

A Cross-Cultural Syllabus for EFL College Students

—Developing Cross-Cultural Communicative
Competence at the Tertiary Level—

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1 INTRODUCTION

This paper discusses an innovative, cross-cultural syllabus based upon content-based instruction¹⁾ in the teaching of English as a Foreign Language at the tertiary level. Building upon the premise that Japan is increasingly becoming part of the world community in the direction of multiculturalism²⁾ and that English is a tool for understanding the complexities of cross-cultural relationships in the world, this study reflects on the merits of the simultaneous acquisition of communicative competence³⁾ and inter/cross-cultural competence.⁴⁾ As the world is becoming a more integrated and interdependent mosaic, cultural sensitivity and respect for cultures of others must be an imperative endeavor, especially for language educators and EFL students in Japan.

Influenced by the internationalization and multiculturalism of Japan, a new cross-cultural course design has been requested to meet the multi-cultural context inside and outside of school and campus. Interactive learner-centered and content-based instruction for self-expression is a natural consequence of this syllabus design, which involves EFL college students who have and will experience of cross-cultural communication. This is an empirical study to produce a cross-cultural syllabus for EFL college students.

The cross-cultural syllabus covers cultural and global topics through employing the latest satellite news broadcasts, extensive reading and oral presentation. Skimming of long passages, sharing ideas and presenting critical perspectives on each cross-cultural topic are emphasized for the purpose of cross-cultural communicative competence.

A study carried out after this program had been taught for one year at the tertiary level revealed that a majority of the students exposed to this program felt that they had developed cross-cultural communicative competence as well as greater freedom and the joy of self-representation in the target language. Also another positive outcome is that most students in this program had developed

multicultural awareness and sensitivity toward other cultures and other people, and were willing to recognize other cultures and what is really happening in other countries as being equally important to their own. In theory this suggests they had developed a transcultural perspectives and an intuitive sense of cultural relativism.⁵⁾

2 CROSS-CULTURAL SYLLABUS FOR EFL STUDENTS

Cross-cultural communication is understanding and sharing of meaning between people from different cultures in a verbal and non-verbal context. Therefore, the cross-cultural syllabus can be a challenge to one of the EFL programs for cultivating cross-cultural communicative competence, a competence to communicate with people from other cultures in a target language with cultural sensitivity and literacy. The ultimate aim of cross-cultural syllabus is to foster in the EFL college student a broader cross-cultural outlook and greater self-confidence in the use of English. The main strategy of the program lies in the use of a cross-cultural syllabus that takes into account the goals of cross-cultural communicative competence and covers such topics as human cultures, human rights, cultural relativism, ethnocentrism,⁶⁾ Orientalism,⁷⁾ feminist studies, cross-cultural communication and other multicultural issues. The aim is to cultivate a view of a unified world, instead of one that sees the world as fragmented, the aftermath of ignorance and isolation in the midst of cross-cultural interaction.

Difficult as such a syllabus may appear, with initiative and resourcefulness, it is possible to find an enormous wealth of informative material, untapped for classroom use. In implementing the program, teaching materials were compiled from up-to-date satellite-based TV programs (CNN International News and BBC News), video materials on world cultures, extensive reading on contemporary human problems and cultures in the EFL/ESL textbooks. The goal is to address the students' need to acquire communicative competence and the skills to present their opinions on relevant cross-cultural topics.

Additionally, there is little doubt that clear articulation of multi-cultural perspectives in the classroom certainly helped students improve their cross-cultural communicative competence for self-representation.

3 RATIONALES

Living in a global community, developing cross-cultural communicative

competence is one of the central assignments for language educators and students as indispensable part of college education in Japan at the dawn of cross-cultural century we are on the verge of. Influenced by the multi-cultural innovation of today's world, many English teachers in Japan have taken upon themselves the task of examining their traditional role, prompting them to become aware of the multi-cultural value of foreign language learning. This is the result of the growing recognition that cross-cultural competence is a vital component of successful communication between people from different cultures.

Understanding of foreign and native culture through a target language is an essential part of foreign language education and should be a kernel of cross-cultural communicative competence. Byram (1989) states that part of the contribution of foreign language teaching to pupils' education is to introduce learners to, and help them understand, 'otherness'. Also he strongly emphasizes that the contribution which the understanding of another culture and civilization should make to the reduction of prejudice and the encouragement of tolerance is one of the unchallenged beliefs of language teachers. The induction of Japanese college students into the inter/cross-cultural dimensions of the encapsulated society of conformity, introducing multicultural perspectives, should be furthered by direct and indirect encounter of a foreign culture. And this is specifically available through the cross-cultural syllabus for EFL students.

With cross-cultural understanding and nurturing a positive attitude towards communication as the central goal of the Course of Study⁸⁾ laid down by the Ministry of Education even at the upper secondary level in 1994, what is needed at the tertiary level is an innovative cross-cultural program that will address the challenges of multi-cultural or simulated environment in the communicative classroom. To this end, an interactive, experimental, participant-centered program can be introduced that involves intermediate or advanced EFL students at the tertiary level.

