The Connection Between Interculturality and Foreign Language Education
A Comparison between Japan and the United States

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Outline

- Significance of the Study
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- Research Background
- Research Method
- Research Findings
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Significance of the Study

- While studying in our Service Learning class, we learned how language can help connect you to other cultures, which in return helps to promote equality and fairness.
- We realized the importance of Interculturality when we studied abroad and wanted to know more about what type of education you received in America and Japan.
- We would like to apply what we learn from our research to teaching.
Research Questions

1. What are students’ experiences with foreign language education?
2. To what extent are students gaining interculturality from foreign language education?
3. What role does foreign language education play in creating connections between students and multicultural/multilingual communities?
Research Background Outline

- Foreign Language Enrollment Trends
- Study Abroad Trends
- Foreign Language Education Awareness
- Grammar Towards Communication
- Foreign Language Education (U.S. and Japan)
  - U.S. - World Readiness Standards
  - Japan - MEXT Action Plan
- Student Experiences
  - Anxiety
- Interculturality
  - Importance
  - In Foreign Language Classrooms
Foreign language education requirements are very open ended

In order to enter university, typically you must take 2 years in high school

(Goldberg, D., Looney, D., & Lusin, N., 2015)
Foreign Language Enrollment Trends - Japan I.

This is the previous English education track.

(Tokyo International Communication Committee, 2016)
Foreign Language Enrollment Trends - Japan II.

Elementary School
- English education was added for improvement of communicative competence

Middle School

High School

College, etc.

- Compulsory Education

- Once per week
- 35 hours per year
- Compulsory

- Grade Level
- 3 4 5 6
- 7~9 10~12

- English Classes

Depends on University and Major

This is the current English education track.

(Tokyo International Communication Committee, 2016)
English education was added for improvement of the communicative competence.

The main reason English is studied before college is to pass the English portions of college entrance exams.

(Tokyo International Communication Committee, 2016)
Study Abroad Trends - U.S.

Top 3 Goals

- Increase numbers to 600,000
- Expand Diversity
- Increase funding for scholarships

304,467 U.S. Students studied abroad from ‘13-'14

5% Increase over prior year!

(Institute of International Education, 2014)
Study Abroad Trends - Japan


Reasons for decline:
● Economic Stagnation
● Costs of studying abroad high

Goal by 2020:
● Increase # of students to 120,000

(MEXT, 2015)
Recent renewed interest in foreign language education.

**Benefits:**

- promotes tolerance and intercultural awareness.
- enhances global economic competitiveness and maintains national security interests.
- increases cognitive, academic, and problem-solving abilities.

(Ovando, 2003)

(The Benefits of Second Language Study, 2007)
Foreign Language Education Awareness - Japan I.

1960s

- Emphasis on grammar rules and language structure

1964 -- Tokyo Olympics

- Lack of Intercultural Communication
- Realization that Japanese foreign language education was not working

(Fast, 2014)
Foreign Language Education Awareness - Japan II.

1960s
- Emphasis on grammar rules and language structure

1970s
- Attempt to return to communicative approach

1964--Tokyo Olympics

(Fast, 2014)
Foreign Language Education Awareness - Japan IV.

1964--Tokyo Olympics

1960s

Emphasis on grammar rules and language structure

1970s

Attempt to return to communicative approach

1980s

1990s

English Classes should be conducted in English -- 2009

2000s

1964 -- Tokyo Olympics

English Classes should be conducted in English -- 2009

(Fast, 2014)
Foreign Language Education Awareness - Japan V.

1964--Tokyo Olympics

1960s

Emphasis on grammar rules and language structure

1970s

Attempt to return to communicative approach

1980s

English Classes should be conducted in English--2009

1990s

2000s

2010s

English at elementary schools--2014
Encourage teaching English in English

2009

English at elementary schools--2014
Encourage teaching English in English

(Fast, 2014)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Period</th>
<th>Methodological Focus</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1800-1960</td>
<td>Grammar Translation - Memorization, Translation, Grammar focused</td>
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<tr>
<td>1940-1960</td>
<td>Audio-Lingual - Pronunciation, Memorization, Repetition</td>
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<td>1986</td>
<td>ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines - Proficiency Focused</td>
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<td>1960-2000</td>
<td>Communicative - Real-Life Tasks, Authenticity, Appeal to various learning styles</td>
</tr>
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<td>1996</td>
<td>National Standards - Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, Communities</td>
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<tr>
<td>2015-Present</td>
<td>World Readiness Standards - Global Competency, Common Core, 21st Century Skills, Interculturality</td>
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(Wells et al., 2013)
Grammar towards Communication - U.S. II.

