AE) skill such as: goal setting skills, action skills, and initiative skills. Overall, Figure 1 describes Kolb’s experiential learning model.

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Insert Figure 1 about here

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**Taxonomy of Expatriates’ Intercultural Competency based on ELT**
Here, I will classify expatriates’ intercultural competencies into one of ELT learning modes or styles. Based on the results of past empirical research presented in the cross-cultural and expatriate management fields, Table 1 summarizes the important intercultural skills and abilities of international business people, including expatriates in multinational corporations, adult workers assigned to foreign countries, as well as young executives attending business schools who previously experienced overseas assignments.

Insert Table 1 about here

To facilitate theoretical categorization of intercultural competencies based on ELT, I will make 12 clusters that respectively encompass similar traits of the past expatriates’ skills and abilities that have been empirically found to be important for adaptation or effective performance in foreign assignments. These clusters will help to construct the intercultural competency taxonomy.

**Human relationship skills**

The first cluster is labeled “human relationship skills.” These skills are representative of one of the most essential intercultural competencies, possibly encompassing the following skills and abilities described in the literature, such as: dealing with people (Byrbes, 1965), relationships with locals and colleagues (Stein, 1966), relational skills or abilities (Hays, 1971; Arthur & Bennett, 1995; Sinangil & Ones, 1997), not task orientation (Ruben & Healey, 1979), not self orientation (Ruben & Kealey, 1979), relationship building (Hawes & Kealey, 1979, 1981), relationship with people (Raitu, 1983), out-of-self orientation (Kealey, 1989), social adroitness (Kealey, 1989),
social orientation (Black, 1990), conflict resolution (Black, 1990), resolving inter-
member conflict (Black & Porter, 1990), interpersonal relationships (Stening & Hammer,
1992), interpersonal skills (Cui & Awa, 1992; Clarke & Hammer, 1995), having affiliates
and friends (Dunbar, 1992), cooperative opposed to overly competitive (Tung, 1998), and
sociability (Caligiuri, 2000).

The human relationship skill that contains the intercultural competencies
described above seems to be associated with the CE learning mode of ELT. As discussed
in the previous section, those who specialize in the CE learning mode are proficient in
relating to people in an open-minded way and value human relationships with people
orientation rather than task orientation. They can be harmonized with their surroundings
and people and perform well in unstructured and ambiguous situations. They are also
good at dealing with proximate human situations. Evidence of the empirical ELT
research describes that there is a significant, positive correlation between the CE learning
mode and the development of the CE skill of ELT (Boyatzis & Kolb, 1991; Mainemelis,
Boyatzis, & Kolb, 2002). Consequently, the human relationship skill in expatriates’
intercultural contexts can be categorized into the Experiencing competency based on
ELT; thus, expatriates who show their preference for the CE mode of learning will tend
to develop the human relationship skills in those contextual environments.

Caring, respect, and understanding people of different cultural backgrounds

The past research on expatriates’ skills illustrates that the skill area of caring,
respect, and understanding people involves an important component of intercultural
competencies. These skills contain the following descriptions, such as: cultural empathy,
(Cleveland el at, 1960; Stoner, Aram, & Rubin, 1972; Cui & Van Den Berg, 1991; Cui &
Awa, 1992), sense of humor (Stoner et al, 1972), courtesy (Harris, 1973), interpersonal respect (Hawes & Kealey, 1979), respect (Ruben & Kealey, 1979; Hawes & Kealey, 1981), intercultural sensitivity (Hawes & Kealey, 1979), sensitivity to host (Hawes & Kealey, 1981), caring (Kealey, 1989), understanding language and non-verbal behavior (Dunbar, 992), extra-cultural openness (Arthur & Bennett, 1995; Sinangil & Ones, 1997), and greater sensitivity to needs of others (Tung, 1998).

The skill comprising caring, respect, and understanding people as depicted here appears to be linked with the two modes of learning: the CE and RO modes, the combination of which generates the divergent learning style. The CE mode is associated with interpersonal orientation. In addition, those with CE learning abilities are sensitive to peoples’ feelings and values, and can understand here and now reality intuitively with open-mindedness. These learning abilities of the CE mode have a positive effect on the development of helping and understanding others (Kolb, 1984; Boyatzis & Kolb, 1991). The RO mode calls for a considered understanding of experiences through careful observation. Those who prefer to learn by this mode are skillful at seeing things from various perspectives and appreciating different ideas. Moreover, they value impartiality and thoughtful judgment. Combining the attributes of the CE and RO modes enables us to classify this cluster of skills as representative of the Diverging competency. Thus, expatriates who specialize more in the CE and RO modes will show a greater level of the skill development of caring, respect, and understanding people in intercultural situations.

Action and initiative skills

The next cluster refers to the skill of action and initiative. Four studies have identified these skills as being necessarily important for expatriates’ adaptation, whereas
one study by Clarke and Hammer (1995) has reported a negative impact for such skills. As a positive effect, the action and initiative skill includes: not being passive (Thompson & English, 1964), abilities to change bad situations (Hautaloma & Kaman, 1975), risk-taking (Rapiu, 1983), action-orientation (Kealey, 1989), initiative (Hawes & Kealey, 1979 and 1981; Dunbar, 1992), and extraversion orientation (Parker & McEvoy, 1993). Clarke and Hammer (1995), however, reported initiative and self-confidence as a negative predictor upon examining managers in a U.S. multinational corporation who were assigned in Japan. Their result is worth studying for what it reveals about the relationship between skill development and immediate cultural influence in that the development of certain individual skills may depend on proximate cultural contexts whose characteristics are necessarily congruent with such capabilities. This perspective is founded on a notion that learning and skills are affected by the interplay between the person and the environment. It will be discussed in a later section.