One of the responsibilities of the language educators on this syllabus is to propel students to realize that conformist and homogeneous orientations can no longer suffice as sound views today; instead, self-driven and diversity-based thinking are required. With this goal in mind, and taking account also of criticism and suggestions by professionals of EFL educators about the nature of English curricula offerings, efforts were made to develop a workable methodology to put into practice the adoption of a program called cross-cultural syllabus for EFL college students.

There exists a well-entrenched binary typology in foreign language teaching, that is, language use and language awareness on the one hand, and language

and cultural studies on the other. One contribution that the Teaching of English as a Foreign Language can make to cross-cultural communication is increasing students' cultural sensitivity and multi-cultural literacy. On the other hand, EFL students in a mono-lingual speech community like Japan continue to be hampered in improving their cross-cultural communicative competence compared with those learning English as a Second Language in a target-language speech community. For this reason, a prerequisite for effective foreign language education for cross-cultural communicative competence is that students should be involved in integrated communicative tasks (Nakamura : 1993) which cover cross-cultural and global topics. Empirically this program encourages EFL college students to become successful interlocutors with appropriate cross-cultural competence for self-representation in multi-cultural context.

There are three basic reasons why a cross-cultural syllabus should be considered as one of the effective cross-cultural programs for EFL college students in Japan.

1 The program has meaningful and comprehensible input based on the humanities, which reflects global and universal concerns of human culture, and can be an excellent aid in acquiring skills for self-representation in a target language in cross-cultural context.

2 Since language is a major symbol of culture, students' awareness of human culture with a realization of the need for cultural sensitivity can be truly enhanced and fostered by this program, thereby leading the learners towards responsible cultural/self identity.

3 Intermediate and advanced class for EFL college students those who have interest in cross-cultural communication over a period of full semester, can be a simulated cross-cultural setting as well as a target-language speech community for self-representation.

The rationales above mentioned are supported by the following four statements :

1. Input must be comprehensible to the learner (at or just above the learner's level) and be offered in such a way as to allow multiple opportunities to understand and use the language. Krashen's "Monitor Model" suggests that if comprehensible input is provided and the students or acquirer does not feel a great deal of anxiety, then acquisition will take place (Crandall : 1987, Krashen : 1987).
2. The English as a second or foreign language (ESL or EFL) classroom lends itself naturally to the integration of language and cross-cultural teaching (Levine and Adlman : 1993).

3. The cultural use of English as well as an understanding of cultural values and attitude should be incorporated into language programs designed to teach language competence (Levine and Adelman : 1993).
4. Awareness of the cross-cultural difference is important because it makes students realize that to become part of the target language discourse community, they need to develop new attitudes, to meet certain criteria of the target language's traditions, and, in some cases, to put aside their native language habits (Mok : 1993).

These statements clearly explain that in order for EFL college students to develop their cross-cultural communicative competence in a way which is acceptable to a global audience, we need to develop not only their English proficiency but also their cross-cultural awareness and sensitivity. Consequently, the process of transforming students' ethnocentric attitudes towards cross-cultural contacts and conflicts into transcultural and transnational ones is a very important part of human education, especially for future generations, for the purpose of peaceful coexistence in a multicultural orientation of the world. Byram (1989) also states that if foreign language teaching contributes to the re-interpretation of pupils' own behavior by introducing them to those in other cultures, it can surely claim to have a significant role in young people's education. Therefore, it can be safely said that these statements support the rationales for introducing a cross-cultural syllabus discussed above.

4 CULTURE AND EFL EDUCATION

Language is the heart of culture and an integral tool of human civilization. Culture and language are symbiotic, interdependent and interwoven. Geertz (1975) defines culture as "an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic form by means of which men communicate, perpetuate and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life." Commenting on Geertz's cultural view, Byram (1989) correctly points out that it clearly puts language, as one of the principal carriers of meaning, at the center of an account of any particular culture, and reinforces the argument that teaching language inevitably involves teaching culture. Integrating these ideas would mean that a premise of learning a language is learning the system of meaning, and the symbols, both linguistic and non-linguistic, which carry that meaning.

Allowing students to immerse themselves in cross-cultural issues in the four

macroskills⁹⁾ and visual areas, results in a deep understanding and cultural background knowledge of content areas. Working with bottom-up and top-down strategies and structuring cultural schema¹⁰⁾ increase cross-cultural communicative competence for self-representation. Especially, many reading passages regarding cross-cultural issues can be adequately comprehended if the EFL students become familiar with the relevant knowledge of cross-cultural terms and principles. Nunan (1992) found that, for high school ESL readers, relevant background knowledge was a more important factor in reading comprehension than grammatical complexity. Therefore, these ideas can be applied to EFL education in the tertiary level in Japan. Schema theory, the theory of comprehension based on relevant background knowledge is particularly significant for EFL students aiming at cross-cultural communicative competence.

