

**RAISING CULTURAL AWARENESS AS PART OF EFL TEACHING IN JAPAN**

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**BY**

**Andrew Neal Reimann**

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## **STATEMENT OF CANDIDATE**

I hereby declare that this thesis has not been submitted for any degree to any other university or institution. The sources of information used and the extent to which the work of others has been utilized have been indicated in this thesis in the manner conventionally approved in the research field in which the thesis fits. The approval from Ethics Committee has been obtained

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# **RAISING CULTURAL AWARENESS AS PART OF EFL TEACHING IN JAPAN**

## **ABSTRACT**

The complex, cause and effect relationship between language and culture has been an important area of inquiry in Applied and Socio Linguistics, ever since it was originally proposed within the theory of Linguistic Relativity (1929) and the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis (1940). These theories stated that the basic components of any language are indivisible from the perspectives of the users and therefore affect the way a certain language group views the world. Present research investigating this relationship is more concerned with how cultural differences influence the language learning process. Considering recent trends focusing on English as a Global Language and the diversity of learners and contexts, attention has shifted to developing cultural awareness and competence as an essential component of second language acquisition. With the steady increase of international travel, global economy, communication technology and the prospect that most people will have frequent and sustained contact and experience with other cultures in the future, it is no longer adequate that language learners merely have a command or a level of competence in a language. What is required, for full participation in an increasingly integrated world, is a deeper understanding and a comprehensive arsenal of meta-skills which will assist learners with acquisition and navigation of the finer nuances and sub levels of communication and interaction. Apart from language, what other skills do learners require? What are common problems that all people have when engaging with a new culture or in a new environment? How can these be taught or

acquired out of context? What is the role of the teacher in facilitating cultural awareness?

In seeking answers to these questions, this dissertation will critically review relevant research, analyze various contexts and methodologies and attempt to determine what type of approach is best suited to the needs and environments of today's EFL learners in Japan. In conclusion, some ideas will be proposed which may provide insight into the nature, and feasibility of a cross culturally appropriate pedagogy.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES, FIGURES AND APPENDICES.....	Viii
FOREWORD: RAISING CULTURAL AWARENESS .....	1
CHAPTER ONE: INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION AND CULTURAL AWARENESS.....	3
Defining Competence.....	3
From Theory to Practice.....	18
Pedagogical Considerations.....	36
Rationale.....	38
CHAPTER TWO: TEACHERS ROLES AND PERSPECTIVES IN RAISING CULTURAL AWARENESS.....	42
Perspectives in Practice; A Survey of Teacher's Needs.....	57
Method and Procedure.....	57
Subjects and Context.....	58
Perspectives and Practices.....	59
Results and Discussion.....	60
Differences in Teaching Experience.....	63
Differences in Teaching Context Diversity.....	68
Differences in Content and Method.....	71
Conclusion.....	75

Goals and Aims for Addressing Teacher's Needs.....	79
CHAPTER THREE: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF CULTURAL CONTENT IN EFL MATERIALS.....	81
Literature Review.....	86
Selection of Texts.....	94
Synthesis of Results from International Texts.....	99
Synthesis of Results from Domestic Texts.....	103
Analysis.....	104
International Publishers.....	104
Summary of Analysis.....	124
Domestic Publishers.....	126
Summary of Analysis.....	136
Conclusion.....	137
Implications for textbook writers and publishers.....	146
CHAPTER FOUR: CULTURAL AWARENESS RAISING THROUGH LEARNER ETHNOGRAPHIES.....	149
Rationale for Ethnographic Method.....	152
Rationale for Japanese Context.....	159
Cultural Awareness Raising Tasks.....	163
Context.....	168
Curriculum, Tasks, Materials.....	169

Perception and Perspective Analysis.....	174
Self and Group Awareness.....	178
Exploring Core Values.....	183
Participant Observation and Fieldwork in the Classroom.....	186
Local Ethnographic Research Project.....	189
Ethnographic Tasks; Engaging in Fieldwork.....	193
Reflections.....	200
Analysis of Ethnographic Tasks and Approach to Cultural Awareness	
Raising.....	201
Method.....	201
Procedure.....	202
Subjects.....	203
Results and Discussion.....	205
Research Methods.....	206
English and Communication.....	208
Cultural Awareness.....	210
Attitudes and Perspectives.....	211
Conclusion.....	213
 CHAPTER FIVE: SYNTHESIS.....	 218
 REFERENCES AND WORKS CITED.....	 223



## **LIST OF TABLES**

Table 1: Summary of survey results measuring teachers' attitudes towards cultural awareness raising.....	61
Table 2: Summary of cultural content and activities in textbooks published internationally.....	97
Table 3: Summary of cultural content and activities in textbooks published domestically.....	101
Table 4: Examples of ethnographic activities that can be done locally.....	173
Table 5: Questions to answer when exploring cultural behaviour.....	173
Table 6: Field note and reflection chart.....	188

## **LIST OF FIGURES**

Figure 1: Ambiguous images and illusions.....	177
Figure 2: Life experience timeline.....	181
Figure 3: Identity and critical incident activity.....	182
Figure 4: Diagram of cultural dimensions.....	195
Figure 5: Topic and hypothesis development chart.....	197
Figure 6: Diagram and flowchart of the ethnographic cycle.....	197

## **LIST OF APPENDICES**

Appendix A: Teachers needs and perspectives survey.....	235
Appendix B: Teachers needs and perspectives survey results.....	241
Appendix C: Survey of ethnographic research tasks and project.....	244
Appendix D: Ethnographic research tasks and project survey results.....	248
Appendix E: Students comments on ethnographic project participation.....	250
Appendix F: List of relevant publications.....	253

