Fostering Intercultural Competence Through Problem-Based Learning: A Case Study of a Socioculturally Modified Curriculum in Japanese Higher Education

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A Case Study of a Socioculturally Modified Curriculum in Japanese Higher Education

by

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DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to those who enabled me to strive for a goal I thought was unattainable. I am indebted to my wife and son who gave me the strength to become someone I had never been before. To my parents, who always put my education first, even when it meant sacrificing everything. To my brother, who was always there to discuss theories and research when no one else would listen. Finally, I dedicated this study to Brian Guthrie, who initially planted the seed in my mind to begin the doctoral process. Your sage-like presence will be missed my dear friend; the good always die too young.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this explanatory mixed-methods action research dissertation was to expose six students studying Oral Communications 1 (OC1) at Japan's Technical University (JTU) to a sociocultural component using the textbook *Mirrors and Windows* (Huber-Kriegler, Lázár, & Strange, 2003) over an eight-week period with the assistance of project-based learning (PBL). This dissertation used Mertler's (2014) step-by-step process of action research to collect, document, and analyze data concerning the students' changes in intercultural competence. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected using: (a) the IDI, (b) field notes, (c) reflective student journals, (d) worksheets from in-class tasks, and (d) a focus group. The Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) was used as the primary quantitative source in addition to categorized quantified anecdotes from the qualitative sources using meta-inferences. A case study was constructed using the qualitative sources (field notes, worksheets, and focus group) through narrative analysis to further elaborate on the results from the IDI. Both quantitative and qualitative interpretations showed successful improvement in three participants' intercultural competence—from Polarization Defense to Minimization—after the completion of the curriculum adjustment. Furthermore, analysis of the case study illustrated why some students were able to transcend Polarization Defense while others failed. Through the action research process, improvements to the sociocultural component, methodology, and theoretical framework for future studies are discussed.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

DMIS .... Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity

DO .... Developmental Orientation

EFL .... English as a Foreign Language

IDI .... Intercultural Development Inventory

IDC .... Intercultural Development Continuum

JTU .... Japan's Technical University

MEXT .... Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology

MOE .... Ministry of Education

OG .... Orientation Gap

PBL .... Problem-Based Learning

PO .... Perceived Orientation

OC1 .... Oral Communications 1

QUAL .... Qualitative

QUAN .... Quantitative

TO .... Trailing Orientation

TOEIC .... Test of English for International Communication

USC .... University of South Carolina

V2 .... Version 2 of the IDI

V3 .... Version 3 of the IDI

ZPD .... Zone of Proximal Development

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The cultural landscape of Japan is dramatically changing, and with it, the

Japanese identity and way of life (Kawamura, 2016; Kim & Oh, 2011; Morita, 2013;

Whitsed & Wright, 2013). In 2010, statistics reported that "the number of foreign

residents increased to nearly 2,134,000" (Matsumoto, 2013, p. 7) or nearly 1.7% of the

Japanese population. At the end of 2016, reports estimated that the number of registered

non-Japanese had surpassed the two percent mark for the first time in history. This may

not seem significant; however, researchers suggest that 30 million (20% to 30%) of the

population will be made up of foreign residents by 2050 (Kim & Oh, 2011; Whitsed &

Wright, 2013). Although it is believed that a large number of these migrant workers will

undertake employment in the labor or service industries, with the introduction of the

highly skilled professional visa status by the Japanese government in 2012, high-profile

technology companies have begun recruiting talent for an array of science and technology

positions (Lee, Park, & Ban, 2016; Yamaguchi & Maeda, 2015). This means, a multitude

of foreign residents will be spread throughout Japan in all sectors of the workforce with

heavy concentrations in engineering and information technology fields (Yamaguchi &

Maeda, 2015).

Due to the growth in foreign workers making their way to Japan, much attention

is currently being focused on coexistence (Kawamura, 2016). Nonetheless, regardless of

national rhetoric concerning internationalization, it prevalent that "the past government

initiatives . . . have not proven successful in cultivating 'international/global citizens'"

(Naganuma, 2016, p. 36). Or, in other words, Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) has mainly focused on internationalism to promote the idea of multiculturalism and globalization through ineffective study abroad initiatives rather than expanding the educational reforms throughout the Japanese curricula (Fukuzawa, 2016; Kawamura, 2016). Hence, there is still a need for educators to help develop students' ability and willingness to communicate in cross-cultural interactions, so they are able to communicate effectively with people from other cultures (Yamada, 2013).

Due to the minimal amount of cultural education in the public education system, it is feared that current Japanese university students may struggle with the skills needed to effectively transition into the multicultural society that lies ahead (Hardy, 2016; Kawamura, 2016; Morita, 2013; Naganuma, 2016; Nozaki, 2008; Whitsed & Wright, 2013). This leads to the concern that, "If a major aspect of the internationalization of higher education is to prepare students to function in intercultural contexts, in order to succeed, students have to be able to see themselves in intercultural contexts as a likely scenario" (Morita, 2013, p. 57). In this regard, many researchers believe that intercultural competence (having the awareness to think and act properly during interactions with those from different cultural backgrounds) is crucial for success in the culturally diverse future ahead (Deardorff, 2011; Hammer, 2015; Hammer, Bennett, & Wiseman, 2003; Lustig & Koester, 2005; Moeller & Osborn, 2014; Sercu & Bandura, 2005; Sorrells, 2015).

Problem of Practice

While working as a lecturer in English as a foreign language (EFL) at Japan's Technical University (JTU) over the past seven years, the teacher-researcher noticed that a majority of the students studying Oral Communication 1 (OC1) struggled with their intercultural competence. Similar to other studies at the tertiary level with Japanese EFL learners (see Flowers, 2015; Kawamura, 2016; Morita, 2013; Nakamura, 2002; Occhi, 2016; Whitsed & Wright, 2013), JTU's students tend to deny cultural similarities while defending their culture's way of doing things, thereby placing them in what Hammer (2012) would call *monocultural mindsets* (avoiding or focusing exclusively on the differences of culture). For example, when talking about problems foreign residents experience while living in Japan, students often revert to the idea that this is caused because they are unable to adapt to Japanese culture. Furthermore, learners are quick to point out how Japan is different from other cultures. Moreover, when asked to talk about cultural similarities, the students often only refer to surface-level observations such as food, eating styles, or sports. As Morita (2013) points out, this issue may stem from their inadequate understanding of otherness (viewing society through a different worldview) and lack of intercultural interactions.

This mindset is especially worrying for students at JTU, as they will be soon working in science and technology fields without the proper level of intercultural competence to help them interact in the multicultural environment that will unfold during their careers. The teacher researcher believes that this underscores a need for a curriculum intervention through the integration a sociocultural component (see Appendix A) into the OC1 courses at JTU. Fortunately, as Kawamura (2016) makes clear, EFL

courses are naturally poised to introduce other cultures within the teaching framework; hence, creating an opportunity to address the students' needs. Learners at JTU, therefore, ought to receive real-world exposure in order to better understand the complexities of culture and build their intercultural competence in OC1 courses. In this respect, this action research project is concerned with utilizing problem-based learning (PBL) to simulate real-world situations, which require students to compare and contrast different sociocultural phenomena in juxtaposition to Japanese culture while interacting with non-Japanese citizens in hopes of increasing their intercultural competence.

Research Question

How does a socioculturally adjusted curriculum using problem-based learning (PBL) impact the intercultural competence level of Japanese students enrolled in an oral communications course?

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of a sociocultural curriculum adjustment using PBL on the intercultural competence of Japanese university students enrolled in an OC1 course at JTU. For the purpose of this study, *intercultural competence* is defined as the awareness to adjust one's own cultural perspective in order to meaningfully participate in an intercultural environment (Hammer et al., 2003; Niu, 2015), whereas, *intercultural sensitivity* is the manner in which cultural phenomena is construed and it can be used as a marker to predict one's intercultural competence (Hammer et al., 2003; Kawamura, 2016; Paige & Bennett, 2015). Intercultural competence will be used as an umbrella term throughout this dissertation.

Action Research Design

During the spring semester of 2018 at JTU, the teacher-researcher conducted a

practitioner action research project utilizing an explanatory mixed-methods case study

approach to measure changes in the students' intercultural competence in an OC1 course.

The main source of quantitative data for this dissertation was the Intercultural

Development Inventory (IDI), which is 50-question assessment tool used to assess

students' intercultural competence. For the qualitative data collection, field notes,

reflective journals, worksheets, and a focus group were employed to assess the effects of

a PBL curriculum adjustment using the textbook *Mirrors and Windows* (Huber-Kriegler,

Lázár, & Strange, 2003). By using quantitative data as the basis of this mixed-methods

action research study, qualitative accounts were supplemented "to elaborate on, refine, or

further explain the quantitative findings" (Mertler, 2014, p. 104).

Since action research is largely iterative, it allows for new discoveries, and a

mixed-methods approach is often a more efficient way to collect and analyze data, as

both quantitative and qualitative sources are key in establishing rigor (Dana & Yendol-

Hoppey, 2014; Mertler, 2014). Additionally it is believed that the use of multiple

instruments leads to more "opportunities for learning when different data sources lead to

discrepancies" (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014, p. 134). Typically, action research

projects start with an issue or topic of interest: "They involve some observation or

monitoring of current practice, followed by the collection and synthesis of information

and data" (Mertler, 2014, p. 13).

Although mixed-methods research has only been prevalent since the 1960s, the

revitalization of philosophical views of pragmatism have established mixed-methods as a

reputable approach over the past 30 years, subsequently, increasing its popularity in the social sciences (Creswell, 2014; Pinto, 2010; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). Mixed-methods research is a pragmatic approach to an investigation as it is primarily concerned with the research question at hand, which means, rather than being partial to one method, the pragmatic worldview advocates any methods and procedures necessary to answer both the *what* and *how* questions prevalent in any research project (Creswell, 2014). "Mixed methods research may bridge postmodern critiques of scientific inquiry and the growing interest in qualitative research. . . . provid[ing] an opportunity to test research questions . . . [and] theory . . . to acknowledge the phenomena of human experience" (Pinto, 2010, p. 817). In this way, accuracy of the data can be explained (Creswell, 2014) by giving researchers an "alternative to the [quantitative] QUAN and [qualitative] QUAL traditions by advocating the use of whatever methodological tools . . . [are] required to answer the research questions under study" (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009, p. 7). Abiding by these presumptions, the teacher-researcher used a pragmatic approach to all data collection through an explanatory mixed-methods case study approach in order to attend to the multi-faceted complexities of intercultural competence.

Using a typical case sample, six students' intercultural sensitivity was assessed over an eight-week period with a modified EFL curriculum designed to promote intercultural competence through PBL. This action research project used the IDI for pretest-posttests, quantified instances, field notes, journals, worksheets, and a focus group to measure the change in students' intercultural sensitivity on the Intercultural Development Continuum (IDC)—the conceptual framework used for describing orientations on the IDI—before and after being exposed to different cultural phenomena

through the use of a sociocultural component developed in unison with the intercultural textbook titled *Mirrors and Windows* (Huber-Kriegler et al., 2003).

The data collection was set up through an explanatory mixed-methods approach where the quantitative data (IDI and quantified instances) was collected first and then followed by a case study that was a contextualization of the other qualitative sources. While acting as an insider throughout the project, Mertler's (2014) action research approach of planning, acting, developing, and reflecting was used in hopes of promoting intercultural competence in EFL courses at JTU.

Local Context

JTU has more than a 100-year history since the university initially found its roots as a vocational school in 1907 in Tokyo. In 1949 the School of Engineering became a full-fledged four-year technical university, adding campuses in the prefectures of Saitama in 1977 and Chiba. In 2012, the Tokyo campus was constructed and boasts one of the most technologically advanced campuses in Japan. JTU has cutting-edge technology and promotes the development of physical sciences as well as engineering fields with almost 250 research labs. It is funded by and connected directly to many major technology companies such as Panasonic and Sony. A majority of the students work in many different sectors in these major companies after graduation as well as finding employment in other large companies in similar international markets.

One of the main aspirations of JTU is to foster the education of globally competent students who can bridge the cultural gap and contribute to Japanese society. Through the international joint research program, JTU has established agreements with 11 different countries at 30 different universities for potential short-term study abroad

and exchange agreements. As of 2017, JTU hosted over 10,000 undergraduate and graduate students, who were studying in various technological, engineering, and computer related fields with the average student aging 18-21 years old in all programs. The majority of international students at the university came from China, Korea, and the Middle East making up nearly 10% of the student population

The participants of this action research project are six first-year students taking OC1 in the spring semester of 2018. OC1 is a mandatory English course required by all first-year students. OC1 meets once a week for 100 minutes on Thursdays and belongs to the English division of the Engineering and Future Science Department in northern Tokyo. Students taking this class are required to have a Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC) score of over 450 by the completion of the course, which is administered by a third-party company on the school's premise twice during the semester. Students who join this class are typically motivated to learn English for their careers or potential research positions. The goal of the course is to cultivate students' English communicative competence and develop globally-minded learners. The particular OC1 that is used for this study utilizes the highest level EFL students from the Architecture and Robotics Departments. The entire course is conducted by the teacher-researcher in English; however, students are allowed to use their mother language to help scaffold particularly difficult aspects of the in-class activities and when explaining facets specific to Japanese culture in their journals and worksheets.

Positionality Statement

I am an American-born, white male serving as a contract-appointed adjunct professor in the Department of English at JTU. Over the past 10 years, I have taught

English as a foreign language EFL at multiple universities in Japan. All educators bring their own assumptions of the power structures in the educational context (Efrat & Ravid, 2013), hence, it is imperative that I unpack my own complex subject position throughout the action research process in order to alleviate potential bias when collecting data.

Even in the face of credible counter-arguments, many people have difficulties accepting whiteness as a socially occurring phenomenon, because it contradicts their belief system. That is, being a white male, I may not fully recognize how whiteness plays out in daily life, as well as in cross-cultural communication in the classroom or through established relationships with people of different cultural backgrounds. Additionally, being someone who teaches English to all Japanese students, I need to be aware of my personal privileges and ethnocentrism as it may affect the way I collect and interpret the data.

Although it is often hard to predict how positionality may change over the course of the study, reporting the unique position that is taken during a particular study is crucial to the framing of the research project as well as for the trustworthiness of the findings (Efrat & Ravid, 2013; Herr & Anderson, 2015). "Action research is part of the process of constructing what it means to be an educator, and involves interconnection between the identities of the researcher and the researched" (Noffke, 2013, p. 19). For the duration of this action research project, I acted as an insider observing insiders, while also operating within a participant-observer role during group and pair discussions in class (Mertler, 2014). This position is often the case for teachers who are working as researchers in the education field, for example, "insiders, either alone or in collaboration with other insiders, are researching their own practice or practice setting" (Herr & Anderson, 2015, p. 41).

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Conceptual Framework

Due to the complexity of evaluating intercultural competence, many researchers turn to *intercultural sensitivity* as a predictive marker of intercultural competence (Hammer et al., 2003; Kawamura, 2016; Paige & Bennett, 2015), as it is easier to quantitatively analyze self-reported survey information about respondents' ability to discern between different cultural phenomena. The most prominent inventory, the IDI, plots respondents' developmental level of intercultural sensitivity on the IDC. To this end, multiple theories are required to explain how intercultural sensitivity is constructed and evaluated. Hence, the conceptual framework (Figure 1.1) illustrates the IDC in terms of constructivism, cognitive complexity, and the zone of proximal development in order to explain how it is theorized that students develop intercultural sensitivity.
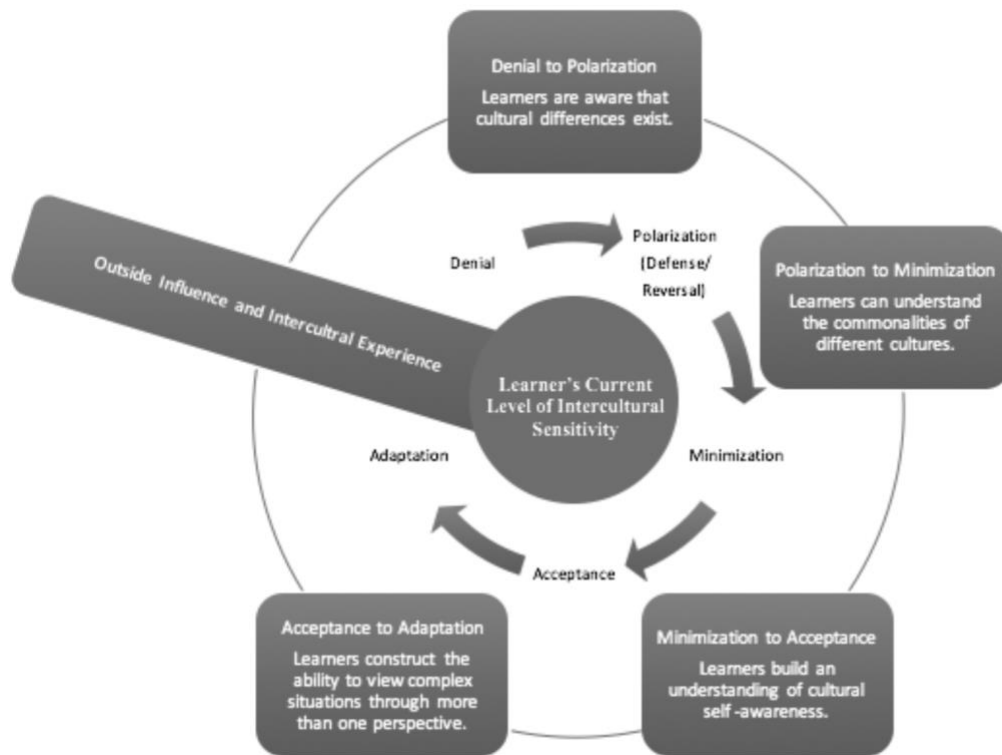
Figure 1.1 Conceptual Framework

Constructivism

The basis of intercultural sensitivity lies in the ideology of constructivism (M. J. Bennett, 2004). From the constructivist point of view, then, it is believed that each person interprets the physical world through a lens that is clouded by his or her own subjectivity and prior experiences. "It follows from this view that each person carries a unique set of experiences that have been shaped by historical circumstances" (Bommarito & Matsuda, 2015, p. 118). This means that rather than viewing knowledge as something that can be discovered, constructivism proposes that knowledge is subjectively constructed by the individual, thus, every person views the world and creates meaning in different ways (Bommarito & Matsuda, 2015; Costantino, 2008; Creswell, 2014). Hence, everyone constructs "their own knowledge by giving meaning to people, places and things in their world" (Mooney, 2013, p. 79). Piaget (1970) expands on this philosophy through a cognitive constructivist lens, explaining the progression of assimilation and accommodation in which schema plays a role in the structuring and restructuring of knowledge. From a cognitive aspect, then, constructivism explains how schema is altered and how each person can create and recreate their own understanding of the world by learning new concepts (M. J. Bennett, 2004). Thus, intercultural learning requires interaction with some culture-general categories in order to recognize how to understand and deal with cultural differences and similarities (Hammer et al., 2003).

Cognitive Complexity

Cognitive complexity further explains how people perceive certain situations based on the way that they analyze events through their past experiences. It follows, those who have acquired higher levels of complexity "can make finer discriminations among

phenomena in a particular domain" (M. J. Bennett, 2004, p. 71). In this way, it is believed that people who have a higher level of cognitive complexity are more successful in interpersonal communication, and thus potentially more likely to increase their intercultural competence (M. J. Bennett, 2004). In terms of intercultural sensitivity, then, the more experience and understanding someone has about culture, the more they can appreciate the similarities and differences. However, often cultural complexity needs to occur over a long period of time and may require assistance in order to develop appreciation of different cultural phenomena (Deardorff, 2006).

Zone of Proximal Development

The zone of proximal development (ZPD) happens when information is just one level above a learner's ability and the scaffolding of more experienced tutors or peers allows a breakthrough to occur, thus, moving them to the next level (Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky (1978) proposed that not only do students learn through personal experiences, similar to Piaget (1952), but they also have a chance to construct knowledge better with teachers and peers when they reach a tipping point, namely the ZPD (Mooney, 2013). In this way, "social constructivism addresses the ontological–epistemological questions of constructivism in describing the bodies of knowledge developed. . . . Everything we know has been determined by the intersection of politics, values, ideologies, religious beliefs, [and] language" (Costantino, 2008, p. 118). It, therefore, follows that we are a product of our environment and the people we interact with. Additionally, the ZDP suggests that learners should only attempt to move one stage above their current understanding for optimal progression. Thus, in the case of the IDC, for example, if

students begin at a worldview of Polarization, the goal should be to help them move into Minimization.

Significance of the Study

Over the past decade, both the Japanese Ministry of Education and JTU have been pushing for more culturally fluid individuals who can bridge the gap between Japan and other countries to promote better relations and intercultural understandings. Although some articles have been published on the use of the IDI in the Japanese context as a measurement of intercultural sensitivity recently (see Kawamura, 2016; Naganuma, 2016; Occhi, 2016), there are few peer-reviewed research papers that have attempted to use constructivist ideologies through PBL to promote intercultural competence. Furthermore, searches on Japan and intercultural sensitivity or intercultural competence yield very few results, thereby delineating an overall gap in research.

By constructing a PBL environment and using action research, students can work towards the same goal together and look at problems through multiple perspectives to gain different worldviews and construct feasible plans of action to rectify issues and promote social justice (Savin-Baden & Major, 2004; Takahashi & Saito, 2013). This allows for a number of ways in which PBL can be utilized to allow students to successfully reconstruct their worldviews through self-guided, reflective activities where they analyze topics of culture, gender, and diversity through a critical lens.

This action research project exposed Japanese EFL students at JTU to different cultural phenomena through PBL in order to build their sensitivity of the cultural differences and similarities inside their own country; thus, allowing them to increase their intercultural competence by raising their awareness of minority groups while finding the

otherness inside themselves. Additionally, through the action research process, transformative change can be achieved by promoting social justice at a higher level within JTU. The results of this action research project were shared with the English Department at JTU to enlighten the faculty of the reasons for teaching diversity in EFL classes and the benefits of increased intercultural sensitivity for creating global citizens.

Limitations

In any study, there are limitation that can have an impact on the way data is collected or interpreted. These issues need to be clarified in order to account for possible inconsistencies. Hence, it is important to think critically about the validity of the data as well as acknowledge constraints that could be adjusted for future studies. This section looks at the limitations of this action research dissertation, reflecting on the generalizability, methodology, action of practice, and positionality.

Generalizability

This action research project was limited by effect size as the sample of the quantitative IDI data only consisted of six students. Furthermore, rather than being a random sample, this study used a typical case sample; thus, the results are not generalizable outside of the context of the OC1 course the it was conducted in. Mertler (2014) notes that this is often the case while working with action research, as the study is typically geared towards changing a specific teaching environment. Secondly, the IDI is not an exact translation of how students' intercultural competence has change due to the effects of the sociocultural component as it only measurers the intercultural sensitivity and uses it as a predictor. However, the information from the field notes, journals,

worksheets, and focus group help illuminate the qualitative changes in students'

intercultural sensitivity, making the findings of the study more reliable.

Methodology

Another limitation of this study was the timespan in which it was conducted. Due

to constraints, students were exposed only to sociocultural content in a PBL learning

context for an eight-week period. However, researchers often suggest a much longer

experience necessary to develop any changes in intercultural sensitivity; thus, this

research project may need to be conducted longer to collect data over an entire 15-week

semester in order to observe larger changes on the IDC. Additionally, at the last stage of

the action research project (reflective stage), it is assumed that the presentation and data

would convince the other staff members to engage in a collaborative research project

aiming to engage in social justice in the local area. Nonetheless, funding would need to

be secured through the university to conduct such an undertaking. This means that one

year prior a proposal must be submitted to the head of the department to secure funds. As

a result, this portion of the action research project did not occur when this dissertation

was being written.

Action of Practice

During the collection of field notes and through the journals and worksheets the

students may have been limited by the EFL environment. Students were asked to discuss

topics in class that they had read about in the textbook or watched in videos posted on the

learning management system in English; nonetheless, students may not have been able to

comprehend the materials entirely or connect with them due to their English ability or

limited intercultural experience. Additionally, the participants may not have been able to

explain themselves to their fullest potential in their second language during discussions. Finally, the teacher-researcher asked the participants to write their journals and take notes on their worksheets using only English. This may have impacted how student construed cultural phenomena as they were restricted by their writing ability or vocabulary.

Positionality

During the entire research project, the teacher-researcher as an insider researching insiders, functioning in a participant-observer role. This meant that during the in-class observations, the teacher-researcher was interacting with the students using Socratic questioning in hopes of helping the students not only see the similarities but also the differences of the culture. However, being a white male, teaching students from Japan and China may have caused the students to answer the questions differently than they would if they were speaking in an all Japanese environment. Also, the teacher-researcher noticed that his presence changed the atmosphere of the conversation and students tended to focus on creating more grammatically correct sentences rather than constructing their ideas about differences and similarities clearly. Lastly, during the data collection process there may have been bias on the researchers' part coming from America. Ideologies of what it means to be interculturally competent or what types of intercultural communication skills are most valued may have been skewed with a Western perspective. Although the project was driven by the best practices for promoting intercultural competence through a sociocultually modified PBL curriculum, the idea of whose knowledge is of most worth is something that needs to be considered more for future studies.

Dissertation Overview

This dissertation is composed of five distinct yet interconnected chapters. Chapter one introduces the study by giving an overview of the most important aspects that will be discussed in the subsequent sections. In chapter two, related literature from the first chapter is reviewed with additional research to support the rationale and methodology of this study. Chapter three explains the action research methodology in more detail and justifies the purpose of the study and its connection to the problem of practice. After the data was collected, chapter four was constructed to present the findings from the action research project as well as the interpretation of the results. Finally, in chapter five, a reflection is made about the study while discussing the interpretation of the findings in relation to the literature. Chapter five also analyzes the main points of the action research project, the meaning of discoveries, and proposed recommendations for future inquiry.

Definition of Terms

Action Research

"Action research is an inquiry that is done by or with insiders to an organization or community . . . It is a reflective process, but is different from isolated, spontaneous reflection in that it is deliberately and systematically undertaken, oriented to some action or cycle of actions" (Herr & Anderson, 2015, p. 3). Furthermore, in terms of educational settings, action research is iterative in nature and typically done by educators to improve their own practice through five stages: planning, acting, developing, and reflecting (Mertler, 2014). "Action research allows teachers to study their own classrooms—for example, their own instructional methods, their own students, and their own

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assessments—in order to better understand them and to be able to improve their quality or effectiveness" (Mertler, 2014, p. 4).

Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity

The Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) was established by Bennett (1986; 1993) in an attempt to conceptualize how learners develop intercultural sensitivity as gauged by a six-point scale: Denial, Defense, Minimization, Acceptance, Adaptation, and Integration.

> The DMIS assumes that construing cultural difference can become an active part of one's worldview, eventuating in an expanded understanding of one's own and other cultures and increased competence in intercultural relations. Each orientation of the DMIS is indicative of a particular worldview structure, with certain kinds of attitudes and behavior vis-a-vis cultural difference typically associated with each configuration (Hammer et al., 2003, p. 423).

Ethnocentrism

"Ethnocentrism parallels 'egocentrism',wherein an individual assumes that his or her existence is necessarily central to the reality perceived by all others" (M. J. Bennett, 1993, p. 30).

Ethnorelativism

"Fundamental to ethnorelativism is the assumption that cultures can only be understood relative to one another and that particular behavior can only be understood within a cultural context. There is no absolute standard of rightness or 'goodness' that can be applied to cultural behavior" (M. J. Bennett, 1993, p. 46).

Intercultural Awareness.

Intercultural awareness is possessing knowledge of a particular culture. It is the cognitive domain of culture built though the study of the topic (Chen, 1997). "Unless a person shows a positive emotion towards learning, understanding, recognizing, and respecting the cultural similarities and differences, intercultural awareness is unreachable" (Chen, 1997, pp. 9-10).

Intercultural Communication.

Intercultural communication is related to cross-cultural interactions with someone from another culture. In essence, it is the "symbolic, interpretive, transactional, contextual process in which people from different cultures create shared meaning" (Lustig & Koester, 2005, p. 46). "Intercultural awareness, intercultural sensitivity, and intercultural competence form the cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects of intercultural communication" (Chen, 1997, p. 10).

Intercultural Competence

According to Hammer (2015), intercultural competence "permits the successful navigation of cultural differences, defined as those experiences, values, interpretations, judgments, and behaviors that differ between people and are learned and internalized from the groups one belongs to" (p. 484). It is viewed as the behavioral domain of culture (Chen, 1997). In essence, intercultural competence is "the ability to think and act in interculturally appropriate ways" with the situation at hand (Hammer, 2015, p. 482).

Intercultural Development Continuum

The IDC is a theoretical framework grounded in the work of Bennett's (1986, 1993) DMIS. The developmental model "ranges from monocultural mindsets of Denial

and Polarization through the transitional orientation of Minimization to the intercultural or global mindsets of Acceptance and Adaptation" (Hammer, 2012, p. 118).

Intercultural Development Inventory

"The IDI is a 50 item . . . self-assessment instrument . . . [and] provides an empirical measure of an individual's general orientation and response to cultural difference" (Straffon, 2003, p. 491). The IDI gives quantitative feedback about intercultural sensitivity, which can be used as a marker for intercultural competence on the IDC ranging from monocultural to global/intercultural mindsets (Hammer, 2011, 2012). The Intercultural Development Inventory, IDI, and IDI Guided Development are registered trademarks of IDI, LLC in the United States and other countries.

Intercultural Sensitivity

Intercultural sensitivity is seen as "the way people construe cultural difference and in the varying kinds of experience" (M. J. Bennett, 1993, p. 24). "It is assumed that such sensitivity can be described in developmental terms better than as a collection of specific behaviors . . . In other words, it is the construction of reality as increasingly capable of accommodating cultural difference that constitutes development" (M. J. Bennett, 1993, p. 24). Hence, it can be viewed as the affective aspect of understanding culture (Chen, 1997). According to Hammer (2015), intercultural sensitivity has been widely used as a "marker that can be placed on the IDI . . . and refer[s] to the ability to discriminate and experience relevant cultural differences" (p. 484).

Otherness

"Otherness has emerged as a widely discussed mental construct of pragmatic significance in the humanities and social sciences over the last three decades. Dialogues

on rethinking sociality, for example, have seriously considered otherness and related concepts such as intersubjectivity and recognition in the contexts of social relations, social problems, and social organizations" (Prior, 2008, p. 587).

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The first section of the literature review begins with the theoretical base of intercultural sensitivity and competence where the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) and Intercultural Development Continuum (IDC) are explained as well as the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI). Afterwards, research using the IDI in the Japanese context and other intercultural competence and sensitivity studies are analyzed. In the second section, the literature review looks at the history and uses of problem-based learning (PBL) and explains how it has been utilized in Japan previously. The third section begins with a historical account of issues related to the Japanese education system in connection with the problem of practice to further allude to the need for an intercultural competence intervention. The final portion of the third section looks at the sociocultural component (see Appendix A) constructed for intended use in this study in response to the information found in the literature review and ends with a summary of the entire chapter.

Throughout the investigation process for this literature review, Education Source and EBSCO were the main tools used through the Thomas Cooper Library at the University of South Carolina (USC) Columbia Campus. Secondary sources were acquired in digital format through Adobe Editions and original copies were obtained through the Inter-Library Loan system of Japan's Technical University (JTU). Additionally, Google Scholar was used in conjunction with Auraria Library courtesy of

the University of Colorado Denver (UCD) for primary resources that could not be located with USC's databases. The major themes and keywords (all geared toward the Japanese context) used for collecting and researching information on this literature review were as follows; constructivism, intercultural competence, intercultural sensitivity, the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity, the Intercultural Development Inventory, and problem-based learning.

Theoretical Base

Over the past six decades, intercultural competence has been embodied in a variety of terms: "intercultural sensitivity, cross-cultural effectiveness, intercultural skills, cross-cultural adaptation, global competence, multicultural competence, cross-cultural relations, cultural proficiency, intercultural agility, and even the misnomer cultural intelligence" (Hammer, 2015, p. 484). Even with the extensive investigations conducted into intercultural communication, competence, and sensitivity, there are still contending views on the terminologies (Deardorff, 2006; Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009).

This is troublesome for researchers, as what is being observed needs to be clearly defined (Chen & Starosta, 1996; Deardorff, 2006). However, as illustrated in Figure 2.1, it is believed that "intercultural awareness (cognitive) is the foundation of intercultural sensitivity (affective) . . . which in turn, will lead to intercultural competence" (Chen, 1997, p. 5). Hence, there are still many different overlapping issues concerning intercultural communication, intercultural competence, and sensitivity needing clarification.
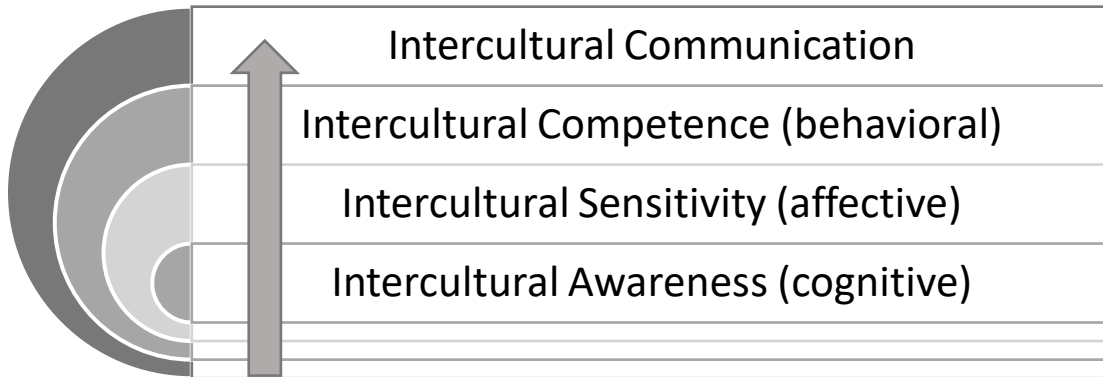
Figure 2.1 Dependencies of Intercultural Communication

Intercultural Communication

Intercultural communication and intercultural competence are often mistakenly used interchangeably in English as a foreign language (EFL). This is because "Language and culture are closely intertwined, which implies that it is not possible to teach a language without culture, and that culture is the necessary context for language use" (Lochtman & Kappel, 2008, p. 11). It follows, then, that intercultural communication is the action or characteristics one exudes during oral discourse (Lustig & Koester, 2005). Intercultural communication is related to the cross-cultural communication skills needed to interact with someone from another country and requires the linguistic skills of a foreign language. In this regard, it has been theorized that "the effectiveness of intercultural communication requires interactants to appropriately demonstrate the ability of intercultural . . . sensitivity, and competence" (Chen, 1997, p. 7).

Intercultural Competence

One of the more recent attempts to clarify intercultural competence was conducted by Deardorff (2006), who used the Delphi method by sending questionnaires to 23 professionals of the field to get their conceptual perspectives on the meaning of

intercultural competence. After compiling the results, Deardorff (2011) defined intercultural competence as an "effective and appropriate behavior and communication in intercultural situations, which again can be further detailed in terms of indicators of appropriate behavior in specific contexts" (p. 66). With a working definition, Deardorff constructed a compositional model of intercultural competence illustrated through knowledge, attitudes, and skills (Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009), which included communicative ability. However, the complex conceptualization of Deardorff's model has often been disputed due to its inclusion of linguistic skills often seen as an aspect of intercultural communication.

In contrast, this literature review accepts the developmental model put forth by Bennett (2004) who defines intercultural competence as "the combination of concepts, attitudes, and skills necessary for effective cross-cultural interactions" (p. 163). Hence, intercultural competence is the ability to negotiate cultural differences and it is directly observable through behaviors. This means, "intercultural competence stresses *doing* driven by the knowledge or emotions, [and] the ability to take actions in order to function in a culturally . . . different environment" (Niu, 2015, p. 39).