Using language as a vehicle to focus on human culture is an effective way of creating a natural exposure to both language and cultural sensitivity. The empirical cross-cultural syllabus design was devised largely on the basis of this premise, but it also takes into account the need to focus on communication tasks, as exemplified by Crandall (1987) in his discussion of teaching language through content-area instruction.

In any form of EFL education, acquiring basic grammatical competence through process-based translation skills should not be taken as an end in itself; unfortunately most Japanese schools have been slaves to this tradition. It is true that historically the tradition of the translation method has resulted from the belief that it was necessary to translate all kinds of text written by Westerners into Japanese for the sake of promoting Japan's modernization since Meiji Restoration in 1868. But now is the right time for Japanese people to positively exchange their ideas and knowledge with the rest of the world, representing their cultural identities and their systems in the target language, for example, in English. Culturally and verbally identifying ourselves and explaining our system in a target language must be a point of departure for self-representation and better cross-cultural communication. This can be largely done through cultural studies in language education.

Morgan (1993) maintains that "the notion of opening up new and interesting areas of knowledge through the teaching of cultural awareness, and the possibility of changing through the teaching of cultural awareness, and the possibility of changing attitudes while so doing, seem to go to the very heart of the educational process itself." The point is how English teachers coordinate and integrate process-centered and product-oriented instruction in the real world through content-based communicative tasks. In a nutshell, since language is the

kernel of culture, becoming a successful foreign language learner means learning how to communicate with people in a cross-cultural context by representing one's self/cultural identity in the lingua franca.

5 MY PILOT SURVEY OF JAPANESE SELF-REPRESENTATION

Central to this investigation was a desire to determine more empirically how necessary it is for Japanese people to develop a sense of self-representation in cross-cultural communication to avoid cultural misunderstanding. A pilot survey was conducted in 1994 to determine the views of American language educators about Japanese self-representation in cross-cultural communication. The survey was administered to 100 American college and high school language teachers both on the East and the West coasts of the United States, with the following distribution of respondents: Pennsylvania (15), North Carolina (20), New York (5), Massachusetts (10), California (25), Washington (25) in 1994.

There is insufficient space to give the full results in this paper, but the following is a summary of the response to the major question asked, "What is most necessary in cross-cultural communication between Japanese and Americans?" Of the hundred teachers polled, 43% believed that Japanese people should express their own ideas explicitly to avoid unnecessary cultural friction, 27% thought that both Japanese and American should make themselves understood with clear self-representation to build better relationships, 17% mentioned that Japanese people should be more honest and direct in how they feel and think, 11% suggested that American should learn to understand Japanese cultural signals in their high context communication¹¹⁾ (Hall: 1976), and 2% felt that there will be no understanding between the two countries now or in the years to come because of cultural differences.

The result of this survey clearly shows that about 87 percent of the American language educators questioned felt, to a greater or lesser degree, the necessity of Japanese self-expressiveness and self-representation for better cross-cultural understanding. This exercise, though small in scale, does reinforce the notion that TEFL in Japan should strive harder to instill self-representation for the purpose of cross-cultural communicative competence in the age of global and multi-cultural community.

6 THE CROSS-CULTURAL SYLLABUS IN PRACTICE (1997)

Communicative tasks should be integrated and sequenced on the learner-centered principle for the purpose of self-representation in a cross-cultural syllabus. Nunan (1989) defines the communicative tasks as “a piece of meaning-focused classroom work involving learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language. Communicative tasks must be a centerpiece of interactive classroom work, designed to immerse students in comprehension, production and interaction in the target language. The following is the cross-cultural syllabus involved in a series of integrated communicative tasks practiced in one of the reading classes for intermediate students (Intermediate English III) at Konan University in 1997.

CLASSROOM PROCEDURES

(1) Clear explanation of the objectives of the class :

Giving students a brief lecture on the significance of the cultural study in EFL education in order to raise awareness of cultural diversity and sensitivity.

(2) Awareness and conceptualization of the topic :

Giving students relevant reading materials concerning cross-cultural topics as a form of immersion strategy.

(3) Paragraph reading :

Encouraging students to summarize each paragraph or passage of the text in English, focusing on main idea, thesis statement and conclusion of each paragraph through skimming.

(4) Critical reading and presentation :

Encouraging students to develop their critical and analytical view on the text or passage and consequently present their critical remarks on each writer's idea.

(5) Extensive reading :

Encouraging students to do research on a given cross-cultural topic to enhance their knowledge and understanding of other cultures and cultural issues.

(6) Video watching :

Watching documentary videos (CNN International, BBC) on global and cross-cultural topics selected to give students an understanding and visualization of the “real world”

(7) Analyzer test :

Receiving feedback about the visual and written materials on the spot to determine students' listening and reading comprehension as well as their cultural awareness.