## **FOREWORD**

### **RAISING CULTURAL AWARENESS**

That language is inseparably intertwined with culture is by no means a new concept, originally proposed within the theory of Linguistic Relativity (1929) and the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis (1940), stating that the basic components of any language are indivisible from the perspectives of the users and therefore affect the way a certain language group views the world. Present research investigating this relationship aims to understand and explain differences in language learning and how contexts, cultures and methodologies affect each other and influence the overall learning process. In light of recent trends focusing on English as a Global Language and the diversity of learners and contexts, attention has shifted to developing cultural awareness and competence as an essential component of second language acquisition. With the steady increase of international travel, global economy, communication technology and the prospect that most people will have frequent and sustained contact and experience with other cultures in the future, it is no longer adequate that language learners merely have a command or a level of competence in a language. What is required, for full participation in an increasingly integrated world, is a deeper understanding and a comprehensive arsenal of

meta-skills which will assist learners with acquisition and navigation of the finer nuances and sub levels of communication and interaction. Apart from language, what other skills do learners require? What are common problems that all people have when engaging with a new culture or in a new environment? How can these be taught or acquired out of context? What is the role of the teacher in facilitating cultural awareness? In seeking answers to these questions, this study will critically review relevant research, analyze various contexts and methodologies and attempt to determine what type of approach is best suited to the needs and environments of today's EFL learners. In conclusion, some ideas will be proposed which may provide insight into the nature, and feasibility of a cross culturally appropriate pedagogy.

Recent literature (Kramsch, 1993, Byram, 1997, Canagarajah, 2002) on curriculum innovation and second language acquisition in general has determined an almost unanimous need for more globalised and context sensitive teaching methodologies, however, has been fairly inconclusive on how best to meet these needs. The following considers this previous research and endeavors to seek out a practical means of raising cultural awareness as part of regular EFL instruction.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION AND CULTURAL AWARENESS**

#### **Defining Competence**

On a theoretical level, notions of competence for describing language production are important for guiding researchers and inspiring teachers. However, what is the practical basis for determining competence? What are the skills, abilities and knowledge required for communication which constitutes an achievable form of competence? Understanding the processes of language learning and its ultimate goals in order to improve teaching, is arguably at the core of Applied Linguistics research. However, can there be an accurately defined and usable benchmark for describing language learning? Is it possible to teach something as abstract as language without clear definitions and benchmarks gauging progress towards competence? As a result of difficulties in forming any conclusions, focus on answering these questions has been largely divided as to whether competence is a reflection of correct form “linguistics applied perspective” or appropriate usage “applied linguistics perspective” or a combination of both (Widdowson, 2000:22).

Since its original proposal in 1965, Chomsky's notion of Competence, as a benchmark for language knowledge has been critiqued, modified and revised in order to better understand and describe the ultimate goals, abilities and realities of language learners and their contexts. Considering that the initial model only addressed the linguistic aspects of communication, Hymes (1972) added a social component claiming that Chomsky's model of *Linguistic Competence* failed to account for the complete range of skills and knowledge required in communication, focusing only on correctness of language while failing to consider appropriate usage. Understanding the rules of grammar, *Grammatical* or *Linguistic Competence* is only one aspect of Communicative Competence and is of little consequence without considering the requirements for appropriateness which are *Sociolinguistic Competence*. He defined this as the knowledge and ability that individuals need to understand and use linguistic resources in ways that are structurally well formed, socially and contextually appropriate and culturally feasible in communicative contexts. (Hymes, 1972). His model of Communicative Competence included four dimensions which he referred to as systemic potential, appropriateness, occurrence and feasibility. These were all considered essential factors in determining the accuracy and success of communication in a given context. This distinction between skills and knowledge, sparked a debate concerning differences of competence and performance and the

subsequent transferring of the necessary knowledge or skills as part of language teaching (Lee, 2006). One of the first viable pedagogies to emerge from Hymes' model and address these issues, was proposed by Canale and Swain (1980). Their framework for Communicative Competence elaborated on Hymes' dimensions and related them to language teaching curricula as a Communicative Approach. This model initially contained three components which included *grammatical competence*, *sociolinguistic competence*, *strategic competence* with a fourth, *discourse competence*, being added by Canale in 1982. Although there were many attempts to build on these models and create a practical communicative approach, most efforts overly focused on the linguistic elements and neglected the socio-cultural components (Byram, 1997: 8, Stern, 1983: 246). van Eck 1986,1991 working with the Council of Europe further expanded this model in order to provide a more general education for the learner which would include not only training in communication skills but also social and personal development, creating a more autonomous, "social responsibility" which he called Social Competence (van Eck 1986:33). This model which he referred to as Communicative Ability, as opposed to Canale and Swain's Competence, was made up of six dimensions which he labeled as follows: Linguistic, Sociolinguistic, Discourse, Strategic, Socio-cultural and Social Competence. Celce-Murcia et al. (1995) similarly extended Canale and Swain's model,

adding discourse competence as the key component of communicative knowledge and ability. Their model consisted of discourse, linguistic, actional, rhetorical, sociocultural and strategic competencies and included aspects of negotiation, turn-taking, problem solving and other nonverbal elements, in order to further account for non-linguistic, social and cultural components of communication.