Intercultural Sensitivity

There are also a number of different conflicting views concerning the terminology of intercultural sensitivity (Bennett, 1986, 1993; Bhawuk & Brislin, 1992; Chen & Starosta, 1996). Intercultural sensitivity was first conceptualized by Bronfenbrenner, Harding and Gallwey (1958) as interpersonal sensitivity where it was theorized to be the ability to identify the differences in others' behavior patterns and emotions in juxtaposition to one's own perceived orientation. Since these differences can also be

placed in cultural contexts, Bronfenbrenner et al. believed that people could also identify

cultural differences. This ideology was expanded upon by Bhawuk and Brislin (1992)

who suggested that intercultural sensitivity could be broken down into three categories:

individualistic vs. collectivist, open-mindedness, and cultural flexibility (Niu, 2015).

The philosophies underlying both interpersonal sensitivity and constructivism have

influenced Bennett's (1993) view of intercultural sensitivity. Bennett's (1993) believed

that intercultural sensitivity was the ability to "construe cultural differences . . . in

varying kinds of experiences" (p. 24). Through this terminology, Bennett (1993, 2004)

maintained that the cognitive realm is most focused on in developmental terms, and the

other two dimensions (affective and behavioral) are intertwined in the learning process.

By this rationale, it is prevalent that higher levels of intercultural competence can be

predicted by greater intercultural sensitivity (Bennett, 1986, 1993; Hammer et al., 2003;

Paige & Bennett, 2015). As Bennett (2004) explains:

> More successful intercultural communication similarly involves being able to see
>
> a culturally different person as equally complex to one's self (person-centered)
>
> and being able to take a culturally different perspective. Thus, greater intercultural
>
> sensitivity creates the potential for increased intercultural competence. (p. 71)

This dissertation abides by Bennett's (1993) definition and advocates that

intercultural sensitivity is "the construction of reality as increasingly capable of

accommodating cultural difference" (p. 23). The study argues this by advocating that the

key aspects of measuring intercultural competence is the fact that it requires the

knowledge or ability to discern between cultural similarities and differences.

The Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity

Although there are multiple developmental frameworks for conceptualizing intercultural competence, there are very few models that have been constructed for intercultural sensitivity (Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009). Bennett's (1986, 1993) Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) is seen as the most concise conceptual framework for measuring intercultural sensitivity. As Chen (1997) makes clear, the DMIS was originally "based on Gudykunst and Hammer's . . . three-stage intercultural training model and Hoope's (1981) intercultural learning model" (as cited in Chen, 1997, p. 5). Hence, these prior frameworks can be seen as a precursor to Bennett's (1986, 1993) DMIS where he sought to explain how people deal with cultural differences using a six-stage archetypal (Figure 2.2).

DMIS Theoretical Framework

As stated earlier, although there is still much debate over the definition of intercultural competence and sensitivity (see Deardorff, 2006, 2011; Hammer, 2015; Hammer et al., 2003), both are fundamental principles of the DMIS framework. Bennett saw intercultural sensitivity "as a developmental process in which one is able to transform oneself affectively, cognitively, and behaviorally from ethnocentric stages to ethnorelative stages" (as cited in Chen, 1997, p. 5). Nonetheless, intercultural sensitivity is most well-known for its role within the DMIS framework where it is used as an indicator of intercultural competence. In this way, intercultural sensitivity is regarded as the potential to understand or accept cultural phenomena (Paige & Bennett, 2015). Bennett's (1986, 1993). To this end, DMIS was established using grounded theory and embodies aspects of Piaget's (1970) cognitive constructivism, the theory of cognitive

complexity (Crockett, Delia, & Gonyea, 1970; O'Keefe & Sypher, 1981), and Vygotsky's (1978) zone of proximal development (ZPD).

The first assumption of the DMIS, cognitive constructivism, advocates that each person constructs their own reality and thus their own worldview (Bennett, 1986, 1993, 2004; Hammer et al., 2003). Hence, in all reality, culture is simply a matter of perception when looking through the constructivist lens. It holds, then, that a culture "can be experienced in very different ways that may or may not be similar to the way it is experienced by its members" (Hammer, 2015, p. 521). There is consensus among researchers that intercultural competence begins with a cognitive process (Hammer, 2015; Paige & Bennett, 2015; Sercu & Bandura, 2005) where people construct and perceive experiences through intercultural situations; hence, each person has their own unique worldview. A good example of this is illustrated by Bennett (2004) where he explains that an "American person who happens to be in the vicinity of a Japanese event may not have anything like a Japanese experience of that event, if he or she does not have any Japanese categories with which to construct that experience" (p. 71). Using the same rationale, then, a Japanese person who lacks similar cognitive complexity would experience western occurrences through a different lens. In this way, the framework of the DMIS is built on the principle "that people can be more or less 'sensitive' to cultural difference" (M. J. Bennett, 2004, p. 71); hence, intercultural sensitivity can be used as a marker to predict how someone will behave (intercultural competence), which can be placed on the DMIS framework (Hammer et al., 2003).

The second assumption of the DMIS is cognitive complexity, which suggests that worldviews can become more complex through knowledge and experience. "More

cognitively complex individuals are able to organize their perceptions of events into more differentiated categories. . . . As categories for cultural difference become more complex and sophisticated, perception becomes more interculturally sensitive" (M. J. Bennett, 2004, p. 71). This means that a combination of training, reflecting, and interacting with different cultures (both domestic and abroad), allows people to refine their worldviews and become more accepting of similarities and differences; thus, letting someone move from ethnocentric stages to ethnorelative stages of intercultural sensitivity (2004). Worldviews and perspectives, then, can be constructed and reconstructed through knowledge acquisition (2004), which alters the learners' schemata and refines their belief system because "experience of events is built up through templates, or sets of categories, that we use to organize our perception of phenomena" (p. 71).

The third assumption of the DMIS is the ZPD. Although Bennett (1993) does not directly make an open statement about the use of the ZPD in the developmental process of teaching intercultural sensitivity, he clearly alluded to certain aspects of it when he suggested "operating one stage beyond that which is being trained for" (p. 66) in intercultural sensitivity instruction. This is obviously an operationalization of the ZPD, where Vygotsky (1978) advocates that people learn best when they are challenged one step higher than their current cognitive ability with interaction or help from peers in a social learning situation. In this way, as Bennett (1993) points out, people can make breakthroughs from lower to higher stages on the DMIS with the assistance of collaborative learning in real-life situations (Costantino, 2008; Mooney, 2013; Vygotsky, 1978). The DMIS "identifies a set of orientations (mind-sets) from which individuals or groups engage in cultural differences" (Hammer, 2015, p. 485) ranging from what

Bennett (2004) refers to as ethnocentric mindsets to ethnorelative mindsets. In the earlier

stages of Denial, students are not prepared to accept the idea of similarities between

cultures; however, with intervention and proper sociocultural training, students can

slowly move into Defense by looking at the differences between cultures (Hammer, 2011,

2012, 2015).
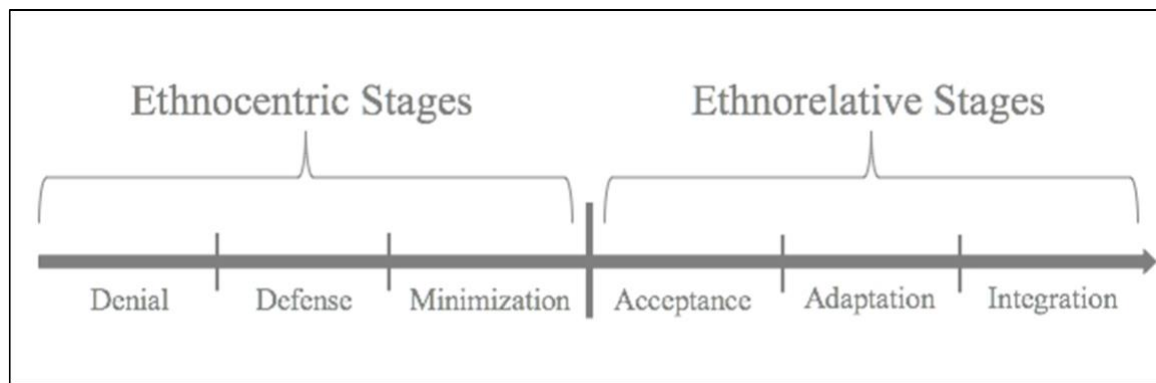
Figure 2.2 DMIS (adapted from Bennett, 1986, 1993)

Developmental Stages of the DMIS. Denial is the first ethnocentric stage and

can be classified in cases where a person refuses to see the similarities or differences

between cultures. Bennett (1993) sees this as the purest form of ethnocentrism where "a

person at this stage of development believes that cultural diversity only occurs elsewhere"

(p. 30). Furthermore, a person in this stage of intercultural sensitivity may wish to not

have any interaction with people outside their own perceived race or ethnicity (Bennett &

Bennett, 2004; Bennett, 1993; Hammer et al., 2003).

Defense is when someone feels threatened by the existence of cultural differences

and takes an *us* versus *them* attitude towards diversity (Bennett & Bennett, 2004; Bennett,

1993; Hammer et al., 2003). "Rather than simply denying difference in general, people in

Defense recognize specific cultural difference and create specific defenses against them"

(M. J. Bennett, 1993, p. 33). In this way, people in Defense tend to look at only the differences between cultures and focus on what makes their culture unique.

Minimization is the last ethnocentric stage on the DMIS and although it is a welcomed departure from Denial and Defense, there are still some negative aspects. In the Minimization stage, people still adhere to their own worldview carrying the assumption that everyone is similar to them (Bennett & Bennett, 2004; Bennett, 1993; Hammer et al., 2003). "This assumption of basic similarities counteracts the simplifications of Defense, because others are now perceived as being equally as complex as one's self. However, they are complex in the same way as one's self" (Bennett & Bennett, 2004, p. 155). As Bennett (1993) points out, this is usually the case where a person in the dominant culture trivializes the culture or physical or religious aspects of someone from the oppressed culture.

Acceptance is the first step into the ethnorelative stage where someone understands that there are multiple worldviews; it can be characterized by accepting the equality of everyone while acknowledging that there are still many differences among us (Bennett & Bennett, 2004; Bennett, 1993; Hammer et al., 2003). In this way, people who are experiencing an acceptance worldview "are not just experts in one or more cultures (although they might also be that); rather, they are adept at identifying how cultural differences, in general, [sic] operate in a wide range of human interactions" (Hammer et al., 2003, p. 425).

Adaptation can be seen as the ability to switch into the worldview of another culture acting accordingly to the behavioral norms (Bennett & Bennett, 2004). "People at Adaptation can engage in empathy—the ability to take perspective or shift frame of

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reference vis-a-vis other cultures" (Hammer et al., 2003, p. 425). Furthermore, it is believed that this stage is usually enhanced by intercultural communication skills or extended periods of living in the target culture (Bennett & Bennett, 2004; Bennett, 1993).

Integration is the final ethnorelative stage on Bennett's (1986, 1993) DMIS, and it is mainly concerned with identity. "The integration stage describes the attempt to integrate disparate aspects of one's identity into a new whole while remaining culturally marginal" (Bennett, 1993, p. 60). Bennett and Bennett (2004) note, this stage usually occurs in subjects who are multicultural or stuck between two different cultures, and as a result, they are in a continuous struggle to define their own identity.

Intercultural Development Continuum

One of the more recent developmental models to be adopted in researching intercultural competence is the IDC (Figure 2.3), which is based on a revised theoretical framework of Bennett's (1986, 1993) DMIS. In this respect, adjustments were made to both terms and stages of the Intercultural Development Continuum (IDC) in light of Hammer's (2011, 2012) research findings from the IDI.

The terminology and organization to the IDC has changed slightly to represent a more refined version of the DMIS. Rather than using the terminology ethnocentric and ethnorelative worldviews, Hammer (2012) groups the different developmental stages of the IDC into monocultural, transitional, and intercultural/global mindsets. The monocultural mindset includes Denial and Polarization; however, unlike the DMIS, the IDC classifies Minimization under a transitional mindset. "Although IDI research indicates that the Minimization orientation is not ethnocentric . . . . [it] is also not ethnorelative . . . Thus, Minimization is now represented as a transitional orientation" (pp.

118-9). Finally, Acceptance and Adaptation remain at the end of the continuum representing the intercultural/global mindsets.
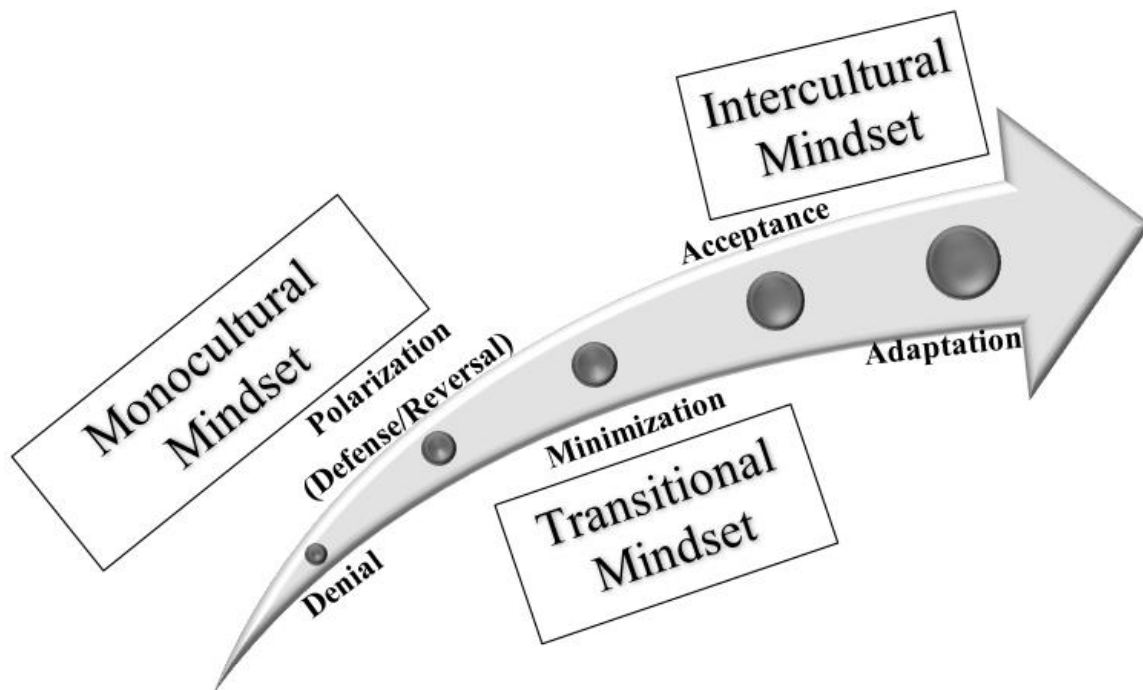
Figure 2.3 The Intercultural Development Continuum (adapted from Hammer, 2012)

The IDC also shows two major changes to the stages of the DMIS. The first is to Polarization, which now incorporates both Polarization Defense and Reversal. As Hammer (2012) makes clear, "within Defense, cultural differences are often perceived as divisive and threatening to one's own cultural way of doing things, while Reversal is a mindset that values and may idealize other cultural practices while denigrating those of one's own culture group" (p. 121). Additionally, in the IDC, Integration is no longer considered a developmental stage as was previously seen in the DMIS. According to Hammer, "Integration, as described in the DMIS, is concerned with the construction of an intercultural identity rather than the development of intercultural competence" (p. 119); hence, it was not empirically validated and the IDI only measures the developmental stages from Denial to Adaptation (Hammer, 2011).

Intercultural Development Inventory

The IDI is a self-assessment tool utilizing 50 multiple choice items and can be taken online or with pencil and paper in 15 to 20 minutes (Hammer, 2012). The first two versions of the IDI were based on Bennett's (1986, 1993) DMIS; however, the current version (V3) now utilizes the IDC to illustrate the developmental stages of intercultural sensitivity (Hammer, 2011, 2012). According to Hammer (2015), the IDI has been rigorously tested and used in both corporate and educational sectors, and currently it is the most respected tool for assessing intercultural sensitivity and was originally back-translated into 17 different languages (Bennett, 2004; Hammer, 2012, 2015; Hammer et al., 2003; Paige & Bennett, 2015).

The IDI reports both one's perceived and actual developmental orientations on the DMIS reported through six clusters and stub-stages (Hammer, 2012). "Once individuals complete the IDI, the IDI web-based analytic program scores each person's answers and generates a number of reports. The IDI can be used to assess an individual's level of intercultural competence" (Hammer, 2012, p. 117). The IDI also provides "a customized, Intercultural Development Plan (IDP) . . . [that] provides detailed guidance for the individual [or groups] to further develop . . . intercultural competence" (p. 117). This plan can be used for coaching respondents in order to make them aware of their current developmental stage and how to reach higher levels. Finally, the IDI can also be supported by qualitative collection (contexting questions and focus groups) to provide opportunities for mixed-methods research into intercultural competence. "Overall, these qualitative strategies help situate the individual, group, and/or organizational IDI profile results in the cultural experiences of the respondents" (p. 117). The IDI is often used to

help learners and educators "achieve increased capability in shifting cultural perspective and adapting behavior across cultural differences" (p. 116); however, many studies utilize it to assess changes in intercultural competence after study abroad programs.

IDI Studies in Japan

The Japanese government and the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) often promotes and funds study abroad programs as a way to increase intercultural competence and sensitivity. Consequently, a majority of the studies published using the IDI in Japan are related to both short-term and long-term study abroad experiences. This section looks at three research projects (see Kawamura, 2016; Naganuma, 2016; Occhi, 2016) all funded by a grant from the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science conducted from 2006-2009.

In *Global and Local Perspectives on Discourses and Practices of University Internationalization*, Occhi (2016), initially wanted to look at the ways in which international universities had affected local areas surrounding campuses in Japan. Due to unforetold issues with the ethnographic portion of the study, the case study focus was placed directly on the universities instead. In Occhi's study at Miyazaki International College in Fukuoka, she used questioners, interviews, and the IDI data collected from first-year students who were part of a small study abroad program in 2008. Occhi analyzed the way in which the school socialized students in an international program using a liberal curriculum design and the way content-based instruction was used to promote intercultural competence. In the findings of the study, however, the IDI results were not especially illuminating of any changes to students' intercultural sensitivity.

A similar study that was conducted by Naganuma (2016) at Akita International University focused on "students with varied experience in studying abroad in terms of intercultural competence by a means of the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) as well as individual interviews" (p. 35). In the case study, a presumptive sample of 40 students was equally split into four different groups based on the amount of time they had spent abroad since high school (Naganuma, 2016). Surprisingly, even though some students, such as those in Group 4, had never studied abroad, all students tested the same regardless of their experience living in different cultures. That is to say, "all of the groups [were] placed in the stages of 'Acceptance/Adaptation' in the *perceived* intercultural sensitivity profile, while all of them [were] placed in the stage of 'Minimization' in the *developmental* intercultural sensitivity profile" (Naganuma, 2016, p. 45). Consequently, Naganuma suggested that the study abroad program was not nearly effective enough to increase students' intercultural sensitivity.

In another case study covering 40 different students from four different international universities in Japan, Kawamura (2016) analyzed the change in students' intercultural competence after study abroad programs using the IDI. "The purpose was to examine if students' experiences at international universities/colleges [had] a positive impact on development of intercultural competence among students" (Kawamura, 2016, p. 10). In the end, Kawamura found that the data was inconclusive and did not show the resemblance or promotion of intercultural competence. To this end, Kawamura advocated that university teachers in Japan recognize that even though study abroad experiences can lead to the development of intercultural competence, the use of sociocultural content and

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modified teaching approaches are just as successful for awareness raising activities domestically.

Teaching Intercultural Sensitivity in Japan

The goal of the Japanese government and MEXT has mainly been to use study abroad experiences in order to increase intercultural sensitivity (Fukuzawa, 2016; Kawamura, 2016; Naganuma, 2016). Nevertheless, as noted by Deardorff (2006), "the development of intercultural competence needs to be recognized as an ongoing process and not a direct result of one experience, such as [a] study abroad" (p. 259). This means, people may learn a language by studying abroad, but they may not gain cultural experience since intercultural competence needs to be explicitly taught and learned (Deardorff, 2006, 2011). Therefore, many researchers have proposed using intercultural or transcultural teaching methodologies in the classroom as a more suitable tactic (Kawamura, 2016; Morita, 2013; Whitsed & Wright, 2013; Yamada, 2013). This method could also be used for raising intercultural sensitivity in domestic universities in Japan where students can experience otherness by finding things in common with other cultures, thus, ensuring they have the ability to interact with non-Japanese.

In a case study by Morita (2013) at Nagoya University, popular dramas were used as a sociocultural component in an altered curriculum showing that the students were able to make connections with the power structures between women and bosses in Japan and America. "This challenged the common belief in Japan about Americans being direct and the Japanese being indirect" (p. 63). Morita found that the students were responsive to using TV shows and movies as content with almost 100% agreeing that it "helped them with intercultural contexts" (p. 63). She also established that adding sociocultural

elements into courses helped learners engage with content at a personal level and enabled them "to discover for themselves that English is a living language, which is useful for communicative purposes" (p. 65). In this way, intercultural competence can be achieved by allowing students to compare and contrast different cultural phenomena in relation to their own society, hopefully transcending the basic belief values of their own culture while trying to find the otherness inside themselves.

In a related study based on promoting global literacy at Konan University in Kobe, Nakamura (2002) suggested using a problem-based intercultural teaching method in hopes of changing monocultural beliefs and promoting multicultural alliances. According to Nakamura, "Global literacy includes cross-cultural competence/sensitivity with transcultural and transnational perspectives to get along with the rest of the world. It also requires communicative competence . . . to have a global and peaceful dialogue" (p. 64). Additionally, Nakamura believed that another prominent aspect of intercultural communication is the opportunity to simultaneously deal with gender inequalities from a comparative point of view through rich cultural examples. Rather than looking at the differences between groups and cultures, Nakamura's suggested using Dewey's (1938) five-step model of inquiry to critically think about the issues. After a five-year endeavor where he attempted to integrate global issues into the classroom with a total of 200 junior and senior high school students studying in advanced speech communications courses, Nakamura concluded that students developed their global literacy; enhanced their global understanding and awareness; enjoyed expressing their opinions; liked the learner-centered atmosphere; and generally accepted the problem-based method of instruction.

Problem-Based Learning

Problem-based learning (PBL) is one of the more recent teaching approaches which grew out of the work of Barrows and Tamblyn (1980) from the McMasters University Medical School in Ontario, Canada where they used ill-structured problems with small groups and tutors to engage students in real-life scenarios that they would possibly encounter in their careers in healthcare. Barrows and Tamblyn's (1980) PBL approach "marked a clear move away from problem-solving learning. . . . where this new method . . . used problem scenarios to encourage students to engage themselves in the learning process" (Savin-Baden & Major, 2004, p. 3). PBL is successful because the focus is on working towards resolution rather than explicitly learning (Barrows & Tamblyn, 1980; Savin-Baden & Major, 2004). As Hmelo-Silver (2004) notes, the main goals of PBL are to construct flexible and extensive knowledge, problem-solving skills, self-directed learning skills, and collaborative skills while promoting intrinsic motivation. In order to accomplish this, PBL utilizes student-centered environments, collaborative activities and inquiry-based learning; therefore, allowing students to use their higher-ordered thinking skills to accommodate or assimilate new knowledge (Barrett & Moore, 2011; Barrows, 1996; Barrows & Tamblyn, 1980; Savery, 2015; Savin-Baden & Major, 2004).

Although it is difficult to classify all of the contributors of PBL (Savin-Baden & Major, 2004), it is widely accepted that Dewey's (1938) theory of inquiry, Piaget's (1952) cognitive development theory, and Vygotsky's (1978) zone of proximal development and scaffolding, have all had a large impact on shaping the pedagogical ideologies (Barrett & Moore, 2011; Savery, 2015; Savin-Baden & Major, 2004). Similar to the philosophy of

constructivism, the teacher acts as a tutor attempting to help guide students while

allowing them to deal with the problem in a self-directed manner (Barrows & Tamblyn,

1980; Savin-Baden & Major, 2004); hence, "problem-based learning focuses on students

learning, not on teachers teaching. It has often been defined as 'a total approach', not just

a teaching technique or tool" (Barrett & Moore, 2011, p. 4).
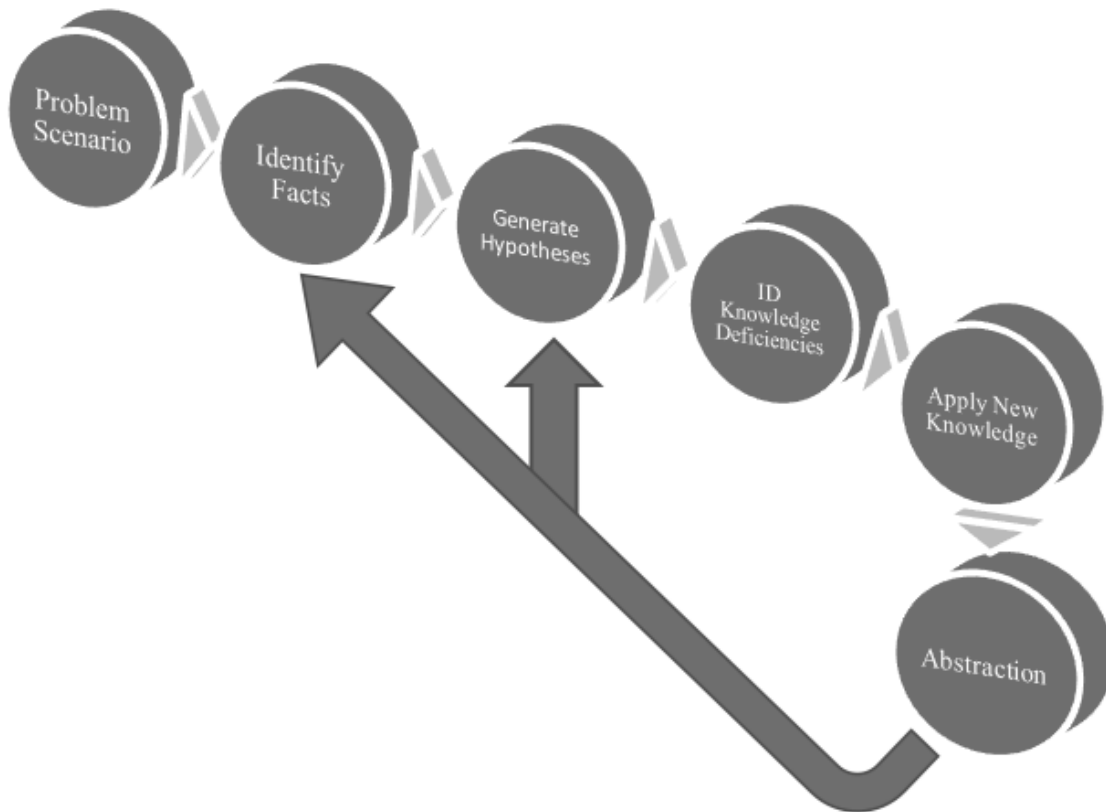
Figure 2.4 The Problem-Based Learning Cycle (adapted from Hmelo-Silver, 2004)

Furthermore, PBL utilizes the principles of the ZPD where there are many ways

to execute problem-based learning, the basis of any variety of PBL "adopts a learner-

centered approach in which learners are guided to take initiative to solve problems by

interaction with their peers in a group setting" (Takahashi & Saito, 2013, p. 695). Like

Dewey's (1938) theory of inquiry, PBL is typically accomplished by using a cyclical

process where a problem is posed, students investigate the problem and create solutions

then later shared with a group and reflected on (Barrett & Moore, 2011; Barrows, 1996; Barrows & Tamblyn, 1980; Savery, 2015). In this way, using the inquiry-based PBL learning cycle (Figure 2.4), students can help each other understand concepts unbeknownst to them, and thereby ultimately allowing them to build higher levels of complexity in a field through collaboration and peer learning (Hmelo-Silver, 2004; Savery, 2015).

The Adaptation of PBL in Japan

PBL has been growing in multiple fields throughout the world and has even been seen as an alternative to learning in higher education in Japan. "Over the last two decades, PBL approaches and curricula have been developed in many other areas of education in professional schools (nursing, law, engineering), college-level courses, and kindergarten through 12th grade" (Barrows, 1996, p. 10). Under the guise of active learning, MEXT has been promoting different teaching approaches to create a more successful learning environment both in the public and private sectors in Japanese universities. The PBL movement picked up near the beginning of the 21st century and number of different lecturers began to adapt corporate training theories to integrate PBL in higher education.

Chujo and Kijima (2006) point out that there are four training methods that have been used in Japan that could be potentially useful in universities: "strategic options development and analysis (SODA), soft systems methodology (SSM), strategic choice approach (SCA), and robustness analysis" (p. 91). All of these techniques are used in Japanese companies today to deal with ill-structured problems in teams and they are "designed to provide consultants with a set of skills, a framework for designing problem-solving interventions and a set of techniques" (Chujo & Kijima, 2006, p. 91).

Characteristically, these techniques require some form of technology to drive the training methodologies that engage the learners in real-life exercises that require 21st century skill.

Although these approaches are suitable for the workplace, Chujo and Kijima (2006) note that most of the approaches may have too many procedures for university students to remember. They maintain that PBL approaches like the SSM would be more successful in Japan because it only requires seven steps and has the added value of an authentic assessment at the end of the problem-solving cycle in the form of a "rich picture technique" (Chujo & Kijima, 2006, p. 91). Thanks to the work by Chujo and Kijima, doors were opened for other instructors in Japanese universities to experiment with PBL ideologies.

In a different PBL study by Takahashi and Saito (2013), they addressed the problems that many educators in Japan deal with today, lack of motivation and self-efficacy, by integrating the Project Cycle Management (PCM) methodology over a five-year period with 217 students at Gakushuin Women's University. One of the researchers was living in Singapore and came to Japan for two weeks each year to train the students using the PBL methodology, while the other researcher collected and analyzed the data over a 13-week period. Takahashi and Saito triangulated their data using observations, surveys, and interviews to explore how the changes in the students' cognitive skills, social aptitudes, and internal beliefs were transformed by the PCM.

Takahashi and Saito (2013) claimed that with the inclusion of PCM, students went through positive changes in all three realms of learning where "the results for the three perspectives—the cognitive, social, and internal aspects—reveal that students went through a pattern of transition" (Takahashi & Saito, 2013, p. 701). Initially, the authors

analyzed the cognitive realm through classroom observations and surveys, which they felt was positively affected because of the higher-ordered thinking skills required to perform problem-solving activities. They noticed that students were able to analyze problems, consider different possibilities, and reflect on the effects of their group's solutions. "This practicum enabled the students to master the basic skills of PCM. In the end, they expressed their motivation to apply problem-solving skills to various issues they might come across in the future" (Takahashi & Saito, 2013, p. 702).

The next aspect Takahashi and Saito addressed was the social aspect of learning, which was examined using only classroom observations. The authors found, "in the end, they improved the interpersonal skills necessary for thriving in a teamwork setting" (Takahashi & Saito, 2013, p. 702). At the end of their research paper, they noted that the students' self-efficacy was a major aspect that had changed. They found that, students had anxiety about their own ideas and did not want to express them due to their lack of confidence before embarking on the PCM task (Takahashi & Saito, 2013), but towards the end of the PBL cycle they could apply the skills they learned in their own lives. "Their sincere expressions led the authors to think further about the importance of studying the affective or psychological aspect of the learners" (Takahashi & Saito, 2013, p. 703). After examining their results, Takahashi and Saito came to believe that all the realms of learning were connected, and by increasing self-efficacy—the students' ability to solve problems in groups improved as well.

Rationale for Sociocultural Component using PBL

Under the essentialist framework enforced in Japan, schools prepare students for the skills they need to survive in society in the future by passively learning through a

lecture-based curriculum filled with numerous standardized tests to ensure that the objectives of the government have been met (Kariya & Rappleye, 2010) rather than using student-centered teaching approaches like PBL. However, as history has shown us, this philosophy often produces a number of different consequences (Spring, 2014). Essentialism believes that knowledge exists outside of the learner; therefore, it is the teacher's job to impart the information of a curriculum mandated by the stakeholders (the government). From the start of the 1900s, social efficiency theorist such as Bobbitt and Charters were some of the first to be inundated by the possibility of automating the curricula with a scientific approach by observing the working habits of professionals and constructing objectives for students to master in order to meet the demands of society later in life (Kliebard, 2013). However, essentialist ideologies are often distorted to disseminate the government's narrative in order to create an obedient workforce, meaning the conservative agenda within the hidden curriculum is ultimately used to nationalize, socialize, and deculturalize the youth.

Essentialism and conservativism have long been a major ethos of the Japanese government and education system (Goodman, 2016; Hirano, 2009; Kariya & Rappleye, 2010; Morita, 2013; Nozaki, 2008, 2009). "During the first two decades of the Meiji period (1868-1912), a large number of Japanese were sent . . . to the United States and Europe, and between three and four thousand Western experts . . . were invited to Japan" (Goodman, 2016, p. viii). This period of time saw the rise of the social efficiency movement, especially in America (Spring, 2014); thus, these ideas were spread into the Japanese education system (Occhi, 2016). Furthermore, it is also apparent that "essentialist national identities of the non-Western nations, has also emerged in

movements and struggles for liberation from colonial and neo-colonial oppressions, or in the battles against the hegemony of the West, militarily, politically, culturally or otherwise" (Nozaki, 2009, p. 148).

In the 1980s, during the same time MEXT was most criticized for the censorship of the Asia-Pacific war, there was also a slow push towards theoretical internationalization of Japan. "A target was set to increase the number of foreign students studying in Japanese universities to 100,000 by the year 2000, a target that was met a few years late" (Goodman, 2016, p. viii). Regardless, many had viewed these policies as only being used for an economic or political gain with a similar project being launched in 2014 to promote Japan as a global country. "Both of the programs have been characterized as government-led, top-down projects designed to meet national interests" (p. viii); hence, ultimately making both processes unsuccessful due to the conservative rhetoric of the policies.

Textbook Bias

Since the end of the Asia-Pacific post-war era, Japan took a conservative and approach both towards policy and education in order to ensure the protection of the status quo (Hirano, 2009; Kariya & Rappleye, 2010; Nozaki, 2008; Wray, 2001). As Nozaki (2008) points out, "much of the imperial system . . . remained intact at the beginning of postwar Japan . . . [thus] allowing the schools to use the blacked-out textbooks until July 31, 1946" (Nozaki, 2009, p. 1-4). The Ministry of Education (MOE), being a branch of the Japanese government, had the sole authority to decide on the content which would be placed in the textbooks (Kariya & Rappleye, 2010; Nozaki, 2008; Wray, 2001). "It created a precedent for Mombusho's [(MOE)] censorship of content from 1950 to 1952

by allowing the contemporary Textbook Authorization Committee [sic] to disqualify textbooks that were 'communist-tinged' [sic] and did not meet 'acceptable standards" (Wray, 2001, p. 71). This meant that all textbooks written and used for public schools in Japan had to pass through the country's Ministry of Education before being used in schools.

These policies and omissions to the text continued far into the 20th century sparking a number of lawsuits, and in 1982, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport, Science and Technology (MEXT) developed and delivered history textbooks which caused many outcries and protests both domestic and abroad due to the inaccuracies regarding the occupational period during the Asia-Pacific war (Nozaki, 2008). According to Hirano (2009), only about 4.5% of the national history texts were written about the Asia-Pacific War. Furthermore, as Nozaki (2008) notes, on the Japanese front, scholars were shocked as MEXT wanted to eliminate the references to the murder of Okinawans by Japanese forces, while Asian countries (such as Korea and China) spoke out about credibility of the textbooks written by MEXT, which they saw as distorting the past. Three major lawsuits were filed against the Japanese government concerning these kinds of matters (among others); nonetheless, many of the issues still have not been rectified in present-day Japan textbooks (Nozaki, 2008).

