

Information Seeking Behaviour of International and Domestic  
Students: A Comparative Study  
留学生と日本人学生の情報探索行動の比較

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The significant growth of the number of international students around the world, and in Japan in particular, have come to draw the attention of many researchers to the importance of studying the difficulties international students face while they adapt to the new environment. Several studies have focused on social adaptation and adjustment of international students and the difficulties they face. Some other studies in English-speaking countries looked at the information seeking behavior of international students. However, studies that examined information-seeking behavior of international students in Japan, which can be culturally different from English-speaking countries, are limited. In this study, we looked at the information seeking behaviour of international students in comparison with that of their domestic peers. The study was based on a set of mixed methods: a web-based questionnaire, a lab-based user study and semi-structured in-depth interviews. The study involved 24 participants in total: 12 English-speaking international students from 11 different countries, and 12 Japanese students. Results showed that international and Japanese students followed different searching techniques when looking for information. For a similar task, international students search performance was comparable to that of Japanese students when the task difficulty is low. However, as the task difficulty increases, international students' performance decreases in comparison with Japanese students. This is shown by the noticeable difference in the number of queries submitted for each search task by international and Japanese students as the difficulty of the task increased. The major factor that plays a role in this decrease in the performance of international students is the inconsistency of information architecture on the university website, across departments of the university, and across versions as well. Future directions may include a further investigation into how information architecture affects students' information seeking behaviour.

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