1800-1960
Grammar Translation
- Memorization
- Translation
- Grammar focused

1940-1960
Audio-Lingual
- Pronunciation
- Memorization
- Repetition

1986
ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines
- Proficiency Focused

1960-2000
Communicative
- Real-Life Tasks
- Authenticity
- Appeal to various learning styles

1996
National Standards
- Communication
- Cultures
- Connections
- Comparisons
- Communities

2015-Present
World Readiness Standards
- Global Competency
- Common Core
- 21st Century Skills
- Interculturality

● Advanced Placement Testing (AP)
  ○ Global Perspectives & Competencies
  ○ Includes speaking and listening portions
  ○ Given to high schoolers who take it voluntarily

(Wells et al., 2013)
Grammar towards Communication - Japan I.

- **1870s**
  - Grammar Translation
  - Translation Focused
  - Reading Comprehension
- **1940-1960**
  - Audio-Lingual
  - Pronunciation
  - Memorization
  - Repetition
- **1970s-1980s**
  - Communicative
  - Oral English
- **2003-2008**
  - MEXT Action Plan
  - Global Competency
  - Communication
- **2011-Present**
  - MEXT Action Plan Revised
  - Global Competency
  - Proficiency Based Language Activities
  - Communication

(Shimizu, 2010)
Grammar towards Communication - Japan II.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Period</th>
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<th>Action Plan</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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- Translation Focused
- Reading Comprehension
- Pronunciation
- Memorization
- Repetition
- Oral English
- Global Competency
- Communication
- Global Competency
- Proficiency Based Language Activities
- Communication

Still focus on…
- 4 Skills: Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking
- College Entrance Exams

(Shimizu, 2010)
Foreign Language Education Standards - U.S.

World Readiness Standards
Goal: To prepare learners to apply the skills and understandings measured by the standards to bring a global competence to their future careers and experiences.

(World Readiness Standards 2014)

- Three Modes of Communication
  - Interpersonal, Interpretive and Presentational
- Common Core Standards
  - Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking
- ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines
  - Novice, Intermediate, and Advanced
- 21st Century Skills
- Interculturality

(The National Standards Collaborative Board 2015)
World Readiness National Standards - U.S.

The 5 Cs:

**Communication**- Communicate effectively in Language other than English

**Cultures**- Interact with cultural competence and understanding

**Connections**- Acquiring information and diverse perspectives

**Comparisons** – Develop Insight into the Nature of Language and Culture

**Communities** – Participate in Multilingual communities at Home and Around the World

(The National Standards Collaborative Board, 2015)
Foreign Language Education Standards - Japan

- MEXT Strategic Action Plan
  - Objective: Obtain the world’s understanding and trust, while enhancing our international presence and further develop our nation. (MEXT 2003)
  - Guidelines:
    - Compulsory Foreign Language Communication Activities
      - Taught by Homeroom teacher
    - Increased classroom hours
      - 105 to 140 hours
    - Four Skills
      - Reading, Writing, Listening, and Speaking
    - Immersion classes in High School
Student Experiences - Anxiety

- **Communication Apprehension**
  - Type of shyness characterized by fear of or anxiety about communicating with people

- **Test Anxiety**
  - Type of performance anxiety stemming from fear of failure

- **Fear of Negative Evaluation**
  - Apprehension about others’ evaluations

(Horwitz, E. K., Young, D. J., & Gardner, R. C. 1991)
# Student Experiences - Anxiety in the U.S. & Japan

These are the **most common anxiety experiences** American and Japanese students deal with.

## America
- Making **errors in pronunciation**
- Certain **tests** are viewed differently
- Speaking in front of peers

## Japan
- **Misunderstand** Cultural Rules
- Pressure to do well on **tests**
- Making mistakes in front of peers

(Horwitz, E. K., Young, D. J., & Gardner, R. C. 1991)
Importance of Interculturality I.