(8) Paragraph writing on the topic :

Facilitating students' ability to structure and integrate information and their own cultural perspectives into cohesive and coherent connected English paragraphs which can be used for self-representation in class.

(9) Presentation practice for self-representation :

Encouraging students to summarize the paragraphs and express their cultural perspectives to represent themselves, while other students listen carefully and make relevant questions.

(10) Inviting guest speakers :

Broadening students' awareness of issues through guest speakers' perspectives and criticism in a cross-cultural context. Guest speakers give us their bicultural or multicultural experiences as a cultural informant.

TEACHERS' ROLES

Playing flexible roles as a lecturer, cultural informant, facilitator, participant and observer according to each task to create a learner-centered environment.

LANGUAGE USED

Encouraging students to use the target language, as well as to share their inter-language at a level acceptable for communication.

TEACHING MATERIALS

EFL and ESL textbooks (*Beyond Language: Cross-Cultural Communication*, by Levine and Adelman 1993); the Times and English newspaper for reading; CNN international, BBC programs and other video materials on cross-cultural issues.

EVALUATION AND GRADING

Evaluating students' skimming and scanning skills by the analyzer. Evaluating written and oral presentations in terms of structure, discourse, coherence, originality and cultural sensitivity.

Evaluating positive participation, mentally and physically.

SYLLABUS DESIGN

The following is the cross-cultural syllabus for EFL college students in a full semester project implemented in one of the reading classes for intermediate students at Konan University, Kobe Japan in 1997. It will be noticed that the topics vary within the framework of cross-cultural studies.

Week 1 : What is culture ?

Culture is like an iceberg (Levin: 1993). As culture has a visible dimension (language, food, appearance) and an invisible dimension (communication style, beliefs attitudes, values, and perceptions), the first week mainly focuses cultural awareness and human behaviors conditioned by their cultures. By defining culture as shared background resulting from a common language, communication style, customs, and belief, attitude and values in a certain group or society, students discuss a variety of aspects of human cultures through reading materials and VTRs.

Week 2 : Cross-Cultural Terms and Principles

Students are encouraged to understand the terms and principles of cross-cultural issues to enhance comprehension of information and their knowledge for discussion. Students should be familiar with terminology like culture, communication, cross-cultural communication, cross-cultural conflicts, cultural sensitivity, cultural literacy, cross-cultural literacy/competence, and multi-cultural identities.

Week 3 : Cultural Relativism

Cultural Relativism is the anthropological attitude that society's customs and ideas should be observed and described objectively and understood in each social context. Students are encouraged to study that there is no absolute "rights" and "wrong" or "superior" or "inferior" cultures and we can't judge other cultures by the standards of our own. Ruth Benedict's cultural relativism is introduced and discussed through the passage from her masterpiece, *The Chrysanthemum and Sword*.

Week 4 : Cross-cultural Contacts and Conflicts

Students are encouraged to discuss and report their own cross-cultural contacts and how they have overcome their cross-cultural conflicts. To enhance their cross-cultural sensitivity and competence, stereotypes, mainstream culture, generalization, minority and majority are focused.

Week 5 : Culture Shock and The Re-entry Adjustment Process

After discussing and sharing individual culture shocks¹³⁾ and reentry problems in cross-cultural or multi-cultural contacts, students are introduced theoretically cross-cultural adjustment and the re-entry adjustment through the textbook.

Week 6 : Multicultural Societies

Reinforcing an orientation premised on cultural relativity by studying the diversity of heterogeneous societies, the conformity of homogeneous societies, comparing Japan and the United States. The melting-pot theory¹⁴⁾ and salad-

bowl theory¹⁵⁾ are introduced and discussed in the direction of multiculturalism.

Week 7 : Minorities

Encouraging students to study the entity of “minorities” and human relations in terms of negative patterns such as stereotypes, prejudice, discrimination and cultural extinction, as well as the positive behavior patterns associated with integration, amalgamation and assimilation through the history of European, African, Asian and Hispanic immigrants. Discrimination against minorities in Japan should be focused and discussed.

Week 8 : Ethnocentrism and Orientalism

Ethnocentrism is the belief that one’s race, nation, group, etc., are better and superior or more important than others. This is a fatal enemy of multicultural society. Orientalism is a Western-centered conception of the Orient (Said : 1978) which is also Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient. Students are encouraged to discuss the history of Japan’s ethnocentrism and Japan’s Occidentalism in Asia.

Week 9 : High Context and Low Context :

The difference of high context communication and low context communication is introduced and discussed. Several examples of cross-cultural miscommunication derived from high context and low context communication styles are presented by students. As group members, Japanese use high context communication in which the listener must derive meaning from the context as well as the words. American communication style is low context, and meaning is derived mostly from words alone (Hall : 1987).

Week 10 and 11 : Marriage and Divorce

Helping students learn about the place of marriage in human culture and how to become successful marriage builder. Monogamy and Polygamy in different cultures are discussed in terms of anatomy of love. Students are requested to make a wide range of research from resource centers to write and present their own idea on marriage as a life education.