The cluster of action and initiative skill describes skills that require people to actively behave in an intercultural situation. This orientation agrees with the characteristics of the AE learning mode. In ELT, this AE mode involves the ability to actively affect people and to change situations. Those who specialize in the AE mode willingly take risks in order to complete their objectives. Although the extraversion that Parker & McEvoy (1993) reported is a description of a personality trait in Jung’s theory, such extraversion is also conceptually and empirically related to the AE mode (Kolb, 1984; Margerison & Lewis, 1979). The AE learning mode is also significantly associated individually with the action skill and the initiative skill of ELT (Boyatzis & Kolb, 1991) as well as with the area of the AE skill (Mainemelis, Boyatzis, & Kolb, 2002). Thus, the
cluster of action and initiative skill can be put into the Acting competency. If expatriates are oriented more toward the AE mode as their learning preference, they will tend to exhibit higher levels of development within the action and initiative skill described in the literature of expatriates' intercultural competencies.

Listening and observation skills

Listening and observation skills as one cluster represent four research findings as important intercultural skills in the past cross-cultural and expatriate literature: listening skills (Hawes & Kealey, 1979, 1981), adopt a listening mode (Tung, 1998), and observation and listening (Ratiu, 1983). Communication skills that several researchers emphasized as essential competencies in that domain subsume the listening, watching, and observing skills. As such, the communication skills might belong to this cluster here. With regard to a learning perspective, however, it makes a difference to focus on the listening and observation skill that requires obtaining information for internal reflection.

In ELT, the RO mode is dialectically opposite to the AE mode in the human learning process (Kolb, 1984). The RO learning mode calls for understanding the meaning of ideas and situations by carefully listening and watching. Kolb and Wolfe (1981) reported that the skill of listening to others is significantly correlated with the RO mode (Kolb, 1984). The skill cluster here, therefore, can be classified into the Reflecting competency based on ELT. It is quite obvious that expatriates who prefer to learn in the RO mode will develop the listening and observation skill in intercultural environments.

Tolerance of ambiguity and stress management skills

Tolerance of ambiguity and stress management skills are essential for overseas adaptation or intercultural effectiveness. This cluster refers to emotional mutuality to
tolerate stress (Stein, 1966), patience and tolerance (Harris, 1973), abilities to cope with ambiguity in personal relations (Hautaloma & Kaman, 1975), self-control under stress (Hawes & Kealey, 1979), tolerance of ambiguity (Ruben & Kealey, 1979), stress management (Hawes & Kealey, 1981; Stening & Hammer, 1992), dealing with stress (Dean & Popp, 1990; Ratiu, 1983), and dealing with unfamiliar situations (Dean & Popp, 1990). The cluster of this ability involves an internal capacity that requires individuals under ambiguous and stressful situations to make sense, to control their minds, and to remain patient. This ability seems to be associated with two modes of learning: the RO and the CE. In ELT, those with the RO mode value patience. The RO mode of learning also compels persons to remain reserved in situations rather than to take quick action. In addition, the CE learning mode necessitates functioning well in unstructured and ambiguous situations. The characteristic abilities of these two learning modes seem to suggest that the two skills discussed here belong to the Diverging competency, whose style of learning is made by the CE and the RO modes. Consequently, if expatriates like to learn by feeling and observing, they will develop the tolerance of ambiguity and stress management skill in intercultural situations.

Interaction skills

Two research studies point out that the following skills are significant for expatriate adjustment and intercultural effectiveness: interaction posture (Ruben & Kealey, 1979) and interaction with host countries (Black & Gregersen, 1991). These skills can be labeled the interaction skill. They seem to be similar to the human relationship skill but tend more to emphasize action orientation between people more significantly than do the human relationship skill. This cluster will, therefore, be
characterized as skills that derive from a combination of both the CE mode and the AE mode, a combination productive of the accommodative learning style. Consequently, the interaction skill will henceforth be categorized into the Accommodating competency. This perspective enables the prediction that expatriates who possess the accommodating style of learning will most likely excel in the development of the interaction skill in intercultural situations.

Management skills

Three studies reveal that management and administrative jobs skills are related to intercultural effectiveness or adaptation. These four investigations use terms such as: contains organizational skills (Cleveland et al, 1960), maintaining a closely-knit organization (Black & Porter, 1990), and general management (Ishida, 1992). Those skills can be labeled as the management skill. The management skill also seems to be connected to the two modes of learning: the AE and the CE modes. Again, the AE mode calls for actively affecting people and emphasizes both practical applications and pragmatic approaches. Those with the AE mode are willing to have responsibilities for accomplishments. In addition, the management skill entails the CE mode because it requires a competency for dealing with people (Kolb, 1984). In an empirical study of adult development in two career fields: engineering and social work; managerial jobs in engineering call for more interpersonal and behavioral skills, while the administrative jobs of social workers who have already developed the interpersonal skill require more behavioral skills (Kolb, 1984; Kolb & Wolf, 1981). Thus, the management skill of expatriates is classified into the Accommodating competency that involves the learning
modes of both the AE and the CE modes. Expatriates who prefer to learn by doing as well as by feeling will develop the management skill in intercultural situations.

