

Classroom Development of Intercultural Competence

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Although there is much attention given to developing intercultural communicative competence, development within a high school classroom of diverse intercultural experiences in Japan is lacking documentation. Based on an 8-month study, this paper offers a glimpse into how intercultural communicative competence (ICC) can be monitored in a classroom of returnee and nonreturnee 1st-year high school students in Japan. In this study, qualitative data, using Byram's (2000) model for self-assessment, suggested an increase in ICC, while the quantitative data using a Perceptual Acuity Scale from the Cross-Cultural Adaptability Inventory (Kelley & Meyers, 1995) showed no significant difference. Findings from this study highlight the differences in ICC development among returnees and nonreturnees and the rich data that can be found in reflective learner journals.

異文化間コミュニケーション能力(以下ICC)の開発については、既にたくさんの研究が成されているが、異文化経験に関して多様な学習者が集う高校における学級での考察を目にするのは稀である。本研究は、帰国子女及び非帰国子女が同じ学級で学ぶ、という多様性の大きい高校1年生の学級を対象にし、彼らの8ヶ月間を検証した。ICCがいかに培われているかByram's (2000) modelを使い、質的データを分析し、その質が高まっていることが分かった。一方でCross-Cultural Adaptability Inventory (Kelley & Meyers, 1995)を使い、量的データを分析したが顕著な違いが見られなかった。そして、帰国子女と非帰国子女ではICCの発達に差があること、また、ICCの発達が学習者のジャーナルからよく見て取れることが分かった。

THE STATED objective for the high school course, Cross-Cultural Understanding, according to Article 13 of the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology's New Course of Study is "to develop appropriate attitudes toward and basic abilities for engaging in proactive communication with people of diverse cultural backgrounds through the English language, while deepening understanding toward foreign countries and cultures" (MEXT, 2011). Japan's upper secondary classrooms are an increasing collection of learners of diverse cultural backgrounds based on ethnicity, religion, values, socioeconomic status, and intercultural experiences in terms of language, place, period of time, and age. As identified in Byram (2000), these experiences contribute to ones' feelings towards, knowledge about, and actions with another culture. However, little is documented about how to develop intercultural communication competence (ICC) within a classroom of diverse high school learners. Using two sources of data, this study revealed the development of ICC among returnee and nonreturnee learners.



Literature Review

Bennett, Bennett, and Allen (2003) argued that “developing intercultural competence is different from teaching culture in the language classroom as that subject has sometimes been treated in language education literature” (p. 245). Developing ICC goes deeper than merely teaching or learning about another culture. Sato and Cullen (2002) set a goal of teaching culture not in order to build cross-cultural understanding, but rather to facilitate dialogue activities that allow Japanese learners to develop tools to be able to understand all cultures. Therefore, ICC development focuses on mixing approaches that help the learner deal with the apprehension or stress of a specific culture along with approaches that identify topics like ethnocentrism, identity, and adaptation strategies.

Monitoring the development of ICC is complex in nature due in part to definition and assessment. There are a number of definitions and terms to describe the ability to communicate across cultures (see Chen & Starosta, 1996; Cui & van den Berg, 1991; Ting-Toomey, 1999). Byram’s (1997) model for measuring ICC consists of five components: attitudes, knowledge, skills of interpreting and relating, skills of discovery and interaction, and critical cultural awareness or political education. These components, and the corresponding explanations provided in the model, could allow the instructor to assess the learners to exhibit the competence they possess. However, some researchers argue that only learners can assess their own culture learning (Damen, 1987).