These models tended to view language learning as a linear process and the learner as an incomplete native speaker, thus limiting the potential for communication, neglecting the learner's culture and communication style by failing to consider the context of communication or the learner's goals (Byram, 1997). Kramsch (1993) argues that the foreign language learner has the right to use the language for their own purposes and that the native speaker is not necessarily a feasible, realistic or appropriate model. Considering more intercultural contexts, native speaker models tend to inspire the wrong type of competence in that they force learners to switch between identities and cultures, abandoning one for the other rather than engaging them objectively and co-creating a mutually appropriate communication environment (Byram, 1997). Learners cannot possibly acquire the full range of knowledge necessary for all potential situations, cultures and contexts, therefore such approaches overly focusing on native speaker

proficiency and linguistic aspects of communicative competence, ultimately condemn most learners to failure. Gudykunst (1994) argues that ‘the processes operating when we communicate interculturally are the same as when we communicate intraculturally.’ His model of ‘perceived competence’ is context dependent and based primarily on psychological factors including sense of security, predictability, group inclusion, anxiety avoidance, as well as skills and knowledge which are needed to manage human relationships diffuse conflict and reduce anxiety. He therefore concludes that it is neither desirable, nor practical to aspire towards mimicking native behaviors as this will ultimately lead to unnatural communication by increasing detachment, discomfort and stress. To be intercultural communicators, “...learners need to see their role not as imitators of native speakers but as social actors engaging with other social actors in a particular kind of communication and interaction which is different from that between native speakers.” (Byram, 1997:21).

Byram’s model of Intercultural Communicative Competence, builds on previous examples highlighting the Socio-cultural elements, but more significantly establishing that the ultimate goal of language teaching should not be a native speaker but an intercultural speaker. In addressing the requirements for an intercultural speaker,



Byram (1997) proposed a comprehensive model of intercultural communicative competence geared towards developing both culture-specific and general knowledge and skills for learning about, becoming involved in and successfully negotiating intercultural communicative interactions. This model consisted of five “Savoirs” (knowledge, ability and skills required to participate in communication in any context) including: (savoirs) knowledge of self, others, individual, society and interaction, (savoir comprendre) skills of interpreting and relating, (savoir s’engager) political and critical cultural awareness education, (savoir apprendre/faire) skills of discovering and interacting, (savoir etre) expanding attitudes by reflecting, relativising self and valuing otherness. There have been many attempts to develop this model and transform it into a viable curriculum or critical pedagogy (Council of Europe 2001, Sercu 2000, Moran 2001). However, due to the ambiguous nature of culture, particularly, the abstract quality of content, problems of assessment and other issues of context and methodology these have met with limited success. In considering what to teach, especially in terms of cultural knowledge, which is perhaps the most concrete/teacher friendly form, the question persists as to whose culture to teach; target language culture, native speaker culture. How representative is this cultural knowledge of the group with which communication may take place? Is it at all relevant to the learner or the ultimate goals of

intercultural communication? “It is dangerous to present culture as if it were unchanging over time or as if there were only one set of beliefs, meanings and behaviors in any given country.”(Byram, 1997:39) As a result of the difficulty in narrowing or pinpointing the aspects of culture that effect communication, EFL has limited its scope to the obvious, more concrete and readily teachable aspects of culture. Therefore most methods, materials and texts distinguish cultural knowledge from language skills without integrating any of the skills which would lead to intercultural communicative competence.

As a result of the difficulty in transferring ambiguous content to curriculum, only parts of such models are applied or adapted to the classroom, often omitting or ignoring the essential components dealing with actual communication. In the case of Byram’s model, which is perhaps one of the most comprehensive and workable, culture is not addressed directly but loosely alluded to in terms of common beliefs, meanings, values or behaviours. Byram focuses more on the underlying skills and cultural knowledge necessary in negotiating, developing and maintaining relationships, further proposing that on a psychological level there is little difference in communication whether it is cross cultural or among members of the same community.

Current literature addressing aspects of Byram's model and exploring potential for curriculum innovation in second language acquisition, while advocating an almost unanimous need for more globalised and context sensitive teaching methodologies, has been fairly inconclusive on how to best meet these needs.

Merryfield (1993) comments that this type of global education is one of the more ambiguous innovations in education today, as it is by no means clear what and how to teach in an objective and beneficial way. Most approaches and methodologies have been lacking in substance in that they either impose culture or use culturally specific methods in inappropriate contexts. "Traditional emphasis in cultural learning in the classroom has been on the acquisition of knowledge about another country...involving decontextualised factual information with minimal relationship to language learning."

(Byram, 1997:65) Typical texts and incorporations of cultural content offer largely trivial, unrelated and irrelevant facts on the target culture and as a result are limited in potential to learning about cultures rather than learning from them. Widdowson (1998b:331) suggests that although it is necessary for learners to develop a basic capacity for cultural awareness, it is problematic to introduce the necessary skills and strategies within the context of the classroom. He argues that the classroom can create a community with its own cultural context providing relevance necessary to acquire these

new competencies and most importantly a forum where language and culture are learned from rather than about. This supports Gudykunst's model in which competence is largely perceived, psychological and context dependent. If relationship building and anxiety management skills are indeed essential for intercultural communication then these are perhaps best developed initially in a local classroom.

There have been various suggestions as to how to cope with the diversity, idiosyncrasy and specialized needs of learning environments as well as transferring control of teaching styles and methodologies from largely Western dominated pedagogy to local teachers who can use their own experiences to determine and develop more unique, context specific and valid approaches (Holliday 1994, Pennington 1995, Thomas 1997, Canagarajah 2002, Nguyen 2006). Popular methods and strategies which characterize this dominance, namely critical thinking, autonomy, student centered, communicative approaches are culturally biased and not necessarily appropriate across contexts (Aoki and Smith 1999). Similarly, many common classroom practices such as content based or communicative approaches that require interaction, group work, learner initiative taking and creativity may be in direct opposition to the learner's culture. In considering the Japanese context, Takanashi (2004) concludes, based on an