**Analytical skills**

One study shows that analytical skills are important for the effective performance of top executive Japanese expatriates in foreign assignments (Ishida, 1992). The analytical skill is strongly connected to the AC mode of learning that requires people to use concepts and logic by analyzing, thinking, and building general theories. Empirical evidence supports this correlation (Kolb, 1984; Kolb & Wolfe, 1981; Boyatzis & Kolb, 1991; Mainemelis, Boyatzis, & Kolb, 2002). Consequently, the analytical skill of expatriates is obviously categorized into the *Analyzing competency*; thus, expatriates with the AC mode will show high levels of the analytical skill in intercultural situations.

**Decision skills**

Ishida (1992) also reports that the decision skill is crucial for the effective performance of the Japanese top-executive expatriates. In ELT, this skill is linked with the AE and the AC modes that create the convergent learning style (Kolb, 1984). Based on the result from empirical research about the relationship between learning styles and performance competencies (Kolb & Wolfe, 1981), Kolb (1984) argues that the convergent learning style is related to decision skills such as: “creating new ways of thinking and doing, experimenting with new ideas, choosing the best solution to problems, setting goals, and making decisions” (p.94-95). The decision skill of expatriates, therefore, can be put into the *Converging competency* based on ELT. Expatriates with the convergent learning style will highly develop the decision skill in intercultural situations.

**Communication and language skills**
Much research shows that communication skills and abilities are linked with
effective adaptation in foreign assignment. Such skills are described using the following
terms: language skills (Hautaloma & Kaman, 1975), communication (Black, 1990;
Stening & Hammer, 1992), communication competence (Cui & Van Den Berg, 1991),
communication behavior (Cui & Van Den Berg, 1991), English language skills (Ishida,
1992), and language fluency (Shaffer, Harrison, & Gilley, 1999). Communication and
language skills seem to be more complex and necessitate all of four learning modes in the
learning cycle: speaking, that is acting, listening, thinking, and feeling. An example of
this notion is the listening skill, which can be classified into the Reflecting competency.
As another example, interpersonal communication could be categorized as an
Experiencing competency in that it seems to emphasize human relationships. Needless
to say, communication also requires people to make concepts, ideas, or thoughts in a
verbal form that is socially acceptable so that it involves the AC mode of learning.
Consequently, the communication and language skill as intercultural competence here
should be treated as an independent component of the intercultural competence taxonomy
by ELT.

Technical job skills

Technical job skills as well as job knowledge are needed for expatriates’
adaptation or effective performance. Such skills are described as technical skills
(Cleveland et al, 1960), professional, technical, or manual skills (Byrnes, 1965), job
competence (Stein, 1966), job ability factors (Hays, 1971), job skills (Hautaloma &
Kaman, 1975), orientation to knowledge (Ruben & Kealey, 1979), technical
competencies (Tung, 1981), technical expertise (Stone, 1991), and job knowledge and
motivation (Arthur & Bennett, 1995; Sinangil & Ones, 1997). The examination of skill
categorization by ELT requires more specific information concerning which
professional area or field such technical jobs lie within, because the specialization of
learning mode varies according to particular areas. For example, the skill development
of technical engineering involves the converging style of learning, while that of personnel
jobs tend to be related to the diverging learning style (Kolb, 1984). The skill of sales and
marketing requires the specialization of the accommodative ability, whereas that of
professional research concerns the assimilative ability (Kolb, 1984). Thus, the technical
job skill here should also be dealt with as a separate entity from intercultural competence
taxonomy of ELT.

Adaptability and flexibility

Adaptability and flexibility are regarded as important abilities for expatriates’
successful adaptation. They encompass flexibility-rigidity (Thomson & English, 1964;
Stoner et al., 1972), interpersonal flexibility (Hawes & Kealey, 1979, 1981), abilities to
adapt (Tung, 1981; Stone, 1991), cultural flexibility (Black, 1990), flexibility as a
personal trait (Cui & Awa, 1992), and flexibility/adaptability (Arthur & Bennett, 1995;
Sinangil & Ones, 1997).

With the exception of the communication and technical job skills, the previous
skill clusters all involve the specialization of one or two modes of ELT learning that will
develop those relevant skill groups. However, the final abilities of adaptability and
flexibility may entail the integration of one or both of the dual dialectics of the AC-CE
modes and the AE-AC modes. As a result of an integrative learning process, the person
who has developed three or four learning modes will not only combine those learning
abilities, but also may tend to flexibly adapt to a learning situation that demands use of its concomitant learning mode. In ELT, Kolb (1984) introduces the concept of adaptive flexibility, the capability that a person can adapt and be flexible in a variety of four different learning situations. One recent ELT research study proves that there is a significant relationship between the balanced learning style; that is, the integrated learning style, and adaptive flexibility in terms of the AC-CE dimension (Mainemelis, Boyatzis, & Kolb, 2002).