Even in the most recent times, MEXT has been under a lot of pressure by the international community to adjust the historical context of textbooks used to educate students due to the inconsistencies concerning Japan's role in the Asia-Pacific War as well as the treatment of the conquered nations it occupied (Hirano, 2009; Nozaki, 2009). As Nozaki points out, this is a large problem, because Japanese education is based on a

universal textbook; hence, the entire nation has had blinders systematically attached to their worldview. With that being said, "in the context of contemporary education . . . the question of whose knowledge out to be taught in school and thus represented in school textbooks" (Nozaki, 2008, p. 154) has started to become a major question. Consequently, as Nozaki makes clear, "the state in all likelihood, has a role, or perhaps multiple roles, to play in ensuring the fairness and transparency of such a process" (Nozaki, 2008, p. 154).

Gender Inequality

Gender role assignments have a very powerful impact, as they create an invisible unity and establish a "dominant gender ideology . . . [where] any possible alternatives are virtually unthinkable" (Lorber, 2013, p. 326). Until 1995 in Japanese junior high schools, only girls were required to participate in home economics and courses related to servitude, while men were required to take different electives. As Lorber (2013) points out, women and men are not traditionally born with the concepts of feminine and masculine gender; however, society instills these ideologies through education and mass media. Japanese public schools start gender socialization using uniforms from the first day; girls wear skirts or dresses, and boys wear pants and button-up shirts. These gender assignments have a very powerful impact as they create an invisible understanding of domination. In a sense, everyone accepts the fact that girls should dress like dolls without questioning the rules because it is a societal norm.

Mass media is used to further institute the roles and expected behaviors of women from a young age in Japan. Hata (2014) found that in 2007 there were over 13 different kinds of magazines emerged that were "exclusively targeting preschool girls" (Hata, 2014, p. 375). In these magazines, text and images are used to establish gender roles with food,

homes, celebrities, fashion, and anime being among the most common encountered topics (Hata, 2014). Findings by Hata (2014) suggest that information in these magazines cause the preschool girls to think about beauty and its relation to female characteristics; also, she explains that the gifts in the magazines (pens or trinkets), encourage "girls to have cute, pink coloured items, implying that if girls have those items they will be more attractive" (p. 387). Feminizing women is one of the first steps taken in creating a hierarchy; the next approach is establishing women's subordination towards men. This is often socialized into the young through the use of anime or TV idols (Starr, 2015). In children's shows, girl characters typically wear cute pink costumes and use high-pitched voices to compliantly effeminate themselves. Since girls grow up with the perception of a high-voice equating to *kawai* (being irresistibly cute), they tend to adopt and imitate it as a way of being pleasant or agreeable. When they are older, they are often expected to use that high voice when working in various service jobs to display their feminism and devotion to the customer (Starr, 2015).

Even though Japan ranks in the top 10 countries for educating women (with nearly the same number of women as men finishing higher education), Japan's gender inequality gap is rated around 100th in the world. This is mainly due to the lack of women in positions of power and the fact that women make around 40% less than men (Kitamura, 2008). In the past ten years, there has been a large influx of women in the corporate workforce, however, if women wish to get ahead they cannot marry as doing so directly affects their career (Kitamura, 2008). "Companies do not want to hire women as 'all-round' employees who train to be future managers because they believe that women quit their jobs after marriage or childbirth, according to what is traditionally expected of

them" (Kitamura, 2008, p. 69). Many students have a fixed image of what it means to be a woman—complacently representing that manifestation when they get older—due to the direct and hidden heteronormative education process of both schooling and society (Sumara & Davis, 2013; Thornton, 2013).

Gender norms keep women from rising against their male counterparts and allows them to be treated as an expendable workforce. Japanese society functions on Confucianism (a collectivist ideology), and as a result, students are taught not to question the system. No one wants to stick out, as being different is seen as a negative characteristic (Kitamura, 2008). The societal norm was established by the education system, which it ultimately ensures the dominance of men and women's dependency on them (Kitamura, 2008). "Men dominate the positions of authority and leadership in the government, the military, and the law" (Lorber, 2013, p. 328); consequently, they control the flow of mass media and gender socialization.

Intercultural Competence Issues

It is well known that intercultural communication skills are important for understanding and communicating with people from other countries (Deardorff, 2011; Hammer, 2015; Hammer et al., 2003; Lustig & Koester, 2005; Moeller & Osborn, 2014; Sercu & Bandura, 2005; Sorrells, 2015). "Therefore, developing a willingness and commitment to communicate with individuals from diverse backgrounds is crucial to engaging in diversity" (Yamada, 2013, p. 223). Nonetheless, unlike its neighboring first-world countries (Hong Kong, Singapore, and Malaysia), Japan still approaches English as a foreign language. As Whitsed and Wright (2013) note, the recent changes to the national curriculum by MEXT in 2008 only established English to be taught from the

fifth grade. "MEXT has stressed upon globalization and the importance of English, [but] experience has shown that English is only useful for passing entrance examinations and some feel that Japan is beyond the reach of globalization" (Morita, 2013, p. 66); hence, there has been a large disconnect between policy, belief, and action.

In the realm of EFL education in Japan, it has become common knowledge that "the vast majority of non-language major undergraduates are not convinced by the MEXT rhetoric that all students need communicative English skills. . . . [as] the idea that English is indispensable in the international market is not supported in their experience" (Morita, 2013, p. 57). In this way, internationalization imposed by MEXT is just seen as another piece of the curriculum rather than an intercultural tool connecting societies together. Consequently, Japanese students think that studying EFL believe that there is no real-world application for English outside of the classroom. They only view English as a subject that can be studied and quantified rather than a tool that can be used to make connections with others; hence, they often lack the intercultural competence required to communicate outside of their own culture.

In a study by Yamada (2013), it was found that only 52% of his students believed that "English is important and should be used in Japan, [but] . . . did not find the use of English relevant or important to their lives" (p. 226). Another investigation by Whitsed & Wright (2013) supported this claim where over 43 different teachers who worked at 66 universities reported that their students did not have a sense of urgency to learn English in the future as they felt they would be shielded from internationalization. The belief that English has no fundamental worth in Japan, "hinders the promotion of cross-cultural

communication and an understanding of multilingualism among Japanese" (Yamada, 2013, p. 223).

Finally, another false dichotomy exists in Japan between the idea of English and communication. If students use English, it is believed that it will be with white, Europeans (Toh, 2012) or with people who speak English as their first language (Hardy, 2016). As Toh (2012) points out, the Japanese government has quite a twisted view of what *kokusai* (international) actually means when referencing the people of future intercultural experiences. Moreover, it is believed that this "reinforces false perceptions about English uses and users, and creates another version of monolingual [sic] and tendency" (Yamada, 2013, p. 223).

The need for intercultural competence and sensitivity is progressively becoming an indispensable tool in the internationalized world where students are living in today both domestically and abroad (Deardorff, 2011; Hammer, 2015; Hammer et al., 2003; Lustig & Koester, 2005; Moeller & Osborn, 2014; Sercu & Bandura, 2005; Sorrells, 2015). As Hammer (2015) notes, "intercultural competence is identified in workplace surveys as one of the top 10 skills needed for leaders and employees in the 21st century" (p. 484). Nevertheless, Japan's unique history with integrating other cultures has been challenging due to the small ratio of minorities (Morita, 2013; Whitsed & Wright, 2013; Yamada, 2013); thus, due to the impending changes in cultural diversity to come in the near future, it is imperative to expose them to different worldviews and sociocultural content in order to help raise their intercultural competence.

Sociocultural Component

The sociocultural component (see Appendix A) is an amalgamation of best practices from the most recent research articles related to Japan which considers transcultural and intercultural approaches for promoting intercultural competence. Using the data gathered from the IDI, field notes, journals, worksheets, and focus group, this study monitored students' exposure to otherness, altering their monocultural views about education, gender, and diversity in hopes of allowing them to become transcultural citizens who are able to accept and interact in an intercultural environment to transcend cultural divides.

In the first theme, schools and textbooks, students were expected analyze their society's method of education and explain how it is still affecting their lives now. Afterward they read about different teaching approaches aboard and compared it to their own culture. Finally, during the end of the first cycle they were confronted with issues of cultural diversity in Japanese education and asked how to solve the impending issues. It was hoped that they could adapt an new worldview, or what Marotta (2014) describes as, "a critical philosophical framework that fosters an alternative mode of being in the world that is sensitive to sameness and difference" (p. 94). Yet, this knowledge needs to be transferred into the belief that multiculturalism is inevitable in the students' generation. Rather than becoming resistant to the foreigners coming to their country, they need to realize that these people will become part of their society and we are all global citizens who need to interact with each other to succeed.

The second theme, gender roles, required students to reflect on the powers of oppression that operate based on gender roles in the Japan. After analyzing different

cases and discussing gender related issues in class, students get a better understanding of the discriminatory practices in the business world. They are asked to compare and contrast the practices in their country to other countries in hopes of finding how inequalities are dealt with. Finally, they have to build solutions for rectifying gender imbalances in the future by modeling or integrating the policies of other countries who have successfully changed policies.

In the third theme, diversity and multiculturalism, students need to "develop heterological thinking and a transcultural competence in dealing with others" (Wuff, 2010, p. 46). Marotta (2014) notes that one of the aspects of transcultural thought allows people to be free of their own culture and develop a hybrid belief through transgression. Hence, issues such as the impending multicultural society are introduced as well as topics about intercultural communication. It is hoped that students realize that English is not only for tests; rather, English can be used for intercultural communication with people from around the world through these tasks. Towards the end, students have to talk about the way to deal with taboo subjects and cultural fax pas to successfully navigate intercultural communication. At the end of the theme, students are asked to do a role play where they are managers of a company and are dealing with critical issues where a non-Japanese is unable to succeed in Japanese culture.

Conclusion

Chapter two discussed the theoretical concepts and historical contexts related to the problem of practice while suggesting problem-based learning (PBL) as having the most potential as teaching approach to promote intercultural competence due to the shared epistemological connections to the IDC. The chapter began with an introduction

outlining the review of related literature as well as how the information was collected to conduct the study. In the following section, (the theoretical base) intercultural communication, intercultural competence, and intercultural sensitivity are discussed in connection with the conceptual framework, while also highlighting Bennett's (1986, 1993) DMIS and Hammer's (2011, 2012) IDC and IDI. At the end of the theoretical base section, the IDI is reviewed with examples of study abroad research projects (Kawamura, 2016; Naganuma, 2016; Occhi, 2016) as well as research articles looking into teaching intercultural competence and sensitivity in the Japanese context (Morita, 2013; Nakamura, 2002). In the following section, Barrows and Tamblyn's (1980) PBL approach is discussed, explaining how it relates to the theory of inquiry and constructivism. Also, more recent applications of PBL in the Japanese context are reviewed (e.g., Chujo & Kijima, 2006; Takahashi & Saito, 2013). Although the inquiry-based approach to teaching global literacy is quite successful in the Japanese context (Nakamura, 2002), Hmelo-Silver (2004) notes that there has been little research outside of the medical field into PBL; hence, in the end of this section, the theoretical framework is connected with intercultural sensitivity, advocating PBL as the best method to execute this explanatory mixed-methods action research study. In the last section of the literature review, historical issues related to the Japanese education system were considered using primary and secondary sources (e.g., Goodman, 2016; Hirano, 2009; Kariya & Rappleye, 2010; Morita, 2013; Nozaki, 2008, 2009) to further illuminate evidence in support of the problem of practice. Finally, the sociocultural component (see Appendix A), which utilizes PBL and *Mirrors and Windows* (Huber-Kriegler et al., 2003), was illustrated using all of the concepts outlined in the literature review in the end of the final section. In

chapter three, the rationale and approach to this investigation will be discussed in further

detail as well as the data collection instrument and data collection plan.

CHAPTER THREE: ACTION RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

According to the Japanese Immigration Bureau, as of 2011, the number of non-Japanese living and working in Japan made up 1.6% of the population (Kawamura, 2016), with the growth of resident aliens expected to increase rapidly over the next three decades in order to sustain the workforce (Kim & Oh, 2011; Whitsed & Wright, 2013). Recent statistics suggest that in 2016 the population of foreign nationals in Japan reached an all-time high of nearly two percent. An explosion in immigration is expected over the next 35 years and this number is expected to raise 20% - 30% (around 30 million) (H. Kim & Oh, 2011; Whitsed & Wright, 2013). However, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) has yet to implement the proper policies to foster intercultural competence in the current generation of university students who will be part of the future workforce along with these immigrants (Kawamura, 2016; Morita, 2013; Naganuma, 2016; Whitsed & Wright, 2013). Whether or not educators are prepared to admit that intercultural competence plays a large role in the globalized world students live in (Deardorff, 2006, 2011; Fantini, 2009; Hammer, 2015; Paige & Bennett, 2015; Sorrells, 2015), "there exists a widespread consensus among researchers and practitioners that [intercultural competence] is a key capability for working and living effectively with people from different cultures" (Hammer, 2015, p. 484). It is believed that learning to compare one's home culture to another culture is the first step to identifying stereotypes and confronting biases that have a stigmatizing effect on society (Sorrells, 2015).

Problem of Practice

Many researchers believe that most Japanese students will struggle with the skills needed to deal with the impending multicultural society ahead (Kawamura, 2016; Morita, 2013; Whitsed & Wright, 2013). That is, students who reach higher education in Japan rarely believe there is a genuine need for intercultural communication skills (Morita, 2013; Whitsed & Wright, 2013; Yamada, 2013). The primary investigator of this study also found this to be the case while teaching Oral Communications 1 (OC1) at Japan's Technical University (JTU) over the past seven years; therefore, justifying a need for an intercultural competence intervention due to the students' monocultural limitations. To this end, a new OC1 curriculum aimed at promoting intercultural competence was designed to help students transcend Defense and move into Minimization in regards to the Intercultural Dependence Inventory (IDC).

Research Question

How does a socioculturally adjusted curriculum using problem-based learning (PBL) impact the intercultural competence level of Japanese students enrolled in an oral communications course?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this action research dissertation is to assess the effects of a PBL altered curriculum (utilizing a sociocultural component) on Japanese university students' intercultural competence in accordance with the identified problem of practice.

Reliability and Validity of the IDI

There are currently three versions of the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI), all of which have been verified for reliability and validity through rigorous testing procedures to ensure the accuracy of the items to predict participants' level of intercultural sensitivity (Fantini, 2009; Hammer, 2015; Hammer et al., 2003; Niu, 2015; Sinicrope, Norris, & Watanabe, 2007). Only version 2 (V2) and version 3 (V3) are discussed in this section.

V2 of the IDI was considered "a cross-culturally validated and generalizable assessment of intercultural competence, which was developed by Mitchell Hammer and Milton Bennett based on the DMIS framework" (Hammer, 2015, p. 486). The DMIS was a framework that was theorized by Bennett (1993) to conceptualize the way in which people interpret cultural phenomena. Although the DMIS was able to explain which worldview people exhibit, it lacked instrumentation for subject testing (Hammer et al., 2003). This led to the development of the IDI by using a 60-question psychometric scale in hopes of identifying a way to methodically assess intercultural sensitivity. According to Hammer et al. (2003), the study of the validity of V2 showed favorable results.

Confirmatory factor analyses, reliability analyses, and construct validity tests validated five main dimensions of the DMIS, which were measured with the following scales: (1) DD (Denial/Defense) scale (13 items, alpha=0.85); (2) R (Reversal) scale (9 items, alpha=0.80); (3) M (Minimization) scale (9 items, alpha=0.83), (4) AA (Acceptance/Adaptation) scale (14 items, alpha=0.84; and (5) an EM (Encapsulated Marginality) scale (5 items, alpha=0.80). While no systematic gender differences were found, significant differences by gender were

found on one of the five scales (DD scale). No significant differences on the scale scores were found for age, education, or social desirability, suggesting the measured concepts are fairly stable. (p. 421)

The IDI has been since updated to V3 and was used in this action research project to assess students' mindsets through a self-evaluation format accessible online (Hammer, 2012). Overall, findings have indicated that the IDI V3 has not only shown strong content and construct validity, but also strong predictive validity making it the best instrument for predicting intercultural competence in research projects (Hammer, 2012). After further studies, the IDI V3 was limited to 50-items in the second version to increase reliability with the following being documented in Hammer (2011):

A review of IDI V3 data collected with a separate sample of 4654 subjects from the United States reveals the following distribution: Denial: 3.5%; Polarization: 17.1%; Minimization: 63.5%; Acceptance: 14.4%; and Adaptation: 1.5%. Combining both sample distribution of IDI scores of the 9417 respondents indicates the following: Denial: 3.05; Polarization: 15.55%; Minimization: 65.25%; Acceptance: 14.65%; and Adaptation: 1.55%. These results from the initial, IDI V2 sample of 1000 subjects along with the two studies completed, clearly suggest a normal distribution, indicating there is no overestimation of Minimization. Further, these results clearly indicate the IDI is very sensitive to individual differences, and the IDI does not underestimate the more ethnocentric orientations. In short, the IDI is an equally robust and valid assessment for both individuals and groups (p. 482).

Findings from the same study by Hammer (2012) advocated changes to the DMIS where integration was eliminated and cultural disengagement was established as a separate scale outside of measurable intercultural sensitivity. This paved the way for the Intercultural Development Continuum (IDC) with which the IDI V3 currently uses to measure intercultural sensitivity rather than the DMIS, as had been the case in previous versions (Hammer, 2012).

Action Research Design

There are many ways to approach curricula reform; nevertheless, action research is seen as a robust tool to initiate investigations for transformative change in local teaching environments (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014; Ivankova, 2015; Mertler, 2014). This aspect made action research an attractive option for the current study. Unlike most traditional educational research methods, where the intent of the investigation is to uncover findings for making generalizations or predictions about certain populations, action research can be utilized to reflectively examine teaching practices or environments in order to promote positive change. In other words, "action research allows teachers to study their own classrooms . . . in order to better understand them and be able to improve their quality or effectiveness" (Mertler, 2014, p. 4).

Although action research is one of the more recently accepted methodologies for educational studies, its influences can be traced back to John Dewey (1938), who asked educators to take a more reflective approach to investigations by using an inquire-oriented process to research. Dewey saw the scientific method as an arbitrary and authoritarian view of the world, as he believed that every student in education was essentially different; thus, no study could truly be generalized for wider use. Dewey

believed that each educator should attend to his or her own classroom to ensure the betterment of the students. He cautioned educators to be wary of accepting traditional teaching approaches and advocated for teachers' engagement in classroom inquiry (observing, altering, and reflecting) to determine which practices bettered the students' situations based on their individual outcomes (1938). According to Dewey, this situation is satisfied only as the educator views teaching and learning as a continuous process of reconstruction of experience. "This condition in turn can be satisfied only as the educator has a long look ahead, and views every present experience as a moving force in influencing what future experiences will be" (p. 87).

The views of Dewey (1938) were subsequently adapted by Lewin (1946), who coined the term *action research* (Mertler, 2014). Later, Lewin published the first journal article to articulate the use of this new methodology. In this publication, he explained his dissatisfaction with the use of surveys and diagnosis used in social research and intergroup relations. Lewin (1946) believed that "a type of action-research, a comparative research on the conditions and effects of various forms of social action, and researching [would lead] to social action" (p. 35). In his report, he laid the groundwork for the action research process as a problem-solving method that required researchers to take a cyclical approach. Lewin illustrated the action research spiral where he proposed a cycle of "fact finding, planning, taking action, evaluating, and amending the plan, before moving into a second action step" (Mertler, 2014, p. 14). Nonetheless, although the data collection procedures in action research appear to be linear, as Mertler (2014) makes clear, the process of action research is dynamic and iterative; thus, some aspects of the plan may be repeated or omitted.

Action research for investigating problems of practice in the classroom has had a large impact on the way researchers approach the observation of the social sciences and education today. On example of an action research process is Mertler's (2014) step-by-step process of action research (see Figure 3.1), which was utilized in this dissertation because of to its robustness. However, similar to other research methodologies, action research is susceptible to threats to validity.

Planning
- Identify and limit the topic
- Gather and review content
- Develop research plan

Acting
- Collect and analyze data

Developing
- Develop the action plan

Reflecting
- Share findings with others
- Reflect on the process

Figure 3.1 Mertler's (2014) Step-By-Step Process of Action Research

Validity of Action Research

Action research dissertations have been becoming more accepted in the field of education (Butin, 2010; Herr & Anderson, 2015). In traditional research using the scientific method, investigators are typically concerned about the validity of their findings. Similar to qualitative research, action research requires a special kind of criteria, namely rigor (Herr & Anderson, 2015; Ivankova, 2015; Mertler, 2014). "In general, rigor refers to the quality, validity, accuracy, and credibility of action research and its findings"

(Mertler, 2014, p. 27). In action research, rigor is seen through a much wider lens; it often encompasses the complete research procedure, rather than just the process of gathering and examining data. This means that rigor in action research ensures that some form of bias has not been incurred mistakenly during the data collection process. According to Mertler (2014), rigor can be easily established through a number of methods: repeating the action research cycle, engaging in action research for longer periods of time, having experience with the process beforehand, checking with other members about the findings, confirming the details with participants, and collecting data from multiple sources.

Rationale for a Mixed-Methods Case Study Approach

Mixed-methods research has become noteworthy for its ability to comprehensively deal with complex social phenomena over the past decades through the use of multiple data sources (Creswell, 2014; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). In this way, mixed-methods research aligns nicely with action research (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014; Ivankova, 2015; Mertler, 2014), as well as case studies (Harvey, 2013; Kitchenham, 2018). This is because action research allows for the triangulation of data and explanatory approaches enable researchers to find similarities and differences when using multiple data types (Creswell, 2014; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). This ultimately adds to the rigor of action research projects (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014; Mertler, 2014), especially those dealing with complex issues such as intercultural competence (Deardorff, 2006; Harvey, 2013; Sakurauchi, 2014).

In a mixed-methods project, the researcher collects both quantitative and qualitative data, using both viewpoints to strengthen the stance on a multifaceted issue (Creswell, 2014; Ivankova, 2015; Mertler, 2014; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009).

"Reaching beyond the traditional quantitative-qualitative divide, mixed methods capitalizes on the fact that qualitative and quantitative research approaches are complementary in nature" (Ivankova, 2015, p. 4). According to Mertler (2014), there is not much difference between action research and mixed-methods research, because "The main goal of mixed-methods studies is more traditional (i.e., to better understand and explain a research problem); the main goal of action research is to address local-level problems with the anticipation of finding immediate solutions" (p. 12). In this respect, many researchers use meta-inferences to integrate the different forms of data (Creswell, 2014; Ivankova, 2015). This allows the researchers to develop multiple perspectives from the different instruments and build a stronger case (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014). As Ivankova (2015) makes clear:

> By capitalizing on the complementary strengths of each method, mixed methods research can produce much stronger and more credible studies that (1) will yield more convergent or corroborating results in the studied phenomenon, (2) will eliminate or minimize potential alternative explanations of the findings, and (3) will explain the divergent aspects of the phenomenon of interest (p. 13).

In this respect, researchers have begun to advocate that using a mixed-methods approach is the most favorable way to investigate intercultural competence and intercultural sensitivity (Deardorff, 2006; Harvey, 2013; Sakurauchi, 2014). Like this, in a study using the Delphi method, Deardorff (2006) found that "administrators were nearly unanimous (95%) in using a mix of qualitative and quantitative measures to assess students' intercultural competence" (p. 250). Furthermore, 100% of the professional participants in Deardorff's study agreed that case studies were one of the most effective

means for employing investigations into intercultural competence. However, "those in the quantitative camp typically point out that qualitative self-reports or interview results are less valid and reliable measures . . . [and] proponents of qualitative methods often reply that quantitative measures simply are not methodologically sensitive enough" (Hammer, 2012, p. 127). In this respect, both sides can be satisfied through a mixed-methods case study approach, better explaining the complex issues of intercultural sensitivity by looking at multiple sources of data; thus, allowing a clearer picture of the phenomenon to be revealed through qualitative and quantitative data collection instruments (Creswell, 2014; Ivankova, 2015).

Research Setting and Time Frame

In order to protect the identity of the participants as well as the institution, Japanese Technology University (JTU) and Oral Communications 1 (OC1) are used as abbreviations throughout this study. This action research project was conducted at the JTU's campus located in northern Tokyo. JTU is a private four-year engineering and technology university established in 1904. It now has a total of five campuses, including a graduate school, which are all located near the Tokyo metropolitan area. This campus is praised for its ingenuity and technological prowess with all of the classrooms being fitted with the latest technologies including Wi-Fi, projectors, multi-media systems, DVDs, and in-class video recording capabilities. There are seven different departments on the campus (Future Learning, Science and Technology, Science and Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, Electrical Engineering, Telecommunications, and Artificial Intelligence), which are made up of 25 different disciplines hosting nearly 10,000 undergraduate and graduate students.

The timeframe of this study was enacted over an eight-week period during the spring semester of 2018 (see Table 3.1). Throughout the action research project, the IDI (see Appendix C) was used to estimate transformations in the participants' intercultural sensitivity (Hammer, 2015) and was administered during week one and week eight of the investigation. Additionally, the students responded to weekly journal prompts and the investigator conducted observations using field notes (see Appendix E) during weekly 100-minute classes between the second week through the eighth week. At the same time, the teacher-researcher collected students' worksheets, which served as an additional artifact in the study. Finally, a focus group (see Appendix E) was conducted during the eighth week where students were recorded.

Table 3.1 Timeline for Data Collection

Date	Before Class	During Class	After Class
4/12 (Session1) Education Topic		Administered IDI (pre-test)	Chose Typical Case Sample
4/19 (Session 2) Education Topic	Categorized and Coded Student Qualitative Data	Took Field Notes	Wrote Field Note Reflections
4/26 (Session 3) Education Topic	Categorized and Coded Student Qualitative Data	Took Field Notes	Wrote Field Note Reflections
5/3 (Session 4) Gender Topic	Categorized and Coded Student Qualitative Data	Took Field Notes	Wrote Field Note Reflections
5/10 (Session 5) Gender Topic	Categorized and Coded Student Qualitative Data	Took Field Notes	Wrote Field Note Reflections
5/17 (Session 6) Diversity Topic	Categorized and Coded Student Qualitative Data	Took Field Notes	Wrote Field Note Reflections

5/24 (Session 7) Diversity Topic	Categorized and Coded Student Qualitative Data	Took Field Notes	Wrote Field Note Reflections
5/31 (Session 8) Diversity Topic	Categorized and Coded Student Qualitative Data	25-minute Focus Group	Administered IDI (posttest)

Participants

Using the data from the entire groups' IDI results (Table 3.2), the researcher considered the students' Perceived Orientation (PO), Developmental Orientation (DO), Orientation Gap (OG), Trailing Orientations, and Cultural Disengagement to select students who came closest to the mean of all categories (PO=115.96, DO=78.53, OG=37.43, Denial Trailing (Denial) =3.66, Disinterest in Culture Difference Trailing=3.48, Avoidance of Interaction with Cultural Difference=3.91, and Cultural Disengagement=3.46, Reversal=3.2).

Table 3.2 Entire Class IDI Results

	Respondents	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
Perceived Orientation (PO)	22	115.96	4.87
Developmental Orientation (DO)	22	78.53	10.24
Orientation Gap (+= PO > DO; -= DO >PO)	22	37.43	6.05

Based on the results of the group IDI consisting of 22 students from an intact OC1 class, the primary investigator chose a typical case sample of six students at the beginning of the study who were most representative of the classroom (Polarization Defense) in terms of their perceived orientations and developmental orientations. Additionally, trailing orientations were taken into account at the end to make final

decisions. In this way, the investigator used a typical case sample of six student

participants (Table 3.3) consisting of four Japanese and two Chinese 19- to 21-year-old,

middle- to upper-middle class undergraduates. Five of the students were male and one

was a female. One of the Chinese students was an international student and the other was

an ethnic Chinese who grew up in Japan. The students chosen for this study came from

similar academic majors (architecture and robotics) with TOEIC scores ranging from 350

to 600. Additionally, all of the participants were taking the OC1 course as a compulsory

first-year course at JTU. The rest of this section explains each participant case with a

brief background gained from the IDI contexting questions.

Table 3.3 Demographics of Participants

Name	Gender	Age	Country Raised	Ethnic Minority in Home Country	Previous Experience with Other Cultures	Time Spent Living Abroad
Ricky PO = 115.16 DO = 79.30	Male	18-21	Japan	No	Only at Ethnic Food Restaurants	0 years
Ken PO = 114.22 DO = 74.37	Male	18-21	Japan	No	Jr. or Sr. High School in America	3-5 years
George PO = 114.95 DO = 76.34	Male	18-21	Japan	No	None	0 years
Louie PO = 119.28 DO = 81.99	Male	18-21	China	No	Currently Studying Abroad in Japan	1-2 years
Joe PO = 119.86 DO = 82.02	Male	18-21	Japan	Yes (Chinese)	Has stayed in China for some limited time	1-2 years

Karen PO = 111.00 DO = 78.18	Female	18-21	Japan	No	None	0 years

Ricky is a 17-year-old male freshman from the Architecture Department. He identifies as a Japanese national and holds Japanese citizenship. He has never lived in another country and claims that his only interaction with different cultures has been by going to different ethnic restaurants in Japan. Ricky thinks that there are a number of different aspects that make intercultural communication difficult, for example, language, communication style, and food culture. He believes the key to interacting better with people from other countries can be found by learning how to communicate at the level of daily conversation. This is the manner in how we can get to know about people's actual lives and who they are.

Ken is a 17-year-old male freshman studying in the Robotics Department of JTU. He has Japanese citizenship and identifies as a Japanese national. According to the IDI contexting questions, he has lived abroad for three to five years in the past. He attended high school in America where he reported having a number of different intercultural interactions with teachers and students from other countries. One of his most prominent memories of interacting with people from other cultures was during a school project where students from around the world introduced their traditional dishes to each other. On the IDI, Ken stated that one of the most difficult challenges for him to interact with people from other cultures is the difference in the way of thinking. He believes that through stronger second-language skills, people from other countries can be drawn closer to each other.

George is a 17-year-old male freshman studying with the Architecture Department at JTU. He is a Japanese national and identifies as such, and he has never lived abroad. On the IDI contexting questions, he reported that he has not truly had the chance to touch other cultures nor has he had any direct intercultural experience with people from another country. In his opinion, he thinks the most challenging aspect of working with people from other cultures is communication. George thinks that when communication fails, it is important to work through intercultural problems by using body language and gestures. In this way, he believes that we can convey our meaning and navigate cultural differences with partners.

Louie is a 17-year-old male Chinese national studying as a freshman in the Robotics Department. He holds Chinese citizenship and is studying as an international student for a four-year degree at JTU on a limited visa. On the IDI, he reported that he has lived in another country for one to two years (most likely Japan). Since he is studying abroad now, he listed living in Japan as his experience dealing with other cultures and believes it is a great chance for him to contact another culture. One of the largest challenges for him living in Japan has been that the lifestyle is much different than his home country. Hence, Louie believes the best way in dealing with his difficulties is to communicate with his family and friends about his experiences in Japan to help him navigate his challenges.

Joe is a 17-year-old second-generation male Chinese national who was born and raised in Japan; however, due to the immigration laws of Japan, he still holds a Chinese passport until he nationalizes in the future. According to his IDI data, he has also lived in another country in the past (most likely China), and he is bilingual and bicultural. Joe

speaks Chinese at home and experiences many different cultural events with his family members that represent his ethnic culture, while also interacting on a daily basis outside of the house in Japanese and experiencing everything it means to be a young Japanese citizen. On many occasions, his family travels back to China and he is able to join a lot of events and traditional festivals. Additionally, Joe believes that he has had a lot of opportunities to interact with people from western cultures recently during his travels. Joe stated that the languages and values are the hardest things for working with people from other countries. He referenced one situation where he noticed that other students who were studying abroad in Japan often had issues interacting with other Japanese students because of the language. Additionally, he remarked that those students would voice their opinions in class were seen as offensive to the teacher and others. He does not know how to exactly overcome these issues and left the section about successfully navigating cultural differences blank.

Karen is a 17-year-old female freshman studying in the Architecture Department of JTU. She currently holds Japanese citizenship and identifies as a Japanese national. Karen has never lived in another country and reported in her IDI profile that she has almost no intercultural experiences in her past. Furthermore, she stated that one of the largest challenges of working with people from other cultures is the different value or moral systems. Karen opted not to divulge a lot about herself in the contexting questions, making it quite difficult to gauge her views on cross-cultural goals, and navigating cultural differences.

Research Methods

This action research dissertation uses an explanatory mixed-methods case study approach to evaluate the effectiveness of a problem-based learning (PBL) curriculum enhancement through sociocultural content in hopes of monitoring an increase in the intercultural competence of six Japanese EFL students studying OC1 at a Japanese technical university. OC1 was conducted by the teacher-researcher exclusively in English and all of the oral and written production by the students was also expected to be in English; however, students were allowed to help each other in whatever language they saw fit during discussions and aspects of the journal and worksheet were allowed to be completed in Japanese if needed.

Using Mertler's (2014) step-by-step process of action research (Figure 3.1) quantitative data was collected with the IDI and quantified meta-inferences from the case study, as well as qualitative data through field notes, student journals, worksheets, and a focus group. All of the data collection instruments in this study were utilized and collected for both the entire group's case and each student's individual sub-case. Each data collection tool was used at a different time (Table 3.1) in the study for different purposes.

IDI

The IDI was the main source of quantitative data used for this study and was collected in Japanese. The IDI is a simple 50-item questionnaire that can be completed in 15-20 minutes online to gauge research participants' intercultural sensitivity based on the IDC (Hammer, 2012). The IDI also incorporates contexting questions "that allow respondents to describe their intercultural experiences in terms of a) their cross-cultural

goals, b) the challenges they face navigating cultural differences, c) critical (intercultural) incidents they encounter . . . and d) ways they navigate those cultural differences" (p. 117). The IDI is also available in many different languages to ensure that the meaning of the items is completely understood by the participants of the study. "In addition to English, it has been back-translated into 13 languages to date" (p. 116); this includes Japanese.

Using a pretest-posttest methodology, the IDI utilizes respondents' answers to illustrate their level of intercultural sensitivity in terms of their predicted intercultural competence plotted on the ICD. After the initial pretest is taken on the Internet, the orientations of both the group and the individuals are processed by the online software, which generates intercultural development plans for both cases. In this way, administrators assess the participants' baseline intercultural sensitivity levels and construct a training program that starts at that particular mindset, ultimately creating an environment that allows students to experience and reflect on different sociocultural phenomena juxtaposed to their own culture at their own comfort level.

Although there are many different quantitative tools for collecting data about intercultural sensitivity, the IDI was chosen as the main data gathering tool of this dissertation for a number of reasons. To begin, the IDI is the most widely used quantitative tool for assessing intercultural sensitivity. "More than 60 published articles and book chapters as well as over 42 PhD dissertations" have utilized the IDI as the basis of the research methodology (Hammer, 2012, p. 117). Additionally, the IDI has been used in both corporate and academic situations by "more than 1,400 Qualified Administrators in more than 30 countries" (p. 117).This means that the IDI has already

established a presence for generalizability across cultures and in cultures that represent

high diversity (2012). Also, the IDI uses a psychometric protocol to guard against social

desirability (2012), so respondents cannot guess what the correct answer is in order to get

a better score. Finally, the administration tool also allows researchers the ability to use

groups, sub-groups, and individual data processing to organize the data in any way seen

fit for analysis.