Week 12 and 13 : Feminism and Feminist Theory

Encouraging students to study feminist theory, which is interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary subject, involving comparative culture and cross-cultural perspectives. The history of women’s liberation in relation to civil rights movements is focused. The history of women is the history of discrimination. How woman can balance her career and household duties with the help of an understanding /husband/homemaker is a central issue.

Week 14 and 15 : Verbal and Nonverbal Communication

Helping students to understand similarities and differences in verbal and

nonverbal communication across cultures, together with interpersonal distance.

Week 16 and 17 : Humanities of the World

Fostering students cultural sensitivity, sense of human solidarity and spirit of humanitarian activities by reading a variety of news articles and passages and watching documentary videos, for example UNICEF : The First Forty Years and compiled world news reports (CNN and BBC) on hunger and poverty in the midst of cultural conflicts.

Week 18, 19 and 20 : Japanese People and Japanese Culture

Helping students to study the question, "What has made Japan become what she is today" : the Japanese hierarchical system, the conformist national character, Japanese work ethic conditioned by Japanese culture, family and group-oriented philosophy in Japanese companies. The diploma disease, school refusal, bullying and other educational problems in Japan are also discussed from cultural norm. Research paper on the issue from cultural perspectives and oral presentations are assigned to all participants as major evaluation of this course.

7 STUDENT SURVEY

(1) QUESTIONNAIRE

Questionnaires on the program were given to Konan students who took Intermediate English III (Reading class) based on the cross-cultural syllabus in January 1998 at the end of one year of the program. The participants in this program comprised 25 students of Konan University.

(2) QUESTION and RESPONSE

- (a) Do you think you have become more interested in cross-cultural issues ?
 Yes (96%) Don't know (4 %) No (0 %)
- (b) Do you think you have become more aware of your own culture ?
 Yes (92%) Don't know (4 %) No (4 %)
- (c) Do you think you have become more aware of other cultures ?
 Yes (100%) Don't know (0 %) No (0 %)
- (d) Do you think you have become more aware of cross-cultural sensitivity ?
 Yes (88%) Don't know (12%) No (0 %)
- (e) Do you think Japanese people should represent themselves more clearly ?
 Yes (92%) Don't know (4 %) No (4 %)
- (f) Do you think that your reading skills have improved through this program ?

- Yes (96%) Don't know (4%) No (0%)
- (g) Do you think your communicative competence have improved through presentation activities ?
- Yes (96%) Don't know (4%) No (0%)
- (h) Do you think you have developed critical and analytical thinking through this program ?
- Yes (88%) Don't know (12%) No (0%)
- (i) Do you think you have developed cross-cultural knowledge ?
- Yes (100%) Don't know (0%) No (0%)
- (j) Do you think cross-cultural communicative competence will be helpful and important in your future life ?
- Yes (92%) Don't know (4%) No (4%)

The result of the questionnaires clearly confirms that EFL college students involved in this program took generally positive attitudes regarding cross-cultural studies and showed a desire to develop cross-cultural communicative competence.

8 STUDENTS' ESSAYS on Cross-Cultural Communication

(1) My opinion on Cross-Cultural Communication

Emi (junior), majoring in law

“What is cross-cultural communication ?” This is the very thing I have wanted to know since I entered Konan University. In this internationalized society I strongly feel the need of studying other cultures, because today's world is getting closer and closer and I believe that it will be united as one world soon.

The preparation for coexistence with the people who have different cultural backgrounds in one world is to have the mind of “cultural relativism”, which is the idea that no culture is superior nor inferior to other culture. To have this idea we need to understand CULTURE ; the shared background deriving from language, customs, belief and etc.

Also as everyone has different background we need COMMUNICATION in order to understand others. However, as long as we depend on mass-media, there may be misunderstanding because of the stereotypes or biased information. If we trust stereotypes too much it will be difficult to have the philosophy of cultural relativism as misunderstanding sometimes causes prejudice and discrimination.

To prevent these negative attitudes I suggest three things. The first is to have direct contact with people from different cultures. The second is to put

yourself into other culture and observe carefully what is going on through their eyes. The third is to see your own culture objectively without ethnocentrism.

In this class I learned not only English but also cross-cultural communication and I have found that English itself is just a language, but if we use it to talk with international people, English will be a wonderful tool for communication. Therefore I would say “If you want to coexist as one of the internationally minded person in this united world, you should have communication with as many people as you can without losing what you are.” (Sic)

Emi, one of the participants of the class wrote this essay on cross-cultural communication and made an oral presentation based on this essay. After she finished the first semester she began to study abroad at Leeds University, UK, one of Konan's affiliated universities. She is now studying communication and culture together with many international students in Leeds.