Often traditional assessment methods of cross cultural understanding or ICC, conducted by the instructor, can suffer from a lack of validity. According to Paige, Jorstad, Siaya, Klein, and Colby (2003), traditional assessment methods in the form of paper and pencil tests tend to be objective in nature and focus too heavily on definitions and facts. However, assessment of a construct such as ICC needs to be more formative and displayed

in development over a period of time. Kramsch (1991) found that many of the foreign language textbooks in the United States focused on testing cultural facts. Drawing from the European Language Portfolio developed by the Council of Europe, Byram (2000) proposed a format for upper secondary or higher learners to engage in self-assessment of intercultural competence, titled, “A Self-Assessment of My Intercultural Experience (p. 11).” This format (Table 1) contains statements to explain and provide examples of the elements of ICC for the five updated categories. With a language portfolio, coursework content over the school term can be more readily examined. A portfolio would serve as tool for both the learner and the instructor to see what areas of ICC the learner exhibits and where improvement is made.

Table 1. Self-Assessment of Intercultural Experience (Byram, 2000)

Categories	Examples
A. Interest in other people’s way of life	<i>I am interested in other people’s experience of daily life, particularly those things not usually presented to outsiders through the media.</i>
B. Ability to change perspective	<i>I have realised that I can understand other cultures by seeing things from a different point of view and by looking at my culture from their perspective.</i>
C. Ability to cope with living in a different culture	<i>I am able to cope with a range of reactions I have to living in a different culture (euphoria, homesickness, physical and mental discomfort, etc.).</i>

Categories	Examples
D. Knowledge about another country and culture	<i>I know some important facts about living in the other culture and about the country, state, and people.</i>
E. Knowledge about intercultural communication	<i>I know how to resolve misunderstandings which arise from people's lack of awareness of the view point of another culture.</i>

Research using Byram's (2000) categories for ICC development in the high school classroom setting is lacking. Studies like Elola and Oskoz (2008) show how Byram's guidelines could be used to assess intercultural competence with learners studying abroad in Spain and blogging about their experiences with classmates back in the United States. In another study in the e-learning context, Liaw (1997) used Byram's format to assess development with Taiwanese EFL learners reading articles on their own culture and sharing them with American students. In Japan, Nakano, Fukui, Nuspliger, and Gilbert (2011) used Byram's (1997) five components of ICC to assess the influence that two guest speaker presentations on Singaporean and Nepalese culture had on Japanese university students. Based on pre- and posttest surveys, the guest speaker sessions contributed to development of the ICC components of attitudes and knowledge in the university students.

In the current study, I used Byram's (2000) guidelines to help monitor ICC development because of its strength for use in the classroom context. According to Spencer-Oatey and Franklin (2009), "one key difference between Byram's model and others . . . is that his model is located firmly in the context of teaching and learning languages in schools" (p. 67). Previous studies focused on developing ICC using Byram's model, such as Liaw (1997) and Elola and Oskoz (2008), have taken place outside of a classroom context in the form of e-learning and study abroad.

However, not every classroom study is able to incorporate the use of technology or capitalize on international exchanges. Mindful of these limitations, I explored how the development of intercultural communicative competence could be monitored in a secondary classroom context.

Participants and Method

One class of 20 first-year high school students in the school's Intercultural Division was selected to be in this action research study. The class was evenly split between returnees (R; $n = 10$) and nonreturnees (NR; $n = 10$). The 10 nonreturnees (6 female, 4 male) had lived in Japan their entire lives. The 10 returnees (7 female, 3 male) had all lived for a period of 2 years or longer in countries outside of Japan. Three of these learners were returnees from the United States, an English-speaking environment (REE); seven returnees were from non-English-speaking environments (RNEE) including Belgium, China, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand. Table 2 shows the demographic information of each participant. Pseudonyms were given to participants to protect their privacy.