Scores on the IDI range from 0 to 145 with thresholds for each orientation (Figure

3.2) and the score received by the respondent is considered the primary orientation on the

IDC. This is theorized to be the mindset used to construe cultural phenomena; however, it

is prevalent that given some circumstances previous orientation might be used if they are

not fully resolved. These are considered trailing orientations, and any person can display

a number of them if they have not yet reached a level of intercultural competence to

transcend completely into a specific mindset. Additionally, the IDI considers an

orientation gap, which is the distance between perceived orientation as opposed to the

actual developmental orientation. All of these are factors in assessing the developmental

process of intercultural competence.

| Denial | Polarization | Minimization | Acceptance | Adaptation |
| •55 - 69.9 | •70 - 84.9 | •85 - 114.9 | •115 - 129.9 | •130 - 145 |
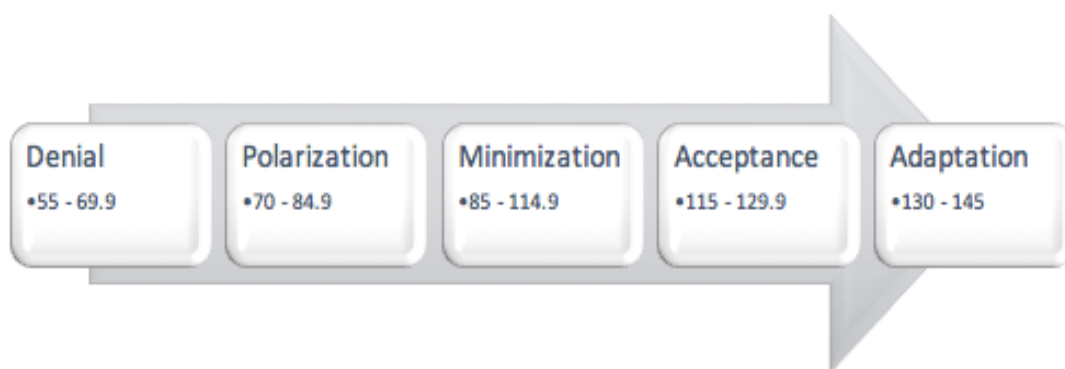
Figure 3.2 Scoring of the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI)

Field Notes

The main tool for collecting qualitative data in this study was field notes. Each week during in class discussions, the teacher-researcher conducted observations to capture the actual climate and natural talk (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014) between the sample of six students participating in a group discussion throughout six of the 100-minute lessons in OC1 classes at JTU. Students were encouraged to speak English, but they were allowed to use any language needed to ensure they could comprehend and explain their ideas about the topics. In addition to this, the investigator took notes about the students' behaviors as well as their body language when considering different sociocultural topics. Each session the teacher-researcher recorded as much information as possible and then summarized all of the data for both the groups and individual students.

Originally, a modified checklist was created to observe the students intercultural competence through objectives to model a study conducted in a similar study by Fantini (2007), however, it became obvious that field notes would be more helpful in describing the developmental process of acquiring intercultural competence over the eight-week period as well as help the process of eliciting cultural phenomena by using open-ended questions with the group to allow them to provide their opinions freely (Creswell, 2014). Additionally, a checklist would require the study's investigator to constantly carry a notebook during the lesson or record each session; whereas, with the field notes, shorthand about students' behaviors, body language, and comments could be jotted down quickly while observing their conversations. The investigator could then just expand more on the ideas while students were doing reading tasks and after the class was over.

Student Journals

As one of the artifacts for this action research project, student journals were utilized to support qualitative data collected from the field notes. The participants completed student journals over a six-week period using a learning management system and were meant to be writing in English, but they were allowed to include Japanese when explaining things such as idioms or vocabulary specific to Japanese culture. Each week the six participants of this study were required to write 100 to 200 words reacting to prompts posted online based on topics from the sociocultural component (e.g. education, gender, and diversity and multiculturalism), which was included in the PBL learning cycle. The prompts were structured to align with the readings about different cultures conducted by students outside of class. During these sessions, the students were asked to compare Japan (or their home country) to another culture, ultimately eliciting them to discuss similarities and differences.

The first reason the teacher-researcher chose student journals as an instrument was because it is a highly encouraged data collection tool by most of the respected researchers in the field of intercultural competence and communication. According to Deardorff (2006), "analysis of narrative diaries, [and] self-report instruments" (p. 251) are the second highest rated tool for collecting data in intercultural competence research. Additionally, they worked well with the pedagogical approach to the curriculum adjustment made in the study. The PBL structure of the course was employed to get students thinking about difficult problems for foreigners in Japan and proposing solutions; hence, journals were a nice fit for the learning cycle as students were required to apply new knowledge and conduct abstraction toward the end of the PBL process.

Hence, the journals were acting in a way to develop students' intercultural awareness through knowledge building, as well as their intercultural sensitivity by restructuring their beliefs.

Finally, another goal of the student journals was to complement the field notes and develop more qualitative rigor when analyzing the students' developmental process. Although Hammer (2012) notes that "when interviewed (or when their journals are reviewed), it is common to find that students often express strong certainty about and enthusiasm about different cultures," (p.128) rather than being completely reflective, the journal prompts in this study were designed to elicit students' beliefs of similarities and differences of culture in order to gauge their intercultural sensitivity.

Worksheets

The second artifact collected in this action research project was in-class worksheets that the students completed each week in class. Students were allowed to use any language they wished for taking notes and annotating; however, the teacher-researcher encouraged them to use English as much as possible. The content of the worksheets was created and piloted with a previous course to ensure the questions and design were user-friendly. However, the content was adjusted again to make sure it reflected the students' current orientation on the IDI (Polarization Defense) where they were able to choose to either talk or record notes about similarities and/or differences while comparing their culture to another country. At the end of each cycle, students worked with PBL worksheets that would require them to solve the sociocultural issues. The teacher-researcher originally was not collecting the worksheets; however, it was difficult to record all of the interaction between the students with field notes alone. In this

way, worksheets were valuable in supporting the qualitative data as well as the quantified accounts later in the study.

Focus Group

At the end of the study, one 25-minute semi-structured focus group was administered with the typical case sample of six students using a semi-structured focus group procedure (see Appendix E) to gather qualitative feedback about the individuals' intercultural competence. The focus group was conducted exclusively in English and the students were given the entire list of questions ahead of time in order to allow them to prepare; however, the students did not know which question they would need to answer prior to the focus groups. During the focus group, the primary investigator acted as a participant-observer to prompt the groups and asked clarifying questions to gain a deeper understanding of their beliefs about cultural similarities and differences. Because the researcher did not have the ability to hire a note taker for the focus group, conversations were recorded using a video camera that was later reviewed and transcribed.

Initially, the researcher was planning to administer individual interviews, as a majority of the studies advocated using structured or semi-structured interviews to collect qualitative data. Even Mertler (2014) suggests using interviewing as a data collection tool for action research. Nonetheless, the IDI prescribes focus groups for gaining more successful insight into intercultural sensitivity. As Hammer (2012) makes clear, "traditional open-ended interviewing protocols do not gather developmental information; they simply gather different (i.e., hypersensory memory) data from students about their experiences" (p. 129). Hence, interviewing is not particularly helpful when trying to assess someone's understanding of cultural similarities or differences. Additionally, as

Fraenkel, Wallen, and Hyun (2014) make clear, not only interviews but also focus groups can be used to clarify what has been collected in the field notes. Hence, the semi-structured focus group questions were constructed to elicit the different intercultural orientations on the IDC from Denial to Adaptation in ascending order.

Procedure

Since the philosophy of action research stems from the work of Dewey (1938) and Lewin (1946)—who called for all teachers to reflect on the conventional teaching approaches through a process of planning, observing, altering, and reflecting—being a reflective practitioner is a vital, ongoing aspect of action research as it allows teacher-researchers to make meaning of certain occurrences and modify certain aspects of the classroom during and after the action planning cycles according to the outcomes (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014; Efrat & Ravid, 2013; Mertler, 2014). It was for this reason that during the first eight weeks of the spring semester of 2018 at JTU, data was collected for this action research project through an explanatory mixed-methods case study approach (QUAN then qual) using Mertler's (2014) step-by-step process: planning, acting, developing, and reflecting (Figure 3.1).

Planning Stage

The planning stage of action research often involves gathering information and reviewing literature to identify and limit the topic at hand (Mertler, 2014). When limiting the area of focus for action research, it is important to clearly understand the extensiveness of the topic (Mertler, 2014). Gathering information consists mainly of doing reconnaissance through "three forms: self-reflection, description, and explanation"

(Mertler, 2014, p. 39). Afterward, researchers typically review sources that can help them connect theories to their practice and guide the study (Mertler, 2014).

Before commencing the study, the primary investigator attended an IDI training seminar, undergoing a three-day intensive workshop to learn about intercultural sensitivity and intercultural competence in more depth. It was in this seminar that the investigator learned how to administer the IDI and interpret the scores returned by the instrument for researching in educational environments. In the first week of the study, the investigator administered the initial IDI to all 22 members of the class, and the results were used to provide a baseline for the learners' intercultural sensitivity level. Following the first execution of the IDI, six students were selected as the typical case sample. They were then used for the entirety of the study. Additionally, the researcher consulted the IDI development guide to determine where to begin the intercultural competence intervention, configuring the curriculum to help them move from Polarization Defense into Minimization.

Acting Stage

The acting stage is typically concerned with implementing the action research plan, collecting the data during a given time period, and then analyzing that data to make the action research project data-driven (Mertler, 2014). Throughout the data collection procedure, the teacher-researcher used five different instruments: the IDI, field notes, journals, worksheets, and a focus group. The timeline (Table 3.1) was followed strictly so as to ensure that systematic collection of the data occurred.

After the students took the initial IDI in the first week, they experienced an eight-week period where the textbook *Mirrors and Windows* (Huber-Kriegler et al., 2003) was

utilized as the modified content into the lessons. This particular textbook has been successfully used in the European context for over a decade (Huber-Kriegler et al., 2003). It supports intercultural communication by allowing students to read, analyze, discuss, and reflect on how cultures are similar or different to their target culture's context.

During seven 100-minute OC1 courses, the investigator acted as a participant-observer in the lessons by interacting with the students through group discussions in class. Field notes were taken from the second to the seventh week to gauge the developmental changes in the six students' intercultural sensitivity over the span of the project. As the data was collected and analyzed after class each day, the researcher directly reflected on the notes taken in class concerning the participants conversations, behavior, and body language which allowed for the teacher-research to judge the students' intercultural sensitivity with the IDC based on their performance in class. Additionally, before classes during the first week until the seventh week, the researcher reviewed the student journals and worksheets, sorting the data in an Excel spreadsheet based on the categories of the IDC (Denial, Polarization Defense/Reversal, Minimization, Acceptance, and Adaptation) as quantified instances.

During the eighth week, the typical case sample of six students underwent a 25-minute focus group that was recorded with a video camera and transcribed. Additionally, in the eighth week, after the focus group, the IDI was administered to all 22 members of the class again. The outcome of their IDC was compared by using the entire class, sub-groups (the typical case sample), and individual scores to assess if any significant changes had occurred in their intercultural sensitivity.

Developing Stage

At the end of most research projects, when teacher-researchers are writing about the implications of the findings, they are constantly reflecting on their study (e.g., the research questions, methodology, and limitations—recommending changes for the next time they execute a similar project through an action plan (Mertler, 2014). In this way, after finalizing the first iteration of an action research project, during the developing stage, researchers are reviewing their findings to decide what to change in the future. "This type of reflection may lead to the identification of individual or collective, in the case of team or school-level action research, professional development needs" (Mertler, 2014, p. 214).

After the data collection and analysis was complete, the teacher-researcher began to write chapter four and chapter five of this dissertation to explain the results and findings, as well at the implications and limitations, which were found while conducting the action research cycle. In chapter four, the investigator presented both the qualitative and quantitative findings in relation to each case of the results based on the IDI. Additionally, the field notes, student journals, worksheets, and focus group were contextualized to show the developmental process. In chapter five, the interpretations of the findings as related to the literature review in chapter three are discussed while highlighting the main points and proposing recommendations for future studies at JTU involving the increase of intercultural sensitivity.

Reflecting Stage

Action research also advocates sharing the results with others in order to communicate ideas past the local context (Mertler, 2014). Similar to this, reflection can be used to assist action researchers to help build their understanding of classroom

occurrences through both formative and retrospective action planning, ultimately giving teacher-researchers the ability to understand how theory and practice are effective in positively changing their own teaching environments and sharing the ideas with others.

After the action research project ended, results were shared during a quarterly faculty meeting at JTU in hopes of persuading other teachers to join in a future action research project. Furthermore, after finalizing the data collection, the primary investigator presented the findings from this dissertation at two different conference venues both in Japan and abroad to get feedback and network with like-minded individuals about the topic in order to reflect further about the action research project.

Data Analysis

After further review of the research question it became clear that due to the ambiguousness of assessing intercultural competence, both positivism and interpretivism were necessary to analyze the effects of the PBL curriculum modification using the textbook *Mirrors and Windows* as the sociocultural content embedded within the OC1 course taught at JTU. That is to say, the change in students' intercultural sensitivity could not be evaluated by the IDI alone (Deardorff, 2006; Harvey, 2013; Sakurauchi, 2014). Hence, this action research project utilized an explanatory mixed-methods approach to collect both quantitative and qualitative data (QUAN then qual) in order to analyze the developmental changes in intercultural competence through two different research philosophies in hopes of increasing the reliability of the findings and strengthen the action research rigor.

Quantitative Analysis

In order to answer the research question and find the effect of the altered curriculum on students' intercultural sensitivity, data was analyzed from two quantitative sources. That is, results from the IDI as well as quantified meta-inferences from the field notes, journals, worksheets, and the focus group were used as the primary sources of data.

The ultimate goal of descriptive statistics is to "permit researchers to describe the information contained in many, many scores with just a few indices," (Fraenkel, et al., 2014, p. 187) for example, the median, mode, or range of data. The teacher-researcher analyzed the changes of developmental orientations from the IDI of six participants during this action research project, the median of the typical case sample as a sub-group, as well as the class were calculated. For this purpose, the IDI produces quantitative feedback that is automatically generated in the form of histograms, charts, and tables which were readily used for descriptive statistics.

Finally, after the study had been completed, a focus group was conducted, and although the data from the focus groups was used mainly as a qualitative source, the anecdotes from the journals, worksheets, and focus group were quantified using meta-inferences based on the categories of the IDC. These meta-inferences were plotted in frequency tables and used to further explain the changes found by the IDI at the end of the eight-week period. In this way, changes in intercultural sensitivity were clarified in more detail by identifying different belief patterns while complimenting the explanatory focus of the mixed-methods research through the addition of establishing relationships among the variables.

Qualitative Analysis

The qualitative data from this study was used to paint a better picture of the developmental process that the six students experienced while participating in a PBL modified curriculum focused on sociocultural content. The teacher-researcher opted for a case study in order to convey a more holistic view of the complex social phenomenon (Merriam, 2009; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2017). As part of the case study process, the investigator observed the students' weekly discussions using field notes, student journals, and worksheets throughout the research project, and utilized a focus group to analyze at the end of the eight-week period as a summative analysis of the students' worldviews.

From the field notes, the primary investigator was able to work out patterns and connections between the members by summarizing the notes from each day (Creswell, 2014). The teacher-researcher focused mainly on their discussions about the similarities and differences of their cultures that allowed more insight to the growth of their intercultural competence. Additionally, the social interaction between the Japanese and Chinese students were assessed. After the class finished, the researcher wrote reflections of the data gathered as well as put notes in the margins to help increase the efficiency of the data collection instrument (Yin, 2017). This allowed the researcher to make data-driven decisions "related to planning and implementing instructional strategies at the school" (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014, p. 16) during future sessions. Hence, both of these methodical practices helped the teacher-researcher find trends in data which were vital to the interpretation of the complex phenomenon being analyzed. After all of the information from the interpretations and notes had been extracted, the data was entered

into a repository and coded based on emerging themes (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2017) as well as different worldviews prevalent in the IDC.

The researcher also used student journals to supplement discussions in class in hopes of finding more evidence of the students' current mindsets and to add to the qualitative findings in the field notes. The journal prompts were designed to elicit students' beliefs of similarities and differences between cultures to gauge if some level of Minimization had been achieved or if the students still remained in Denial, and/or Polarization Defense on the IDC. If they had changed their worldview, it would be dominant in their writing. The same method for analyzing the information in the field notes was used with the student journal and added to the same repository each week.

The final piece of qualitative data of this study was a focus group where all six participants who participated in this study had a group discussion. There was no note taker for the focus group; therefore, the investigator opted to use a video recording of the 25-minute session and transcribe the conversation in order to act as a participant-observer without taking exhaustive notes. The focus group questions were structured in the same fashion as the IDC, starting from the lowest level of intercultural sensitivity (Denial), to the highest level (Adaptation). When students had problems answering the questions or did not participate, the teacher-researcher acted as the facilitator to ensure that all members had a chance to express their opinions on different sociocultural topics. After the focus group was completed, their responses were allocated into the proper location into the repository file adding a detailed description of each stage of the IDC that was prevalent. The investigator reflected on the categories at this point to decide if any

overreaching themes were missing and adjusting the database accordingly (Merriam &

Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2017).

Case Analysis

The case analysis used a chronological sequencing of data in the repository after

the redundancies had been deleted from the records and the desired pieces were

connected to explain the discussion of cultural phenomena from each week's field notes,

journals, and worksheets (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2017). Each instance was color

coded and documented by percentage of orientations the students used over the span of

each theme (Education, Gender, and Diversity and Multiculturalism). Using a narrative

analysis, the researcher attempted to explain the changes in intercultural sensitivity

through both the quantitative and qualitative data. Attention was given to the six

participants as a single case who were seated with each other in a group for the duration

of the research project; however, a heavier focus was placed on the individuals as sub-

cases. This allowed for combining all of the data sources to make final inferences about

each participant's change in intercultural competence and explain what allowed some of

the them to surpass Polarization Defense and move into Minimization.

<div align="center">

Ethical Considerations

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Ethics can often be an overlooked facet of action research. Therefore, it is

important for researchers to acknowledge the inherent implications of choosing a

transformative research approach. "Considerations must be paid to how participants who

are involved in a study are treated. . . . At a minimum level, research ethics address such

values as honesty, caring, and fairness" (Mertler, 2014, p. 41). Educators who conduct

ethical research should consider the moral implications of research with human subjects

to ensure no mental harm or discomfort affects participants (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014; Fraenkel et al., 2014; Mertler, 2014).

As Dana and Yendol-Hoppey (2014) make clear, action research does not often ethically differ in the way that educators approach the teaching environment; nonetheless, "whether [researchers] are 'teaching,' 'researching,' or seamlessly intertwining the two, the role of ethics in any teaching endeavor ought to be considered" (p. 149). It is due to this that many investigators may wonder at what point teaching becomes research in action research projects. Fortunately, as Dana and Yendol-Hoppey (2014) point out, as long as action researchers are attempting to understand the issues in their classrooms, helping students achieve their ambitions while observing their performance and attitudes, there is not a large difference between reflective teaching and action research.

During this action research project at JTU, the researcher used a selected textbook, conducted weekly observations using field notes, assigned journals, using in-class worksheets and utilized a focus group with students while functioning as a participant-observer (Mertler, 2014). In the context of the current OC1 course, all of these activities are naturally done as part of the curriculum design for different purposes, so the role did not differ much from a traditional EFL course at JTU where teachers experiment with a new course design or investigate the effectiveness of an alternative teaching method. This action research dissertation, therefore, did not alter the interaction with students significantly, nor the conduct or treatment toward them. Hence, the process of action research was mutually beneficial for everyone involved.

Comparison of Ethical Standards

In universities in the United States, the institutional review board (IRB) conducts reviews to ensure research is conducted ethically according to federal standards and regulations (Fraenkel et al., 2014; Mertler, 2014). Educators must submit protocols to the board before being able to conduct any form of research involving human subjects. In the case of federally-funded institutions, if the researcher or the board falsifies or misrepresents their findings, there is a chance that the institution may lose its funding entirely, warranting more oversight in the proposal and execution of studies (Fraenkel et al., 2014). This is quite different to the practice in Japan, where the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) requires only educators who receive federal grants to submit proposals and reports. This means that investigators (who wish to get these grants) must submit documents written in Japanese to ensure that studies are being conducted ethically. This can often complicate the research process for non-Japanese instructors applying for assistance, making it nearly impossible to receive approval and funding. Hence, many educators opt to use research funds provided by their institutions in order to conduct their studies, because universities in Japan do not have institutional review boards, leaving ethical considerations at the discretion of the researcher.

Informed Consent and Privacy of Data

The researcher did not use annual research funds provided by JTU to conduct this study, and, therefore, was not required to submit a proposal to a federal granting agency or review board. Furthermore, JTU does not have an IRB; however, voluntary participation of the students and their privacy was considered. This is especially

important for teacher-researchers who plan to use aspects of the study in a presentation or publication (Fraenkel et al., 2014; Mertler, 2014). In cases like these, the students should be allowed to withdraw from the study at any time if they are uncomfortable with the analysis or distribution of their thoughts and ideas (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014; Fraenkel et al., 2014; Mertler, 2014). Accordingly, the researcher made it clear that participating in the study was voluntary by using an informed consent form (see Appendix B) written in both Japanese and English at the beginning of the semester, which notified students about the topic and provides a summary of the study, the requirements, and the security and use of their data (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014; Mertler, 2014).

Secondly, how educators handle the data is also of concern for reporting proper results as well as protecting students' anonymity. The investigator coded students' data to ensure that no one could identify the students' identity (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014). In order to achieve this, after downloading the IDI data from the website, each participants' record was encoded with numbers and letters to signify and create cross-reference tables. "A linkage system [was created] and carefully guarded," (Fraenkel et al., 2014, p. 64) and stored in a secure, locked office at the university for the duration of the study to guarantee its safety. By taking the precautions listed above, the investigator attempted to address the physical and emotional aspects of the students involved in the study, while ensuring that the teaching practice, students' participation, and data collection methods would hold up to scrutiny in future scholarly presentations and publications after the finalization of the dissertation.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATIONS OF THE RESULTS

It is believed that in the next 35 years, the population of foreign residents in Japan will increase dramatically (Kim & Oh, 2011; Whitsed & Wright, 2013). However, there has been little preparation made to deal with the multicultural change in the population (Hardy, 2016; Hirano, 2009; Morita, 2013; Nakamura, 2002; Nozaki, 2008; Whitsed & Wright, 2013). This is most prevalent in education, as before entering university, it is believed that most students have not had a chance to build the intercultural competence needed to interact with people from other cultures (Goodman, 2016; Hirano, 2009; Kariya & Rappleye, 2010; Morita, 2013; Nozaki, 2008, 2009). While teaching Oral Communications 1 (OC1) at Japan's Technical University (JTU) over the past seven years, the teacher-researcher noticed the effects of this monocultural education system as the students rarely came with the intercultural sensitivity to make associations between similarities of Japan and other cultures. For students to successfully communicate across cultures in the future and interact in the multicultural society they will be a part of, it is imperative they have the ability to increase their intercultural competence and communication (Deardorff, 2011; Hammer, 2015; Hammer et al., 2003; Lustig & Koester, 2005; Moeller & Osborn, 2014; Sercu & Bandura, 2005; Sorrells, 2015). Thus, through this explanatory mixed-methods action research, an English as Foreign Language (EFL) curriculum was modified to promote intercultural competence using problem-based learning (PBL) with the assistance of a sociocultural component (see Appendix A).

Research Question

How does a socioculturally adjusted curriculum using problem-based learning (PBL) impact the intercultural competence level of Japanese students enrolled in an oral communications course?

Purpose of the Study

It is believed that "intercultural awareness and intercultural sensitivity are the prerequisites for being competent in intercultural interactions" (Chen, 1997, p. 9). Intercultural awareness is having the knowledge of culture while intercultural sensitivity refers to the ability to discriminate between two different cultures. The purpose of this action research study was to determine if building intercultural awareness through sociocultural elements using PBL has an effect on Japanese EFL students' intercultural sensitivity studying in an OC1 course at JTU.

Findings of the Study

This action research project was conducted over an eight-week period within an OC1 course at JTU in Japan during the spring semester of 2018. An explanatory, mixed-methods case approach was used to determine changes in students' intercultural competence utilizing a socioculturally modified curriculum integrating the textbook *Mirrors and Windows* (Huber-Kriegler et al., 2003). The study employed (a) the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI), (b) field notes, (c) journals, (d) worksheets, and (e) a focus group. The goal was to articulate students' developmental stages of intercultural competence before, during, and after the curriculum intervention using Mertler's (2014) step-by-step process of action research. A typical case sample of six

first-year Japanese students who were best representative of the OC1 class were used for both quantitative and qualitative analysis, and were separated by sub-cases utilizing narratives to display their development of intercultural sensitivity chronologically.

Student IDI Scores

The IDI was the major quantitative component of this action research project and was administered before and after the sociocultural curriculum adjustment was made to the OC1 class at JTU. Six student participants took the IDI two times to assess the changes in their intercultural sensitivity. According to Hammer (2015), these findings can be used as a predictor of the respondents intercultural competence on the IDC. Four of the students were Japanese, one of the students was a Chinese national raised in Japan, and another student was a Chinese international student studying abroad at JTU. Figure 4.1 and Figure 4.2 display the distribution of the group's developmental orientations before and after undertaking the curriculum modification.
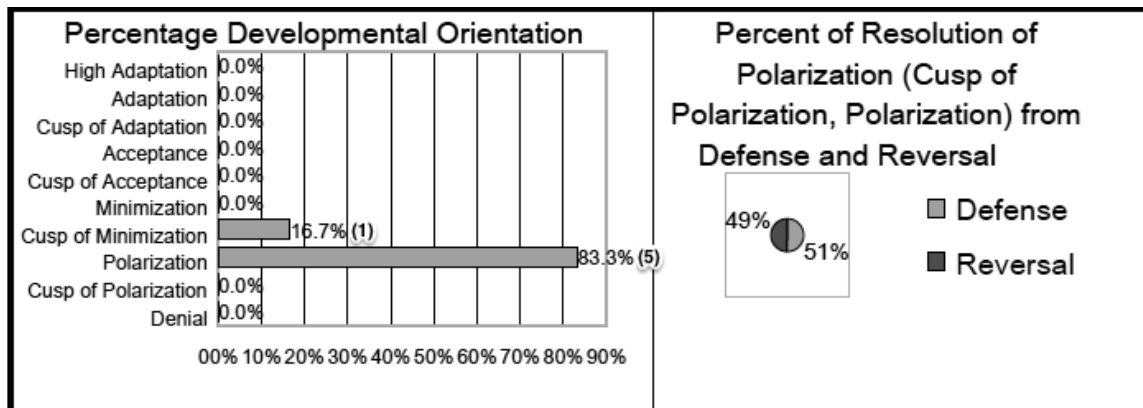
Figure 4.1 Pre-IDI Range of Developmental Orientations

The graph in Figure 4.1 displays the students' orientations by percentages and total participants. Almost every student was in some form of Polarization before the eight-week period with the exception of one student who was at the cusp of Minimization.

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Additionally, Figure 4.2 shows the change in students' orientation after the eight-week period. As can be seen, at the end of the study, two students were in Minimization, one was at the cusp of Minimization, two were in Polarization, and one was at the cusp of Polarization.

Furthermore, Figure 4.1 and Figure 4.2 show the resolution of Polarization. There are two different forms of Polarization that are dependent on the way cultural phenomena is construed. If students are in a state of Polarization Defense (PD), they hold their own culture as more valuable, whilst those in Polarization Reversal (PR) will appreciate other cultures' way of doing things over their own. In Figure 4.1 the students are 51% PD and 49% PR, respectively. As a group, this denotes that they take the orientation comparing their culture as being the norm in opposition to other cultures. Figure 4.2 shows how after the eight-week period their Polarization changed slightly, 47% PD and 53% PR, but according to the IDI this is not enough to suggest that they are in PR as a number of other clusters need to align to make the assumption that they pose other cultures as higher than their own.
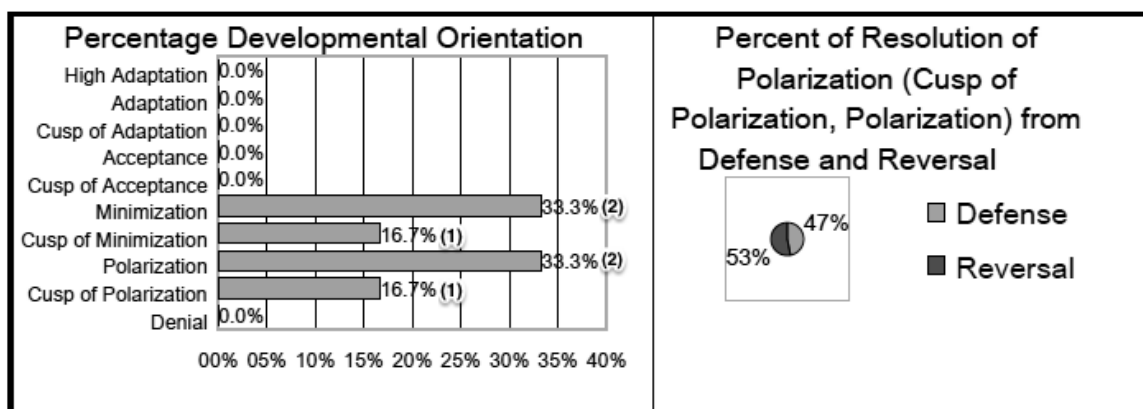
Figure 4.2 Post-IDI Range of Developmental Orientations

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Primary orientations. A more detailed breakdown of the students' primary orientations can be found in Table 4.1 where students IDI scores are displayed as a group as well as individually. The average IDI score for the entire group was 78.7 (PD) at the beginning of the semester and increased .95 to 79.65 (PD) after the eight-week period. In this respect, as a group, the IDI scores are relatively the same before and after experiencing the curriculum adjustment using PBL with a sociocultural component and they remained in a monocultural mindset. However, if we look at the IDI scores individually, we can see a different pattern of gains and losses. Three students (Ken, Joe, and Karen) moved into transitional mindset of Minimization with increases of 9.54, 5.81, and 7.8, respectively.

Table 4.1 Changes on IDC After the Eight-Week Period

Student	Pre-IDI		Post-IDI		IDI Change
Ricky	79.30	Polarization (Defense)	74.26	Polarization (Defense)	-5.04
Ken	74.37	Polarization (Defense)	83.91	Cusp of Minimization	+9.54
George	76.34	Polarization (Defense)	67.11	Cusp of Polarization	-9.23
Louie	81.99	Polarization (Defense)	78.83	Polarization (Defense)	-3.16
Joe	82.02	Cusp of Minimization	87.83	Minimization	+5.81
Karen	78.18	Polarization (Defense)	85.98	Minimization	+7.8
Group Average	78.70	Polarization (Defense)	79.65	Polarization (Defense)	+.95

Trailing orientations. The IDI accepts that it is impossible to construe culture using only one mindset in all contexts. Additionally, our worldview is not static; knowledge and experiences affect our schema and influence our intercultural awareness

and our intercultural sensitivity. The IDI also provides trailing orientations which are alternative mindsets that one might use at certain times, places, or events to interpret cultural similarities and differences. Not everyone has trailing orientations, but if they are not resolved, there is a chance that earlier orientations will be used to make sense of cultural phenomena rather than the primary orientation. This is not uncommon in education where students are continuously fluctuating. However, the goal is to resolve the trailing orientation in order to move to the next mindset.

Table 4.2 Group's Resolved Trailing Orientations

	Pre-IDI (Respondents Resolved)		Post-IDI (Respondents Resolved)	
Group Average	0%	Denial	33%	Denial
	33%	Disinterest in Cultural Difference	50%	Disinterest in Cultural Difference
	50%	Avoidance of Interaction with Cultural Difference	50%	Avoidance of Interaction with Cultural Difference
	0	Polarization (Defense/Reversal)	17%	Polarization (Defense/Reversal)

Table 4.2 explains the degree to which trailing orientations are resolved at the group level. Since no member went above Minimization, there are only two sub-categories of trailing orientations listed: Denial and Polarization. There are two more sub-orientations (Disinterest in Cultural Difference and Avoidance with Cultural Difference) within Denial. As a group, the participants were able to increase the resolution of all their trailing orientations besides for Avoidance of Interaction with Cultural Difference, which remained the same after the eight-week intervention.

Table 4.3 breaks down all of the orientations and sub-orientations that each participant resolved before and after the eight-week curriculum intervention. According to the IDI, trailing orientations that are not above 4.00 are considered unresolved.

According to the results of the IDI, the same three participants (Ken, Joe, and Karen) were able to resolve some of their trailing orientations after working through a PBL curriculum enhanced with a sociocultural component.

Table 4.3 Students' Resolved Trailing Orientations

Student	Pre-IDI		Post-IDI		Outcome
Ricky	3.71	Denial	3.43	Denial	- Unresolved
	3.50	Disinterest in Cultural Difference	3.25	Disinterest in Cultural Difference	- Unresolved
	4.00	Avoidance of Interaction with Cultural Difference	3.67	Avoidance of Interaction with Cultural Difference	- Unresolved
Ken	3.71	Denial			Resolved
	3.00	Disinterest in Cultural Difference			Resolved
			3.33	Polarization (Defense)	/Unresolved
			2.89	Polarization (Reversal)	/Unresolved
George	3.71	Denial	3.14	Denial	- Unresolved
	4.00	Disinterest in Cultural Difference	2.50	Disinterest in Cultural Difference	- Unresolved
	3.33	Avoidance of Interaction with Cultural Difference	4.00	Avoidance of Interaction with Cultural Difference	+ Unresolved
Louie	3.43	Denial	3.71	Denial	+ Unresolved
	3.50	Disinterest in Cultural Difference	4.00	Disinterest in Cultural Difference	+ Unresolved
	3.33	Avoidance of Interaction with Cultural Difference	3.33	Avoidance of Interaction with Cultural Difference	= Unresolved

	3.43	Denial	3.00	Denial	- Unresolved
	2.75	Disinterest in Cultural Difference	2.50	Disinterest in Cultural Difference	- Unresolved
Joe			3.67	Avoidance of Interaction with Cultural Difference	- Unresolved
	3.17	Polarization (Defense)			Resolved
	3.57	Denial			Resolved
	4.00	Disinterest in Cultural Difference			Resolved
Karen	3.00	Avoidance of Interaction with Cultural Difference			Resolved
			3.50	Polarization (Defense)	/ Unresolved
			3.78	Polarization (Reversal)	/ Unresolved

* +: Positive Increase, -: Negative Decrease, =: No Change, /: New Trailing Orientation

Case Study

This case study was constructed using all of the qualitative data gathered over the eight-week period, including a contextualization of the observations, journals, and in-class artifacts through a narrative to help explain the students' developmental process of intercultural sensitivity found by the IDI. Some quantifying of data was used in order to create histograms and frequency charts to better illuminate occurrences of which mindsets and trailing orientations students were using to construe the sociocultural content during the course. The eight-weeks were broken down chronologically by sessions indicating the theme week-by-week. An introduction was provided in each session, followed by a discussion of the group as a whole as well as each students'

individual descriptions. After each theme (education, gender, and diversity and multiculturalism), frequency distribution charts were used to explain the occurrences of intercultural orientations. Session eight was used entirely for the focus group; hence, observations and field notes were not conducted the same as in the prior weeks.

    Session 1: Education, textbooks, and schools. The first session began with the students chatting in pairs about the text they had read and written about considering learning styles prior to the lesson. They were required to take the ideas from the reading and reflect on the differences and similarities in juxtaposition to their home country. During the lesson, students were asked to scan and skim the textbook readings to gather and reflect about educational practices in Japan and other countries in an attempt to find advantages and disadvantages. After discussing the topic more thoroughly with their group, the group leader for the week added to the brainstorm on the whiteboard and attempted to include two similarities and differences about educational practices. At the end of the class, students were broken down into three-person groups to explain a link that they had previously attached to their journal about a school problem in their own country. After each small presentation of websites, they were required to decide if these problems existed elsewhere using the brainstorm previously created.