The application of adaptive flexibility to the expatriates’ competency on ELT taxonomy will rest upon how expatriates’ intercultural situations are analogous or correspond to variation with four learning situations defined in ELT. Several cross-cultural ELT studies suggest that learning styles may vary from one culture to another (Katz, 1988; Hanpol, 1987; Sanders, 1988; Hayes & Allinson, 1988; Hoppe, 1990; Rhodes, 1990; Algee and Bowers, 1993; Yuen and Lee, 1994; Auyeng & Sands, 1996; McMurray, 1997; Ruksasuk, 2000); therefore, there exist four types of learning environments over the world that emphasize the development of particular learning styles matched to such environments (Yamazaki, 2002). One could infer that expatriates’ intercultural situations are subsumed into various learning situations that involve the learning environments of ELT. Consequently, the abilities of adaptability and flexibility can be categorized into the adaptive flexibility competency. Expatriates who show a higher degree of adaptive flexibility in their learning situations will also be more flexible in adapting to expatriate intercultural situations. In addition, if expatriates express their learning preference for balanced orientation in the dimension of the AC and the CE modes, they will demonstrate adaptive flexibility in that dimension.
In summary, the expatriates' skills and abilities for adaptation and intercultural effectiveness have been categorized into eight ELT competencies. With the exception of the adaptive flexibility competency, Figure 2 illustrates the relationship between ELT learning modes and seven intercultural competencies linked to the aforementioned clusters. In an intercultural competency circle as depicted in Figure 2, the inner circle represents one or two learning modes reflected within ELT, while the outer circle refers to the seven competencies.

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Insert Figure 2 about here

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**Adaptation Strategies from ELT Perspectives**

This section will aim at producing expatriates' adaptation strategies in cross-cultural environments in accordance with the intercultural competency taxonomy based on ELT. As an initial step toward this end, my discussion concerns examination of a relationship between learning styles and environmental demand. It will contribute to the making of a conceptual framework about expatriates' adaptation strategies that can be usefully derived from the ELT competency taxonomy. To facilitate this discussion, I will focus more intensely on ELT learning styles or modes as a representation of more higher-level learning devices facilitating the development of a generic class of more specific skills. Two adaptation strategies, then, will be hypothetically made for expatriates' adaptation in intercultural environments.

**Learning styles and environmental demands**
Individual learning styles and skills: that is, generic adaptive competencies and specific adaptive competencies, involve interplay between people and the world (Kolb, 1984; Boyatzis & Kolb, 1991, 1995). Kolb (1984) further explains that such interplay shapes learning styles at five levels: psychological types, educational specialization, professional career, current job, and adaptive competencies (Kolb, Boyatzis, & Mainemelis, 2001). In addition to these five levels, a recent ELT study indicates that the culture of country around people is the sixth level of interplay between them: namely, there are four modes or styles of learning among cross-cultural environments (Yamazaki, 2002). The basic learning styles of most people are developed at those levels by emphasizing some learning modes over others, and as has been discussed previously, refer to the four fundamental styles of learning (Kolb, 1984). This perspective about the involvement of the interplay is consonant with a concept of Lewin’s theoretical formulation, $B = f(P, E)$ which indicates that “behavior is a function of the person and the environment” (Kolb, 1984, p.36).

When we focus on the macro level of an environmental factor; that is, culture as the sixth level, expatriates are conceived to have experience with two kinds of cultural components: the monoculture or single-culture of the home country and the cross-culture of the host one. The home country seems to originally affect the creation of the basic learning styles of expatriates, while the host country that involves the cross-cultural environment is supposed to have a great effect on their fundamental learning styles already developed at home. As a result, this second cross-cultural component may possibly impose a change or reinforce their basic learning styles and may entail the development of undeveloped intercultural skills as specific intercultural competencies for
expatriates' adaptation to the cross-cultural environment. Furthermore, this relationship between the learning style or competencies and the intercultural environment may suggest that a dominant learning style or an important intercultural competency which prevailed in one country will be repetitive of environmental characteristics of learning in that country. In other words, knowing the learning style or the skill emphasized in expatriates' intercultural situations would allow us to infer a type of environmental characteristic or demand in light of learning styles or skills in those contexts. The expatriates' learning styles in cross-cultural circumstances, however, has not been examined in scholarly domains yet, but we could conjecture that cultures are such powerful forces as such would drive expatriates to adequately respond to transitional environmental demands for their own survival.

This theoretical perspective about the impact of environmental change on learning styles in culture seems to be supported by the following two studies. These studies concern the relationship between learning styles and the changing demands of professional careers and jobs as a more micro level than culture. They suggest that the changing environmental demands from the home country to the host country be regarded as analogous to that of changing careers from one job to another. Clarke, Oshiro, Wong, and Yeung (1977 in Kolb, 1984) showed that the learning styles of MBA students and accounting and marketing professionals were changed from the convergent learning style toward the accommodative learning style, according to the transition of job requirements from highly technical tasks to interpersonal and managerial ones. Similarly, Gypen (1980) illustrated that change of job demands directs the orientation of learning styles over the career path of engineering as well as social workers. Along with the change of
their learning styles, the competencies that were required in the transition of their careers were also developed accordingly (Gypen, 1980; Kolb & Wolfe, 1981). Both studies substantiate the influence of changing environmental demands upon learning styles from the view of professional career and jobs. That is, changed learning styles and developed competencies in those studies are reflected into the environmental characteristics of learning. Consequently, to the extent that culture affects the development of learning styles, the change of culture as an environmental component may have an impact on expatriates’ learning styles and skills to be fit to the demand of the cross-cultural environment of the host country. Importantly, in addition, expatriates’ learning styles and competencies that should be developed in their intercultural situations are embodied as a response to the demand of environmental characteristics of learning.