“Interculturality is the interaction of people from different cultural backgrounds using authentic language appropriately in a way that demonstrates knowledge and understanding of the cultures.”

(Rollings-Carter, 2010)
Importance of Interculturality

(Van Houten, J. 2016)
Interculturality in Foreign Language Classrooms

- Teaching interculturality in the classroom is good. However...

The best ways to learn interculturality are...

- Studying Abroad

Interaction with multicultural/multilingual communities

Eg. Volunteering, attending festivals, Writing to a pen pal

(Van Houten, J.2015)
Research Method

Study Participants: 64 University Students

● 34 Japanese University Students
  ○ 16 Male, 17 Female, 1 Other
● 30 American University Students
  ○ 13 Male, 16 Female, 1 Other

Research Instrument

● Online Survey (English, Japanese)
  ○ Google Form (English)
  ○ Google Form (Japanese)
Research Question 1 Findings

What are students’ experiences with foreign language education?
Experiences with Foreign Language Education

About 90% of American students and 65% of Japanese students reported a positive experience with their foreign language education. However, over 30% of Japanese students reported a negative experience.
### Responses - America

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Negative</th>
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| “My teachers have all been genuinely happy to teach the language, and as a result I felt less pressure in learning. Instead of language being just another class, I actually enjoy learning.”  
(Female 20-22 years old) | “The first two years I spent learning Spanish it was taught by people who didn't understand it any better than I did.”  
(Male 20-22 years old) |
<table>
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<td>“Middle and high school English class was mostly grammar and reading, it wasn’t fun, but University English class we do conversation, so it is fun/interesting.”</td>
<td>“Boring. Only grammar, only one way-teacher lectures only teacher is bored too, not passionate, not excited.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Female 20-22 years old)
“I am afraid my language teacher will correct my mistakes.”

In general, American and Japanese students weren’t afraid of teachers correcting their mistakes.
Fear of Negative Evaluation—Peers

“I feel other students are always better than me.”

67% of Americans agree that they feel other students are always better than them, compared with the 62% of Japanese students who disagree.
Test Anxiety

“I feel under a lot of pressure to get good grades on tests.”

80% of American students feel under a lot of pressure to get good grades on tests, in comparison with 53% of Japanese students.
80% of Japanese students and 76% of American students stated they panic when they have to speak without preparation in class.
Were there projects or experiences in your language class that connected you to a multicultural community?

Such as:
- Volunteering/Service Learning
- Pen Pal
- Communication with an international Sister-school
- Visiting a community event of target culture (ex. a festival)
- Visiting a site (ex. target culture restaurant)
- I did not have such a project/experience

70% of Americans and 65% of Japanese have participated or experienced a project that has connected them to one or more areas.
Summary of Findings - Research Question 1

- **American students** had a *more positive experience* with learning a foreign language compared with Japanese students
  - Americans positive reason: **Good Teachers**
  - Japanese positive reason: Teachers were native speakers of target language; Participated in conservation activities in class
    - Japanese negative reason: Class was focused on writing, reading and listening, but *little emphasis on speaking*.
- In general, **American students** experienced *more anxiety* regarding their foreign language education than Japanese students, except in the case of speaking without preparation in class, when it was about the same.
- It is also notable, and surprising, that **Japanese and American** students reported *projects and experiences* in their foreign language classes that connected them to *multicultural communities* in near *equal numbers*. 
Research Question 2 Findings

To what extent are students gaining interculturality from foreign language education?
What is the highest level of foreign language class you have taken in your home country?

The majority of American students had taken up through Intermediate level classes, while the majority of Japanese students had taken up through Advanced level classes.
Language Proficiency

● In our survey we *only asked about interpersonal communication proficiency*.

● The question included scenarios that increased in difficulty from novice to advanced level.

● These scenarios were based on ACTFL Can-do Statements used for self evaluation.

● In Japan and America, Can-do Statements are used as self-evaluation tools for students and for teachers as a checklist of skills to build upon each term.
American and Japanese students showed a similar language proficiency.
We only tested for an intermediate level of interculturality.
I can usually accept and refuse invitations in a culturally accepted way.