extensive survey of preferred teaching and learning styles and subsequent results, that the typical methodologies used in Japan today are opposite to and in conflict with Japanese communication styles and are thus negatively effecting learning outcomes. Texts and methodologies need to consider not only the diversity of culture of the target language but that of the learner's culture as well. The majority of materials providing cultural content, tend to overgeneralize, reinforce stereotypes and in terms of fostering awareness, may do more harm than good (Sargent, 2004). Examining content and language in several leading texts and materials in Japan Aoki, et al. (1999) conclude that definitions of culture and pedagogy must be more flexible or modified in order to avoid misconceptions and stereotyping. They propose that the pigeonholing of cultures and teaching methods in such dominant media is counterproductive and that teachers and students need to collaborate to form a "negotiated culture" or mutually created culture in the classroom and determine an appropriate methodology accordingly. Further support for the need for more context/learner sensitive approaches comes from Norton's (2001) survey of varying levels of learner participation and non-participation in language classes. In explaining these, she discovered that learners have different psychological investments in various members of a community and tend to feel least comfortable communicating with those members with which they have the most

invested. Based on the levels of emotional, social or personal investment in such relationships, learners tend to create imagined communities and imagined identities within their cultural spheres, the role, status or position of which influences affective factors including confidence, comfort and anxiety levels and consequently, subsequent levels of participation. In order to accommodate diversity, acknowledge learner differences, imagined communities or identities and prevent the onset of non-participation, Norton suggests that teachers make necessary modifications by considering learner investments and encouraging them to envision themselves as living in multiple communities with multiple identities.

Preisler (1999) observes similar deficiencies in his study of EFL contexts in Denmark. Investigating the appropriateness of Standard English across various domains, he distinguishes between English from above (international/external communication) and English from below (local, personal and specific communication), and identifies several sub groups within the community that have quite different needs, uses and means of learning English. Based on an in depth survey of sub cultures and language goals, he concludes that for maximum effect and success, the variety of English taught should be presented in its central, cultural contexts and compared with corresponding

contexts in the learner's own culture (Preisler, 1999:249). In one case after determining that one of the main goals of the learners was to be able to understand lyrics and communicate about certain music genres in English, Preisler used the relevant music and language of the sub culture to motivate and inspire the students. In this way, only the content is standard and the methods, strategies and goals are left up to the teacher or determined by the sub-domains specific needs.

Canagarajah (2002) also argues that more neutral approaches such as those learners may be more familiar with or used to in non-language learning contexts and also consider diversity are required. He proposes that in order to create a culturally sensitive method, the typically deductive process, beginning at the top and moving to the bottom, starting with a method, evaluating the context and finally determining any modifications and adaptation requirements necessitated by the particular environment must be reversed and an inductive (bottom to top beginning with contextual evaluation and designing appropriate methodology based on subsequent analysis) form of method generation be implemented. Widdowson (2005) echoes this, stating that teachers need to be active change agents evaluating their teaching environments and creating appropriate methods, rather than passive recipients of innovation from detached researchers who are

not familiar with specific needs. Ellis (1997) identifies a significant gap between research and practice and suggests that teachers need to engage in active research, and researchers must make their findings more accessible and applicable to teachers.

Canagarajah's inductive process begins with teachers, context evaluation and strategy identification and ends in the development or selection of an appropriate format. One way in which this has been implemented is in having teachers conduct ethnographic research within their classes in order to get a more complete perspective of learners' abilities, weaknesses and preferences (Frank et al. 2004). Canagarajah's rationale for this stems from the premise that teachers will modify and customize any established method in order to suit their specific needs regardless of what is prescribed and that it is unlikely that any universally appropriate method will ever be achieved. The model he offers entails the identification and development of dominant learning strategies.

Canagarajah argues that the flexible and context specific nature of strategies makes them more generalizable and transferable across cultures than methods. He therefore suggests starting with broad pedagogical principles which are specialized and modified as the context is explored and its unique characteristics are discovered. Further support comes from the fact that there remains much contention in establishing the superiority of one method over another. According to Canagarajah, teachers should move away



from using predetermined methods and rely on their own experience and intuition to determine what is appropriate. This “non-method” approach which seeks to explore and describe what learners do, has the potential of a “context sensitive or community specific” model. Canagarajah applies this approach to teaching writing and adapts new techniques based on the students’ learning styles and preferences. In this way he accommodates the diversity of potential cultures within a single class. He goes further to conclude that learners require access to different cultures in order to develop a more complete competence. “It is far better to teach students the skills of negotiating languages and cultures than to make them accommodate to one language/culture at a time.” (Canagarajah, 2002:146). In order to foster the development of these coping and negotiation strategies, he also exposes the learners to unfamiliar strategies with which they may be uncomfortable and are counter to their traditional learning styles (such as collaborative group work in a more introverted context). Through this, learners are able to develop a deeper awareness, discover limitations and exercise creativity and critical thinking. Canagarajah concludes that methods blind, limit and restrict teachers as to what they are able to do and to what is best for their specific context. Strategies, on the other hand, encourage exploration, sensitivity and accommodation as well as liberate teachers to pursue their own agenda, research or paradigm.

Although Canagarajah's strategy based approach has universal potential, it does not fully escape the bonds of method-based pedagogy. Without resorting to a form of "chaos" theory driven approach, or a random "everything is ok" approach, Canagarajah's model cannot stand on its own. Such an approach requires some kind of benchmark or guidelines in order to be feasible and acceptable to teachers, students and administrators. How should teachers begin to use their experience and intuition effectively? How should new and inexperienced teachers be initiated into such a paradigm? How can teachers introduce strategies? What are the best means of raising awareness? How can any standards or levels of quality be established or maintained? How can any predictions about learning outcomes be made? Ideally, Canagarajah's model should be further developed and extended to include more specific elements within the realm of cultural negotiation as well as language and laying down a framework upon which more covert/underlying cultural skills and strategies common to both linguistic and nonlinguistic negotiation, navigation and success are introduced and developed to create an overall communicative, intercultural competence.