Table 2. Demographic Data of Participants ($N = 20$)

Name	Gender	International experience	Time
Aya	F	NR	
Ayako	F	NR	
Haru	F	NR	
Hina	F	NR	
Miho	F	NR	
Risa	F	NR	

Name	Gender	International experience	Time
Jun	M	NR	
Masa	M	NR	
Sunau	M	NR	
Taro	M	NR	
Asuka	F	US (REE)	5 years
Sari	F	US (REE)	3 years, 3 months
Kana	F	Belgium (RNEE)	3 years, 4 months
Miki	F	China (RNEE)	4 years
Nahoko	F	Thailand (RNEE)	6 years, 5 months
Nana	F	Indonesia (RNEE)	2 years
Yuka	F	Malaysia (RNEE)	7 years, 3 months
Ken	M	US (REE)	3 years
Manabu	M	China (RNEE)	5 years
Yasu	M	Belgium (RNEE)	3 years

Note: NR = Nonreturnee, REE = Returnee from English-speaking environments, RNEE = Returnee from non-English speaking environment

The returnees and nonreturnees brought with them into the classroom diverse intercultural experiences. Nonreturnees had a variety of intercultural experiences, through international and domestic travel and from living in various regions of Japan. Various intercultural experiences could have been acquired through language study or through interaction in a given place or at a particular age or for a specific time period. All of these contributed to the learners' feelings, knowledge, and actions

toward another culture (Byram, 2000). Furthermore, the differing socioeconomic, religious, values, and ethnic backgrounds all contributed to the diverse identities of the participants in this study.

The Cross-Cultural Understanding class met twice a week. The Japanese Teacher of English (JTE) and Assistant English Teacher (AET) facilitated classes using a textbook published by Nan'un-Do, *This is Culture* (Kajiura & Goodmacher, 2005). The course syllabus was based around the following topics: hidden and visible culture, verbal and nonverbal communication, stereotypes, media, and identity. The study period lasted from April to December.

Data Collection

Responses from questionnaires and journals were analyzed to find evidence of the development of ICC.

Perceptual Acuity Scales

At the beginning of the course, learners were given a pre-course questionnaire (see Appendix), which measured perceptual acuity. According to Paige et al. (2003), perceptual acuity is an individual's ability to decipher variations of signals and ways of communication in another culture. Kelley and Meyers (1995) described perceptual acuity as the sensitivity to the feelings of others. Statements like *I try to understand people's thoughts and feelings when I talk to them and I can perceive how people are feeling, even if they are different from me* were among the 10 statements to be rated on a 5-point scale. The Perceptual Acuity Scales were seen as helpful in assessing ICC because of the course topics covered and the use of experiential learning activities (e.g., skits and role-play) used in class. At the end of the study in December, learners were given the same pre-course questionnaire as a posttest.

Learner Journal

Learners in this Cross-Cultural Understanding course kept a journal to record their reflections on class activities. At the conclusion of each class, learners were asked to answer the following questions: (a) What did you like and dislike about class? (b) What did you learn in class? (c) What happened in the skit or group work today? The learner journals were collected 3 days later. Their reflections were used to create a class newsletter to be read and discussed in the following week's class.

Results

Perceptual Acuity Scales

Table 3 shows the mean and standard deviation for the scores on the 10 questions from the pretest and posttest of the Perceptual Acuity Scale. The differences were computed by subtracting the pretest score from the posttest score.

Table 3. Summary of Perceptual Acuity (PAC) Scales Results

Partici- pants	Pretest scores (A) <i>M (SD)</i>	Posttest Scores (B) <i>M (SD)</i>	Differ- ences (B – A)
All	34.92 (2.72)	35.77 (3.63)	0.85
Returnees	35.38 (1.99)	37.00 (3.02)	1.63
Nonre- turnees	34.20 (3.77)	33.80 (3.96)	-0.40

Results from the Perceptual Acuity Scale questionnaire showed a slight change. Overall, there was a small increase in perceptual acuity among all learners. The results showed a slight increase

among returnees and a slight decrease in perceptual acuity among nonreturnees, although the changes were not significant.