    The initial observation was the first time the six participants (Ricky, Ken, George, Joe, Louie, and Karen) spoke to one another. They spoke as pairs, a full group, and in smaller groups throughout the class. The teacher-researcher attempted to arrange and rearrange them to let them get exposure to each other at least once. There was a total of three conversations observed during the lesson. When they spoke in pairs, the investigator only listened, but when it was with groups the teacher-researcher tried to

interact to get more interaction and observable data. As a group on the day of observation, they struggled a lot to discuss similarities and differences. The teacher-researcher often had to interact with them to drive the discussion.

Ricky. During the first lesson, he made almost no attempt to communicate with the other students in his groups. He was reclusive and seemed hesitant to speak and give his opinion, especially when discussing similarities. This might also be because it was his first time speaking English with a group of people, some of whom were Chinese, and he did not know how to interact with them. He often slouched and kept his voice down when speaking in pairs so that others could not hear him. He seemed very nervous and even had problems discussing his journal at the beginning of class. In Ricky's first journal, he wrote about the problems in Japan. However, he did not compare specific learning styles or other countries. This was very surprising, because both the article that he attached to his journal specifically referenced how active learning is used successfully in other countries. He mainly wrote about how difficult it is to speak about one's opinions in the Japanese classroom.

> I think the problem of Japanese education is that students are not given much opportunity to speak their own opinion. Therefore, they tend to be shy. Now I focus on 'Active Learning.' It's an education system they participate the class more active and can speak their own opinion. I hope it is implemented more, and then I want to improve my communication skill.

Ken. It was noticed that Ken took control of the conversation and interacted quite well with Louie (a Chinese national raised in Japan) throughout the lesson. They talked about a lot of different topics regarding education in Japan and were even comparing the

ideas in the textbook to different cultures other than their own. Ken was able to discuss the idea of math education in the US and Japan referencing how it is not as highly regarded as in Japan. He noted that "looking at my experience in America, I notice that there a lot of differences in the Japanese system of education, but some things are valued in both, for example, high grades and standardized test." It is likely that Ken's cultural background and living abroad gave him more insight to the idea that conformity is valued in both societies. He seemed to have a point of reference for making his opinions and was not afraid to disagree with the other students when they spoke in a group about culture. In his journal, he wrote specifically about both the similarities and differences about learning subjects in Japan and America.

> I think Japanese students and American students who go to the primary school learn to learn. Like, how to take a note in classes. When they go to the junior high school or high school, they learn for content knowledge. Math, for example, how to solve complicated equations. I think these two learnings are similar.

Additionally, the website he provided and spoke about at the end of class was not only about Japan. He chose to look at world problems in education, noting that there were similar threads each society deals with in educational practices.

George. When asked to communicate with the Chinese international student, Joe, George had a decent amount of trouble negotiating intercultural communication. Many times, he avoided eye contact and read his book rather than speaking. He did better in pairs with Japanese students, but had issues in the smaller groups. He was either trying too hard to accommodate what he knew in the conversation, or he was afraid the other students would not understand him correctly. The teacher-researcher found difficulties in

grasping anything directly that he said about similarities or differences between Japan and other countries, but he did focus on comparing Japan and America in his journal. He mainly cited the differences between the two countries, however, and attached a link referring to the issue of English education in Japan. In the end, he was able to find one small link between the two countries and expressed an interest in globalism.

> I think that Japanese education is the same as American education in that learning for personal development. Even more, in recent years, Japan focus on the teaching of English to adapt to global society. For that reason, Japan started the teaching of English in an elementary school. I think that education changes by changing of the world. I was interested in changing Japanese educational policy.

Louie. The international Chinese student, Louie, was very patient waiting for the other Japanese students to give responses in conversations. At times, it seems as though he waited too and nothing really was accomplished in the first chat about their differences of teaching styles in different cultures. He may have been being overly patient because he was afraid of the stereotype Japanese people have about Chinese. However, the teacher-researcher noticed that he got quite close to George a few times, which is not common for Japanese personal space. From previous conversations with Japanese students about topics of personal space, people are most comfortable with about one meter (three feet) physical distance when speaking to people for the first time or with strangers. In the last conversation when they were discussing similarities and differences, he even dropped into Japanese conversation a number of times to help the Japanese students communicate. The possibility exists that he favors Japanese over English for a medium of conversation. Nonetheless, Joe tended to talk about China a lot and did not compare it to Japan or the

textbook many times. In his journal, he spoke about the duties of Chinese students and compared the differences to Japan; however, he did not specifically talk about learning styles, nor did he provide a link to give an example of the information he was referencing. Hence, he talked about the structure and expectations of school instead, and although it seems he favors Japan's method, his tone of voice denoted that Chinese students are more motivated to learn.

> In China, the only duty for the students is studying [sic]. There is no any activities after the class. If you have not done well in today's class, maybe you have to take an extra lesson to make up for it. But in Japan, apart from studying [sic], there are many club activities. Students can relieve the pressure by attending the club activities. I think the school in China also should put more attention on how to relieve students' pressure and make our school life more colorful.

Joe. Although Joe was very successful in his ability to compare different cultures, he seemed to be focusing on the differences rather than the similarities. He brought up the point that he felt Japanese people are too shy while talking to Ken and they had a deep conversation about the differences between people in the US, Japan, and China. "When talking to people in Japan sometimes, they are too shy for some reason. I noticed when I was back in China people tend to speak their minds." At times, he slipped into Japanese to help Karen, but he never used Chinese with Louie. He seemed to be overcompensating a bit to make sure he was not being too overbearing. However, he had a lot of strong opinions about Japanese people and living in Japan. After the first observation, it was not clear if the other students realized he was second generation Chinese, or if they notice his accent in Chinese accent English. On a side note, the teacher-researcher noticed that he

had problems playing the game rock, paper, scissors with the other Japanese students as his timing was a little off. Both of which could have been social keys revealing he was not completely Japanese. In his journal, he stated he was Chinese and focused on comparing the differences of Japan and China, but also expressed universalistic ideas about student-centered education and provided a link that compared Japan, India, and America.

> I think Japanese education system is needed reform for the sake of students' autonomy. In my opinion many Japanese are lack of autonomy. In contrast, my cousin who lives in china is assertive. When I say, 'No idea.' He sure to say, 'I want to ****" or I like ****.' Not only China. A lot of country has student-centered classes Like this classes could let them assertive. So, I think Japan should introduce that kind of classes.

Karen. During the first session, Karen had a lot of problems communicating with all of the students. Due to her struggles communicating, it was difficult to assess her in the first observation. She had her head down almost the entire period and was very quiet the whole time. She acted as though she was reading her book when people asked her questions and could not do any of the activities in class. The only time she interacted is when prompted to get involved in the conversation and asked questions directly, but even then, it was hard to hear what she said. After the first class, the researcher decided that it was imperative to think about how to mix the groups around a little bit more to ensure all the students had a chance to speak with the Chinese students and have intercultural communication opportunities. However, she did provide a very interesting journal response and link providing some insight to her mindset. Karen spoke about the

differences in education between developing and developed countries and provided a link to a website referring to a Bloomberg article where she noted that developing countries catch up with the developed country after 100 years. Karen wrote, "I think that I cannot make use of having learned to receive education in a developed country." In this way, she was still functioning out of Polarization due to her valuation of Japan being a developed country.

Session 2: Education, textbooks, and schools. The content of the second section was the structure, bias, and cultural norms of education in American schools. In the student journals, they were required to read about the idea of decentralization of education as well as rules and responses toward cheating. At the beginning of the session students discussed their journals with partners and took notes about each other and shared different ideas with the class. Afterwards, the students read and reflected on the reading, they discussed similarities and differences between their home country and America regarding the gender of teachers, using their mother tongue in class, and cheating. At the end of class, they broke into smaller groups to explain how the link they posted connected with the things they spoke about in class.

After noticing that some members were not communicating as well, during the second week of classes, all six students interacted in three different conversations with new members each time. Similar issues to the prior week were still prevalent, but the group seemed to be getting along better than before and interactions were more fruitful. To this end, the teacher-researcher changed a few of the students' seats to allow them to interact with different members, and looking at the students' behavior, more members were expressing ideas from the state of Minimization.

Ricky. During the first conversation, Ricky took initiative and asked different questions to Ken. He seemed to have good insight about the school system in Japan, but throughout the discussion he focused directly on Japan and did not seem to know much about other cultures other than his own. This means he was not able to find many similarities or differences between cultures. In the second conversation, Ricky was asked to check with his partner about the answers he found in the reading. While he was checking, he was able to express some interesting points about the school system in America and Hungry and noted them while speaking with Karen. Finally, during the third conversation, Ricky was only able to come up with one similar point and one different point about Japanese and American schools in regards to the theme. Nothing about Ricky's body language changed during this lesson and he only interacted with Japanese students well. As a final reflection, the teacher-researcher found it interesting that Ricky chose to a wear mask during class, although, this is very common in Japan when people are sick. However, Ricky did not appear sick; rather, it seemed as though he was trying to make understanding his English intentionally difficult by wearing the mask. This made it quite difficult to catch any quotes as his voice was too muffled to understand from a distance. Ricky also completed his journal incorrectly, so the data was not very valuable. Instead of comparing and contrasting he tried to just answer the questions in the book.

Ken. When Ken spoke with Ricky during the session, he was very quiet during the first conversation. He was trying to speak about other countries at length in the first conversation; however, he broke into Japanese a number of times. Ken made a lot of good points that related towards similarities. For example, he referenced American schools and said, "I believe the similarities are the testing systems of Japan and America."

He felt that standardized testing was a problem for both countries and that they were not needed. Additionally, he spoke of cheating in Japan and America and how people are usually dealt with similarly. While checking answers with Louie, he did a great job with cross-cultural communication. The teacher-researcher often found difficulties in understanding what Louie was trying to say and he used body language to clarifying questions to ensure he understood his partner. Finally, during the discussion task with all of the group members, Ken was able to bring up multiple points about the similarities of educational practices in different countries. Surprisingly, Ken was overly critical of Japanese society. He mentioned that Japanese society needs to take a more active role and allow students to become more creative and critical thinkers. This is likely because he experienced a different kind of educational approach while studying abroad in America and found it more useful for his own learning. In his journal post and link, he focused on comparing Russia, Japan, and America. He not only highlighted differences, but also similarities. He noted, "In America, the majority of teachers are female. All countries considered I think the number of male and female teachers are about same."

George. Although the first task was to discuss education in different cultures, George spent the majority of the first conversation speaking about phones and Japanese schools with Louie. He did not really focus on issues in other countries. He was more interactive with the other Japanese students in his groups, but he tried more this session to express his opinions. This could be because he was having problems understanding the Chinese students' pronunciation or tempo when asking and answering questions. Rather than asking for clarification, he just became quiet when he did not understand. However, although he was a little bit hesitant, he was able to act as the group leader in the final

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conversation and ask backup questions. He was interested in the term *rug dealers*, and he wanted to know what it meant related to education. The teacher-researcher was surprised he brought this point up and asked the teacher-researcher directly in front of his group members. This showed some initiative and interest in a complex topic. After explaining the term to him, he asked, "Why do people insulted each other and use a term so negative for people from the Middle East?" During the last conversation, he was able to find three similar and three different points about the Japanese education system in relation to China, America, and Korea. Again, the conversations were very close and seemed friendly. At one point, Louie patted George on the shoulder during one of their conversations.

Unfortunately, Louie misunderstood the journal post directions and although he found a similarity between Japan and other cultures from a universalistic view, his ideas mainly focused on differences.

The similarities between Japan and other countries' education styles are all students (from any country) have the right to study in their mother tongue. Conversely, the difference between Japan and other countries' education styles is the proportion of female teachers. Another countries average proportion of female teachers is about 70 percent [sic]. But Japanese average proportion of female teachers is about 40 percent [sic]. For Japanese female, compatibility of housework and childcare is difficult. So, in Japan, there are a few female teachers.

The website he provided, however, was focused on issues of test taking in Japan alone and explained how to deal with children who cheat on tests. The website also referenced

a lot about entrance exams in Japan, hence, he was, in a sense avoiding the topic from an intercultural standpoint.

Louie. During a majority of the conversations Louie seemed a little bit uncomfortable interacting with the Japanese students today. Possibly he did not do the reading so he was not sure what to say in order to communicate his ideas. But compared to the previous week, he seemed self-conscious. When students were checking answers about the reading he seemed completely quiet. He was looking at his phone the entire time, and it was difficult to know if he was just distracted, if he was attempting to translate from Chinese into English on the fly, or if he was just trying to avoid interaction with Ricky. However, he was able to ask questions to others and answer the teacher-researcher's questions when prompted. Nonetheless, during the last discussion he did better in a small group and seemed to have built a strong bond with George. This was great to see and gave evidence that the method of first contact with another culture helps to break down barriers in this group of participants. During the final conversation, he was able to come up with four similar points and two different points when comparing educational concepts in America, China, and Japan.

Louie's journal was lacking a link and he did not take the time to check his grammar, but the content seemed to be focused on an outward looking frame and he was able to find a lot of similarities between countries.

In China, the most schools' funding come from Chinese government. And in most Chinese [sic] senior high school and junior high school, the majority of teachers are female, and the students must wear a uniform. I think the schools in China is

just like these in America, almost 90 percent [sic] of people go to the public school.

Joe. During the majority of class, Joe took a lot of initiative in the discussions. He was constantly interacting with all different members of the group. In conversation with Karen, he used Japanese a number of times and allowed for many long pauses and quiet instances to give her time. He also adjusted his behavior and spoke quietly with her while slowing down his gestures. This proactive mentality continued throughout the session and he was interested in Ken's answers about the readings. The two were very compatible from the previous session, and this is probably because both came with experiences of different cultures. In the second conversation, they talked at length about similarities and differences of culture. Even during the final conversation, he was able to get Louie to speak more and probed for his opinions. In retrospect, however, he has been observed using Chinese with Louie. Actually, in one instance, the two were overheard speaking Japanese during a discussion. During the final conversation, he was able to list two different and similar points about cultural norms in education. In a sense, he was doing quite well finding not only the differences between Japan and other countries but also the things that linked them together. Although, he did not provide a link, similarities were a theme reflected in his journal where he noted something about all international students in the world. "Now a day, international students come to study in Japan. Each the students have their own mother tongue but, I think they need to study in English as it is part of study abroad." This was a very interesting concept, and in this way, he was using a form of Minimization through an ideology of universalism.

Karen. She seemed much more prepared during the beginning of the session. She was interacting with Joe and talking about education, but because her voice was so quiet, it was difficult to hear anything she said. For this reason, the teacher-researcher could not detect if she used English during conversations. Her shyness may have been because she was the only girl in the group, or had to do with her personality. In retrospect, more girls should have been added to the group to make her feel more comfortable. However, during this session it was observed that she was interacting better with both of the Chinese students, Louie and Joe, but she used a majority of Japanese with them when she spoke. During the conversation in the entire group when the topic of discussion was similarities and differences, she did not say anything. At that point, the teacher-researcher thought there was a possibility that she has some form of social anxiety making it very difficult for her to interact in groups. The teacher-researcher tried to observe her worksheet to see if she had written anything on either list, but was not able to read her work from a distance. Also, when Karen's turn arrived to speak about her link in smaller groups, she did not really provide any details and used a very small voice, speaking for only a few seconds. Looking at her journal and link, she chose to share an article she read comparing American and Japanese schools. It was good to see her starting to focus on things outside of Japan, but the majority of the content was about the differences in ages, grading system, and teaching methods. Additionally, in her post, she mainly focused on the differences between two cultures. She noted, "I think that an American student will neither put on a uniform nor pay money of the textbook can be named as the difference between Japan and United States," where she was alluding to the fact that Americans do not need to pay for uniforms, because they are not used and textbooks are free. This is

obviously an overgeneralization and she was still using avoidance methods instead of critically thinking about topics.

Session 3: Education, textbooks, and schools. Session three was a split session in the sense that the journal was focused on eliciting and reflecting on their worldviews through idioms. Conversely, the work in class was focused around attempting to push the students' intercultural competence up with content geared toward Acceptance. This was for those students in the group who were already at Minimization. Their journal was based on different idioms and sayings that had negative stereotypes or generalizations about people from other countries. Using the example in the book they were asked to give the English equivalent or find similarities with other countries' idioms. There was a total of three discussions on this day. The idioms discussed in the beginning of class with a partner and the one the teacher-researcher tried to elicit how there may be similar ones in Japanese. Afterwards, students focused on a PBL task where they were required to finish the cycle of abstraction and formulate a hypothesis about the social problems of education in Japan with the impending multicultural society. The activity was organized to allow students to answer questions from multiple perspectives to see what worldview they would use. After brainstorming problems with some group members, they were broken into smaller groups to reflect on possible solutions for the social problems.

Some adjustments were made to the group orientation during this session and attempts were made to match people with whom they rarely spoke with in the past. The teacher-researcher also decided to start collecting and taking pictures of the in-class artifacts (worksheets) they had been using to brainstorm, because reading the documents while trying to make other observations during the class proved to be difficult. As a

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whole, they were working much better together on this day and the topic seemed much more accessible to them as they had prior knowledge about idioms. However, managing a large group discussion again was difficult and a few members remained quiet while the others did the majority of the talking. The teacher-researcher interacted a number of times during this session during the PBL task and helped with brainstorming as they were having some problems thinking from another cultural perspective at times.

Ricky. Ricky did a great job explaining to Karen the idiom he posted online and how it was similar to some uses in the English language. He said that there are many sayings in Japanese that have similar meaning in English and Chinese as well. He even went as far as to say that a lot of Japanese *Kanji* comes from China, so there are bound to be some similarities. Although he was minimizing the differences, he started to show signs of seeing connections between the societies and the way they think. His best interactions were in a small group including Ken and Joe as they asked him a lot of follow up questions which made him expand on his ideas more deeply. However, he was having problems with eye contact during the conversations. This may have been due to his confidence about the topic. Finally, he had a lot of problems with the PBL task and could not form may ideas about the problems that the immigrants coming to Japan might face; rather, he phrased his answers thinking from the Japanese perspective, "We will have to be able to speak other language." His solutions for this problem were to give immigrants free lessons to learn Japanese, but he was not able to fully express why this was the best method for solving the problem. His journal was quite reflective and he was able to discuss an idiom and give a link that attributed to its origins both in eastern and western society.

My favorite phrase in Japanese is 灯台下暗し. It means it is dark under a candle.

So when one looks for something, surprisingly he/she may hold it or it may be

near oneself. In English, people use the saying 'Go abroad and you'll hear news of

home.' This phrase is similar to Japanese. It is interesting that the same proverb

can be expressed in various different ways depending on the culture in each

country.

The underlying worldview of this idiom shows some disinterest in cultural phenomena

outside one's own culture. Basically the idiom states that you hold within you everything

you need, and if you go abroad you will find out that it was there all along.

Ken. The teacher-researcher found it interesting that Ken was surprised to find so

many negative phrases related to Chinese people, such as, "It's written in Chinese which

means it's incomprehensible." He was able to make some connections to the hidden

inferences of the idioms presented in the book and noted that he thought a lot of them

were quite negative about other cultures. He noted that there was a saying in Japanese as

well which was "Standing on a cliff" that has the same connotation as "In trouble like a

Gypsy in a swamp, meaning being in great trouble," but according to him, there was no

reference to other cultures. He had great interactions with the other group members. He

was not afraid to get the others' opinions, while acting as the leader throughout the class.

During the PBL task Ken was able to come up with many problems that the immigrants

would face, for example, he thought they would have to learn new languages. However,

he was worried about the amount of money the government would have to use to support

the system. In contrast, he was also able to see the bright side of the interaction and

suggested that Japanese could learn how to understand different cultures as more

immigrants came. Additionally, Ken was able to come up with a lot of solutions for the problems that would potentially stunt immigrants' success in Japan. He gave the following as examples: voting, working, and the financial burden of coming to Japan. He believed the government needs to allow them to vote to allow the country to hear different opinions and potentially decrease the majority of the votes from being 100% Japanese. Nonetheless, Ken also noted that companies needed to make rules to limit the number of foreign workers so the Japanese work force is not affected. Also, he noted that he felt the immigrants were at a disadvantage because it would be difficult for them to support their children for educational fees. In his journal, he did a great job expanding his knowledge of idioms outside the realm of Japanese by addressing another country's idiom first. Ken wrote:

> Narediti se Francoza is a Slovene's idiom. In English, 'To act as a Frenchman.' It means you act intentionally as if you didn't know something. 'しらを切る.' This is the same meaning idiom in Japanese. しら means you don't know something. 切る means you say it but it's a lie. . . . I got is this idiom is about 100 years old. Thus, It's the old idiom. People sometimes tell a lie about what he or she knows. I also do. So, I looked up this idiom in the textbook. There are many idioms which use foreigners for expression. I want to look up the reason and other idioms.

This quote makes obvious that he was starting to use some intercultural sensitivity skills of universalism. Also, his motivation to want to know what other expressions in Japanese have other origins attests to this as well.

George. Toward the beginning of class George spoke to Ricky and Karen in a small group. He made a lot of eye contact with the other members and was an affective

communicative partner with the quieter speakers in the group. Also, when interacting with Louie (the Chinese student), he noted that he did not think any of the phrases represented anything that Japanese people said about Japanese. He was sharing the book with Louie who forgot it that day and they did well discussing the similar idioms between Japan and China. Additionally, for the third time straight the two interacted very closely and seemed to have no problems with personal space. During the PBL task George noted that, in the future, it is going to be difficult "to tell each other feelings when there are a lot of immigrants living in Japan." By this he meant that people would have problems discussing their ideas and emotions because of the different worldviews. Additionally, he was worried that the government might have to pay money for the immigrants housing and living expenses. In this way, he felt that providing free or subsidized language classes would help many people attend and learn enough Japanese to express themselves properly. He also agreed that the government should give the immigrants a right to vote and allow them to have an equal voice. This was also prevalent in his journal post where he did a great job looking at the complexity of idioms and worldviews in the East and West.

One of the famous proverbs in Japan is 覆水盆に返らず. It means once it's

happened, we cannot [sic] return. The history of this proverb come from Chinese

story. Like we cannot put back the water spilled from the tray, a couple who got

divorced cannot be restored. This is a content of Chinese story. This proverb in

English, it's no use crying over spilt milk. It almost has the same meaning as

Japanese. But, why milk instead of water? Old days in English-speaking countries,

milk was precious. So, this comes from if you spill . . . milk into a bucket and cry,

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it cannot [sic] be helped. Even though language and culture are different, we

understand the same meaning. I was interested in this point.

As a result of this, the teacher-researcher felt George did a great job showing signs of

thinking from a different perspective and noting things that seemed to express global

uniformity.

Louie. He did not have a particularly good day during the discussions, but seemed

to have fun with the topic and was smiling a majority of the time. He was not asking

many questions, and did not interact unless someone else prompted him. The only

member he did well with was George, this is possibly because he has become familiar

with this student. This caused the teacher-researcher to realize that they had sat next to

each other for the past few sessions; hence, there was a need to rotate the group in order

to give Louie and others more exposure in order to build their intercultural

communication skills. During the PBL task, he had some problems thinking from the

Chinese perspective. This was interesting. He noted that the negative impact of

immigrants coming to Japan would be that Japanese would lose jobs. However, as a

positive effect, he believed that Japan could learn new customs and habits from other

cultures. He believed the best solution for the problem about jobs would be to decrease

the number of jobs immigrants were allowed to take and set some specific careers for

Japanese only. Also, he thought because of the difficulties of language, the Japanese

government needed to supply immigrants with more free lessons. Louie chose to look at

the idiom in his journal today from the perspective of China and comparing it both to

Japan. He was able to find some similarities in sayings between Japan and China. For

example, he noted, "I think both Japan and China have the saying 'No pain, No gain,' it's

a cultural similarity." I think he related this to more of a Buddhist ideology where one must go through a form of suffering or restraint to achieve something.

  Joe. Throughout the lesson, Joe was helping a lot of the students using Japanese and scaffold a lot of the information so they could understand what he was trying to say. He had done this in the past, and the teacher-researcher had observed seeing him doing this with the Chinese student again. He also was using code-switching as well when making his own opinion in English. Nonetheless, he did a great job driving the conversation in small groups and wanted to know the deeper meaning of why his partner chose certain idioms. He said "Why did you choose that quote? Does it have a cultural meaning?" In this respect, I think he got a lot of useful information out of Ken and George. He also tried to motivate Karen by telling her that she could use simple vocabulary to explain her idiom. However, there were very awkward interactions with them again during this period. He could not hear what she was saying most of the time and chose to speak with her in Japanese instead of English. He was a strong participant in the PBL task and came up with a lot of problems that both Japanese and immigrants would experience due to the increase in immigrants coming to Japan. He noted that the mother tongue is going to be different and the education and health care systems will be stressed. However, Joe thought everyone in Japan could benefit from understanding other countries and that this understanding was a way to harmonize Asian cultures. He noted that the best solutions would be to give immigrants the right to vote because as the foreign population increases they need a better representation of their ideals in the society. Also, he thought the supply of education feeds, and jobs need to be monitored to ensure both sides were getting fair opportunities. Joe was also able to find an idiom in Japanese;

explain its origins in Chinese; and then give the equivalent in English, showing that he is able to traverse worldviews and has insight into universalism.

> I want to introduce about 噂をすれば影. The idiom means when I talk about the person who isn't there, they will appear after we mention them. Origin of the idiom is 説着曹操 (Cao Cao), 曹操就到. In other words, speaking about 曹操, 曹操 appear. 曹操 is the cleverest schemer in the Three Kingdoms period. You know. Also, generally speaking, the idiom has the same mean as 'speak of the devil' (This idiom is short of the phrase 'speak of the devil, and he will appear.'

On a side note, before the PBL task, the teacher-researcher said that anyone could relate the topic to their own culture while quickly gesturing toward the Chinese students in the class (including him). He looked annoyed after this gesture was made, so the teacher-researcher planned to be more careful of it in the future.

Karen. Karen was more comfortable in one-on-one situations rather than groups this session. She was more productive interacting in smaller groups as well. The teacher-researcher found collecting data about her to be difficult, because it is hard to hear what she said. Nevertheless, she had stopped staring at her phone to avoid conversations. She did well with the first discussion about idioms and quotes, but spoke mainly in Japanese with some spurts of English when trying to denote some similarities between the quotes in the western context. However, she was able to participate in the PBL task and explain why people from other countries would have problems in Japan. For example, she stated that insurance would be an issue, but Japanese could learn something new about culture. In the end, she was not really able to give any great solutions for the problems she listed

besides for suggesting to give free education fees to immigrants because they are poor. Although her journal response seemed a little bit translated, her responses were also quite interesting and the link she supplied did a great job explaining the history of an idiom.

> My favorite phrase in Japanese is 一期一会. . . . in English, 'once in a lifetime chance.' The etymology of the once-in-a-lifetime chance is from a rule of the tea ceremony to which I say 'When meeting with a tea ceremony, the chance is known with something once in life, and, a primary and the subordinate and, do the sincerity each other.' I learned about the etymology of the once-in-a-lifetime chance from a rule of a tea ceremony for the first time this time.

From this prospective she admits that there are similar worldviews in both the East and the West, but she reverts back to the idea that it is an actual rule she learned from her cultural experience in Japan.

Table 4.4 Session 1-3: Quantified Instances of Intercultural Sensitivity Orientations

Student	Denial	Polarization	Minimization	Acceptance	Adaptation
Ricky	8.3%	75.0%	8.3%	8.3%	
Ken	6.7%	40.0%	46.7%	6.7%	
George	26.7%	26.7%	46.7%		
Louie	37.5%	25.0%	37.5%		
Joe	13.3%	53.3%	33.3%		
Karen	30.0%	60.0%	10.0%		
Group Average	20.4%	46.7%	30.4%	2.5%	

Session 4: Gender roles and inequality. During the fourth session, the class moved into a new theme about gender norms, stereotypes, and the glass ceiling. There were four discussions observed again on that day. At first, students began speaking in a full group to talk about gender roles in their home countries, why they exist, and how they started. Afterwards, the leader shared ideas with the class and the students moved into a jigsaw reading task where students worked in the same large groups to put the pieces of the reading back together in the correct order. Finally, in smaller groups, students were asked to discuss the similarities and differences between their home countries' and other countries' gender norms. The focus was to elicit the problems these biases can have on any society. At the end of the class they worked in pairs to discuss their journal and link that they posted the previous week, which was about gender norms, politeness, rules, and oppression.

In general, the teacher-researcher thought they were interacting as a group more fluidly on that day and seemed comfortable with each other. During the first discussion, the teacher-researcher noticed they were actually laughing and enjoying the process of collaborating. This made the teacher-researcher think they were getting closer to each other and working as a team without thinking about their cultural differences. At one point, they were all very close together when doing the jigsaw task. Most students were able to express their opinions and were asking strong backup questions. It was noticed as the members moved into smaller groups, the interactions were stronger.

Ricky. During the first week of discussing gender roles, Ricky was having some issues communicating his ideas in the first conversation with Karen about gender stereotypes. He actually admitted that the topic was difficult to talk about. This may have

been because he was speaking with the only female in the group so he did want to say the wrong thing and give the impression that he was a male chauvinist. He was able to conduct the reading and seemed to understand the contents about gender stereotypes being different for culture to culture. During the second conversation, he noted how he found interesting that there are many rules for opening the door for women in different countries. When speaking with Ken and expressing his opinions about the reading, he seemed to communicate at a much more natural pace, although he was somewhat quiet. In reflection, the teacher-researcher realized again, his body language was very reserved and he made little eye contact with all of the students. He often read from his notes when speaking and did not participate unless spoken to. Also, he was wearing a mask, which made the teacher-researcher wonder if he wears the mask in his other classes and if he is worried about getting sick, or if he is just wearing the mask during the English class in order to hide his mistakes. Nonetheless, the mask made it difficult to understand what he was saying again and also played a role in impeding his intercultural communication with other students, especially with Joe and Louie, the Chinese students. During the final task, he was asked to compare gender in his home country opposed to other countries that he knew. Ricky did a great job working with his group and brought up both similar and different kinds of gender roles. "Women can't play some sports in Japan and this is similar to other countries." He also made reference to wearing make-up and hairstyle stating that in Japan these are cultural requirements, however, maybe they do not exist in other countries. In his journal, he made great references to different systems of oppressions in the political system of the Japanese diet; nevertheless, he only chose to references his own country rather than comparing it with countries abroad.

I think the statement that if women had as much influence in the world as men do, it would be a much more peaceful and more pleasant place has an element of truth in my opinion. This is because, for example in the diet, it is difficult to discuss the problem of gender in the situation that the diet women are far less than the diet man like in Japan. So Japanese government is making an effort to increase the number of the female managers, conclude the diet women, to more than 30% of all managers by 2020.

His link also provided strong support to support his opinion. And although he was still technically referencing things from a Polarization Defense mindset, he noted that Japan was ranked 119th in the world for women's participation in society.

Ken. He was able to look at gender and culture in complex and multifaceted ways throughout the discussions during this session. In the first conversation, he did a great job interacting with George in a very natural matter. He had no problems expressing and explaining his ideas about the differences and similarities of gender roles in Japan and in other countries even when it was not the focus of conversation. He also explained the general attitude in Japan toward women is oppressive and admitted that a change was needed by evaluating examples from different cultures like America, China, and Europe. However, he took his analysis one step deeper, noting that in each culture we cannot generalize, because there are many different kinds of gender roles depending on the situations. For example, "not just men, but also women work in Japan." While also explaining, "I see the part in the text about arranged marriages for Muslim people, but I don't think the feeling is true for all of them." He really started taking to the idea that each person is unique and different and it is not only his or her country or culture that

defines him or her. Additionally, during the third discussion with Louie, he was asking for the deeper meaning of Chinese gender roles. He seemed genuinely interested and was trying to find and connect similarities while also celebrating their differences. One thing he noted as similar was the way jobs are often specified for women, for example, "in both Japan and China, kindergarten teaching is no usually a job that men undertake." In his journal and link, however, he tended to focus on Japan completely and from an almost Polarization Reversal mindset. "In Japan, there was a distinction between men and women in the past. Now, there are some gender issues but we don't discriminate men and women. So, Many Japanese women work in many companies." Overall, he was able to find similarities and his link and other parts of his journal attest to his universalistic beliefs.

> I think men and women should have same roles. For example, having a job, taking their children, cleaning their house, and so on. I have two reasons. The first reason, it [sic] waste times for women who have talents only to do housework. They have a good time if they work. The second reason, Men can go along with their children. Some men don't have times to play with their children because of their works. If they had times, they could have a good family life.

George. During the first conversation, George was able to get Karen to answer questions in English while getting her to express her opinions and reasons for gender roles. Surprisingly, he was not able to express his opinions about the gender norms in Japan and why they exist while speaking with her. However, he was able to explain why the general attitude of gender roles continues to stay the same. He used critical thinking skills and really analyzed the reading from the textbook when speaking with Louie. He

noted that each culture has different thoughts and that there are different kinds of discrimination that occur in society. He said, "I think this idea is false, because it says all countries are the same, but I think there are differences too." Furthermore, he was able to give opinions about people in European countries, but minimized the idea about Muslims wanting arranged marriages. During the final discussion with his group, when he was brainstorming, he was only able to think about gender issues in his home country. For example, he spoke about the gender stereotype of women working only until marriage. He also spoke about the sports and the types of jobs that they are not able to undertake. All in all, he was working out of Polarization Defense most of the lesson and was unable to explain how gender issues are similar or different to other countries. This might be due to his lack of experience with other cultures; however, he should have been able to draw from the readings in the textbook. The teacher-researcher also wondered if there was a problem with his comprehension of the materials, or if he did not read them well enough at home before coming to class to draw upon the content. Additionally, his journal and link were very focused on his own personal knowledge about Japan.

> In Japan, sexual harassment had occurred in the past. But by the creation of the Equal Employment Opportunity Law [sic], sexual harassment was banned. Recently, sexual harassment is decreasing. Though it does not disappear completely. I think this is Japanese government's problem from now on.

Louie. During a majority of the conversations Louie was able to ask back-up questions and express the deeper meaning behind gender roles in Japan while also comparing them to China. He was able to express his opinions and felt comfortable discussing differences and similarities with Ken and George. In both instances, he had

good interactions and he even noted that, "women's ability is wasted, both in the current system in Japan and China." However, Louie seemed to think for some reason that women had much more power in his country than Japan. He also interacted with the teacher-researcher very well when the teacher-researcher challenged his ideas or tried to get him to think from outside his own perspective. During the second conversation, he noted that he thought all cultures handled gender in different ways and it was impossible for them to handle the differences in the same. He was knowledgeable about the different kinds of formalities and religious bias that are prevalent in other societies and noted that sometimes he thinks these put unneeded stress on women. When discussing gender roles in Japan and China, he seemed to have some problems coming up with ideas about Japan even though he has been living here for some time. When talking about stereotypes, he noted that in China, women should be able to do the housework while men are meant to be strong. He also said that in China, boys must have short hair and girls have to wear skirts. Nevertheless, he did not mention if this was similar or different to Japan. He also spoke about some other countries and said that in some cases women do not have to change their family names after being married and that some women are not allowed to show their skin in public. His choice of phrasing was appropriate and he realized that this is not the case for all people in Western or Middle Eastern countries. Finally, in his journal, he did a good job comparing different cultures and explaining how a glass ceiling exists in many cultures. "In my culture, the big companies [sic] are more inclined to recruit the male applicant, because they think the men have more ability than women. And in Japan, I [sic] think the man-female relationships are the same as China."