Relationship between the person and the environment in cross-cultural studies

The importance of interaction or cultural fit between the person and the environment is also pointed out in the domain of cross-cultural and expatriate studies with regard to intercultural adaptation, adjustment, selection, and training (Harris, 1975; Tung, 1981; Hannigan, 1990; Searle & Ward, 1990; Ward & Chang, 1997; Deller, 1997). Tung (1981), for example, argues that the lowest failure rates of expatriate assignments are derived from expatriates’ selection in accordance with different situational environments. The proper fit between the expatriates’ attributes and the environmental circumstances does matter as an effective adaptation strategy whether they fail or succeed in expatriates’ assignments. Ward and Chang (1997) found in their empirical study that discrepancies between sojourns’ personalities and host cultural norms are correlated with psychological distress in terms of the dimension between extraversion and introversion.
Concerning this Jungian personality trait, the AE mode of learning is associated with extraversion while the RO mode of learning is linked with introversion (Kolb, 1984). It could be seen that the matched or mismatched learning modes or styles between the person and the environment tend to influence cross-cultural adjustments. This consequence suggests that those who cannot develop undeveloped modes of learning in new cross-cultural situations would be maladapted to such intercultural context. Here, it seems to be postulated that a primary adaptation strategy is to master undeveloped modes of learning and skills that are demanded from the intercultural environment.

Intercultural adaptation strategies

In order to generate expatriate adaptation strategies to be fit to intercultural situations, it is important to analyze expatriates' environmental characteristics with regard to learning styles or modes. The previous discussion indicates that expatriates' transitional environments may result in the change of expatriates' learning styles and influence the development of their intercultural competencies. Moreover, leaning styles or intercultural competencies that are emphasized in expatriates' cross-cultural environments may be representative of their environmental characteristics of learning. These assumptions will enable us to examine types of expatriates' environmental characteristics of learning and, thus, to produce proper expatriates' adaptation strategies in the cross-cultural environment. In order to understand these environmental characteristics of learning, I will utilize the intercultural competency concentric-circle as described in Figure 3.

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Insert Figure 3 about here
This concentric circle has four layers: the center circle represents four fundamental learning modes; the next layer refers to the expatriates’ intercultural competencies; the third layer describes the home country; and the outermost circle indicates the host country. The number in parenthesis next to the home country shows how many times the cross-cultural and expatriate studies related to intercultural competencies were conducted there. This competency concentric-circle, however, is composed of the past results of the various empirical studies that were conducted by different research designs and purposes, different demographic samples, different instruments and interview protocols, etc.; therefore, a result of one cross-cultural study may be precisely incomparable with that of another cross-cultural study on the same table. Yet, analyses of these results in the competency concentric-circle would provide us with a unique view that there is a particular pattern to be gleaned as expatriates’ environmental characteristics of learning. According to such characteristics of learning that will be examined, two kinds of adaptation strategies are explored in the presentation below: the general adaptation strategy and the special adaptation strategy. The former strategy seems to be applicable to expatriates in general and consists of three classifications that are congruent to three modes of learning: the CE, the AE, and the RO, while the latter strategy, which is associated with the AC mode, may be employed only for Japanese expatriates in particular.

(A) General adaptation strategy

The concentric-circle of intercultural ELT competencies may indicate that three learning modes: the CE, the AE, and the RO modes, are generally critical for the
expatriates’ adaptation of cross-cultural contexts, whereas the AC mode is especially essential for the adaptation of Japanese expatriates. Of these three modes, furthermore, the CE mode appears to be the most important for the intercultural adaptation of expatriates in common because it is concerned with the development of three intercultural competencies: the experiencing, the diverging, and the accommodating competencies, all or some of which are required for expatriates to learn to ensure their cross-cultural adaptation, no matter which home country they come from. Perhaps, the qualitative study of Ratiu (1983) about 250 young executives attending MBA programs would support the importance of the CE mode in the cross-cultural environment. He illustrates that the most international manager, one who is very adaptable, has a tendency to learn from his or her international experiences of proximate, specific situations and to be concerned with descriptive and interpretive orientations of new experiences rather than with explanations and reasoning orientations. Distinctly, his argument demonstrates the significance of the CE mode in expatriates’ intercultural situations. The analysis of the competency concentric-circle with the result of Ratiu’s study, therefore, makes it possible to deduce that the cross-cultural environment of expatriates generally tends to hold, in trait, the demand of the CE learning mode such as societal, intercultural, human orientations rather than as task, rational, and analytical ones. Accordingly, this environmental characteristic of the CE mode of learning would allow us to propose the first general adaptation strategy. It refers to the strategy by which mastery of the CE learning mode for expatriates’ intercultural adaptation in the cross-cultural environment becomes possible.
It should be noted that there are two forms to employ this strategy if we focus our attention to the environmental characteristic of learning of the home country. One form concerns a transitional approach in which expatriates need to change learning styles or develop undeveloped learning styles. In this case, there is a mismatch between the learning style originally emphasized in the home and those in the cross-cultural environment. The other form refers to a reinforcing approach. This approach involves reinforcing or maintaining the learning styles of expatriates initially developed in the home country.