(2) Respect for Cultural Differences and Cultural Identity

Daichi (Senior), major in Economics

Communication across cultures can easily turn into miscommunication. American business people often complain about the difficulties of business negotiation in Japan. For example, Japanese often imply “Yes” when they mean “Maybe” or “No”. The American often get frustrated, confused, and irritated. However, I believe that human communication through language can transcend cultural difference.

American people tend to get to the point immediately. Their style of business negotiations is very direct and honest. In a high context culture like a Japanese society, some Japanese feel Americans sometimes seem quite aggressive. After a short exchange of greetings, they get down to the business and try to find a good result of business talks. Comparing with the American communication style, Japanese people start off the meetings with rigid formalities and long greetings. I think that Americans like the expression of “get the ball rolling”, which means that they start discussion or activities immediately.

The style of business talks or negotiations gives us many clues about communication styles in each culture. Americans aim at the productive result of a business talk with their customers, and they never withdraw during negotiations. They want to know a clear answer to finish their business negotiation. So from their cultural systems, Japanese business people can't make their own decisions on their own responsibilities. How can we reduce these cultural differences to avoid misunderstanding.

For a possible and workable solution, whenever we are involved in cultural

differences, we should not prejudge or judge others and other systems from our value systems. The most important thing for Japanese people is to enter another culture respecting their own cultural identity. If you do so, you will be surprised how the cross-cultural communication improves. You should try to accept cultural identities of other people from their point of views as we respect our own cultural identity. Cross-cultural Communication will be improved when we respect the cultural identity of others. (Sic)

Daichi is a senior student who is going to study economics and world culture at graduate school. As he had cross-cultural experiences in Australia in his childhood he always took an active part in this class, expressing his own comparative cultural perspectives in each cultural topic.

(3) What I Learned in this Class, “Communication with other people”

Shintaro, (junior) major in Economics

The time has come when Japanese people have to prepare to become a member of the international community. All of the countries on the earth are becoming united and transnational. Also Japan can't ignore and avoid this international trend. The number of people who go abroad and come to Japan is remarkably increasing. So we are having many chances to communicate with people whose backgrounds are different. As a result we have seen many conflicts between people who have different cultures. These conflicts come from the lack of information and direct contact with other cultures and other people. What makes the matter worse, this lack of information and direct contact create stereotypes. In order to become friends with foreign people from different cultures, first of all, we need to communicate well enough to understand each other. It is really important to communicate with each other in order to get rid of stereotypes and prejudice.

In general Japanese become shy when we have a talk with foreigners. Japanese have a culture in which modesty is regarded as valuable and desirable. But the concept of modesty and shyness are quite different from country to country. It is true that the Japanese culture is unique and attractive, but to be too modest and too shy is not accepted in the cross-cultural communication. The real reason why Japanese become so shy is because of Japanese social environments and education. Japan is a homogeneous country, so we are not used to communicating with foreigners who have different cultures. As Japanese education depends on the ranking society, they don't teach the wisdom to recognize a foreign culture as it is. The objective and relativistic view to compare Japanese culture with foreign cultures should be introduced. Japanese

educators are teaching just skills to get good scores and pass the exams. Although we know some grammatical knowledge of English, we cannot write and speak English well enough to communicate with people from different cultures.

In order to change this educational environment and quality of education, we have to learn diversity of cultures and how to transform ourselves into global citizens in the international communities. We should have positive attitude to know another cultures by reading books, watching TV and having contacts with people of the world directly. We should have education which foster positive attitude to live together with other people and skills to communicate with people from different countries. Now is the time for Japanese to seek and find out the wisdom to coexist in peace. Then we can become one of the global partners to build a better multicultural community together. (Sic)

Shintaro is a junior students who is studying economics. He joined the Summer Intensive Program of Leeds University during this summer. He has become aware of how important the cultural aspect of human communication and the peaceful coexistence of human beings are.

Most students in this class tried to write cross-cultural contacts and conflicts as Japan's cross-cultural assignments. Also as they learned John Dewey's Reflective thinking, which covers analysis of the problems, suggesting workable solutions to the problems, and selecting the best solution of the problem, most conclusions they have arrived at are related with workable solutions for the cross-cultural problems.

9 STUDENTS' COMMENTS ON THIS CLASS

The following are some of the students' comments on this class. They are printed in the form in which they were submitted.

I haven't thought about Japanese culture until now. After I finished this class, I noticed that I am very ashamed of myself as a Japanese. Although I am a Japanese I have little knowledge about Japanese culture and our communication styles. From now on I have to explain Japanese culture in English. I have enjoyed this class and I will continue to study culture more. Daichi (senior)

I have never thought about culture. This class taught us how important to know not only our own culture but also diversity of other cultures. Though this is one of the toughest classes with lots of assignments and oral presentations, we had a good time. Shintaro (junior)

This was a great class. I was so impressed. Speech communication class was also great but compared with that class this class has more cultural knowledge and skills to live in cross-cultural contacts. Thank you very much and best wish for your international English and cultural studies. Emi (junior)

This class taught me many cultural terms and cultural concepts. To be accepted we must accept others and other cultures as they are. I think it is very important to study not only English language itself but also cross-cultural communication. Also we have to observe and understand cultural differences and feelings of others. To be loved we must love others and other cultures as our Professor used to say. I want to study English and culture more.