Qualitative Data

From the outset, returnees' journal reflections displayed an interest in culture, while nonreturnees' reflections showed a concern about their perceived lack of the English ability necessary to participate in class. An analysis of the learners' journal entries displayed four types of ICC consistent with Byram's (2000) categories: (a) interest in other people's way of life, (b) ability to change perspective, (d) knowledge of another country and culture, and (e) knowledge of intercultural communication. Over time, reflections also showed an increase in focus on cultural content over language form. The quotations are the original students' writing unchanged.

Interest in Other People's Way of Life (A)

Selected journal comments demonstrated the learners' interest in other cultures. These reflections were made after witnessing skits involving a critical incident concerning a misunderstanding, such as when the JTE presented the AET an American flag with a birthday message written on it. Critical incidents are an occurrence that can raise questions about what has just happened (La Brack, 2003).

It was very interesting. At first I didn't know why Kevin looked very sad. Because it is good for use to write on flag in America. And I thought, "The differences of cultures is very interesting. And I want to know more differences." (Nahoko RNEE)

It was interesting because Kevin's skit was real. I learned a lot. For example about flags and foreign culture. I

thought, “Foreign country is perfectly different than Japan.” Foreign culture is more interesting than before.” “I didn’t know that if you drop an American flag, you burn it. I thought burning it is worse. Is it burnt only at your house? Or every other American people?”

Q: Is it a culture to not to eat the crust of pizza in the USA? When I was in America many people were not eat in the crust. (Kana RNEE)

I learned another countries’ peoples’ idea. They are not same thinking, not same habit, and not same common sense. It was interesting for me to learn them. But sometimes the differences are easy to understand, sometimes not. (Haru NR)

In summary, a skit involving a misunderstanding over a cultural object spurred a greater interest in other cultures and a desire to know about more cultural differences.

Ability to Change Perspective (B)

Reflections in the journals showed a greater volume of comments related to a change in perspective following experiential learning activities in class. One experiential activity was a skit involving the AET eating an *onigiri* with a knife and fork, rather than by hand as is the custom in Japan. One learner shared an experience in which she could finally empathize with how someone she previously met didn’t know how to eat the same food.

It was very funny. I enjoyed the skit very much! I had same situations. When I lived in Malaysia, I went to the Japanese school. That school has an international exchange programs. It is a program that we invite the Malaysian students to the school and introduce Japanese cul-

ture and know each other. When I was I was primary 6 student. We make an *onigiri* to introduce our food culture. We made them and we began to eat. But they didn’t eat them. I said to them, “You can eat rice ball now!” They asked, “But how?” I was surprised and I answered and I answered, “With your hand!” They looked very surprised!! I thought, “Why they are surprised?! Now I know why they so surprised. I think it is interesting to know other countries’ culture. (Yuka RNEE)

Another learner used the skit as a way to reflect on when his perspective had changed in the past.

I felt weird and strange. Because I have never seen a person who would do that. Also I have never even thought about eating an *onigiri* that way. But sometimes I see people eating it with chopsticks because they don’t want to get their hands dirty. Somehow that doesn’t seem so weird. At home I usually use spoons forks and knives. I don’t really use chopsticks. I’m not sure why. Well, where there’s a bowl of rice or miso soup for dinner I use a spoon to eat it but my mom always tells me not to do in public! I didn’t get why thought. I didn’t think it was weird. But now that I’ve seen someone eating something weirdly I’ll think I get it. Its just not one of the folkways in Japan. (Asuka REE)

In summary, skits highlighting critical incidents either helped change the learners’ perspective or they reminded them of a critical incident in the past that changed their perspective.

Knowledge of Another Country and Culture (D)

Learner journal entries revealed knowledge of the learners’ culture and the culture of others. Knowledge of diverse ideas within a culture was noticed during a unit on stereotypes. We

first examined stereotypes locally within our school and then we discussed stereotypes of people from other regions and countries.