Joe. Although he was quieter than usual, Joe looked very comfortable comparing other cultures, but seemed a little quieter than usual. In this session, while interacting with Karen, their conversation came to a complete standstill. Neither person spoke or had opinions about gender stereotypes. There was very little eye contact and it was difficult to record enough about their views. The teacher-researcher was not sure if the gender topic made him self-conscious during the interaction with Karen or if there was some cultural faux pas at play. Overall, he was quiet when he spoke today, which was rare, because in the past his voice could be easily heard. In the second conversation with Ricky he was able to express his opinions very well and did not have any problems asking backup questions. He explained how each culture has different thoughts and explained that there are some similarities among Eastern and Western countries. However, he was not as knowledgeable about Middle Eastern people and decided to take bait from the book and began making generalizations about people from Muslim cultures, because their marriages are based on their religion beliefs. He did listen to Ken's complex views and may have internalized some of the opinions as his body language made it seem that he was open to the new ideas. Finally, during the last conversation, he was able to find similarities and differences for gender roles in the Eastern context. He noted that in many cultures, women are cabin attendants and that is a type of forced gender stereotype. He found a majority of similarities between the cultures, for example, the idea of ladies first and household work. Finally, although he simplified a lot of the ideas about gender equality in his journal, he linked information showing that he truly was thinking about this topic through more than one cultural lens. Joe wrote in his journal the following excerpt:

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In my thought, man and women bear each work is natural. Man do the modern equivalent of hunting and defending their territory, and women gather food and care for the children since ancient era. This custom has continued even now, men are worker and women are household. But now a day, some women are working in Japan. And require the same rights as men. Moreover, men have to give way to the lady; lady first. In my opinion, it is not necessary to get women same rights as men. Because body structure or spirituality are different between men and women. However, don't get me wrong. I didn't completely oppose gender equality, but women's working is just free will.

Karen. She seemed to have gotten more during this session, but she still had some difficulties communicating at certain times with certain members. In the first conversation, she was speaking a lot with George; she opened up a lot with him and gave her opinions as well as reasons. Nevertheless, about halfway through the conversation she broke into Japanese for the duration when discussing the elements of truth and general attitudes about gender roles. When doing a group activity, she was interacting well with the other groups for the jigsaw, but her voice was still very quiet and was always a struggle to hear what she was saying. Hence, the teacher-researcher decided to move her to the front row to get her closer and interact with her directly. She came up with a lot of gender norms in her home country, for example, regarding universities, hairstyles, sports, and power. She was also able to speak with all student six in a group and found out a little bit about China from previous lessons. In the second discussion, she seemed to be referencing Muslim women and seemed as though she was starting to gain knowledge that there are differences between cultural practices of gender. In her journal and link, she

chose to focus solely on Japan and did not branch out on the similarities that exist between cultures.

> I'd like to get married in the future, but I'd like to work. When working, it's pain that the opinion isn't heard thanks to sexual discrimination. . . . Because I have not been out to society yet, it isn't understood, but I think it's gender-equal so often in Japan now. When I work, I wish that more sexual discrimination is eased more than the situation now.

Session 5: Gender roles and inequality. This was a continuation of the previous session where students were required to discuss feminism and its role in their culture. Before the lesson, students were asked to watch a video in which Emma Watson gives a speech to the United Nations (U.N.) about a new paradigm for feminism. They were asked to pick a point that they agreed or disagreed with and state why. This particular activity did not elicit them to compare the topic to another culture or provide a link, because the video was already quite complex and would require a lot of discussion in class. During the class, there were three conversations observed. The first was the students in pairs where students reflected on the video and shared their opinions. Second, after watching specific parts of the video two more times, the students discussed the idea of a glass ceiling in their own culture in a group. Finally, at the end of class the students underwent a PBL task in smaller groups where they were required to state the problems of gender equality in their own country and other countries they knew while comparing them and attempting to create solutions.

The group seemed to work very strongly as a team during this session. They were also very supportive of Karen who was the group leader. She was required to write down

all the answers and speak for the group throughout the lesson. As a unit, they were able to use complex opinions and the reasons to express their ideas about gender roles in relation to different cultural situations. Throughout this discussion in pairs and groups, there was strong eye contact and favorable body language. Everyone seemed to be enjoying themselves and were participating in different roles within the group in order to understand the content about feminism and systems of oppression. During the PBL task this time, they were much more successful in managing information, sharing ideas, looking at the problems, and creating solutions.

Ricky. He was able to give a lot of opinions during the session, and for the first time the teacher-researcher was possible to grasp a number of his quotes helping to contextualize the way he was thinking about gender roles in relation to different cultures. In the first conversation he said, "I want all people to realize people (men and women) should not be treated separately." He went on to explain that the video by Emma Watson's U.N. speech made him realize that men in all countries are stuck within stereotypes. He seemed very comfortable talking to Karen, Louie, and Ken. He also was not wearing a mask today, which indicates that it was possible he had been sick for the past five weeks. This possibly could explain his low participation. The possibility also existed that he may have finally become comfortable enough from with working with his multicultural group. At any rate, he seemed very relaxed and could answer others' questions about the problems in Japan. He noted that women are often forced to leave their jobs after having a child and are paid less in Japan, which he thought was different in U.S. In this respect, he was still looking at the complex issue from a generalization of what he knows about western countries. However, he did support his reason by stating

that women should be given maternity leave rather than have to retire, which is often found in the western system.

   Ken. While chatting with Karen during his first conversation, Ken was very calm and collected. They started off in English but slowly moved to Japanese. As always, his experience living abroad allowed him to draw interesting comparisons. He found a lot of similarities in the way women are treated in both Japan and America. He wondered why few men do jobs that they are not stereotyped for. While discussing with Karen, he said he agreed with the gender problems Emma Watson raised in her speech and that he believes men are imprisoned by the distorted view of what it means to be successful. In the second conversation, Ken brought up how both women and men have different types of rights and stereotypes in Japanese society. He added, "In the U.S., I noticed that men have to be just as strong as men in Japan." He talked about how power affects men at length and the way this is a problem all over the world. He even brought up the recent #metoo phenomenon that has shown how men use their position of power to subjugate women in all walks of life. In contrast, during the PBL, he made some references to the fact that men do not usually do housework in Japan, so in the U.S., women have to work and help around the house. Also, he made sweeping generalization about specific jobs for men and women, but noted that this is changing in Japanese society. "Women can't work as firefighters or police usually, but some are starting too." Finally, he made reference to the fact that Japan has fewer teachers who are women. He noted that this was similar to a lot of different countries. Specifically, when he was speaking with a Chinese student, he found out that the majority of teachers are men as well. His conversation with Joe was

very intriguing and they ended in a really deep discussion along with Louie about what percentage of which professions were male dominant.

George. He was capable of the material and interacted well with Louie and Joe. He seemed very confident managing intercultural communication with the Chinese students and built a bond with them. He even seemed to have become friends with Louie as they came in and left for lunch together. He talked in depth with Joe about gender roles both in Japan and other countries and he had strong eye contact while using English the entire time with a friendly demeanor. George seemed to be very moved by the speech of Emma Watson and brought up a lot of strong opinions about feminism and inclusivity. He said, "Men have to admit that women have the equally rights because the old ideas are affecting them." George also did an amazing job brainstorming and thought of many different problems that women have in Japan (e.g., low salary, sports, housework, and sexual harassment). Since he spoke with Louie and Joe a lot, he learned a lot about how these points are different and similar to China. He was able to state that housework and sexual harassment are similar to not only Japan, but also America. He felt that it would be important for the future if all countries make a law against unwanted advances for women.

Louie. While Louie was speaking with Ricky, he did a great job explaining his views and seemed to speak comfortably and confidently. They talked about the wage gap in Japan and China and he stated that, "The issues that exist in Japan also exist in China," for example, women are paid less for doing the same job as men and it is often difficult for them to get a raise. The primary investigator was not able to keep track of his conversations that well because he spoke quite softly. In retrospect, the teacher-

researcher noted that direct interaction with him would have aided in getting a better understanding of his views. However, the teacher-researcher felt as though he was asking a lot of questions to Karen, but she was not always answering them. During the final discussion, he was able to look at the social effects of the glass ceiling through the perspective of a Japanese person and noted that a lot of the issues in Japan may be caused by the fact that women are not looked at as having the same ability as men physically or mentally. He felt this was a great waste of human resource and that people should be paid according to their ability. He did an amazing job relating this idea to China and noted how much more difficult it is for women to find jobs as well as reach the top of companies in both countries. He felt that in order to fix the problems, the companies and government should be required to be held accountable for the salary and working environment of women in both Japan and China.

Joe. While he was speaking with Karen and George, Joe was hard to keep track of, because he was quieter than usual. Nonetheless, he brought a lot of different perspectives to the discussions. At the beginning of class, he expressed opinions in comparison to China for the first time. He must have become complacent with the other members knowing that he was not Japanese. However, they may have been able to guess previously because of this first post, his accent, or his name. He noted that, "Men control women more in Japan than in China," when referring to the business place and at home. When he got back to speaking with Ken he seemed a lot more relaxed and could let his guard down. The two seemed to be becoming regular discussion partners by chance, and their language ability compliments each other; hence, they often discuss harder, more complex issues. However, on this day, there was almost no interaction with Karen. The

teacher-researcher wondered if it might be a personality issue. They spoke Japanese for just a few seconds and both of them were silent for the entire discussion time. Even after trying to interact with them they were not very complacent in offering more to the conversation. The teacher-researcher's presence might have actually made things worse. During the last conversation, he brainstormed four different ideas that prohibited women from being equal to men in Japanese society: early retirement because of children, sexual harassment, lack of women in technical jobs, and the separation of men and women in society. He was split 50/50 of how he felt about their similarities and differences in other countries. In this way, he was not specifically comparing them to China in the final conversation, which was interesting. Rather, he just noted that they were different or similar outside of Japan. He thought the best way to solve the global problem of the wage gap and glass ceiling was to use the government to give aid or punish those who do not abide by standards set for each company.

Karen. As the leader today, Karen did better than expected; she even volunteered and gave her answers in front of the whole class. This was found as a surprise. The teacher-researcher observed that Karen seems as though if she can prepare her ideas first and write them down, she feels more confident to say them aloud. Nevertheless, she seemed to have problems speaking to Ken. At the beginning of class, she could not or would not explain her ideas about gender roles in Japan and other countries. This seemed to continue through the class period, and she especially had problems with Joe today. It was not clear if there was an issue with his pronunciation or if she just feels more comfortable to interact with the Chinese students in Japanese. In all reality, she did much better when interacting in a group orientation rather than a 1-on-1 basis. She did a decent

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job brainstorming today, and this was the first time she was observed comparing Japan to other countries. She must have done extra research outside of class to build her intercultural awareness for this gender topic. She noted that, "There is gender discrimination in Japan" and it makes her feel sad, because she wants to work alongside men and get the same opportunities. She also noted that women have problems with their salaries, keeping part-time work, and getting to the top of companies. To this end, she compared the similarities and differences between Japan, America, and China; nonetheless, she did not offer any solutions to the problems.

Table 4.5 Session 4-5: Quantified Instances of Intercultural Sensitivity Orientations

Student	Denial	Polarization	Minimization	Acceptance	Adaptation
Ricky	29.4%	41.2%	29.4%		
Ken	14.3%	21.4%	64.3%		
George	53.8%	7.7%	30.8%	7.7%	
Louie	27.8%	38.9%	33.3%		
Joe	6.3%	37.5%	56.3%		
Karen	50.0%	18.8%	31.3%		
Group Average	30.3%	27.6%	40.9%	1.3%	

Session 6: Diversity and multiculturalism. This session focused on talking about cultural norms, taboos, and cultural faux pas. For their journal, each student was required to reflect on two things that they are not allowed to do in their culture and in another culture and to also include a video link, which they were required to explain in class. There were only two events where the teacher-researcher was able to observe the

members because of helping other students in the class who were having problems. In the beginning of class, students spoke in pairs about turn-taking when speaking Japanese and how the flow of conversation is managed in both their home country and other countries. This topic was very hard for the students to comprehend, so a lot of the class time was spent reading and reviewing the materials in the textbook. After that they had a discussion about the idea of silence and non-verbal communication. They were asked to find common links between different cultures. Finally, they gave mini-presentations about their videos from their journals.

As a group, they did not seem as confident with this theme. The teacher-researcher was unclear if it was the topic the students were uncomfortable talking about or if it was the fact that they had not done enough reading to discuss the multifaceted issues of intercultural communication in pairs and groups. Nonetheless, they seemed to be less motivated than in previous weeks and a lot of times they were shortcutting when having their discussions. They also seemed a little tired and did not form strong opinions or report their ideas openly after discussions. However, after putting them in smaller groups of three, they did much better, especially if the Chinese students were in a group together with some higher-level Japanese students.

Ricky. The teacher-researcher noticed that Ricky had defined a lot of the culturally-based vocabulary, thereby revealing that he was interested in the topic. He took many notes in his textbook from the readings, which he used as reference throughout the class. Although he had some problems being the group leader, he did not wear his mask and he was able to speak about different kinds of taboos and cultural faux pas. Additionally, Ricky was making good eye contact with Joe and Louie; hence, he adjusted

his social skills to ensure that he conveyed ideas properly. During the mini presentation, he talked about using chopsticks and compared the utensil's usage with other countries, noting that it was similar in some Asian countries. However, he got stuck when talking about the complexity of the issue. He had some problems developing his ideas into more concrete examples when explaining the similarities between Japan and other countries. Again, in his journal, he chose only to focus on Japan and did not compare his ideas outside of his current knowledge.

> In Japan, it may be better not to talk about one's educational background when it is the first meeting because there are some people who have no confidence in their educational background. It may also be better not to talk about one's work, one's parents' work or one's partner's because almost all people don't want to be evaluated themselves by the work.

Ken. While Ken spoke with Joe and Louie today, he seemed a little underprepared, possibly because he did not complete all of the reading. He seemed a little limited by his ideas about cultural taboos in other countries. He was able to act as the leader for the conversation and ask other students about the similarities and differences, but when his turn arrived, he was not able to expand on his opinions as he usually does. One thing he said was "If people get to know each other more it's ok to be silent during conversations." However, did not really expand on this and he did not give his reasoning or examples of situations in Japanese cultures or other cultures to justify his ideas. This was also prevalent in his journal and link, where he only chose to focus on Japanese society. "We can't ask people how much they earn and ask older person's age. We think

it is rude when you ask older workers or colleagues how much they earn. Also, we think

money which people earn is a private thing."

George. Efforts were made to mix everyone around so they had a better chance to

be exposed to people with different cultural experiences. In this session, Ricky worked

really well with George, which was surprising, because by themselves they are usually

quiet. He referenced a lot of ideas about things that cannot be used in conversations in

Japan, such as relationships, money, and age. During his discussion with Ricky, he

brought up a lot of decent points. He said, "we should not talk about someone's wealth or

money in any country." The teacher-researcher found in interesting how he realized that

this was a universal concept. He also noted that people cannot really criticize the opposite

sex for fashion or changes to hairstyles anywhere in the world. It was quite interesting

that he was starting to work on universal ideas, which made the teacher-researcher

believe that he was starting to move into status Minimization where he was thinking

about culture from a general state. In his journal, he attended only to Japanese society,

however, and his link only provided information that was only specific for his home

country.

> I think Japanese people care too much about their age. For example, some people
>
> dislike being given up the seat. Because they feel as if they are treated the old
>
> person. And Japanese people care about their body problem. So, we would better
>
> not tell a joke about the problem that they worry.

Louie. For the first time Louie spoke with Karen in a number of conversations

throughout the lesson. The teacher-researcher wanted to see if Karen's issue was related

to culture or just a personality difference with Joe. The teacher-researcher found that

Louie was very patient with her. However, they skipped out on checking answers with each other and avoided eye contact many times. Additionally, when Louie was meant to be discussing with George, the teacher-researcher had to interact in order to get them to talk. This was quite interesting, because they seemed to have formed a bond from previous classes. Additionally, he seemed to be asking a lot of members for help during the conversations. This could be because he was having a lot of difficulties understanding the content from the text. Nonetheless, when speaking about silence and the similarities and differences between China and Japan, he was definitely looking at the more complex concept of using pauses and conversations for different reasons. He noted, "It depends on the situation, but usually 10 seconds is the most amount of time for allowing silence during conversations in China." He also explained how talking about salary and health in China is a taboo subject. He believed that would be invasive to someone's privacy, because knowing that information would allow us to know more about one's lifestyle. He did a great job dissecting his own culture, but made no comparisons to Japan. This could have been evidence that he was basically still thinking from a stance of Polarization Defense. This was also prevalent in his journal where he only spoke about his home country.

> Although you know someone's parent are divorced, [sic] you can't talk about it with him unless he talks [sic] about it himself but you also cannot [sic] do any comment. And in daily conversation . . . you can make some jokes, but you had better not make a joke of others' family, private life or any other sensitive problem.

Joe. He was matched with Ken for the first conversation in this session, and as always, the conversation was very natural and they talked about many complicated aspects of culture, comparing both Japan and China while finding both similarities and differences. Additionally, while Joe was speaking with Ricky, he gave a lot of good opinions and even noted that, "in Japan sound is used to agree, but in another country [sic] it's sometimes used to disagree." The teacher-researcher was intrigued that his bicultural background brought some interesting discussion points to the conversation. He seemed to be focused not only on China, but also Japan in his journal, and he took a universal approach to stating his ideas about racial discrimination.

> This topic is taboo in every single country. Of course, it is also in Japan. Because race isn't a distinction to judge the people. But it isn't naturally in a decade ago. So, the topic was heavily restricted. I take care of this topic in usually.

What is particularly fascinating is that he brought up this topic in his reflection journal but did not share it with his classmates. As he noted it is very taboo, but since the class was talking about taboo things, the teacher-researcher thought his ideas might have come up at least once in the conversation. The social stigma of discussing racism is larger than previously assumed by the teacher-researcher.

Karen. She had her first conversation with Louie today and seemed much more prepared than in the past. She was surprisingly outspoken when talking with the Chinese student and used a lot of English. However, she did not make any eye contact and stopped talking after two topics. This is the first time the teacher-researcher observed her interacting with someone other than a Japanese person so openly since the beginning of the research project. She explained, "We cannot talk about weight in Japan, it is not

polite, I don't know about other country." She seemed to be more active but a little quieter during the group chats. The researcher noticed a very good interaction between her and Ricky. She was able to talk about different cultural taboos and brainstorm the differences. This was also true for her journal where she chose to focus on Japan alone. "When I think from the view point of a lady certainly, when you hear the height and the weight age, it won't be too good feeling. It's very difficult to reply that physical condition is heard when being having a period, in particular."

Session 7: Diversity and multiculturalism. The theme of this session was personal space, body language, and directness. Students mainly did group discussions and there were only a few occasions where they interacted in pairs. There was a total of three conversations observed. The first was a discussion about gestures, eye contact, and body language. The students had to brainstorm their ideas about other cultures they knew and make comparisons. Afterwards, time was taken to review the reading again, then the students were broken into pairs where they each had a different topic to debate. Finally, at the end of class, they had a discussion about personal space in Japan and discussed the similarities and differences to other cultures.

Overall, they seemed very cordial with one another. A lot of students were smiling, and they seemed to be getting along really well. No one appeared overly uncomfortable even though the topic required them to talk about controversial topics including personal space, body language, men touching, and physical contact. Nevertheless, this lesson was a little more focused on writing rather than oral communication. Also, they had some problems interacting when sharing at the end of lesson, although they had topics in the notes written down with what they talked about

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previously. The teacher-researcher concluded that they work very well in small groups and in pairs, but not as a whole.

Ricky. He was not wearing a mask, however, because Ricky spoke quietly, it was difficult to hear what he was saying all the time. He paused a lot and spent less time interacting during this session than in previous ones. This was especially true for when he was talking with Karen. Attempts were made to interact and speak with them directly, but the teacher-researcher's presence only made the situation worse. One quote that really stuck out was when he said, "Because when I go to other countries, I should try to assimilate, so I think when people come to Japan they should try to accept Japanese culture." This statement seemed quite heavy because the teacher-researcher did not think that people who visit Japan know Japanese society and cultural norms. Consistently, he has only focused on Japan in his journal and this was the case again during this session where he also did not provide a link to support his ideas and choose to look at the differences between two cultures. "Japanese culture 'Aiseki', sharing a table with somebody, also show the smallness of Japanese personal space. In comparison with Japan, Finnish [sic] personal space is far greater. I think this difference is due to the differences in cultures, national traits, and so on."

Ken. He acted as the leader for the group today and took charge when doing checking as well as group conversations. He noted that, "America is a low context society and Japan is a high context society." In this way, he brought up a lot of different points about communication styles including language, proxemics, and body language. Additionally, he said that he feels uncomfortable when people enter his intimate space and he had experienced it before while living abroad. He actually challenged the content

of the video we watched by questioning the ideas that Americans enjoy larger amounts of private space. "They say Americans enjoy their privacy, but I'm not sure." I was surprised that he did not point out that situations are different depending on relationships, gender, and social status considering that he lived there previously. He was able to compare and contrast different cultures in his journal and supplied a link that really helped contextualize what he was thinking about, which extended to his discussions in class.

> I also feel uncomfortable if someone stands or sit close to me except on the train. So, I think most Japanese have these kinds of personal space. Russians think it is natural to talk closely with someone. This idea is different from Japan but U.S. people have the similar idea as Japan. The similar idea is that they talk closely with their family or their friends. So, I think U.S. people also feel uncomfortable when they talk closely with someone they don't know.

> *George.* He used a lot of body language during the session and made steady eye contact with Louie. He was able to reference specific aspect of Japanese society where cultural norms and personal space were allowed to be broken. For example, when speaking about Japanese trains he said, "They are too crowded, so we can get used to it." He was talking about making body contact and allowing people within intimate zones that is usually not permitted in Japanese society in public as it is a non-contact society. He also clarified that he can be closer with family members, and although they do not touch, their proximity is much different than that of acquaintances. He was able to reference all different kinds of complexities of body language and contact in Japan but

did not reference any other cultures. This was the same situation in his journal, but he did make some comparisons highlighting only differences.

> Many Japanese people are shy compared to other countries. So, Japanese people's personal space is larger than any other country. For example, Japanese greeting is just shaking hands. But when American greet, they do hug. And Italian kiss each other's cheeks.

Louie. This situation was the second session in a row that he seemed uncomfortable speaking about topics related to cultural norms. Whether he was trying to think or if he was trying to avoid speaking with his partner Ricky was unclear. He was pausing a lot and looking into space for long periods of time. In this respect, he had some problems interacting with other members who were not usually part of his group. Specifically, he had issues interacting with other girls that he had not spoken to previously. He seemed to be constantly looking at his phone and he was not checking answers or brainstorming with any members. Furthermore, he was looking down a lot. The teacher-researcher had difficulties in assessing if he was comparing the similarities and differences of culture, because the teacher-researcher could not interact with him directly. He also did not write a journal reflection or provide a link to a website to talk about.

Joe. He seemed to cooperate with Karen much better in this session than in the past. They both used a lot of English to communicate with each other. This could be due to the teacher-researcher having been strict on their group and constantly reminding them that they needed to be checking in English, but for whatever the reason they seemed to really converse more fluidly. Joe spoke about very common things with Karen, like Japan

in general, and how close or how far people will stand from each other. The teacher-researcher found difficulties in catching any direct quote about what he said when he was comparing Japanese culture to other foreign cultures; however, after reviewing his worksheet, the teacher-researcher noticed that he had listed differences as well as similarities. His journal was very enlightening and it allowed for seeing how he was really thinking about complex issues from a Japanese point of view.

> I think Japanese personal space is narrower than one of the other country. The reasons cause me the thoughts are Japanese land and Japanese culture. First Japan is island country. That means Japan has less land and a hundred million people. In Tokyo, for example, 'Tsuukin Rush' is a famous event. The train was so crowded and there is no space that can be called personal space.

Karen. Karen appeared very interested in the topic during this session and seemed like a completely different person today. She expanded on her opinions, and while speaking to Joe, she was smiling and made eye contact. She was also asking extra follow-up questions to find out why he believed what he believed. She was overheard saying, "People have different ideas about personal space, this is because of their country." However, once again she became very quiet during group checking suggesting that she works much better in smaller social groups. Her journal also contained a lot of information and links to support her ideas.

> I think it's decided what kind of space the space is by a relation with the person in the space, not the physical distance in Japan. I think that place that is an elevator and a next seat in trains with a close person is personal space. Even though the distance is close, I think if a partner is the person who doesn't know at all, that

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isn't personal space. According to this article, there seems to be a person who worries about the physical distance in the United States. I was surprised that the next seat in trains becomes intimate space in the United States and it's different from Japan.

Session 8: Diversity and multiculturalism. The content from their journal and PBL worksheets were recorded during session eight, nevertheless, there were no field notes taken on this day because the focus group was conducted in place of field notes. While participants were not participating in the focus groups, they were working on the PBL task and IDI posttest. The focus group for 20-25 minutes was conducted with the six participants to get a clearer picture of how their intercultural sensitivity changed over the eight-week period. There were 10 questions in total (see Appendix E) with probing questions in order to get more concrete explanations of the orientations that the students were using to construe cultural phenomena. The questions ranged in difficulty and moved from Denial to Adaptation on IDC.

Teacher: Hello everyone. How are you doing today? What do you think of the semester so far?

Ricky: I think it was good, because I learned more practical English and get the chances to think about culture. How about you? (Gesturing to Ken)

Ken: I think it was a difficult class, because I had to talk about my opinion with partners or groups. But it was a good chance to speak English.

Teacher: Did this class change your idea about culture?

Karen: No, but I can learn general understanding of culture. How about you? (Looking at Louie)

Louie: Yes, this class has given me the chance to know about the similar view of China and Japan. I come from China, I don't know the opinion difference opinion from China from Japan. From the class, I could find out how Japanese think about China.

Teacher: Nice, so you guys were able to compare a bit; that's good to hear. Let's go on then.

Teacher: What types of cultural differences do you know about in Japan?

George: In Japan, Japanese greeting is just shake hands. Americans, they do hug and in Italy they do kiss on cheek.

Teacher: Oh, they all kiss on the cheeks?

George: Yeah.

Teacher: I guess they do.

Teacher: Do you know about any cultural differences in Japan? This one is asking about within Japan or your home country. It doesn't have to be Japan.

Joe: Yeah, in Japan there is something called like Otaku. Other types is like sports or activities. Someone who is very shy may be an Otaku.

Teacher: Ok, let's move on. Do you think your country is becoming multicultural?

Ken: Yes, I think so, because there are many people who came from another country and live in Japan. For example, Indian and Russian, and so on. So, I think Japan will be multicultural. How about you? (Gesturing to George)

George: I think so too because Japanese people enjoy any events from another culture. For example, Easter Egg, Valentine, Halloween, Christmas.

Teacher: Yeah, that's true.

George: So, Japan will become a multicultural country.

Teacher: Are there some problems or difficulties that immigrants might have if they enter your country? (Asking Ricky)

Ricky: (No answer)

Teacher: I can rephrase it, "If people come from a different country will they have some problems in Japan?" Can you think of an example?

Ricky: (Passes to Joe)

Joe: Umm, I think not problem. Japanese sensibility to more international is more thing. That is good think. No problem.

Teacher: How will Japan change after more immigrants come to Japan? (Asking George)

George: (No answer)

Teacher: I can rephrase it. After more people from a different country come to Japan, how will Japan change?

George: I think Japanese will change because of . . . (Question passed.)

Teacher: Do you think it's important to pay attention to cultural similarities or differences?

Louie: I think it is important

Teacher: Which one, similarities or differences.

Louie: Difference, because in something in your country there is one meaning but in another they have other idea.

Teacher: Oh, so you are talking about a difference in meaning?

Louie: Yes, in one country if you nod your head, it means yes, but in another country, it means no. It may cause trouble when you are communicating with others.

Joe: I think so too, it is very difficult. Some gestures make a misunderstanding with a different cultures people. This can make trouble with those people.

Teacher: What does your culture have in common with America? . . . or any western country? I mean, differences too, you can do difference.

Ricky: In America or any other country, people don't take of shoes when they enter in the room. It's different from Japan.

Teacher: Do you agree with that? (Looking at Ken)

Ken: Yes, in America people wear shoes in the house, but Japanese take off their shoes in their house.

Teacher: How about similarities? Can you think of any similarities between Japan and other Asian countries? For example, China or Korea

George: I think a similarity between Japan in China is, many Japanese people like Anime and Comic book. And many Chinese people like Manga, and this is similarity point.

Teacher: Is it true? (Gesturing to LOUIE)

Louie: Yes, Chinese are interested in a lot of Japanese Manga.

Teacher: I didn't know that, that's interesting. Actually, in America its getting very popular, too.

Teacher: Umm, let's talk about your reaction. If you met somebody from Canada, how would you first react?

Joe: I wouldn't do anything special. Maybe always shake hands and bowing. That interaction is first. This is how I would react.

Teacher: Why would you choose that reaction, why would you bow?

Joe: It is very normal; it is always ok in different countries.

Karen: I would ask easy topic about their country.

Teacher: Oh . . . you would ask, "What is it like living in Canada?" Start with common conversation? Why would you talk about Canada? Give me an example.

Karen: I'd ask delicious food.

Teacher: Um . . . that sounds like a good idea to talk about with Canadians. Alright let's move on to abilities. A little bit harder

Teacher: What are some abilities that are important for communicating with people from other cultures?

Ken: I think about different culture while taking with another countries people.

Teacher: You mean knowledge or custom?

Ken: Yes, think about other culture, not only Japan.

Teacher: I got you, so you would try to think about their culture when talking.

Ken: Yes, it's important. How about you? (Gesturing to LOUIE).

Louie: I think when traveling to another country that learning is the most important. You have to have knowledge about the similarities and differences.

Teacher: Yes, we went over that a little bit in the class.

Teacher: Alright, so . . . What would be the most difficult thing for a person to live in your culture?

George: Japanese population is very large so people from other countries confuse Japanese train is very crowded.

Teacher: Yeah that is definitely a hard part. Can you give me an example?

George: For example, the train in the morning is very crowded.

Teacher: Yeah that could be one. What do you think? What is a difficult part of living in Japan (Looking at Ricky)?

Ricky: It's difficult to work, because workers have much fewer vacation.

Teacher: Yeah, the working time, yeah is definitely a problem. Can you think of another example? Karen, what do you think?

Karen: The most difficult things, is the difference of mother language. I think there are language that is not used in other language.

Teacher: Especially, like Japan has Keigo and Son Keigo [honorific language] to show respect. Yeah, I can see your point for sure.

Teacher: If someone came to Japan and said, I have culture shock, what advice would you give someone suffering from culture shock?

Ken: I might say that try to live Japan more days, if you do this like that person might be thinks that living in Japan is easy.

Teacher: So, you suggest spending more time and getting used to it?

Ken: Yes

Teacher: Ok how about you, what do you think? Maybe they . . .

Joe: I can't advise them to, this only weak advice. But you need to adjust custom this culture. This difference is no avoidable. So, learning about the gap is the only way.

Teacher: Yeah, I can see that! How can you become accepted in a new country that isn't your own country?

Louie: I think if you want to be accepted, you have to learn the differences in customs and culture. And then so you will be accepted to the new culture.

Teacher: Ok, let's talk about gestures a little bit, we were talking about them before. So, what do you have to change when communicating with people from other countries? What kind of gesture or custom? Can you give me an example?

Ricky: . . . It's hard. (Passes to Ken)

Ken: I think I have to change my language, for example it's because people who came from other country, I think they don't know Japanese, so I should change my language if I want to talk with them.

Teacher: Yeah, language has a lot to do with it. The problem could be that they don't know English so it would be a bigger problem.

Table 4.6 Session 6-8: Quantified Instances of Intercultural Sensitivity Orientations

Student	Denial	Polarization	Minimization	Acceptance	Adaptation
Ricky	42.9%	38.1%	4.8%	14.3%	
Ken	20.7%	24.1%	24.1%	38.1%	3.4%
George	37.5%	34.4%	18.8%	14.3%	
Louie	35.0%	20.0%	20.0%	23.8%	
Joe	22.2%	22.2%	27.8%	23.8%	
Karen	25.0%	31.3%	25.0%	14.3%	
Group Average	30.5%	28.3%	20.1%	21.4%	0.6%

Interpretation of Results of the Study

To strengthen the reliability and rigor of this dissertation, a mix-methods explanatory approach was used to measure the multifaceted change in students' intercultural sensitivity. First, this section explains how the quantitative data from both the IDI and the quantified meta-inferences from the case study account for the change in

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students' intercultural orientations according to the IDI. Then, this data is supplemented by a case-by-case explanation of the participants' changes in orientations in reference to the qualitative accounts in the case study. Overall, the results from both the quantitative and qualitative data collection instruments show promise for using PBL with sociocultural content to promote intercultural competence both at the group and individual level. However, after further analysis, each students' subcase is valuable for understanding holistic change.

Quantitative Interpretation

The IDI was used as the main quantitative data collection tool to assess students' intercultural sensitivity. Students took the IDI two times. Once during the first week before the curriculum intervention and once during the eighth week after they had undergone three different themes included in a sociocultural component (see Appendix A) using PBL. The data was compared and contrasted to illuminate the essential aspects of changes in students' orientations according to the IDC. In addition, the quantified instance from the case study were included to better illuminate the progression in which students developed their intercultural competence.

IDI group interpretation. Although the average of the group's IDI did not transcend and change the entire mindset from Polarization Defense (PD) to Minimization (M) as hoped, they were approaching the Cusp of Minimization (Cusp of M) at 79.65 (Table 4.1). Additionally, as a group, the members increased the resolution of trailing orientations in Denial from 0% to 33% and Disinterest in Cultural Difference from 33% to 50% (Table 4.2). However, the sub-orientation of Avoidance of Interaction with Cultural Difference remained the same (50%).

IDI individual interpretation. Looking at the students individually, three out of six participants reached Minimization (M) after the eight-week period (Figure 4.2). That is, Ken, Joe, and Karen all made significant improvements in intercultural sensitivity as individuals. Ken started with an IDI of 74.37 (PD) at the onset of the program and made the largest gain of 9.54, ending with 83.91 (Cusp of M). Joe and Karen were also able to transcend Polarization Defense (PD) into Minimization (M). Joe began with an IDI of 82.02 (Cusp of M) and added 5.81 to his score, placing him at 87.83 (M). Karen moved from 78.18 (PD) with and addition of 7.8, placing her at 85.95 (M). The same students resolved a number of impeding trailing orientations (Table 4.3) allowing them to curb their use of prior mindsets to construe cultural phenomena. Ken had already resolved his Avoidance of Interaction with Cultural Difference in the Pre-IDI and then was able to resolve both Denial and Disinterest in Cultural Difference in the Post-IDI. However, Ken was both unresolved in Polarization Defense and Reversal after the posttest. Joe originally had Avoidance of Interaction with Cultural Difference resolved in his Pre-IDI, but regressed in the Post-IDI where it was unresolved. Nevertheless, Joe was able to resolve PD in the Post-IDI. Karen had no trailing orientations resolved in the Pre-IDI, but was able to establish resolution in three areas after the Post-IDI: Denial, Disinterest in Cultural Difference, and Avoidance with Cultural difference. In contrast, Ricky, George, and Louie saw a decrease in their scores, but all of them remained in Polarization Defense (PD) after the second administration of the IDI (Figure 4.2). They were also unable to increase any of their trailing orientations, adding to the reasons why their developmental orientations remained unchanged (Table 4.3).

Case study quantified interpretation. Another form of quantitative data was used by exploring the field notes, journals, worksheets, and focus group from the case study through means of quantification using meta-inferences. All data from the case study was reordered and categorized into one of the five mindsets in reference to the IDC (Polarization Defense – Adaptation). This data was a consolidation of the field notes taken during in class discussion; the points of view they provided in their journals; the type of links that they posted in their journals; what they wrote on their worksheets; and what was said in the focus group. These instances were converted into percentages to show which mindset they were primarily using, as well as alluding to the trailing orientations that was used to construe content from the course. Each section below is an interpretation of the quantified instances, spanning the length of three themes (education, gender, and diversity and multiculturalism). Graphs of the averages from the quantified instances of the case study were constructed to illustrate a better developmental view of the participants' intercultural competence over the eight-week period. Attention is given first to the group as a whole and then to each individual.