## **From Theory to Practice**

In light of recent studies focusing on the implications of English as a global language, used by an increasing diversity of learners in various contexts, research has begun to examine the role of cultural awareness and competence as an essential component of second language learning and teaching (Crystal 2005, Rajagopalan 2004, Widdowson 1994). With the steady increase of international travel, global economy, communication technology and the prospect that most people will have frequent and sustained contact and experience with other cultures in the future, it is no longer adequate that language learners merely have a command or a level of purely linguistic competence in English. Our “task”—pun intended—can be understood like this: “Today it is not sufficient for learners to know how to communicate meanings; they have to understand the practice of meaning making itself.” thereby developing a symbolic competence (Kramsch 2006). What is required, now more than ever, is a deeper understanding and a comprehensive command of meta-skills which will assist learners with acquisition and navigation of the finer nuances and sub levels of communication and interaction.

Tomic (1998) identifies the need for a “cultural re-thinking” in language teaching stating that language is only one aspect of communication and that intercultural awareness is at the heart of communicative competence. This shift in focus needs to be developed into a critical pedagogy, building interpersonal skills such as those proposed by Gudykunst (1994), which will prepare learners cognitively and affectively for exploring other cultures. Some of the skills and qualities which should be included or developed by such an approach are as follows: critical thinking, tolerance for ambiguity, open-mindedness, non-judgmentalness, empathy, communicativeness, flexibility, adaptability, curiosity, warmth in human relationships, motivation, self-reliance, strong sense of self, tolerance for difference, perceptiveness and the ability to fail (Gudykunst 1994). Rather than teaching about differences and how to cope and act appropriately, conflict, bias, inequality, communication breakdown and culture shock, should be experienced and recreated through critical incidents, role plays, simulations and other activities which will allow learners first hand, to use and develop the skills, tools and awareness they require to function appropriately in the real world.

Although EFL in Japan has recently been pursuing more innovative and multidisciplinary approaches to improving communication and language skills training

(Aoki 1999, Stapleton 2000) basic methods and materials remain for the most part unchanged, there is much scope for further research and improvement. Areas of concern which should be investigated further include exploring learner differences in cultural orientation, observing and describing learning and communication styles and strategies and overall attitudes, evaluating and analyzing concerns and perceptions of language learning and usage. In the past, before the advent of the information technology revolution, memorizing forms, structures and prescriptive rules was indeed a useful skill. Information was much less accessible and came at a premium. Being able to remember and recall information easily provided a significant advantage. Although these abilities are by no means obsolete, in today's world of superfluous information, having a higher ability for critical analysis, organization and information processing will be of the greatest advantage. It is essential that education reflect these changes in society's requirements of learners. Rote memorization and repetition have been replaced by critical thinking strategies such as analyzing, evaluating and organizing, learning how to learn and categorize and act on/use resources appropriately as necessary skills for communication. The research described here investigates both learners' and teachers' preferences and needs, by examining various contexts, methodologies and individual differences, critically reviewing relevant literature, analyzing context and feasibility of

methods and materials By conducting a comprehensive critical analysis and survey of the contexts, subjects and materials involved in language learning, it should be possible to determine what type of approach is best suited to the needs, environments and learning styles of today's EFL learners. The final goal is to gain insight into how a cross culturally appropriate pedagogy, geared towards raising multicultural or cultural awareness and overall communicative competence, might be developed.

In order to account for and accommodate the various needs, styles and contexts for communication, the following proposes a more diversified and less context dependent/specific model of competence. Building on models put forward by van Eck (1986) and Byram (1997) advocating socio-cultural and personal development model described herein will entail an Ethnographic Approach based on a broader set of skills and abilities which will be referred to as Meta-cultural Competence.

Much of the recent research investigating the relationship between language and culture, has focused primarily on expanding previous communicative competence models in order to identify and develop specific skills, more conducive to intercultural scenarios and better suited to modern language learners interacting in increasingly

globalised or multicultural settings. The subsequent pedagogies and approaches which have evolved from this research have been, for the most part, geared towards specific contexts and target language cultures with the goal of preparing learners to enter, interact with and ultimately communicate with members of those specific target cultures (Kramsch, 1993, Byram, 1997, Moran, 2001, Sercu, 2006). As a result, most cultural content in the classroom has been largely overt, “tourist culture” or limited to abstract and irrelevant facts which are often presented with bias and consequently do little more than reinforce stereotypes, and exaggerate or misrepresent the culture. “To date the teaching of culture largely consists of the passing on of information regarding various dimensions of the target culture, such as geography, education, food and drink, tourist highlights, politics, the economy, etc. “(Sercu, 2002:62). Texts produced by some of the major publishers in Japan include suggestive titles such as “Identity (Oxford), World View (Longman), World Link (Thompson) and claim to include cultural awareness raising content and exercises. Nevertheless the content remains in the form of simple contrastive analysis activities or information exchanges which fail to actively engage the learner, offer opportunity for critical analysis or reflection and promotes passive learning of facts and culture specific trivia out of context. With regard to cultural content in TESL or TEFL, the majority of materials and texts are based on models of

American Culture and are thus geared towards developing a very limited, loosely defined and not necessarily appropriate brand of cultural awareness. (Canagarajah, 2002, Tomic, 1998, Chamberlin-Quinlisk, 2005, Widdowson, 1998a).

Although much has been written in criticism of such approaches and materials (Kramsch, 2005, Byram 2004, Robertsetal, 2000) there are few suggestions on how to improve methods, materials or models in a way that would lead to the development of a practical, appropriate and viable pedagogy. Considering the growing demand and increasing need for more well-rounded globally aware, communicatively competent societies, most research in the field does not focus directly on how best to achieve this. Sercu (2005) explores applying Byram's 1997 model towards developing teacher knowledge. Although his list of requirements for the Intercultural Teacher are quite extensive, distinguishing between linguistic and socio-cultural components, his concept of intercultural skills, abilities and knowledge remain abstract and he does not address the fundamental issue of how to train teachers in this regard. While focusing on teachers and learners perspectives about culture and communication, the practical elements of classroom methods, activities and materials are not addressed. Although there is a growing trend towards further exploring cultural content in language learning as a



“pedagogy of difference”, in which learners are taught to perceive diversity as a resource rather than an obstacle (Giroux, 1993), this does not indicate any kind of paradigm shift and much is left to be explored.