Nao (Sophomore)

I have never been asked so often to present my own opinion on culture and cross-cultural issues in my education as this class. Although this class was quite difficult and tough, we have felt that we have been accepted and our own ideas have been respected by our professor and others. Everyone tried to listen to others and we learned how to summarize the passage and present our own comments on it in English. As I am going to study abroad in a University in Scotland from next month, I would like to learn much about cultural differences and communication styles by expressing my own opinion. Aki (junior)

10 DISCUSSION : SELF-REPRESENTATION AS A CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE

An important assertion is that Japanese people should verbally represent themselves ; they should express their own ideas in cross-cultural communication rather than following the portrayals and national stereotypes created by Westerners who have dominated cross-cultural relations between East and West as the principal actors in global affairs. Said (1978), for example, following the insights of Karl Marx, describes the Oriental people in the following words : “They cannot represent themselves ; they must be represented.” He also states that Japanese contemporary verbal culture is austere, even impoverished (Said : 1994). This implies that Japanese people should verbally represent themselves in cross-cultural context to avoid cultural misunderstanding (Nakamura : 1994).

Historically, the Orient has been culturally incorporated and assimilated by the system of Western knowledge and Western-centered conceptions of the Orient. Along with other Oriental countries, Japan has had little chance to represent herself because of language barriers, cultural differences and cultural

hegemony by Western powers. Furthermore, the most crucial crises and bloodshed in the contemporary world are occurring along the cultural fault lines separating civilization. In the post-Cold War context, Huntington (1993) has pointed out that “the fundamental source of conflict in this new world will not be primarily ideological or primarily economic. The great division among humankind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural.” Although Huntington’s perception of culture and civilization are biased and problematic in terms of transcultural and multicultural orientation, which is moving in the direction of global community concern, many nationalities on this fragile earth have been and are still the victims of stereotypes and biased notions of other culture and other national characters. Even a half century ago, Benedict (1946) warned that one of the handicaps of the 20th century is that people still have the vaguest and most biased notions, not only of what makes Japan a nation of Japanese, but of what makes the United States a nation of Americans, France a nation of Frenchmen. Ironically, even now, a half century later, many people are still the victims of biased notion of other cultures and others in the name of cross-cultural fault lines.

Facing difficulties created by the false ideas of the clashes of civilization, cultural regionalism and cross-cultural conflicts, it seems that now is the most opportune time for Japanese educators to think of possible methods to develop cross-cultural competence of the future generation and to equip them for genuine self-representation in a target language. The major contention here is that the cross-cultural syllabus can be one means of acquiring self-representation and one way of helping to avoid unnecessary cultural friction, confrontation, misunderstanding, racial animosity and xenophobia *vis-à-vis* the rest of the world. By interacting with people from other cultures, students will naturally feel the necessity of expressing themselves in a mutually comprehensible language, for example, in acceptable international English, not to mention in an authentic national English.¹²⁾

The fundamental purpose of a cross-cultural English program is to shift students’ fixed stereotypes towards broader perspectives in multi-cultural settings. Cultivating cultural sensitivity and relativity is not simply a matter of becoming cosmopolitans without a cultural identity. What is important is to foster our own cultural identity and multicultural perspectives so that we can represent ourselves within the framework of mutual respect for cultural, political, economic and gender identity, while working, living and sharing for the benefit and development of humanity.

Whether the Japanese people welcome it or not, the real world is rapidly

changing in a multi-cultural and transnational direction. People are coming to Japan in increasing numbers from different social strata of diverse societies. They come here for a varying purposes. One thing is certain, however, Japan is becoming a focus of interest to many, and while they are here, they have to live together with us, assessing us in terms of our cultural identity and our commitment to global partnership.

For these reasons, verbally-focused self-representation in cross-cultural context is expected of a country which has become so advanced technologically. Our cross/inter-cultural relations need to match our technological achievements, otherwise we will simply be regarded as an unacceptable and ineffective leader in the world arena. This means that we should be culturally sensitive and literate in the direction of multiculturalism, if only to contribute to cross-cultural understanding. Perhaps it is a truism, but great efforts are needed for us, as language educators, to realize a situation where we can be counted as an asset to the cross-cultural environment. Language educators are indispensable partners in the task of helping the future generation become capable of representing themselves with enough cross-cultural competence and better be able to live with one another as equal citizens of our fragile planet onward into the 21st century.