Examination of Western expatriates' learning styles or modes may suggest the transitional approach toward the CE general adaptation strategy, while Japanese expatriates seem to apply the reinforcing approach to such strategy. The Western world traditionally values the rational mode of thought that concerns analysis, logic, and reasoning (Nugent, 1981; Hall, 1976; Hayashi, 1994). This tendency is reflected in the evidence of several ELT studies about Americans, showing that American businesspersons and business major students are strongly leaned toward the AC mode as well as relatively to the AE mode, the combination of which makes the converging learning style (Boyatzis & Mainemelis, 2000; Kolb & Fry, 1975; Geiger & Pint, 1991). Although there might be variation among Western countries, Western expatriates seem to be inclined to the AC mode as their learning preference, reflective of the traits of Western value and philosophy. The cross-cultural environment of expatriates generally stresses the CE learning mode; thus, Western expatriates would be associated with the transitional approach in this context. In contrast, Japanese expatriates appear to involve the reinforcing approach toward the CE general adaptation strategy. McMurray (1998)
reports that Japanese economic and science major students tend to be leaned toward the CE and the RO modes, in spite of their majors that should emphasize more the analytical mode. The result of this learning tendency is related to Japanese norms and cultures such as; *amae*: that is, interdependence with people (Doi, 1979), intuitive mode (Nugent, 1981), and values of caution, deliberation, and silence (Linowes, 1993). Consequently, it could be reasonable to conclude that the original learning preference of Japanese expatriates may possibly be inclined to the CE and the RO learning mode. This characteristic of Japanese learning style calls for Japanese expatriates to utilize the reinforcing approach to the CE general adaptation strategy.

Like the CE mode, the AE and the RO modes of learning also appear to be required in general for expatriates’ adaptation in intercultural environments, according to the intercultural competency concentric-circle of Figure 3. American, Canadian, and Japanese expatriates are associated with the AE mode of learning and its two competencies: the acting and accommodating ones. The RO mode and its two competencies such as the reflecting and the diverging competencies seems to be crucial for the intercultural adaptation of American, Canadian, French, and Japanese expatriates. This fact can also be congruent with the argument in the research of Ratiu (1983). He discusses that the most international manager employs “considerable observation and listening, experimentation and risk-taking, and above all, active involvement with others” (p.141). His finding makes obvious that these two modes of the AE and the RO under a central involvement of the CE mode have essential elements for expatriates’ adaptation in general. Consequently, it may be inferred that the cross-cultural environment of expatriates generally demands the possession of the AE and the RO learning modes as
contextual characteristics. The environmental characteristics of these two modes would lead to produce the AE and the RO general adaptation strategies respectively. These two strategies require expatriates to master the AE and the RO learning modes for intercultural adaptation in the cross-cultural environment.

A type of approach to these two strategies varies with Western or Japanese expatriates on account of their different preference of learning. As discussed, Western expatriates appear to learn by thinking and acting; thus, they would be required to take the transitional approach to the RO general adaptation strategy but to apply the reinforcing approach to the AE strategy. In contrast, since Japanese expatriates may display their learning preferences of the CE and the RO modes of learning, the transitional approach to the AE strategy would be effective for Japanese expatriates, whereas the reinforcing approach to the RO strategy would be useful for them.

(B) Special adaptation strategy

While the general adaptation strategy may be widely applicable to most expatriates in intercultural contexts, the special adaptation strategy seems to be only exercised by Japanese expatriates for their adaptation in particular. The intercultural competency concentric-circle describes the magnitude of the AC learning mode as well as the analyzing and converging skills for only Japanese expatriates. This orientation that the AC mode is necessarily required for Japanese expatriates to learn in intercultural contexts can be also seen in the literature. The study of Iwauchi, Kadoaki, Abe, Jinnouchi, and Mori (1999), based on interviews with 32 Japanese expatriates in the U.S., the U.K., and Thailand reports that the development of the capacity for logical explanation is considerably important for the internationalization of Japanese expatriates.
In practitioner literature, logical reasoning and clear explanation are illustrated as significant components to be developed by Japanese in the cross-cultural environment where Japanese expatriates or Japanese businesspersons discuss Americans (Yashiro, 1997) as well as Westerners (Ito, 1999). These views positively support the emphasis of the AC mode of Japanese expatriates for intercultural contexts. Taken together, it could be deduced that there may be the cross-cultural environmental requirement of the AC mode surrounding Japanese expatriates. This environmental disposition that demands the AC mode would enable us to propose the special adaptation strategy dealing with the AC mode for the adaptation of Japanese expatriates. This special strategy, which is only applied to Japanese expatriates, necessitates mastering the AC mode of learning in the cross-cultural environment. In addition, a type of approach to the AC special adaptation strategy rests on the learning style of Japanese expatriates in their home country. Since Japanese learning preference appears to be oriented toward the CE mode, the transitional approach will be an adequate way to be employed by Japanese expatriates.

In summary, I have proposed the general adaptation strategy and the special adaptation strategy for expatriates’ cross-cultural adaptation, in the framework of the intercultural competency concentric-circle based on ELT. The former strategy, applicable to expatriates in general, is composed of three sub-strategies that concerns the CE, the AE, and the RO modes of learning. The latter strategy can be employed only by Japanese expatriates in particular and is concerned with the AC mode. Because home countries tend to differently emphasize the development of learning styles, an approach aiming to engage with these adaptation strategies must take into account the variety of learning styles. In addition, it must also, of necessity, vary with those learning styles. A
transitional approach calls for changing original learning styles or modes, while a reinforcing approach necessitates strengthening or maintaining them. Table 2 illustrates expatriates adaptation strategies in overall.

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Insert Table 2 about here

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Conclusion

I examined expatriates' skills and abilities in the cross-cultural environment by applying Kolb' ELT. Linkage between these capabilities and his theory has paved my way to create an intercultural competency taxonomy that may provide a unique perspective with which to explore and understand the expatriate competencies. This competency taxonomy might be worthwhile not only showing us the classification of the expatriates' skills in line with the social sciences but also, I believe, making it possible to postulate a more systematic but holistic adaptation strategy for expatriate adaptation.