Defining culture, deciding how and what to teach, desired outcomes and methods of assessment are serious points of contention in forming any kind of cultural awareness curriculum. Considering that many teachers in Japan favour the simplicity and predictability of more overt “tourist culture” content and materials (Stapleton, 2000) and that the majority of texts and materials focus on either western based, overgeneralized or stereotypical examples of target culture, achieving any kind of shift towards a critical or ethnographic approach to cultural awareness is challenging.

Dlaska (2000) advocates making culture learning the “overriding and underlying principle in language teaching.” Considering cultural awareness an essential skill needed for success in the modern world, she suggests a “Language for Specific Purposes” approach focusing on developing the language, knowledge and skills required for interacting with members of other cultures. Although she criticizes methods which trivialize culture on the basis that they develop only a tourist knowledge rather

than a deeper awareness, the methods she suggests remain target culture specific in that they do not foster any critical thinking or active engagement with the culture rather only passive receiving and processing of facts. Such an approach is perhaps easy to teach and assess however restricts any broader development of strategies, skills or insights.

Advocating an autonomous, student centered skills oriented methodology with the goal of fostering cultural awareness as opposed to cultural knowledge, her suggestions of researching cultures using the internet, newspapers and authentic texts, examining “pieces of culture” by considering differences in lifestyles “roommate qualities”

completing information gap activities using cultural content and examining, describing and presenting different opinions on customs and artifacts, may indeed be interesting and in some cases relevant to the learners. However, these approaches to fostering cultural awareness, are superficial in that the learner has no opportunity to participate actively and will therefore not provide learners with a more complete perspective which would include the skills that will assist them in negotiating, interacting or communicating appropriately and successfully within the context of another culture.

Considering the open-endedness and flexibility of her definition for culture awareness; “Socially transferable and variable patterns of behavior and interaction” and her desire to develop underlying, general skills and awareness, her model remains culture specific

in that it addresses only the obvious points of a broader “English Language Culture” and is therefore limited in scope and potential.

In contrast, Barduhn (2004) suggests that rather than focusing overtly on culture as a product (clothes, food, music, customs) geared towards making students “comfortable tourists”, cultural awareness teaching should facilitate learners active discovery and participation in culture by helping them:

- To recognize that all people are different.
- To become aware of cultural connotations (commonly held perceptions, beliefs or opinions)
- To recognize the origin of stereotypes
- To develop skills to evaluate and refute generalizations

In this way Barduhn develops an active and analytical approach to engaging culture and diversity as opposed to Dlasaka’s more passive processing of facts and information. Barduhn concludes that in order to approach this effectively, the starting point must be the self and that the learners must first discover who they are as cultural

beings. Moran (2000) echoes this in his model of personal competence which builds on and incorporates Canale and Swain's (1980) model of Communicative Competence and Byram's (1997) model of Intercultural Communicative Competence by integrating the internal process of cultural understanding with the steps involved in successful communication across cultures. Expanding on arguments proposed in each model, Moran concludes that personal competence and a deeper understanding of the self and a sense of self-awareness are at the heart of developing any kind of cultural awareness and ultimate intercultural communicative competence. Although this model addresses many of the deficiencies characteristic of typical approaches on a theoretical level, it fails to propose any practical solutions or methodologies which could be developed into a curriculum or viable cultural awareness pedagogy. In theory Moran's avocation of self-discovery as the corner stone of ICC is valid in that it requires the learner to focus inward and reflect on perceived differences. However his suggested methodologies and activities remain western based, target culture specific and limited to developing little more than a tourist culture perspective. In that the materials and methods tend to be artificial and prescribed, maintaining a contrastive analysis (we shake hands but they bow) approach. A true *Personal Competence Approach* would have the learners come across this information and the subsequent realization on their own, in a less direct or

forced way, through active participation and self discovery. Stapleton (2000:301) reaches the same conclusion stressing "...the importance of putting students in a position where they could discover both their own culture or the target language's culture by themselves."

In his examination of the feasibility of introducing culture and its subsequent role as an important component of EFL in the Japanese context, Stapleton surveyed several university teachers to discover how they perceived the role of culture in the classroom. He investigated four main points:

- (1) feelings about both the importance of teaching culture and what kinds of culture are taught if any
- (2) the use of contrastive constructs between the students' native and target languages (Japanese and English respectively)
- (3) teaching-style adjustments that were made due to perceived cultural needs
- (4) perceptions about culture in textbooks.

From the results it appears that the including of culture in language teaching is variable, random and idiosyncratic. Although most teachers agreed it was important and included it as an essential point of EFL they were unsure of how to present culture or expose students to culture in a meaningful, constructive and unbiased manner. He also found that teachers were generally dissatisfied with the way culture was portrayed in texts and that in many cases content was biased, over generalized or stereotypical. Even the most basic linguistic tasks and structures such as greeting, requesting or thanking cannot produce a unanimous consensus as to any kind of universal appropriacy within the same language group. One teacher remarked that telling students a common response to a compliment in English was 'Thank you' would be regarded as arrogant in Britain (Stapleton, 2000:293). Another teacher contrasted leadership behavior in the US with Japan. 'Japanese education does not emphasize leadership ... while US education rewards leadership behavior' (Stapleton, 2000:296). These examples show the diversity in language teaching and usage perspectives among native teachers, lending further support for Canagarajah's call for a bottom up approach to methods and materials design and selection which also gives more consideration to periphery teacher's needs and contexts.