Sessions 1-3 (education): Group interpretation. Figure 4.3 Session 1-3 Quantified Distribution of Intercultural Sensitivity, shows the averaged percentage of the group's and students' intercultural sensitivity levels after exposure to the first three sessions about education. According to the quantified data, the participants were mainly operating out of Polarization Defense (46.7%) as a group. Hence, they were predominantly looking at the differences between cultures. However, it is prevalent that they were using Minimization (30.4%) a number of times to compare the similarities of different cultures as well.

Sessions 1-3 (education): Individual interpretation. Ricky (75.0%), Joe (53.3), and Karen (60.0%) were predominantly utilizing Polarization Defense to construe cultural phenomena (Figure 4.3) in sessions one through three. In this regard, Karen was also using Polarization Defense as her trailing orientation. This means, she was focused on avoiding the idea of cultural difference or was disinterested in speaking about it. However, Joe used Minimization as his leading orientation as he often spoke about universalism between cultures.
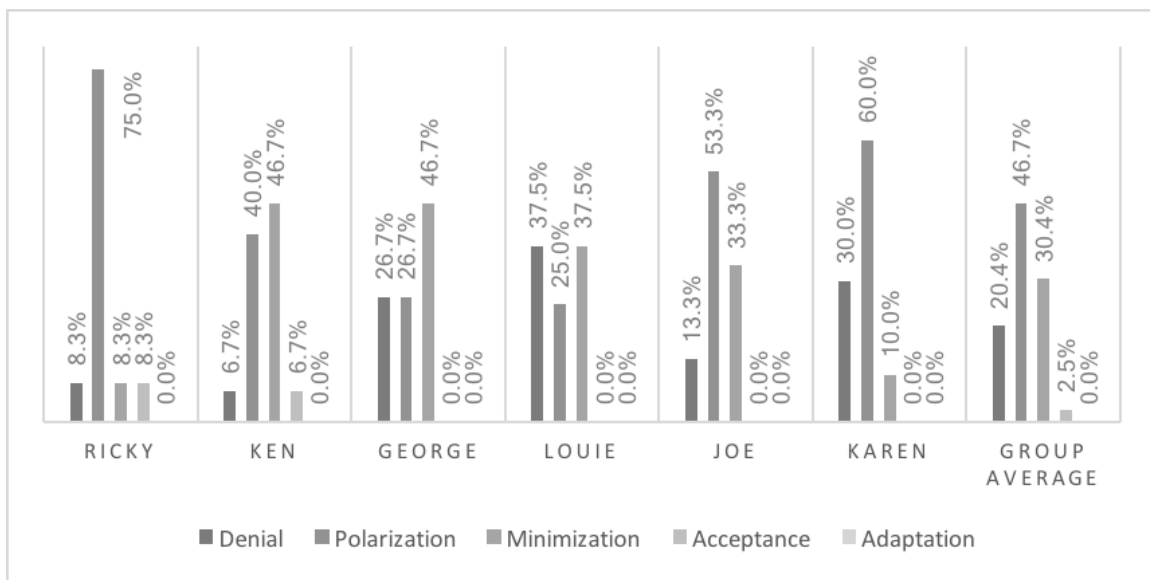

Figure 4.3 Session 1-3 Quantified Distribution of Intercultural Sensitivity

Ken (46.7%), George (46.7%), and Louie (37.5%) were mainly using Minimization where they chose to find common threads that connect societies together. Ken was also using Polarization Defense as his trailing orientation, while George was using both Polarization Defense and Denial when he was addressing issues. This means, that George was referencing only his own culture's way of doing things or suggesting that everyone does things differently. Louie also had a trailing orientation of Denial, where he was only focusing on China without comparing it to any other culture.

Sessions 4-5 (gender): Group interpretation. Figure 4.4 shows the students' and group's averages of mindsets after undergoing the gender topic for two weeks. As a group, they showed high levels of Minimization (40.9%) and were able to find the similarities between their home country and other cultures. Nonetheless, they were still using sizable amounts of Denial (30.3%) and Polarization Defense (27.6%) when addressing issues of gender roles, norms, and issues.

Sessions 4-5 (gender): Individual interpretation. After the second theme was finished and all the data was compiled, George (53.8%) and Karen (50.0%) showed high levels of Denial where they would not address issues in other cultures (Figure 4.4). Ricky (41.2%) and Louie (38.9%) were using Polarization Defense and mainly attending to the differences between cultures. However, both of them were showing signs of Minimization and Denial; hence, they were using many different mindsets to construe gender.
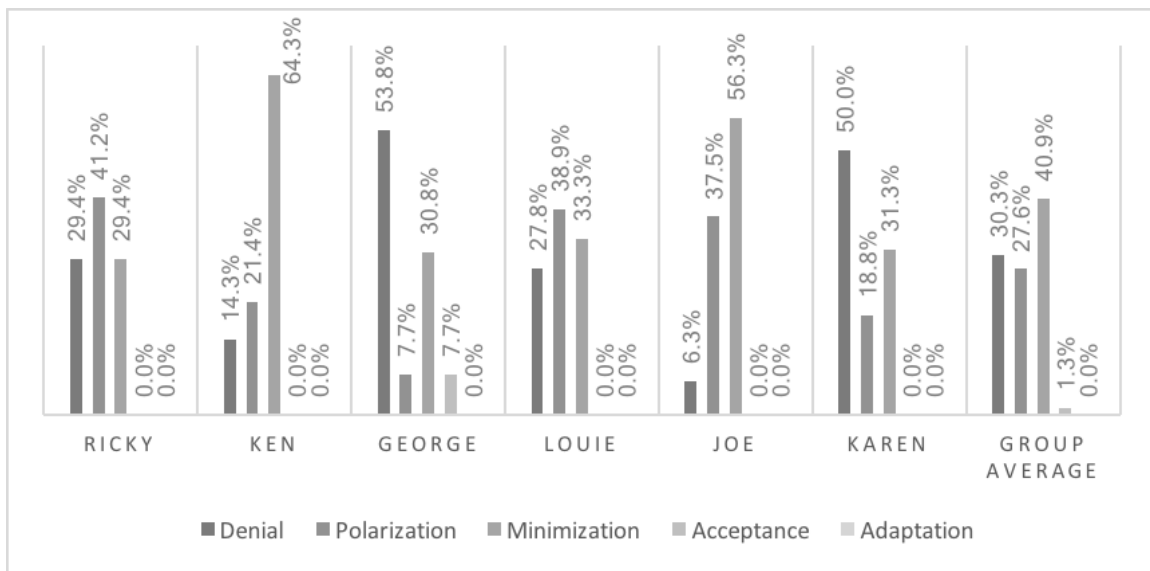

Figure 4.4 Session 4-5 Quantified Distribution of Intercultural Sensitivity

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Finally, only Ken (64.3%) and Joe (56.3%) used high levels of Minimization to compare different cultures in the theme using similarities and universalistic ideologies. It should be noted that both used their trailing orientations of Polarization Defense at times, but it was less than the previous sessions.

Sessions 6-8 (diversity and multiculturalism): Group interpretation. As can be seen in Figure 4.5, after the final three sessions covering diversity and multiculturalism, the group's intercultural sensitivity orientations seemed to be spreading out rather than being highly focused in one area. In addition to the journals and worksheets, the final session contained a focus group. It seemed that they were using both Denial (30.5%) and Polarization Defense (28.3%) when addressing diversity and multiculturalism. However, there were many incidents where they were also using Minimization (20.1%), and for the first time, higher levels of Acceptance (21.4%). This means, some of the students were actually able to think about perspectives from another worldview different from their own and appreciate the similarities while celebrating the differences.

Sessions 6-8 (diversity and multiculturalism): Individual interpretation. Similar to the group analysis, as individuals, the students were using a range of mindsets to interpret cultural phenomena. Ricky (42.9%), George (37.5%), and Louie (35.0%) were showing high amounts of Denial in their critiques while doing in-class activities and journals (Figure 4.5). However, it should be noted that both Ricky (38.1%) and George (34.4%) used Polarization Defense almost equally. Louie, on the other hand, seemed to be spread across almost every other orientation except for Adaptation (0.0%). Karen was showing signs of using Polarization Defense (31.3%) most, but also favored Denial (25.0%) and Minimization (25.0%) equally in her writing.
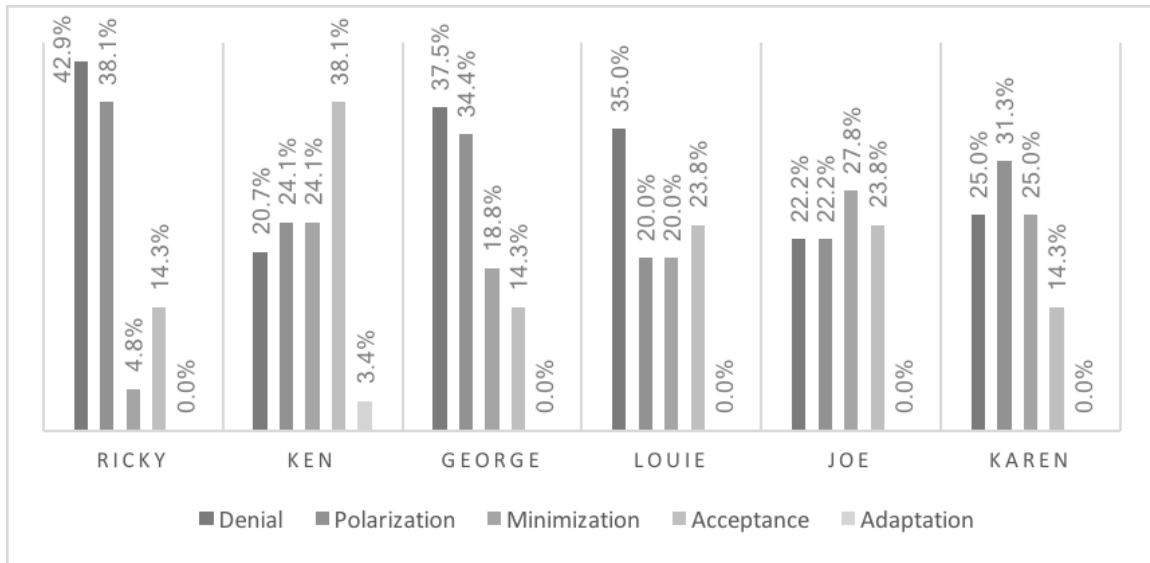
Figure 4.5 Session 6-8 Quantified Distribution of Intercultural Sensitivity

Joe was nearly equally completely across the board from Denial (22.2%) to

Acceptance (23.8%); however, he favored Minimization (27.8%) where he tried to find

common threads across cultures. Ken showed very high levels of Acceptance (38.1%)

during this theme and he was the first student to display this mindset in concentration.

That is, he was able to look at things from the perspective of an outsider and suggested

how to address and solve problems from another culture's viewpoint during the

discussion. Additionally, Ken was using Denial (20.7%) through Minimization (24.1%)

when evaluating cultural similarities and differences with his trailing orientations.

Culmination of sessions 1-8: Group interpretation. Looking at Figure 4.6, it is

much easier to see a contextualized view of how the students applied different mindsets

to assess and interpret cultural phenomena in their journals, worksheets, and focus group

over the entire eight-week period. As a group, the students were primarily using

Polarization Defense (34.2%); however, Minimization (30.5%) was also a close

contender as their leading orientation. Surprisingly, this data correlates quite well to the

findings of the IDI and could very well be viewed a confirmatory evidence of the group's intercultural sensitivity orientation after the eight-week period.

Culmination of sessions 1-8: Individual interpretation. Overall, Ricky was using Polarization Defense (51.4%) as his primary orientation with Denial (26.9%) as his trailing orientation (Figure 4.6). Ken favored Minimization (45.0%), but also used Polarization Defense (28.5%). George was functioning in Denial (39.3) in most instances, but also showed signs of Minimization (32.1%). Louie was very close between three different mindsets: Denial (33.4%), Polarization Defense (28.0%), and Minimization (30.3%). Joe used Minimization (39.1%) as his main orientation, while also having may instances where he applied Polarization Defense (37.7%). Karen mainly utilized Polarization Defense (36.7%), but there were many occurrences of Denial (35.0%) with a supplemented orientation of Minimization (22.1%).
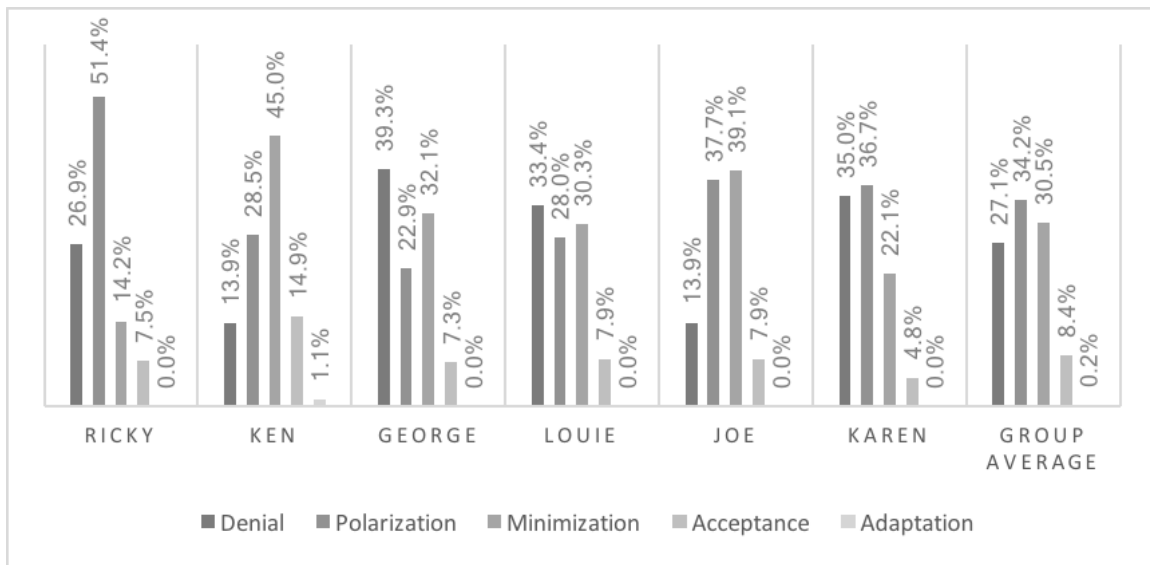

Figure 4.6 Session 1-8 Total Quantified Distribution of Intercultural Sensitivity

Qualitative Interpretations

As part of the explanatory mixed-methods approach to this action research project, a qualitative case study was incorporated to contextualize students' changes in intercultural sensitivity through a narrative. As Creswell (2014) and Ivankova (2015) point out, this method often allows researchers to get a clearer picture of complex issues and elaborate on the findings of quantitative data. "Reaching beyond the traditional quantitative-qualitative divide, mixed-methods capitalizes on the fact that qualitative and quantitative research approaches are complementary in nature" (Ivankova, 2015, p. 4).

Students interacted with each other weekly as an entire group multiple times in each session to discuss, check, brainstorm, solve problems, and reflect on the content of the sociocultural component (see Appendix A) guided by PBL. In some situations, students were assigned roles, such as leader, note taker, and inquisitor to promote fluid conversations in English. Student field notes, journals, worksheets, and a focus group were reordered and combined in hopes of understanding both the group's and each student's intercultural developmental process. This information was compared and contrasted with findings of the IDI and quantified meta-inferences to investigate what caused changes in intercultural competence. This section looks at the accounts of the case study both from the perspective of the group and individual in order to explain the why students increased and decreased in their intercultural sensitivity and how they were able to resolve their trailing orientations.

Case study: Group interpretation. The results from the IDI showed that the group only marginally increased (+.95) in their intercultural sensitivity, remaining in Polarization Defense (Figure 2.1). Furthermore, only two trailing orientations saw

increases in resolution (Table 4.2). This data was also echoed in (Figure 4.6), which showed that the students were mainly operating out of a state of Polarization Defense (34.2%) while using almost equal levels of Denial (27.1%) and Minimization (30.5%) to construe cultural phenomena. This section attempts to give alternate explanations for the changes in intercultural competence and rationalize why there were only the minimal gains in the group domain on the IDI.

Reflecting on the group selection process, it is not surprising that there were many instances where the group had a lot of difficulties interacting as a whole, especially in sessions one through three where they were just getting to know one another. The participants were chosen based on having the most diverse group as possible both in gender and culture while having similar IDI scores from the onset of the research project to produce a typical case sample. It was quite obvious that some of them had never spoken with someone from another country before (especially in English), which may have come as an initial shock and forced them to recluse. Hence, a lot of the intercultural communication was stunted as many of the Japanese students reverted to using their mother tongue in order to complete the tasks. While discussing education in sessions one through three, students focused heavily on the differences of education around the world in comparison to Japan, which was not the intention of the topic. In retrospect, this attempt to focus directly on their home countries' educational beliefs and worldviews may have reinforced Denial and Polarization Defense orientations due to lack of knowledge of the topic.

During sessions four and five, after making adjustments to the group's seat arrangement, finding complimentary partners, and reworking the course content about

gender to promote more discussions about the similarities between cultures, they were able to work better as a team and collaborate more comfortably in smaller groups. They became more supportive of one another and started to form more complex opinions while giving reasons for certain gender roles both in their own country and abroad. They also attempted to offer better solutions for the gender issues and shared ideas readily with the entire group. The students were mainly working out of Minimization for the while sometimes focusing on their own culture exclusively (Polarization Defense) or in direct opposition to their own. This may have been because the tasks were not set up in a way to elicit enough similarities, or there may have not been enough time for some of the lower-level students to brainstorm their ideas.

After reflecting on Figure 4.6, it is obvious that a range of different mindsets were being used to construe the content of sessions six through eight by all of the members. These sessions were focused on analyzing Diversity and multiculturalism in hopes of giving students a better understanding of how to view situations from another worldview. While in some instances they were giving strong opinions about equality, some of those who were in lower stages of intercultural competence, tended to recoil and take stances grounded in the Japanese way of doing things rather than trying to view the situations from another perspective. Looking back at the activities, there are possibly two things that caused this issue. First, the content was too difficult for the students as they had problems discussing it openly with partners. It was not until after brainstorming or using scaffolding that they understood all of the topic. Additionally, they may have been uncomfortable talking about these topics and sharing their ideas, because they were afraid of saying something wrong or offensive in front of the other students. In this way,

although, the intention of sessions six through eight was to elicit Minimization and Acceptance, due to the nature of these topics, the content seemed to serve as a kind of double-edged sword in terms of promoting intercultural competence.

Case study: Individual interpretation. After an eight-week period of being exposed to sociocultural content, three students (Ken, Joe, and Karen) moved into Minimization, while three others (Ricky, George, and Louie) remained in Polarization Defense (Table 4.1). Additionally, according to the IDI, Ken, Joe, and Karen were all able to resolve some of their trailing orientations in the process of the research project. In this section, qualitative accounts are used "to elaborate on, refine, or further explain the quantitative findings" (Mertler, 2014, p. 104) for each individual student to theorize why students increased or decreased in their intercultural competence.

Ricky. Not only did Ricky remain in Polarization Defense after the eight-week intervention, the IDI showed that he decreased -5.04 on his IDI score. Additionally, he was not able to resolve any of his trailing orientations and actually decreased in all areas: Denial, Disinterest in Cultural Difference, and Avoidance of Interaction with Cultural Difference. What happened and why did Ricky revert to using lower-level orientations to construe culture?

In sessions one and two, Ricky seemed unwilling to express differences or similarities about other cultures. While many other students in the class came up with multiple perspectives for their brainstorms, he tended to only look at his own cultural norms and had problems comparing them to other countries. It was obvious that he was still remaining in a state of Denial or Polarization Defense, since he was having problems seeing equal value of cultures. Furthermore, he was showing signs of cultural avoidance

and disinterest when asked to interact with the students from other cultural backgrounds. Nonetheless, during session three he did show some promise in the group conversation as he added that he believed all immigrants with permanent residency should have the right to vote because all people are equal.

By session four, he was progressing from an intercultural competence standpoint, as he finally seemed to be interacting better with the international students and he started to note similarities that he saw between cultures. And after he stopped wearing the mask in class during session five, he seemed like a completely different student. He was speaking with confidence and seemed to have a grasp on the content. It was obvious that he was starting to construe cultural phenomenon through a lens of Minimization; however, it was noticeable that he still had some trailing orientation of Polarization Defense where he was simplifying the complexities of relationships from his own prior experiences and understanding.

In hindsight, sessions six through eight were more than likely introduced too early on in the semester for Ricky. He was not quite ready to confront issues of his own culture from a negative standpoint. This may have sent him back into the Polarization Defense range where he was only able to respect his own cultures way of doing things. For example, when he was asked to look at problems faced by people from other cultures living in Japan, he decided to propose how they needed to change to live in Japan rather than viewing the issue from another worldview. He added that he would do the same thing if he were in their position, but he was only speculating; it is most likely that he would retain his Japanese worldview and behaviors even if he were in another country. Furthermore, he was only able to answer one focus group question and chose to look at

the differences between Japanese and Americans. More reflection on his work made the teacher-researcher realize that during the entire eight-week period he was only writing about differences between Japan and other countries; hence, being another reason why he fell back into Polarization Defense in the end.

Ken. After undertaking the socioculturally modified curriculum, Ken made one of the strongest advancements and was able to increase his IDI score by +9.54, moving him into the Cusp of Minimization. He was able to resolve his Denial and Disinterest in Cultural Difference. However, according to the IDI, he was still using Polarization Defense and Reversal to deal with new cultural phenomena. How was Ken able to make such incredible gains and what can account for his use of prior orientations?

In the first session, Ken was using Minimization tactics to express opinions about other cultures and citing similarities to Japan with facts to support his ideas. Nevertheless, during sessions two and three it was obvious that he was still using some of his trailing orientations (e.g., Denial and Polarization Defense) during the later discussions. This was especially true for session three where his nationalism might have got the best of his judgment. He began suggesting that immigrants should learn Japanese and worried about how the government would have to support them because they could not make enough money to survive in his country. In his defense, he may have been just agreeing or going along with his partner or group members because he did not want to stick out.

While discussing gender roles in sessions four and five, Ken again showed strong signs of Minimization. However, when speaking with Joe he was able to speak more deeply about the problems gender roles cause and noted that women tend to have more power in China then men. In this way, he was falling back on his basic understanding of

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gender equality and categorizing differences rather than accepting things might be different some of the time. In retrospect, he almost started to use Acceptance tactics when attempting to discuss gender from an American perspective; nonetheless, he was actually using his trailing orientations of Polarization Reversal as he was being overcritical of Japanese society. This can account for the reason he was not able to resolve his trailing orientations. Overall, Ken was progressing and always brought new ideas and different ways of comparing and contrasting cultural phenomena. Furthermore, the comparisons he made were not just at the surface level. They were often very complex where he seemed to appreciate the cultural differences.

Throughout sessions six through eight, Ken's method of analyzing and explaining cultural phenomena rarely waivered. Additionally, toward the end, he was not only using Minimization to speak about the similarities of other cultures, but also a fair amount of Acceptance at the same time. He had the ability to think from a different cultural perspective and appreciated the cultural differences. This was a common theme in his journal as well as his worksheets in class. It was also obvious that his research and effective use of the abstraction stage of PBL was increasing his intercultural awareness, and in turn, his intercultural competence. During the focus group, he was also one of the only members who was able to answer questions at the Acceptance stage and admitted that it should be him who makes the adjustment to cater towards other cultures when they came to Japan so that they could communicate.

George. The curriculum adjustments seemed to have been the least beneficial for George's intercultural competence as he regressed the most, moving -9.23 from Polarization Defense to the Cusp of Polarization. This was the largest negative change of

all the other research participants. He decreased in two of his trailing orientations (Denial, Disinterest in Cultural Difference), but almost resolved his Avoidance of Interaction with Cultural Difference. Why did George have such a dramatic decrease in his IDI score and what allowed him to increase his trailing orientation?

During the first three sessions, George was using an array of orientations to construe the content inside and outside of class. At times, he was on the borderline of Polarization Defense, as he could mention some differences during his conversations, but then was unable to talk about similarities openly. However, there were instances in his journal and worksheet where he had written down his ideas to express similarities. That is, after the PBL task in session three, he listed up some commonalities and attempted to think of possible problems immigrants might have. He spoke about the problems that non-Japanese will have after coming to Japan. He felt that since they would be skilled professionals who will be in the IT sector, they will most likely be bringing their families and living a lifestyle very similar to his own family. In his case, he was struggling with a language barrier and was not able to express his ideas due to a lack of productive skills in grammar and vocabulary.

After sessions four and five, it was obvious that George was beginning to utilize some Minimization to explain his ideas, but was still showing some strong signs of Denial and Polarization Defense. In his journal, George mainly focused on the differences between Japan and other countries. At times, in class he would not offer any examples or explanations at all. He often skirted questions and said that there was not anything similar or different to Japan that he read in the textbook. However, after being paired with Louie, he had a chance to think outside of the Japanese context and the more

interaction he had with the Chinese students, the more comfortable he seemed to become with another culture.

George seemed to be utilizing Denial and Polarization Defense throughout sessions six through eight. While working with Louie, he tended to list many differences between cultures, and often did not fill in the similarities sections of his worksheets or make note of anything besides Japan in his journal. In reflection, this may have been due to the amount of time he was given to brainstorm. However, the change in his demeanor and body language toward the Chinese students and willingness to look at cultural phenomena with a different perspective showed that he was, at times, using Minimization and Acceptance. In the focus group, he was able to use Minimization tactics and find a common thread (Anime) between Japan and China. This is something that he most likely learned from his Chinese counterparts. Given a more time, George would have probably made a breakthrough; nevertheless, the intervention only lasted eight weeks.

Louie. Although Louie's IDI decrease was only -3.16, he was another student who remained in Polarization Defense. He was also not able to completely resolve any of his trailing orientations, but he was very close with his improvements of Denial and Disinterest in Cultural Difference after exposure to the sociocultural component. Why was Louie unable to transcend into Minimization and what can account for his improvements to his trailing orientations?

In session one through three, Louie seemed to be equally using his Denial and Minimization orientations to attempt to understand the content in class. In the first session, he was coming from a place of Denial and Polarization Defense as he seemed to favor his own country's way of doing things and only compared the differences. However,

toward session two and three he began using more Polarization Defense tactics, but also utilized Reversal as he tended to say things that sounded pro-Japan rather than complimenting his own culture. For example, he noted a lot of negative points for accepting immigrants into Japan. It seemed as though he was functioning in a mix of all four orientations, which may be a result of internalized beliefs from living in Japan. Nonetheless, he was also trying to make connections between his own culture and Japanese citing idioms and worldviews that were similar. He may also have been just going along in order to get along, and did not want to argue with his members, thus, causing them to lose face.

It would be hard to go as far as to say that Louie was accepting the similarities or differences of other cultures in sessions four and five; nonetheless, he was willing to admit that they existed. For these reasons, he seemed to be approaching Minimization more during this portion of the research project where he was able to compare similarities in which cultures deal with gender roles. There were times when Louie was able to look at some situations from a Japanese perspective; however, he was still using his trailing orientation of Polarization Defense as he tended to favor explaining the differences in the way that his country does things. This may have been a fault of the content set up, as students often asked him about China for their comparison, since they did not know about other countries from their own prior knowledge. Overall, living in Japan has enabled him to begin to develop a different worldview than he previously had before coming. Looking at the way he brainstormed his ideas and expressed his opinions in session six, he was approaching Minimization as he was mostly discussing similarities throughout the discourse.

It appeared that Louie was using a lot of different strategies for explaining cultural phenomena by sessions six through eight, but he was not consistent. He often had problems explaining himself and referencing ideas from the textbook. The content and quality of his journal also decreased week-by-week. It appeared he was only putting minimal effort into the class. Possibly, he may have become overwhelmed with all of the work in other classes. As an international student, it can be difficult to manage your time. Additionally, he was taking all of his other coursework in Japanese, which could have detoured him away from working on topics in English. Whatever the reason was, Louie's slow decline in reading and reflecting on the content in class can most likely attribute to his lack of progress into Minimization. In a sense, because he was not gaining more intercultural awareness from the content in class, he chose to fall back on what he already knew: Chinese culture.

Joe. Many different types of things happened to Joe over the span of eight-weeks; nonetheless, he was one of the participants who moved into Minimization by adding +5.81 to his IDI score. While Joe was able to resolve his Polarization Defense trailing orientation, all of his lower trailing orientations intensified. He also added one more trailing orientation (Avoidance of Interaction with Cultural Difference), which he did not have at the beginning of the study. Given his bicultural background and unique identity, it is no surprise that Joe's intercultural competence grew in a different way. How was Joe able to progress into Minimization and why did his trailing orientations change so differently compared to other students?

During the first three session, Joe often used Minimization to construe cultural differences, but his primary orientation was Polarization Defense. During session two, he

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showed a lot of signs of Minimization, but again through cultural disengagement. He was

not using Chinese with Louie and tended to act detached or disconnected to his home

country when discussing them. In this way, he may have been struggling to find a sense

of self in his group. By session three he was using a lot of Japanese with the other

students, but it was often to help the Japanese students who could not understand the

material. In the end, he was a strong participant in the group and helped others see the

advantages of allowing more immigrants into Japan.

While discussing the gender topics in sessions four and five, Joe was almost

exclusively using Minimization techniques. This was a big change from sessions one

through three and he tended to only focus on how cultures where similar. This was quite

unique considering his cultural background, as he was trying to act as a bridge for the rest

of his group members so they could see the connections. However, his attempt to help

everyone else may have changed how he was viewing different cultures only through one

lens. This may be the explanation for why his trailing orientations became worse as he

was completely disregarding differences to the point where he did not believe they

existed at all (or he did not want them to exist). By session five, his demeanor changed,

and regressed a little more towards Polarization Defense or Reversal when discussing

difficult topics.

In sessions six through eight, Joe used almost every orientation equally. In session

six he spoke about the idea of silence in comparison to other countries while noting not

only similarities, but also the differences. He had a lot of great conversations and seemed

to interact with everyone very well. Overall, he favored Minimization and had a strong

handle on why other cultures had similarities to Japan. At times, it was obvious that he

was coming from a place of Polarization Defense or Reversal as he tended to value Japanese culture even over his own Chinese heritage. However, he made a lot of great advancements and spoke from many different cultural points of view during session seven and the focus group. In this way, he was able to deeply talk about how to be accepted in different cultures that are not your own and get others to think about the complexities of living abroad.

Karen. It was very surprising to see Karen's intercultural competence jump +7.8 from Polarization Defense to Minimization. Karen was very similar to Ken, where she was able to resolve all of her Denial and Polarization trailing orientations; nevertheless, she was still using Polarization Defense and Reversal to make sense of the world around her. Why was Karen able to make such a sudden change and how did she resolve three different trailing orientations?

During session one through three, Karen seemed unwilling to express differences or similarities about other cultures in her conversations. Her journals and worksheets also seemed to only address Japan and she never really addressed another country. In this way, Karen tended to be in Denial and Polarization Defense a majority of the time with very few observable moments of Minimization. Her body language made her unapproachable to the other students and she was especially shy around Joe and Louie (the Chinese students). Even the teacher-researcher's interactions seemed to cause her to freeze up. It could have been because of the content or her personality, but she did not participate at all in group discussions as well. In retrospect, she was the only girl in the group which might have added extra stress on her.

In sessions four and five, something happened which is still difficult to understand. Although she was still using a lot of Denial and Polarization Defense strategies in session four where she focused completely on how Japan is different from other countries, by session six she began to slowly change and began opening up to ideas outside of her own culture. A lot of this can be credited to Joe and Ken who were sitting next to her. The combination of both their perspectives (e.g., a Chinese who understands Japanese culture and a Japanese who lived abroad) helped her build her intercultural awareness. The more she understood, the more she transferred the knowledge into intercultural competence. It was obvious that her English level was lower than the other group members, but being able to use Japanese also aided in her discovery of things she would have never known about.

Similar to the other group members, she utilized a lot of different mindsets to construe content in sessions six through eight. During week six she did not make connections with other cultures' similarities. Nonetheless, Karen seemed very prepared throughout sessions six and seven where she was taking copious amounts of notes in the textbook and from things she researched on her own online. She began to give a lot of opinions and responded well to the Chinese student Louie. By session seven she was even expanding on her ideas with Joe and Ken, where she could see and value the difference of countries while noting that there are complexities that cannot be generalized all of the time. Overall, a lot of her progress could be attributed to gaining awareness through both the content of the class and from her fellow peers.

Emerging Themes

Looking at the findings and interpretations from the qualitative data, there are a number of consistent characteristics, actions, and behaviors that can account for the way in which the students' intercultural competence changed. This section looks to explore some of the emerging themes that are ubiquitous among sub-groups in the interpretations in hopes of making some generalizations about the participants from this study.

Unchanged intercultural competence. There are many common threads connecting the students who were not able to move into Minimization after being exposed to the sociocultural component (see Appendix A). First, although the discussions in class and journal online were meant to elicit similarities, as part of the data collection design, the option was left open to the students to which path they would take. In this way, those students who looked exclusively at the differences seemed to polarize the world into a dichotomy of us vs. them. Next, the topic of diversity and multiculturalism in Japan and other countries may have come too early in the curriculum for some of the students who were at the lower levels of Polarization Defense. This topic may have cause some of them to hold more closely to their cultures' way of doing things and feel threatened by the idea of a more diverse country in the future. Furthermore, those who did not put much effort into the readings or their reflective journals online lacked the cultural awareness to make more complex comparisons between their own culture and another country during the abstract conceptualization phase of the PBL cycle. In a sense, they fell back on the stereotypes and generalizations about other cultures based on the implicit and explicit forms of socialization they had undergone throughout their lives. Finally, the content of the reading may to have been too difficult for some of the students'

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English comprehension. At times, it appeared that some of them were unable to discuss some of the topics rather than actually being unwilling to do so.

Increased intercultural competence. Those who were successful in increasing their intercultural competence also had multiple aspects in common. First, they tended to discuss cultural similarities and support them with their own experiences because they were able to draw on previous knowledge. In this way, support was given and complexities were discussed more deeply during in-class activities. At times, Ken and Joe were even attempting to view their cultures from a different worldview. They acted as bridges and shared their own intercultural experiences with their group members, which helped others see the advantages of diversity. In a sense, these two students attributed to the phenomenal gains of Karen who was able to build an immense amount of intercultural awareness through her interactions with them. Additionally, Karen was a vital character of the case study because she represented a majority of the students at JTU who had no prior experience with culture outside of Japan. The first contact she had with Joe and Louie, required her to use intercultural communication skills and allowed her to discover things about new other countries both implicitly and explicitly. Finally, all three participants were very diligent in their studies throughout the intervention. Their work inside and outside of the class was thoughtful and often showed that they had contemplated the content more deeply. Hence, building their intercultural awareness. This was especially true for the later sessions where the content became more challenging and required the students to gain knowledge from multiple sources and compare them.

Unique sub-case. After reviewing the data from the findings and interpretations, Joe's influence seemed to be a reoccurring theme in the promotion of other's intercultural

competence. Firstly, although seats changed weekly, he was sitting more closely to Ken and Karen for the majority of the study. This means he spoke to both Ken and Karen the most over the eight-week period in pairs and groups. At first, he appeared Japanese in his mannerism and intercultural communication methods; this may have been the reason it was easier for the other students to learn about another culture in contrast to Louie who may have seemed less approachable. In the long run, Joe was able to help others learn about Chinese culture through multiple lenses rather than one that was filled with monocultural ideologies. He often supported Karen in both English and Japanese in an attempt to make her feel more comfortable in expressing her opinions. Additionally, he worked with Ken and discussed many complex notions about the similarities and differences between cultures. When they worked in a group with Karen, it was obvious that she was building her cultural awareness and able to appreciate the similarities they were discussing.