Americans were much more confident in their ability to interact with other cultures using their language abilities regarding accepting and refusing invitations.
I can usually offer and receive gifts in a culturally accepted way.

Americans were much more confident in their ability to interact with other cultures using their language abilities regarding offering and receiving gifts.
I can use some appropriate cultural conventions such as body language, turn-taking, interrupting, agreeing, etc. when talking with others.

Americans were much more confident in their ability to interact with other cultures using their language abilities regarding body language, turn-taking, interrupting, agreeing, etc.
“I can respond in a culturally accepted way when someone sneezes, toasts, or pays me a compliment.”

Americans were much more confident in their ability to interact with other cultures using their language abilities regarding responding to sneezes, toasts, and compliments.
Summary of Findings - Research Question 2

- Though the American and Japanese students showed similar interpersonal language proficiency the majority of Japanese students had taken up to advanced level classes, while the majority of American students had only taken up through intermediate level classes.

- This backs up our Literature Review showing that foreign language classes in Japan still do not emphasize interpersonal communication ability.
  - As we saw that Japanese students are less confident in their interculturality, this lack of emphasis likely harms students’ abilities to use their language in appropriate ways in real world settings.
Research Question 3 Analysis

What role does foreign language education play in creating connections between students and multicultural/multilingual communities?
73% of Americans agree that their foreign language education has connected them to a multicultural community, while 53% of Japanese students disagree that they have been connected to a multicultural community.
Foreign language education has helped you create relationships with native speakers of the language.

60% of American students and 59% of Japanese students agree that foreign language education has helped them created relationships with native speakers of the language, though American students more strongly agreed.
Foreign language education has made you more understanding and accepting of other people and cultures.

93% of Americans agree that foreign language education had made them more understanding and accepting of other peoples and cultures, as opposed to the 68% of Japanese who agree.
Summary of Findings - Research Question 3

- **Most Americans** agreed that they had been **connected** to a multicultural community through foreign language education, while **only half of the Japanese students** agreed.

- **Both American and Japanese** students felt they had been able to create relationships with native speakers in equal numbers, though Americans felt more strongly connected.
  - This is possibly because **foreign language** does open up the door for communication, and the students we surveyed typically attended universities with strong study abroad programs.

- However, while only 7% of Americans disagreed that **foreign language** education has made them more accepting and understanding of other cultures, **32% of Japanese disagreed**.
  - The lower level of agreement among Japanese is possibly because, as indicated in our literature review, **Japanese foreign language classes** are typically more rigidly structured and grammar focused, often not emphasizing culture and communication.
Conclusion I.

- It seems that American students have higher confidence in their interculturality than Japanese students due to more enthusiastic teachers, a greater emphasis on teaching culture and interpersonal communication, and stronger connections with multicultural communities and native speakers of their target languages.

- We also found that language anxiety does not necessarily impact students’ overall positive or negative experience with their foreign language education. Rather, teachers and course content are typically the deciding factors.
Conclusion II.

● Though Japanese and Americans reported near equal numbers of projects and experiences that connected them to multicultural communities through their classes, Americans still feel more connected to multicultural communities.
  ○ Possibly because America, as a more heterogeneous country, has more opportunities for immersive experiences.
● Therefore, class experiences and interculturality can be improved by:
  1. Creating many immersive opportunities inside and outside classes to connect with multicultural and multilingual communities.
  2. Offering many opportunities to practice real world interpersonal applications of the target language.
Limitations of the Study

● Most Americans who took the survey were from California, and many were language majors
  ○ May not give an accurate picture of foreign language education in the United States as a whole
● Most Japanese who took the survey were our foreign exchange student friends or students we had been friends with in Japan
  ○ May have skewed the Japanese results
Future Research

- In this study, we did not differentiate between foreign language courses taken in University and courses taken in high school and under.
  - It could yield more detailed and clear results if experiences and interculturality gained from University courses and from high school courses were surveyed separately, as it was clear especially in the case of Japanese students that University and high school courses offered vastly different experiences.
References


References


Van Houten, J. (2016). Moving through the levels of interculturality—a visual representation [PowerPoint presentation].


Media Resources


https://lauraterrill.wikispaces.com/Presentations
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Questions?