There were a lot interesting opinions! Sure enough, stereotypes is sometimes not useful because even If there're all Japanese people, each Japanese are different. In my opinion, "So many, men, so many minds." I think some think that there're only the same people in Japan is much crazier. (Miki RNEE)

Different people think the different ways of seeing things. It kind of relates to Chapter 2's survey. Different ages think it many ways even though they are same as you. Every people think in very different ways I think people make assumptions about other people because, for example, people assume that Asians are smart. Maybe they have seen many Asians that are smart. So their image of Asian people are smart. But our differences are very different from others. (Sari REE)

Following the initial unit on stereotypes, learners examined how certain cultures are portrayed in diverse forms of media such as commercials, video games, and mascots for sports teams. Journal reflections mentioned knowledge of the diversity of opinions that exist within a culture in regards to portrayals of cultures in media. The following learners tried to explain how Brazilians might feel about their portrayal in the video game we examined.

I think there will be two types of people. First group of people might feel proud of Blanka because he looks the strongest of all three (characters). Also they might want to be thought that way The other group might feel frustrated because probably most people don't look that way just

like I'm not a sumo wrestler. Also because Blanka doesn't look very human so they might feel sad to have such an image since they could feel looked down. This is just my opinion but there are more people in group. (Hina REE)

Some people good. Because Blanka is super macho. The other don't feel good. Of course, not ALL people are macho. People want people to make a positive and correct assumption. (Kana REE)

Learners were able to demonstrate knowledge of the diversity of feelings towards the positive and negative stereotyping. This knowledge was made evident after examining stereotypes found at the local level. Subsequently, learners could imagine the diversity of opinions that would exist in another culture in reaction to stereotypes that are portrayed in media.

Knowledge About Intercultural Communication (E)

Most of the comments concerning knowledge about intercultural communication came from returnees. However, comments displaying knowledge about intercultural communication were far fewer than those displaying knowledge of another country and culture (category D). After the unit on stereotypes, there was an increase in comments that showed a desire to improve communication and resolve misunderstandings in intercultural communication. Comments, like the ones below, show the ability of learners to express their knowledge of the viewpoint of others by considering how they might feel if Japanese were talked about in the same way as Chinese were in this group activity examining stereotypes.

I thought there were some wrong assumptions on the papers. About Chinese, some opinions were almost right all right, but some opinions were a little impolite for Chinese.

Chinese have faults but also have good points. All countries have, too. Japanese are exactly so. If foreigners do the same thing we did, I think it may be the same results with us. We may be a little hurt. We should think whether our information is right or not before we speak up about foreigners. (Miki REE)

I think people make assumptions about others because it does not check whether having come into ones mind first is true. . . . Therefore, I thought that the mistaken recognition will be produced. In order to prevent it, we thought it required to act without having a fixed concept. By doing so I think that misunderstandings will decrease sharply. (Ken REE)

In short, these returnees' reflections showed an ability to empathize with others. The returnees expressed knowledge of intercultural communication and a desire to avoid misunderstandings. Reflections from nonreturnees demonstrated a stronger interest in the differences between cultures, rather than knowledge in managing the dysfunctions that may arise from a lack of awareness of the viewpoint of another culture.

Focus on Content Over Form

Comments in the first few weeks of the research period highlighted the divide between returnees and nonreturnees. Returnees' comments focused on the content of the class rather than the language used in the class. Nonreturnees displayed a discomfort with speaking in front of others and their comments often showed their concern by comparing themselves with learners who spoke out in the previous class.

I didn't talk. Speaking English is tense. Speaking English is not easy for me. But I'll try to talk next time. (Aya NR)

I could hear opinions but I couldn't say my opinion so, I want to say my opinion next class. (Risa NR)

Since the comments that the learners provided in the first 2 weeks of journal reflections focused heavily on the use of English in the classroom, ice-breaking activities like "Mentions," in which participants communicated back and forth by only speaking two words at a time, were introduced. These activities allowed them to get to know each other and force them to communicate without the fear of using "perfect English."