11 CONCLUSION

We have reviewed a practical college-based experiment conducted to enhance cross-cultural communication, and have argued that self-representation in a target language is a goal that should not be overlooked by language educators. As questionnaires and students' essays showed, most students in this program clearly felt that cross-cultural studies were helpful and important in EFL education, and showed a strong desire to develop cross-cultural communicative competence to get along with people from different cultures. Through the favorable responses of the participants, we have verified the positive aspect of cross-cultural syllabus for EFL students. Although this program undoubtedly has much room for improvement in terms of theoretical/scientific support and authentic pedagogy, it is believed that what students have studied through the cross-cultural syllabus will greatly aid them in their struggle for self-representation as they communicate with people in the kaleidoscope of cultures and live in the coming multi-cultural century.

NOTES

- 1) Many content-based ESL programs have developed to provide students with an opportuni-

ty to learn cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP), as well as to provide a less abrupt transition from ESL classroom to an all-English-medium academic program. Content-based ESL courses—whether taught by the ESL teacher, the content-area teacher, or some combination—provide direct instruction in the special language of the subject matter, while focusing attention as much or more on the subject matter itself (Crandall, 1987).

The use of experiential content as the basic building in lesson or unit design is not a new one. As it has been around for a long time, it has many variants. Many of the courses and textbooks for English for Specific Purpose take as their point of departure content or topics from other subject area. Another example of content-based courses are the foreign language ‘immersion’ programs in which school students learn math, science, history etc. through the target language. In a sense, as language is used as a vehicle to talk about other things, all language classes have a content dimension (Nunan : 1992).

- 2) Multiculturalism is the preservation of different cultures or cultural identities within a unified society, as a state or nation (Webster’s Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language. 1996).
- 3) A term in sociolinguistics for a speaker’s underlying knowledge of the rules of grammar (understood in its widest sense to include phonology, orthography, syntax, lexicon, and semantics) and rules for their use in socially appropriate circumstances (The Oxford Companion to the English Language. 1992). Speaker’s internalized knowledge both of the grammatical rules of a language and of the rules for appropriate use in social context. (Webster’s Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of The English Lanugage, 1996)
- 4) Cultural competence is the demonstrated ability to enact a cultural identity in a mutually appropriate and effective manner. Inter-cultural competence is the reinforcement of culturally different identities that are salient in the particular situation. Intercultural competence occurs when the avowed identity matches the identity ascribed. For example, if you avow the identity of an assertive, outspoken U.S. American and your conversational partner avows himself or herself to be a respectful, nonassertive Vietnamese, then each must ascribe the corresponding identity to the conversational partner. You must jointly negotiate what kind of relationship will be mutually satisfying. Some degree of adjustment and accommodation is usually necessary (Samovar and Porter : 1994).
- 5) Cultural Relativism is the anthropological attitude that society’s customs and ideas should be described objectively and understood in the context of that society’s problems and opportunities (Ember : 1990).
- 6) Ethnocentrism, centerdness on one’s own group, might well be the characteristic that most directly relates to intercultural communication. Keesing (1965) notes that ethnocentrism is a “universal tendency for any people to put its own culture and society in a central position of priority and worth (Samovar and Porter : 1994).
- 7) Orientalism is a Western-centered conception of the Orient. Orientalism is also Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient (Said : 1978).
- 8) The guidelines for foreign language education in senior high school by Monbusho (The Ministry of Education) in 1989, which emphasize cross-cultural understanding and nurturing a positive attitude towards communication in a target language. This guidelines were put into practice in all senior high schools in Japan in 1994.
- 9) Nunan (1992) states that in language skills and use, the nature of the four macroskills are

- listening, speaking, reading and writing.
- 10) The mental structures which store our knowledge are called schemata, and the theory of comprehension based on schemata is called schema theory. According to the theory, reading is an interactive process between what a reader already knows about a given topic or subject and what the writer writes. It is not simply a matter of applying decoding conventions and grammatical knowledge to the text. Good readers are able to relate the text and their own background knowledge efficiently. Schema theory is particularly significant for second language learners (Nunan : 1992).
 - 11) A high-context (HC) communication or message is one in which most of the information is either in the physical context or internalized in the person, while very little is in the coded, explicit, transmitted part of the message. A low-context(LC) communication is just the opposite ; i. e., the mass of the information is vested in the explicit code (Hall: 1976).
 - 12) National English is an authentic English spoken in English speaking countries, especially in U.K, United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand (Suzuki : 1983).
 - 13) Culture shock is a state of bewilderment and distress experienced by an individual who is suddenly exposed to a new strange, or foreign social and cultural environment (Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language, 1996).
 - 14) Americans' views of their own diversity have changed over the years. In the early to mid-1900s, some people described America as a "melting pot." The belief that ethnic groups and races would eventually completely assimilate and become one group (Levine and Adelman : 1993).
 - 15) By the 1970s and 1980s, a better analogy was introduced : America's multicultural society was described as a "mosaic" in which all the races and ethnic groups could be proudly displayed. Each group was seen as separate and distinct, but contributing its own color, shape and design toward the creation of an attractive mosaic (Levine and Adelman : 1993).

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