This study has addressed the important issue that home learning styles are a significant part of the cultural background of expatriates and that they are particularly crucial in determining to what extent proposed adaptation strategies might be be challengeable. As discussed, the two kinds of approaches, transitional and reinforcing, reveal differing levels of difficulty in employing the adaptation strategy. Perhaps, the transitional approach is more difficult, and challenging for expatriates than the reinforcing approach is because the former requires changing learning styles that have been comfortably used and preferred. For example, Japanese expatriates may perceive
that the adaptation strategy of the CE and the RO modes is easier than the one of the AC and the AE modes. The mastering of the AC and the AE modes as well as their relevant competencies must be challenging but essential for the intercultural adaptation of Japanese expatriates. In contrast, Western expatriates probably feel that the adaptation strategy of the CE and the RO modes is more difficult than that of the AE mode. In other words, the mastering of the CE and the RO must be a key for their adaptation. These mechanisms stem from the analysis of the cultural background of expatriates in light of learning styles. To the extent that expatriates’ cultural backgrounds must be paid more attention to in order to understand the complexity of intercultural adaptation or effective performance, the present study is resonant with the view of Stening and Hammer (1992). The potential impact of cultural background calls for yet further study. Extensive empirical examination of the magnitude of this issue, as it relates to the learning styles of expatriates, will be the future hope of this work.

Finally, although I organized expatriates’ intercultural skills using Kolb’s ELT to understand these skills in a framework of the social sciences, this study consists of the past empirical results that were done by different research methods, sampling, instruments, and purposes in the presentation of various cross-cultural studies. In order to more deeply understand the relationship between those expatriate skills and expatriates’ learning in line with ELT, a comprehensive as well as systematized way of empirical research is essential. This perspective is congruent with that of Dineges and Baldwin (1996). ELT instruments that are designed to measure ELT constructs including learning styles, learning skills, or adaptive flexibilities as discussed in this study, can be usefully applied to deal with such empirical examination. As a promising direction for this
examination, the application of ELT instruments may contribute to the profound understanding of expatriates' competencies in intercultural contexts.
References


David, K. (1972). Intercultural adjustment and applications of reinforcement theory to problems of cultural shock. Trends, 4, 1-64,