Sercu (2002), emphasizing autonomy as a primary component of cultural awareness course development, suggests several methods for introducing cultural content into the classroom and making it accessible and relevant to learners. Using Byram's (1997) *Savoirs* as a framework, Sercu proposes that activities such as task based role plays which encourage critical thinking, collaborative learning, self-initiated knowledge acquisition, cooperative evaluation of alternatives and collective decision making are what is missing in most culture based curricula. He argues based on his survey of teachers perspectives and preferences (2002, 2005), that learning tasks in textbooks are too one dimensional and fail to engage learners meaningfully, allowing them to "process, apply or reflect on any previously acquired information regarding the target culture and people." (p.64). He further emphasizes the need to develop and practice specific strategy areas, such as reflection skills, self and peer evaluation, cooperation skills, negotiation skills and study skills as well as generally increasing one's familiarity with foreign cultures, with one's own culture and with the relationships between cultures. Although Sercu provides practical suggestions for the application of Byram's model, he only loosely outlines general desired competencies and gives little insight as to how learners can effectively internalize these or pursue them autonomously.

A key element missing in many attempts at fostering awareness raising skills, particularly those advocating autonomy and learner centered approaches, involves the transformation of one's own identity, inhibitions, anxieties, bias and perspectives for the purpose of achieving a neutral position from which to objectively observe, explore and reflect on both target and learner cultures, moving to what Kramsch (1993) refers to as a "Third Place". Since acquiring another culture often entails abandoning elements of identity or personality, this process can lead to feelings of depression, isolation, shock and often produces "displaced persons" who are not members of the target culture but no longer feel comfortable in their home culture. Kramsch (1993) argues that this seemingly negative condition can be turned into a valuable resource in developing awareness. She concludes that only when the familiar has become strange can we understand, appreciate and become aware of the concept of foreignness. A practical example of this might involve, having learners explore their own cultures and communities from the perspective of an outsider, discovering diversity first hand. This would also take the pressure off learners to feel that they have to emulate native speakers, allowing for diversity in seemingly homogeneous environments and promoting the acceptability of difference. Byram (1997:11) reiterates this point, stating that using native speaker behavior as a goal for learners not only results in the wrong



type of competence but creates an impossible target resulting in inevitable failure. By achieving a third place learners need not give up their own identity nor take on unfamiliar and strange customs but rather step back and reevaluate both perspectives in the same light in order to create a new mutual harmony on more common ground.

In an effort to transcend the context requirement for learning about culture, and reach a more neutral vantage point from which to explore cultural phenomena, Wendt (2002) proposes the mental separation of cognitive states in order to “distinguish between the individual and their meanings on the one hand and culture as the semantic dimension of a group on the other hand.” (p.289). He also proposes that culture has to be defined as the denotative level of meaning of social and communicative interaction and that intercultural learning is a transgression of limits of socialization into primary communities and a move towards ‘the foreign’. He suggests that foreign language instruction can contribute to this journey from familiar to strange by conveying the understanding that one’s own as well as the foreign culture are cognitive constructs. “Contexts and their interpretations are usually understood as being culturally determined, we always perceive reality as interpreted reality, each individual participates in several cultures, these and the categories ‘own’ and ‘foreign’ cannot be

seen as objective facts” (p.292). Further supporting Kramsch’s metaphor for neutrality in interpreting cultures this distinction of culture as a cognitive construct is essential for meaningful awareness raising.

Jordan (2002) takes this concept one step further, suggesting that we are all unconscious ethnographers making sense of our surroundings on a daily basis and asserts the need to attain a neutral position or “third space” from which to explore ourselves and others as part of the journey towards cultural awareness (p.102). She proposes that in negotiating meaning it is not necessary to impose, accept or “become entangled in a web” of individual meaning rather it is more desirable to actively engage in creating a unique and fresh place together. In actual practice this would entail interpreting the reasons for communication difficulties or failure, analyzing the situation and the interlocutors background, empathizing with participants and evaluating the context objectively and flexibly, reserving judgment without jumping to conclusions.

From the extensive literature advocating cultural awareness as an important component of language learning, the need for a paradigm shift towards more practical intercultural training in language learning becomes clear. Nevertheless, many key

elements are still missing and any consensus on optimal methods, models or principles remains fragmented and experimental. It is essential for any emerging critical pedagogy to adequately prepare learners for the world they will encounter by providing more than just language tools. Considering individual needs, differences, cultures, learning environments and preferences, building on teachers knowledge and experience and compiling and analyzing strategies which are common across cultures, it should be possible to create a universal pedagogy and framework which integrates a diversity of skills, develops a meta-cultural awareness and ultimately produces individuals which are truly, communicatively competent focusing more on the international sense of English as a Global Language. Building the introspective strategies proposed by Kramersch (1993) and Moran (2001) and applying the skills and abilities suggested in Byram's (1997) *savoirs*, the following proposes a model of Meta-Cultural Competence which holds at its centre, the basics of critical discovery, analysis and evaluation through a pedagogy of local ethnography. The fundamental difference distinguishing Meta-Cultural Competence from Moran's Personal Competence (2001), Kramersch's Symbolic Competence (2006), Gudykunst's Perceived Competence (1994), Byram's, Intercultural Communicative Competence (1997), van Eck's Social Competence (1986) and even Canale and Swain's Communicative Competence (1980) is the complete

absence of the need for context or even a classroom or teacher to provide relevance, content or structure. Such an Ethnographic Method can be conducted anywhere with minimal tools or guidance, anytime people interact, whether local or global.

Ethnography, although a western based method of inquiry, as applied to language learning, would focus primarily on developing abilities of neutral observation, critical analysis, information processing and informed reaction as part of communication. In this way Ethnographic pedagogy also transcends culture by not being context specific, placing the impetus for discovery in the control of the learner by allowing learners to completely form their own conclusions and course of action based on their own observations. The end result, a Meta-Culturally competent learner, having mastered these ethnographic skills as part of language learning, will be able to rise above both cultures (native and target) and determine how to act on a case by case basis, evaluating each context and situation differently without bias or prejudice and free of the stereotypes and other structures which lead to inflexible predictions and inaccurate assumptions that often hinder all types of communication whether inter or intra cultural.