This gives credence to acknowledging that students like Joe could very well be vital in the assistance of promoting intercultural competence in Japan as they can function as in-group individuals whose knowledge is more acceptable as it comes from someone who follows the cultural norms of Japanese society. Another possibility may be that the combination of (a) a Japanese person with no intercultural experience and (b) another Japanese person with extensive cultural experience with the combination of (c) someone with a different ethnic background that was raised in Japan, may be a sort of golden triangle that lays the groundwork for building intercultural competence in Japan. Figure 4.7 illustrates this more concretely to make a better visual representation of how the intercultural dependencies may lead to enhanced intercultural competence.
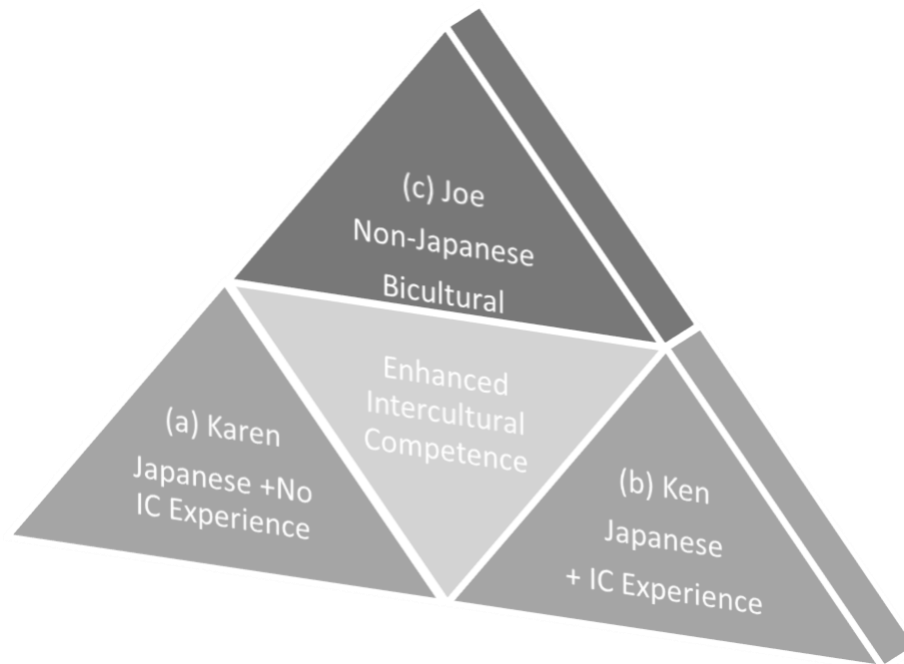
Figure 4.7 Unique Sub-Case for Building Intercultural Competence

Conclusion

The beginning of chapter four reviewed the problem of practice, research question, and purpose of the study. After that, the quantitative findings from the IDI were explained, including both the primary orientations and trailing orientations of the six research participants before and after an eight-week curriculum adjustment. Through an explanatory mixed-methods approach, the quantitative data was extended with a case study that included the field notes, journals, worksheets, and a focus group to contextualize each students' changes in intercultural competence. The case study was also quantified using meta-inferences to show the percentage of each mindset the students were using to construe cultural phenomena throughout the duration of the study. These findings were summarized and interpretations were given at the end of this chapter in an attempt to explain why some students were able to increase their intercultural competence while others struggled to move out of their current orientations.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Chapter five begins with a short introduction about the problem of practice and a summary of the findings from the curriculum adjustment to an Oral Communications (OC1) course at Japan's Technical University (JTU) using problem-based learning (PBL). After that, the research question and purpose of the study are reviewed in order to ground the focus for the following sections. Then, an overview and summary of the study explore the research methodology and instruments used during the data collection phase. Additionally, the overview and summary explain the major points of the study (both quantitative and qualitative) and establish the rationale for the new action plan. Lastly, this chapter ends with the implications, the action plan, and suggestions for future research. This chapter ends with a final conclusion where recommendations for the gaps in understanding that arose during the action research process are stated.

Introduction

Due to the declining birthrate and increasing aging population, more foreign talent are coming to Japan in order to supplement the workforce (Kawamura, 2016). In the next few decades, it is suspected that the number of non-Japanese residing in the country will jump from 2% to nearly 30% (Kim & Oh, 2011; Whitsed & Wright, 2013). The younger

generation of Japan have not yet had much contact with culture outside of their own; therefore, many worry that their intercultural competence may stunt their ability to deal with the diverse society which they will soon find themselves in after entering the workforce (Morita, 2013; Whitsed & Wright, 2013; Yamada, 2013). After teaching OC1 for a number of years at JTU, the teacher-researcher realized that a curriculum intervention was necessary to help students build their intercultural competence for their future benefit. Hence, for an eight-week period, an adjustment was made to the original OC1 curriculum using a sociocultural component (see Appendix A) to help students build their intercultural competence through PBL.

Findings from this action research study showed favorable results for the participants in terms of raised intercultural competence. Overall, according to the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI), three students (Ken, Joe, and Karen) were able to move from Polarization Defense to Minimization on the Intercultural Development Continuum (IDC) thanks to the implementation of sociocultural content in an OC1 curriculum using PBL. In this way, this dissertation showed that building cultural awareness in the domestic context was extremely beneficial for three of the research subjects in the sense that they were able to find the similarities that connected two cultures together.

Although, the other three subjects (Ricky, George, and Louie) did not increase their intercultural competence, they remained in the same orientation (Polarization Defense) after the curriculum adjustment. Hence, according to the IDI teaching the sociocultural content through PBL had no negative effects on the participants of the study. Additionally, the information gained from all members of this study was extremely

illuminating as it shed some light on why some students were more successful than others in increasing their intercultural competence. In the end, these findings can be used to create a better curriculum modification that is more effective in increasing a wider-range of students' intercultural competence at JTU.

Research Question

How does a socioculturally adjusted curriculum using problem-based learning (PBL) impact the intercultural competence level of Japanese students enrolled in an oral communications course?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this action research study was to increase the intercultural competence of JTU students studying in an OC1 course using an eight-week sociocultural component (see Appendix A) taught through a PBL approach. The main focus was to build cultural awareness through the cognitive dimension by having students compare and contrast different cultures with the teaching cycle ending with a PBL task requiring them to look at society through a worldview. It was hoped that students' cultural sensitivity (belief dimension) would be altered through this process with the goal of increasing students' intercultural competence (behavior dimension) in order to aid their intercultural communication skills for the future.

Overview and Summary of the Study

This action research dissertation utilized an explanatory mixed-methods approach in hopes of clarifying how students changed in their intercultural competence over an eight-week curriculum intervention using sociocultural content through PBL. In this way,

quantitative data was gathered to identify the change in the participants' intercultural competence while the qualitative data sought to explain how or why the changes came about.

At the beginning of the study, 22 students from an intact OC1 course took the IDI pretest to assess their initial intercultural competence, providing a diagnostic of the group and individuals' orientations on the Intercultural Development Continuum (IDC). After the IDI, a typical case sample of six students was selected who were representative of the intercultural competence spectrum in the OC1 class. Following this, the sociocultural component (see Appendix A) was adjusted to meet students' understanding of cultural aspects in accordance with the Intercultural Development Plan supplied with the IDI (Hammer, 2012). In this case, the six participants were in Polarization Defense, so the focus was on finding differences and then similarities between their home culture and other countries in hopes of moving them into Minimization.

During the study, field notes, journals, worksheets, and a focus group were used to contextualize the qualitative changes in the six students' intercultural competence through narrative analysis aimed at identifying best practices and establishing more reliability through data triangulation. Using the recommendations of Hammer (2012), this action research utilized an explanatory approach in order to allow "qualitative strategies . . . situate the individual, group, and/or organizational IDI profile results in the cultural experiences of the respondents" (p. 117). Hence, during the study, the students participated in discussions in the classroom while being observed using field notes to assess how the typical case sample of students' intercultural competence changed. This data was integrated with the participants' journals and worksheets to craft a case study.

Towards the end of the study, the IDI posttest was administered to investigate the students' changes in intercultural competence. Finally, the typical case sample of students participated in a semi-structured focus group to further explain the students' orientation on the IDC. During all stages of the action research project attempts were made to limit changes in the teacher-researcher's positionality in order to strengthen the trustworthiness of the study (Herr & Anderson, 2015).

Major Points of the Study

In chapter four, analysis of both the quantitative and qualitative data showed that using PBL with the addition of a sociocultural component (see Appendix A) was surprisingly effective in increasing three out of six participants' intercultural competence according to the IDI. A case study was also constructed an attempt to explain how some students were able to move from Polarization Defense into Minimization on the IDC, while others remained in Polarization Defense. This section covers the main points of the findings and interpretation of the data gathered over the eight-week period of the study.

IDI. During the progression of this curriculum intervention, six students' intercultural sensitivity was assessed through an explanatory mixed-methods action research investigation with a modified English as a foreign language (EFL) curriculum designed to promote intercultural competence through PBL. This action research project used IDI pretests and posttests to measure the change in students' intercultural sensitivity on the IDC before, and after being exposed to different cultural phenomena through the use of the intercultural textbook *Mirrors and Windows* (Huber-Kriegler et al., 2003). After the study was concluded, the quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics. Additionally, qualitative data from the case study were quantified and meta-

inferences were used to categorize the data according to developmental orientations on the IDC. As a group, the IDI showed that their collective mindsets remained in Polarization Defense. However, there was an increase in almost every area of their trailing orientations. As individuals, Ken, Joe, and Karen all moved from Polarization Defense into Minimization. Ken made the largest gain moving him to the Cusp of Minimization (83.91), and he was able to resolve both his Denial and Disinterest in Cultural Difference trailing orientations. Finally, Joe moved from the Cusp of Minimization to Minimization (87.83). While Joe was able to resolve his Avoidance of Interaction with Cultural Difference and Polarization Defense trailing orientations, he was not able to do the same with Denial and Disinterest in Cultural Difference. This may have to do with his unique situation of being bicultural. He may tend to utilize a go along to get along mentality in a society where he is an ethnic Chinese who was raised in Japan. However, Joe was the only student able to resolve his Polarization Defense trailing orientation, showing that he was preparing to shift his cognitive frame into Acceptance. The other three students (Ricky, George, and Louie) remained in Polarization Defense after the eight-week curriculum modification and were not able to resolve their trailing orientations.

Implications

Although the findings from this action research dissertation are not generalizable due to the sample size, there are a number of implications from this study. With this in mind, the results from both the quantitative and qualitative data make a case for using short-term curricula interventions using PBL to promote intercultural competence in

Japanese universities as it requires them to utilize multiple worldviews to solve sociocultural issues.

Only half of the members (Ken, Joe, and Karen) increased their intercultural competence to Minimization during this study, however, the findings are quite astounding given the short period (eight weeks) in which the intervention took place. Building intercultural competence is a very dynamic process—one which often assumed to take a long period of time in order to reach a stable state of cognitive complexity (Deardorff, 2006). Hence, this study showed that it may be possible to increase intercultural competence with under 12 contact hours depending on the method.

Using problem-based learning through the introduction of a sociocultural component (see Appendix A) showed promise for increasing intercultural competence with the subjects chosen for this study. In addition, Piaget's (1952) cognitive constructivist and Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivist ideologies played a large role in the way the students undoubtedly built and reconstruct their mindsets (Hammer et al., 2003; Niu, 2015; Paige & Bennett, 2015). This is because the constructivism inherent in PBL allowed them to interact within real-world situations and gain intercultural awareness, ultimately aiding them in the reconstruction of their worldview by analyzing cultural similarities and differences. This allowed for the successful students to move from monocultural to transitional mindsets as depicted by IDI.

As can be seen through the case study, the students were using many different kinds of orientations to construe cultural phenomena s the study progressed. Many of the participants used not only Minimization, but also Acceptance in an attempt to understand cultural phenomena when asked to solve social problems in their own country. In this

way, PBL may be another viable option for intercultural competence training as it requires students to critically assess prior knowledge and reconstruct it through collaboration (Hmelo-Silver, 2004; Savery, 2015); however, it may be more suitable when students are prepared for it both linguistically and interculturally.

Finally, it may be important for educators and trainers to balance the grouping of students to promote higher increases in intercultural competence. The qualitative data showed that the combination of a Japanese student with no intercultural experience, and another Japanese student with extensive intercultural knowledge along with a non-Japanese who has spent a majority of their life in Japan might be key for breaking down social barriers.

Action Plan

Action research can be traced back to Dewey's (1938) theory of inquiry and Lewin's (1946) action research spiral approach to problem-solving. Although there are many different methods to action research, in most models there are four main stages; planning, acting, developing, and reflecting which are cyclical in nature; thus, allowing iterations to build rigor and promote deeper understanding of the issue at hand (Ivankova, 2015; Mertler, 2014). However, action research is not always linear in nature. As Mertler (2014) points out, action planning is often conducted when reflecting on a completed study because there is always room for improvement in the next cycle of research. In this way, action research can be used to promote transformative changes in the organizations; teaching practices; learning environments; and in individuals through investigating, active testing, and reflection before, during, and after the action research process has occurred (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014; Efrat & Ravid, 2013). Two of these methods

will be applied in the action planning stage after the completion of this dissertation. First will be through individual action planning where the findings will be shared with like-minded individuals for feedback. The second will be team action planning where the teacher-researcher attempts to facilitate a collaborative action research project with instructors at JTU who share mutual research interests.

In order to suffice individual action planning, findings from this study will be shared at two different academic events. The first will be a symposium at a Japanese university focusing on using active learning in EFL. The teaching approach used in this dissertation will be proposed for higher-level elective courses in the Department of Languages. At the end of the symposium, a panel will be held where participants are able to ask questions and give recommendations concerning the applicability of the teaching methodology at the school. This will allow for a reflective process on the content as well as the sequence of the materials used in the study. Secondly, the findings from this action research project will be presented at an international education conference in Hawaii during a poster session. This will enable individualized conversations with similar-thinking lecturers on the reliability and validity of the data to ensure better research methodologies in the future.

As part of the action planning stage, in line with action research procedures for team planning (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014; Mertler, 2014), findings from this study will be shared with the Department of English at JTU's quarterly meeting for all faculty members to introduce the idea of teaching OC1 courses with the addition of a sociocultural component (see Appendix A). The effects of the investigation will be used to persuade other lecturers at JTU of the importance of intercultural competence as part

of oral communications courses in accordance with the identified problem of practice. The goal will be to educate faculty members on how they can participate in a joint research project aiming to promote intercultural competence in the classroom by utilizing, multicultural, bicultural, transcultural, returnee, and international students in their own courses. That is, other researchers will be invited to build new curricula promoting intercultural competence using collaborative action research as a transformative tool.

Suggestions for Future Research

Due to the constant reflection required in the action research process, areas for improvement were quite easy to identify for future studies. Furthermore, the rich data collected from the case study brought to light a number of issues concerning the content of the sociocultural component (see Appendix A). This section will explain the aspects of sociocultural content and sequence, scope, as well as methodological and theoretical aspects that should be considered for future studies.

Sociocultural Component

There were a few problems with the content as well as the sequence of material in the sociocultural component. First, because the selected textbook was based on the European model for developing intercultural competence, a majority of the readings were about Eastern and Western Europe, and the Middle East. Furthermore, the content was geared towards students who had more exposure to the English language from a young age. In this way, it may not have been accessible to all members of this study. Those who persevered, learned a lot about other cultures and countries that they had never known before, but it may have been too difficult to comprehend for others. For future studies, more scaffolding or custom materials related to the Asian context may be better suited for

students studying in Japan. Additionally, the order in which the content was introduced may have rushed some students who were not yet ready to think through an Acceptance mindset. This may be especially true for the PBL tasks at the end of each theme that repeatedly forced students to view their own society through a different worldview to solve social justice issues. It may be better to wait and introduce topics of this nature later in the sequence to ensure they are ready to deal with reflecting on their own culture through a more critical lens. Another approach could be to customize the curriculum to each students' needs rather than attempting to force all of them to take the same path. This may allow them to develop their intercultural competence at a more comfortable pace and rectify issues of recoiling back into Polarization Defense/Reversal or Denial orientations.

Research Methodology

The length, sampling, and arrangement of students definitely limited the success of this study, considering the complex nature of building intercultural competence. This study would have served much better as a longitudinal study that spanned over an entire year to watch the development of intercultural competence at multiple points. This would be a better representation of the students' developmental process of intercultural competence. Additionally, a more representative sample including more female subjects and international students would have been more beneficial. The current study only included one female and two Chinese students. Variation in gender, ethnic, and cultural experience could help broaden the case study and develop a richer data for analysis. From another prospective, because of the fact that Ken, Joe, and Karen all complimented each other so well in increasing each other's intercultural competence, it might be worthwhile

to test the golden triangle hypothesis. This could be done through a grounded theory approach where three members are selected based on their intercultural experience and ethnic background similar to that of the subjects in this study who increased their intercultural competence.

Theoretical Framework

Looking at the findings and interpretations from chapter four of this action research study, the case of Joe seems to be the most thought-provoking and could serve as a great focus for future studies using critical pedagogy. Straddling two different cultures may have put some stress on his identity. Hence, the conflicted changes in intercultural competence were much different from his fellow peers and he seemed to be struggling to find his true voice when speaking about *his* culture.

The teacher-researcher did not choose this path for the current study because of the worry that the classroom would contain only Japanese students. However, the IDI brought to light one special sub-case who seemed to function as a gateway between cultures. In this way, rather than looking at intercultural competence directly, it may be more worthwhile to see how students of this nature deal with identity and balancing two different cultures while working within the systems of oppression of Japan.

Although the restrictive, pervasive nature of oppression operates at many different levels and dimensions within society (Hardiman, Jackson, & Griffin, 2013; Kirk & Okazawa-Rey, 2013; Lee, 2013; Young, 2013), it is often more visible to the subordinate groups (Hardiman et al., 2013; Lee, 2013) rather than the dominant group (Johnson, 2013; Kirk & Okazawa-Rey, 2013; Tatum, 2013). Hence, making subjects like these

more practical for action research studies that promote social justice by looking at oppression that functions from the micro-, macro-, and mesa-level.

At the micro level, otherness is a prevailing factor used in establishing dominant and subordinate groups (Carlson, 2008; Harro, 2013; Johnson, 2013; Tatum, 2013), "reducing people to a single dimension of who they are separates and excludes them, marks them as 'other,' as different from 'normal' . . . and therefore as inferior" (Johnson, 2013, p. 16). This makes it possible to establish stereotypical, exotic, or romantic ideologies of different minority groups; thus, placing them in a lesser position to the privileged group (Kirk & Okazawa-Rey, 2013). Hence, at the individual level, oppression can be seen as functioning through the conscious or unconscious attitude or behavior toward a minority group member in the context of in-groups and out-groups (Hardiman et al., 2013). This could be a very interesting approach to investigate how in-groups and out-groups operate with these unique sub-cases when undertaking oral communication courses in Japan.

Additionally, at the macro-level it is clear that the acceptance of otherness, inferiority, and systems of oppression are socialized through interaction with family, friends, teachers, and institutions (Hardiman et al., 2013; Harro, 2013). In this way, oppression is multifaceted and functions within society through labeling the subordinate groups in juxtaposition to the dominant group's values and characteristics which is consistently reinforced at the individual, institutional, and cultural levels of society (Hardiman et al., 2013; Kirk & Okazawa-Rey, 2013). According to Hardiman et al. (2013), it is obvious that oppression also exists at the institutional level including family, religion, and education. "Social institutions codify oppression in laws, policies, practices,

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and norms . . . that maintain and enforce oppression [which] are intentional and unintentional" (Hardiman et al., 2013, p. 28). This path of research could also be fruitful if working directly with other educators in Japanese universities to see how students of different ethnicity are treated in the EFL classrooms or institutions of higher education.

The final dimension of oppression is at the societal and cultural level, or what is sometimes referred to as the mesa-level. These are the ideologies that are ingrained in our culture's belief systems "and often serve the primary function of providing individuals and institutions with the justification for social oppression" (Hardiman et al., 2013, p. 28). Furthermore, the idea of good and evil, deviance and the way life should be lived are all aspects in the norms of this dimension (Hardiman et al., 2013). In a sense, this level of oppression can be seen in the light of what Johnson (2013) considers a reality that is socially constructed where different people are designated to a certain group depending on how culture or society's norms deems fit. This type of research project may be more difficult to construct without a grant and would require a lot of interviewing and surveys at large scale in many facets of Japanese education; hence, possibly outside of the scope of feasibility.

Conclusion

In the field of education, action research can be seen as a highly pragmatic approach, since it promotes triangulation through multiple sources of data in order to achieve its goals (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014; Mertler, 2014). As Dana and Yendol-Hoppey (2014) point out, the use of multiple instruments leads to more "opportunities for learning when different data sources lead to discrepancies" (p. 134). This allows for a clearer picture of phenomena to be revealed through both qualitative and quantitative data

collection instruments (Creswell, 2014; Ivankova, 2015). Through a mixed-methods approach, both the IDI and a case study were used in this study to better explain the intricate issues of intercultural competence by looking at multiple sources of data to explain how a curriculum adjustment using a sociocultural component (see Appendix A) and PBL affected six students' intercultural sensitivity over an eight-week period.

Developing intercultural competence is often seen as an ongoing process and cannot be obtained simply through a single event, such as a study abroad experience without guidance (Deardorff, 2006; Kawamura, 2016). In the realm of intercultural competence building, many reliable teaching methods have been developed (e.g. intercultural coaching or content-based learning), which can help learners become more aware of other cultural ideologies while making opportunities for teachers to assess students' acceptance to new perspectives (Deardorff, 2006, 2011; Moeller & Osborn, 2014; Sinicrope et al., 2007). These methods can eventually help students increase their intercultural competence and open-mindedness (Hammer, 2015; Paige & Bennett, 2015). Looking at the findings from this action research dissertation, PBL may compliment these teaching approaches by promoting active, collaborative participants who are on a quest to construct meaning of the world around them (Barrows & Tamblyn, 1980; Hmelo-Silver, 2004). That is, rather than experiencing education through a traditionalist methodology where students are required to memorize and restate information taught to them, students needed to experiment and find their own path to enlightenment through first-hand experiences (Schiro, 2013) allowing them to construct a different framework for understanding cultural phenomena.

A number of different models for the assessment of intercultural sensitivity have been established in the past; however, the IDI was chosen because it is one of the most noteworthy instruments for collecting quantitative data (Sinicrope et al., 2007) as it has been rigorously tested for reliability and validity (Fantini, 2009; Hammer et al., 2003; Sinicrope et al., 2007). Though the IDI is a commercial product, it provides a far superior assessment of intercultural sensitivity, as this 50-question assessment tool is cross-culturally certified (Fantini, 2009; Sinicrope et al., 2007). It has also been "back-translated from English into multiple languages [including Japanese], measuring an individual's or group's position along the intercultural developmental continuum" (Hammer, 2015, p. 486). Using a pretest-posttest methodology, the IDI utilizes respondents' answers to illustrate their level of intercultural sensitivity in terms of their predicted intercultural competence plotted on the ICD. The IDI allows researchers to predict "how an individual construes or makes sense of cultural differences, and the experience of difference based on those constructions" (Paige & Bennett, 2015, p. 521). Although previous versions of the IDI used the DMIS (Hammer, 2015; Hammer et al., 2003; Paige & Bennett, 2015; Sinicrope et al., 2007), version three (V3) now uses the IDC, which can be used as a marker for intercultural competence ranging from monocultural to global/intercultural mindsets (Hammer, 2011, 2012). The orientations are Denial, Polarization Defense, Polarization Reversal, Minimizations, Acceptance, and Adaptation. "The IDI can be used to assess an individual's level of intercultural competence" (Hammer, 2012, p. 117).

The results from the IDI can be used as a diagnostic assessment tool to access students' worldviews as they were in this dissertation where the IDI informed the

selection of the typical case sample and construction of the sociocultural component (see Appendix A). Furthermore, the served as the main data collection tool for this study. Hammer (2012) also admits the value of qualitative data to explain the results of the IDI; however, suggests that instruments such as focus groups are more effective in gathering students' beliefs rather than interviews, because interviews tend to be projections of participants' ideal self. Hence, this study used field notes, journals, worksheets, and a focus group to create a case study in order to better understand how students' intercultural competence developed. Data from all of the sources were tagged, sorted, and quantified using databased meta-inferences in order to better summarize the mindsets they employed to construe cultural phenomena.

Findings from the IDI in this study showed that the intercultural competence as well as trailing orientations of three students increased where they were functioning through Minimization rather that Polarization Defense after undergoing an eight-week socioculturally modified curriculum using PBL. Even though the other participants remained in Polarization Defense; the results from the study are very impressive regarding the short-term nature of the intervention. Those who were not successful, most likely had issues either with their English level, motivation, personality conflict, or dwelled on only the differences of culture rather than the similarities throughout the study. The three successful students (Ken, Joe, and Karen) all attempted to look at complexities of culture, finished all of the reading as well as assignments, and (besides for Karen) had previous knowledge they could share with each other about cultural experiences.

The reflective process of this action research dissertation allowed the teacher-researcher to identify many limitations of the study and plan for better research projects

in the future. The way in which the content was constructed as well as the order in which the students learned about other cultures, may have inhibited some of the participants' ability to move into Minimization. That is, the level of the materials may have been too challenging or not closely related to their prior knowledge. Furthermore, the length the study may have not allowed for a completely holistic view of the participants changes in intercultural competence. Future studies will attend to these issues in order to develop better research driven choices in the classroom.

The teacher-researcher found that the interaction of Karen, Ken, and Joe led to the most increase in intercultural competence. The combination of their knowledge and skills require future investigation to build a theory of the best approach for promoting intercultural competence in Japan. Also, Joe was instrumental in the change of both Ken and Karen's intercultural competence. By reviewing both the quantitative and qualitative data, it became clear that his experience was much different from the other students in his group and that he may be conflicted by some form of internalized prejudice due to being an ethnic Chinese who grew up in Japan. This brought to light another possible direction of research for the future where the teacher-researcher could focus on the system of oppression faced by minorities.

All of the lessons learned from this dissertation will be utilized in future presentations as part of the action plan, both for the individual and team action planning. The ultimate goal will be to use the research findings from this dissertation to persuade other educators to make an adjustment to their teaching practices, or otherwise join a collaborative action research project in order to promote social justice in the classroom.

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APPENDIX A: SOCIOCULTURAL COMPONENT

Problem Scenario	Identify Facts	Generate Hypotheses	ID Knowledge Deficiencies	Apply New Knowledge/ Abstraction	Overt/Covert Objectives
Schools and Textbooks **Week 1** Mirrors and Windows p. 69-78	Different kinds of teaching styles around the world.	Compare and contrast the different kinds of teaching styles to Japan.	Read about American schools and taking a test in Hungary.	Online journal: Compare the similarities and differences in education styles in the world.	Japan is different, but also similar to other countries; Education is used as a tool of socialization.
Schools and Textbooks **Week 2-3** Mirrors and Windows p. 69-78	Sources about institutional racism in American Schools. Look at different idioms that embody prejudice.	Compare the actions of America *How can we solve unequal education in Japan?	Data about the current and projected number of non-Japanese expected in Japan. Discuss problems they may face in education.	Online journal: How do non-Japanese in Japan struggle with inequality. PBL Worksheet#1	Institutional racism is prevalent in all societies; Laws in Japan cause education inequalities for minority races.
Gender Roles **Week 4** Mirrors and Windows p. 39-49	Different types of gender roles in Japan.	Discuss the main points that make it difficult for women to be successful in Japan.	Research about gender related problems in Japan.	Online journal: How is Japan similar or different for other countries concerning gender inequalities.	Maternity leave and payment are unequal; Japan needs to break down sexism.
Gender Roles **Week 5** Mirrors and Windows p. 39-49	YouTube videos about the need for men to be involved in the Feminist movement.	Compare and contrast a country compared with Japan. *How can we solve inequality problems?	Compare different generations of Japanese with other countries in terms of prescribed gender roles.	Online journal: How Japan is similar or different to other countries regarding gender roles and policies. PBL Worksheet#2	Japan's gender roles are changing; Japan needs to adopt different policies to resolve inequalities.

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Diversity and Multiculturalism **Week 6-7** Mirrors and Windows p. 29-37	Links of articles explaining the different communication styles and body language.	Compare and contrast the different communication styles as well as body language.	Research about the use of social norms, hierarchy, silence, and distance in intercultural communication.	Online journal: How is communication different with. non-Japanese in intercultural communication.	In order to communicate with different cultures, students must understand cultural expectations.
Diversity and Multiculturalism **Week 8** Mirrors and Windows p. 29-37	Video about Hall's Model of personal space and factors prevalent in intercultural communication.	Discuss the cause and effects of the influx of foreign workers coming to Japan in terms of intercultural issues.	Research how other countries have different social norms and expectations.	Online journal: How can we deal with taboo subjects and cultural fax pas in intercultural communication.	Students need increased intercultural sensitivity to succeed in the changing cultural landscape.

(adapted from Mertler, 2014)

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Informed Consent Form
同意書

Principal Investigator (PI): Jesse R. Elam　研究者：エラム　ジェシー

Project Title: Enhancing Intercultural Competence through Problem-Based Learning: The Effects of a Socioculturally Modified Curriculum in Japanese Higher Education
研究テーマ：日本の大学における問題解決型学習を使用した異文化コミュニケーションの強化

　You are invited to participate in my action research project that aims at promoting intercultural competence. During the first eight weeks of your Oral Communication I class, you will be provided with intercultural training. You will be asked to read about different cultures and compare them with Japan outside of class in your personal journal. When you return back to class you will be discussing these different cultures in groups and doing different role-play exercises. It is believed that learning about different cultures will increase your intercultural competence, which will allow you to interact better with people from different countries, ultimately allowing you to be better English speakers.

　異文化コミュニケーションの研究を目的としたプロジェクトに参加していただきたいと思います。皆さんは、口語英語 1 の最初の 8 週間において異文化コミュニケーションの訓練を受けます。宿題で様々な国の文化を調べ、日本の文化と比較し、ジャーナルに自分の考えを記します。その後、授業内でグループに分かれ、自身の考えを他の生徒とディスカッションします。他国の文化の理解を深めれば、自身の異文化コミュニケーションのスキルが向上できると理論上では考えられています。英語のコミュニケーションスキルが強化できれば、他国の人々とコミュニケーションが円滑に進み、さらに英語のコミュニケーションスキルは向上します。

If you agree to be part of this action research project, you will take an Intercultural Development Instrument (IDI) to assess you initial understanding of cultural differences; you may be asked to take this again at the end of the eight weeks. Students will be chosen to do a 25-minute focus group at the end of the study. During the study, I will observe your conversations and journals for data. I will choose six people from the class who represent the highest similarity to the entire class. However, your data and identity will never be revealed and all information will be kept in my office in a locked drawer. The data will not be passed on to a third party. When the findings are published, it will be impossible to identify you individually from the data presented.

　本プロジェクトに参加していただける場合、最初に IDI というアンケートを実施します。アンケートの結果は自身の異文化適応能力を示します。アンケートは 1 週目と 8 週目の計 2 回実施し、最後の 8 週目には 25 分間のグループディスカッションを行います。研究実施中は、学生のディスカッションやジャーナルを観察します。また、IDI の調査により判明した異文化適応能力がより近い学生を 6 名選出します。研究で収集した個人情報は厳重に管理され、第三者に漏れることがないよう細心の注意を払います。また論文として出版する際には、匿名で載せます。個人が特定できるようなことはありません。

  Your participation in this project would be very much appreciated, but if, at any stage, you wish to withdraw, you may do so by emailing or contacting the PI. Furthermore, your participation can be ended by the PI due to complications. In either case you will not receive any penalty for the decision.

この研究プロジェクトには、履修者全員が参加してほしいのですが、何らかの理由で参加を取り消したい場合は、エラム先生まで申し出てください。参加、不参加に関わらず成績には一切関係ありません。

Do you have any questions? (Circle one)
質問はありますか？　　　　　　　　　　　No いいえ　　　Yes はい

Do you agree to participate? (Circle one)
同意しますか？　　　　　　　　　　AGREE 同意する　　　　　DISAGREE 同意しない

NUMBER _____　　　NAME _____
学籍番号_____　　　　名前 _____

APPENDIX C: IDI SAMPLE QUESTIONS

(adapted from Hammer et al., 2003, p. 436)

(1) Our country is probably no better than many others.

(2) It would be better to be a citizen of the world than of any particular nation.

(3) Our responsibility to people of other races ought to be as great as our responsibility to people of our own area.

(4) Any healthy individual, regardless of race or religion, should be allowed to live wherever she/he wants to in the world.

(5) Our schools should teach history of the world rather than our own nation.

(6) Our country should permit the immigration of foreign peoples even if it lowers our standard of living.

Response options ranged from strongly disagree to strongly agree:
(1=strongly disagree; 2=disagree; 3=slightly disagree; 4=slightly agree; 5=agree; 6=strongly agree).

The higher the score, the more world-minded the response.

APPENDIX D: FIELD NOTES

Date: _____

Observer's Name: _____

Quantified Instances from the Case Study		RICKY	KEN	GEORGE	LOUIE	JOE	KAREN
Denial unable or unwilling to express differences or similarities about culture, customs, or traditions.							
Polarization Defense/Reversal compared another country to Japan only in respects to differences in culture, customs, or traditions.							
Minimization compared another country to Japan with the addition of similarities in culture, customs, or traditions							
Acceptance displayed the ability to think from a different cultural perspective and take on another worldview.							
Adaptation showed signs of switching between worldviews and adjusting cultural norms.							

Field Notes	
Observations: saw, heard, thinking,	**Reflections**
RICKY	
KEN	
GEORGE	
LOUIE	
JOE	
KAREN	

Other Notes:

APPENDIX E: FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL

Denial and Polarization Defense/Reversal:
1: How are you feeling today? 1b: What did you think about the class this semester?
Probing Questions: Why is that? Has this class changed your thoughts about culture?

2: What types of cultural differences do you know about in your home country? (adapted from Hammer et al., 2003)
Probing Question: Do you think your country is becoming/will be a multicultural country?

3: Are there some problems or difficulties of having more immigrants enter your country? What for example?
Probing Question: How will your culture change after the population of immigrants changes?

Minimization and Acceptance
4: Do you think it is more important to pay attention to cultural similarities or differences? (adapted from Straffon, 2003)
Probing Question1: What does your culture have in common with (Country A)?
Probing Question2: How is your country different from (Country B)?

5: What do you think are some differences between (Country A) and your culture?
Probing Question1: When do you think about the differences between cultures?
Probing Question2: Are there possible any similarities between your culture and another country?

6: What abilities are important for communication with people from other cultures? (adapted from Fantini, 2007)
Probing Question: If you meet someone from (Country A), how would you first react? Why do you think you would do that? (adapted from Straffon, 2003)

7: What would be the most difficult thing for a person from another country to live in your culture?
Probing Question1: What type of advice could you give someone suffering from culture shock who just came to your country?
Probing Question2: How can you become accepted in a country that is not your own?

Adaptation
8: What do you have to change when communicating with people from other countries?

Probing Question: Do you know of different gestures or customs that are important in other cultures? How and when do you use them?

9: How do non-Japanese view living in your home country?
Probing Question: If you were a non-Japanese living in Japan, what would you do if you were faced with prejudice or racism?

10: What does it mean to have two or more cultural identities?
Probing Question1: Do you think you belong to more than one culture?
Probing Question2: Have you questioned the idea of your own identity? How or Why?