I think everyone's statement get better. Be everyone is influenced by Kevin (Risa NR)

First class, we didn't speak in English at all. But now we can speak in English a little. I think it is for us. But we can't speak a lot yet. I didn't like it. A quiet class is not very fun. (Nahoko RNEE)

The statements from the nonreturnees showed the disparity in confidence about communication that existed in the classroom. Although not represented by changes in response scores to the 10 statements on the Perceptual Acuity Scales, at the end of the term, learners further explained a change in thinking that occurred over the term. The following comments from a returnee and nonreturnee showed the change from a focus on form to a focus on content. This returnee's comment reflects development in those who wanted to keep or improve their English ability.

In the beginning I just wanted to speak more English but now that I started to notice the differences between the cultures. I want to learn about those differences. (Asuka REE)

The following comment from a nonreturnee learner also represents development of ICC with a focus on cultural content over form.

My opinion is understanding culture. Not speaking. Of course speaking is very important but in CCU class, learning culture is more important. (Haru NR)

In summary, nonreturnees' concern with the use of English was more evident at the beginning of the study term. Journal reflections from both returnees and nonreturnees showed a change in perspective in their goals and achievements toward ICC in this class.

Implications

This study reveals that the development of ICC can be monitored in a classroom setting with the help of qualitative data in the form of journals. In their reflections entries, learners displayed heightened interest in and knowledge of cultures along four of Byram's (2000) categories. This study may imply as follows:

1. Monitoring intercultural development is not possible solely by relying on a perceptual acuity survey.
2. Journals can provide a rich source of data to monitor intercultural development.
3. Differences in L2 language ability and intercultural experience between returnees and nonreturnees can make assessing ICC difficult.

In conclusion, a quantitative measurement, Perceptual Acuity scale, showed no significant change in ICC. Journal reflections, however, showed evidence of heightened interest in others, an ability to change perspective, knowledge of culture, and intercultural communication. Although this evidence was exhibited to differing extents among the learners, both returnees and nonreturnees showed a change in perspective from a focus on language form to a focus on cultural content, a key goal of the Cross-Cultural Understanding course.

Further studies of classrooms with less proficient speakers are needed, as are additional investigations into the classroom dynamics of returnees and nonreturnees in developing ICC.

Bio Data

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Appendix

Perceptual Acuity Scales (PAC)

Circle the number which best describes your feeling.

5 = Strongly Agree, 4 = Agree, 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 1 = Strongly Disagree.

- I try to understand people's thoughts and feelings when I talk to them. 話す時に相手の考えや気持ちを理解しようと努力する。
5 4 3 2 1
- I have a realistic perception of how others see me. 他人が自分をどう見ているのかよくわかっている。
5 4 3 2 1
- I am the kind of person who gives people who are different from me that benefit of the doubt. 私は自分と違う人に対して、ひとまず好意的な見方をする。
5 4 3 2 1
- I can perceive how people are feeling, even if they are different from me. たとえ自分と異なる文化圏の人であっても、かれらが何を感じているか読み取ることができる。
5 4 3 2 1
- I believe that all cultures have something worthwhile to offer. すべての文化には、何かしら学ぶべき価値があると信じている。
5 4 3 2 1
- I pay attention to how people's cultural differences affect their perceptions of me. 文化の違いが、他人が自分を見る目に、どのように影響するか注意を払う。
5 4 3 2 1
- I consider the impact my actions have on others. 自分の行動が他人に与える影響について考える。
5 4 3 2 1

8. When I am with people who are different from me, I interpret their behavior in the context of their culture. 自分と異なる人と一緒にいる時、彼らの立場に立って、行動を理解しようとする。
- 5 4 3 2 1
9. When I am in a new or strange environment, I keep an open mind. 新しく慣れていない環境でも、偏見を持たないでいられる。
- 5 4 3 2 1
10. In talking with people from other cultures, I pay attention to body language. 他の文化圏の人と話するとき、ボディランゲージに注意を払う。
- 5 4 3 2 1