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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authors</th>
<th>Subject &amp; sample size</th>
<th>Home</th>
<th>Host</th>
<th>Significant Skills and Abilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cleveland, Mangone, &amp; Adams (1960)</td>
<td>Adult workers N = 244</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Mexico, Japan, Indonesia, Iran, Yugoslavia, Ethiopia</td>
<td>Technical skills, Brief in mission, Organizational skills, Sense for politics, Cultural empathy</td>
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<td>Thomson &amp; English (1964)</td>
<td>Peace Corps N = 32</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Africa, Latin, Asia</td>
<td>Flexibility-rigidity, Not passive: approach and talk with people to initiate new projects</td>
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<td>Byrbes (1965)</td>
<td>Technical assistance N = 34</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Diverse</td>
<td>Dealing with people, Professional, technical, or manual skills</td>
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<td>Stein (1966)</td>
<td>Peace Corps N = 56</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Columbia</td>
<td>Job competence, Relationship with locals &amp; colleagues, Emotional maturity to tolerate stress, to work alone or under pressure, to cope with unusual difficulties</td>
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<td>Hays (1971)</td>
<td>Expatriates N = 51</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>Job ability factors, Relational abilities</td>
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<td>Stoner, Aram, &amp; Rubin (1972)</td>
<td>Managerial technical assistance N = 51</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>Cultural empathy, Creativeness, Sense for politics, Flexibility-rigidity, Sense for humor</td>
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<td>Harris (1973)</td>
<td>Peace Corps N = 53</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Tonga</td>
<td>Perseverance, Patience &amp; tolerance, Courtesy, Reliability</td>
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<td>Hautaloma &amp; Kaman (1975)</td>
<td>Peace Corps N = 18</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>Language skills, Job skills, Abilities to use humor, A tolerance of depression and loneliness, Abilities to change bad situations, Abilities to deal with bureaucratic systems, Abilities to cope with ambiguity in personal relationships</td>
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<tr>
<td>Authors</td>
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<td>Host</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Ruben & Kealey (1979)     | Technical advisers and their spouse  
 N = 13                                    | Canada | Kenya                     | Respect, Interaction posture, Orientation to knowledge,  
 Not task-orientation, Not self-centered, Interaction management,  
 Tolerance of ambiguity                                                                                                  |
 N = 117 to 159                                 | Canada | Africa, Asia, Latin       | Interpersonal skills: interpersonal flexibility,  
 interpersonal respect, listening skills, relationship  
 building, self-control under stress, and sensitivity  
 to host; and Self-Assertion skills: initiative,  
 self-confidence, and frankness                                                                                           |
| Tung (1981)               | The vice president of foreign operations  
 N = 80                                    | US     | Europe, Canada, Latin  
 America, Asia, Africa     | Abilities to adapt a different physical or cultural environment,  
 Emotional immaturity, Abilities to cope with large responsibilities  
 Technical competencies                                                                                                  |
| Raitu (1983)              | MBA students of overseas working experience  
 N = 250                                   | Diverse| Diverse                   | Observation and listening, Risk-taking,  
 Relation with people, Deal with stress  
 Make sense of new experience                                                                                             |
| Kealey (1989)             | Technical advisers  
 N = 89 and 188                               | Canada | Africa, Asia, Latin,  
 Caribbean’s                 | Caring, Action-orientation, Out-of-self orientation,  
 Self-monitoring, Social adroitness, Low security needs,  
 Low need for upward mobility                                                                                                |
| Black (1990)              | Expatriates  
 N = 67                                      | Japan  | US                        | Cultural flexibility, Social orientation,  
 Communication, Conflict resolution                                                                                      |
| Black & Porter (1990)     | Expatriates  
 N = 57                                      | US     | Honk Kong                  | Integration: maintain a closely knit organization  
 Resolve inter-member conflicts                                                                                          |
| Dean & Popp (1990)        | Expatriates  
 N = 61                                      | US     | Saudi                     | Working effectively with other people, dealing with unfamiliar situations, dealing with stress, dealing with communication misunderstandings, dealing with changes in life styles |
<p>|                           | N = 31                                      | France | US                        | Working effectively with other people, dealing with unfamiliar situations, dealing with communication misunderstandings, dealing with changes in life styles, entering meaningful dialogue |</p>
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Authors</th>
<th>Subject &amp; sample size</th>
<th>Home</th>
<th>Host</th>
<th>Significant Skills and Abilities</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black and Gregersen (1991)</td>
<td>Expatriates</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Korea, Japan, Taiwan</td>
<td>Interaction with home for work adjustment, Interaction with host for interaction and general adjustment</td>
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<td>Stone (1991)</td>
<td>Expatriates</td>
<td>Australia, New Zealand, UK, US, France, Canada</td>
<td>South Asia</td>
<td>Ability to adapt, abilities to cope with large responsibilities, Motivation to work overseas, technical expertise</td>
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<td>Expatriates</td>
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<td>N = 62</td>
<td>Stress management, Communication, Interpersonal relationships</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>US</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>Interpersonal relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>N = 36</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>US</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Cui &amp; Awa (1992)</td>
<td>Expatriates</td>
<td>Diverse</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>Personality traits: patience, flexibility, empathy, tolerance, Interpersonal skills, Social interaction, Managerial abilities, Cultural empathy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dunbar (1992)</td>
<td>Repatriated staff</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Europe and others</td>
<td>Cultural skills: understanding language &amp; non-verbal communication, having affiliates and friends, interest in host culture, engagement in enjoyable tasks, initiative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ishida (1992)</td>
<td>Expatriate president</td>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>Diverse</td>
<td>General management, Decision-making, Good health, Balanced sense, Good mood, Perseverance, Belief in mission, Flexibility, English language skills, Analytical abilities,</td>
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<td>Parker &amp; McEvoy (1993)</td>
<td>Adult workers</td>
<td>Diverse</td>
<td>Diverse</td>
<td>Extroversion (for interaction adjustment)</td>
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<td>Home</td>
<td>Host</td>
<td>Significant Skills and Abilities</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sinangil &amp; Ones (1997)</td>
<td>Expatriates N = 220</td>
<td>Diverse</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>Relational skills, Flexibility/adaptability, Extra-cultural openness, Job knowledge &amp; motivation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tung (1998)</td>
<td>Expatriates &amp; spouse N = 409</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Diverse</td>
<td>Adopt a listening mode, Greater sensitivity to needs of others, Cooperative as opposed to overly competitive, Espouse an inclusive leadership styles, Compromising rather than domineering,</td>
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<td>Shaffer, Harrison &amp; Gilley (1999)</td>
<td>Expatriates N = 452</td>
<td>Diverse</td>
<td>Diverse</td>
<td>Language fluency for interaction adjustment</td>
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<td>Caligiuri (2000)</td>
<td>Expatriates &amp; inpatriates N = 143</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Diverse</td>
<td>Sociability, Ability to speak, Contact and Openness (moderator)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note:  
1. Three researches such as Thomoson & English, Tung (1981), and Stone concern the factors of failure or early return, so the skills and abilities described here are reversed to their originals.  
2. Items of skills and abilities studied by Harris, Dean & Popp, Ishida, and Tung (1998) are described as the most effective ones (Harris), the five most important ones (Dean & Popp, Tung), and the ten most important elements (Ishida).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>General adaptation strategy</th>
<th>Special adaptation strategy</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CF</td>
<td>AE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western expatriates</td>
<td>Transional</td>
<td>Reinforcing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japanese expatriates</td>
<td>Reinforcing</td>
<td>Transional</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 1
Kolb's experiential learning model

Concrete Experience (CE)

Accommodator

Active Experimentation (AE)

Diverger

Reflective Observation (RO)

Converger

Abstract Conceptualization (AC)

Assimilator
Figure 2

Intercultural Competency Circle based on ELT

Human relation skills

Caring, respect, understanding people of different cultural background skills

Interaction skills

Tolerance of ambiguity & stress management skills

Experiencing

Reflecting

Listening & observation skills

Action & Initiative skills

Accommodating

Converging

Analyzing

Analytical skills

Decision skills

Analyzing

CE & AE

RO

AE & AC

CE & AE

Note: (1) Communication & language skills and Technical job skills are independent of this intercultural competency circle.
(2) Adaptation and flexibility is categorized as Adaptive flexibility but is not displayed in the circle because of its characteristics.
The center circle = four fundamental learning modes
The second layer = expatriates' intercultural competencies
The third layer = home countries
The outermost circle = host countries