## **Pedagogical Considerations**

Developments in pedagogy for intercultural language education have recently gained momentum and are at the forefront of a significant shift in perspectives.

(Kramsch, 2006, Liddicoat, 2008, Scarino, 2009, Crozet, 1997, Byram & Zarate, 1994).

One of the major changes advocated by these studies involves a movement away from teaching language as an isolated entity free of values, attitudes and beliefs in preference for a more inclusive approach, which views language as “culturally contextualized meaning making” (Liddicoat, 2008:277). What this entails is a deeper exploration and understanding of the contexts and individuals involved, the types of interaction as well as the perspectives and attitudes brought to any given encounter. A significant aspect of this, according to Liddicoat (2009:279) requires creating opportunities for learners to discover and reflect on how their own culture works and then extending this awareness to interaction, participation and communication with others; ultimately realizing that cultures are relative not absolute.

For the purpose of developing an intercultural pedagogy, Liddicoat proposes a set of integrated principles which advocate self-reflection, synthesis and interaction as a requirement for interculturality. These principles are condensed into four processes of

noticing, comparing, reflecting and interacting, which are easily extended to both classroom and external communicative encounters. The processes described are essentially a framework for an ethnographic approach, which entails similar activities such as participant observation, analysis, interpretation and interaction. Ethnographic methodology, in the sense that can be applied to foreign language learning and teaching contexts, does not require longitudinal observations in specific contexts rather a set of introspective or investigative techniques, strategies and skills or transportable tools for developing and understanding an insider's perspective (Robinson-Stuart, 1996).

Sobolewski's (2009) report on ethnographic interviews, poses that students be positioned both as "learners and researchers" in order to form a complete perspective of the identities and attitudes at play in communication. He concludes that the purpose of ethnographic methods in language learning is to create a global picture of the self and other (p. 32). Similarly Scarino (2009) concludes that students should examine their own language and cultural practices as a reference point from which to understand additional languages and cultures, and language and culture in general (p.13). In a study of students as virtual ethnographers, Carel (2001) found that after observing verbal and non-verbal cues and creating ethnographies, students demonstrated a heightened sensitivity and awareness of communicative differences, both linguistically and

culturally. Subsequently, these students displayed a marked attitude and belief change away from stereotypes and “National Geographic knowledge” to include multiple perspectives and interpretations of the target culture (p.157). The consensus of these studies in promoting intercultural exploration and ethnographic methodology as a means for cultural awareness raising, indicates a strong shift in perspectives on foreign language learning from an isolated view of competence as exclusive abilities, skills and knowledge to a more integrated, reflexive and comprehensive synthesis of awareness, understanding and interaction of both the familiar and unfamiliar.

## **Rationale**

In order to gain perspective on the state of intercultural language education and determine how to practically apply innovative methodologies towards developing cultural awareness as part of EFL instruction, a series of studies were undertaken investigating context, attitudes, materials and methods for introducing and addressing cultural issues or generally raising cultural awareness as part of EFL instruction in Japan.

The first stage of this investigation involved a comprehensive literature review of recent developments and innovations in the field of intercultural communication as well as the current state of EFL instruction in Japan. This review determined that there was a gap between theory and practice and that a need exists to develop materials, methods and motivation for incorporating cultural elements as part of general language learning. As teachers are at the forefront of this paradigm shift, the second phase of this investigation involved recording and analyzing teachers' perspectives and attitudes towards the importance, practicality and feasibility of including culture as part of EFL instruction. Including cultural components as a part of any curriculum is both challenging and ambiguous (Merryfield, 1993), some of the most significant hurdles to overcome in this regard include developing teacher training (Carel, 2001), setting up objective and practical means for assessment (Byram, 1997, Scarino, 2009) and eliminating any forms of bias, cultural imperialism or hidden agendas (Canagarajah, 2002). Before proposing, developing or implementing any innovative methodology for combining language study with cultural awareness, it is essential to understand the nature of teacher's needs and concerns with regard to these issues.



Similarly, as media and materials are the primary sources of cultural information in the classroom, the third study critically reviewed and analyzed the cultural content and representation of the most commonly used EFL textbooks in Japan. Most texts considered culture on a very broad scale providing only a biased and limited portrayal of culture either by representing only well-known stereotypes (Stapleton, 2000) or overly focusing on native speaker English or center varieties without considering the greater diversity and dynamics of periphery, or world Englishes (Canagarajah, 2002). Furthermore, the texts which did include cultural information, had no clear guidelines or goals for incorporating it and similarly ignored the learners own culture, background and experiences (Takanashi, 2004), making it difficult for students to engage materials, synthesize content and information or generally reflect on the culture represented. Finally, after considering the combined results of the surveys and studies, a set of cultural awareness raising methods, including a comprehensive ethnographic methodology was proposed, trialed and analyzed. The results and feedback from students piloting the cultural awareness raising tasks and the ethnographic project were positive and suggest that such an approach both meets the requirements and addresses concerns, of introducing a cultural component to EFL learning environments. This was evident in that ethnography methodology can be

readily implemented and easily assessed, is flexible and can be adapted to most situations, levels and contexts, requires minimal teacher training and works best with representative and authentic materials as opposed to over generalized textbooks.

Considering the changes in perspective emerging in the field of EFL and the requirements of students preparing to communicate with an increasingly diverse international community, the following will present a case for introducing a more robust cultural awareness raising pedagogy to EFL instruction in Japan and provide insight into how such pedagogy can be practically applied.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **TEACHERS' ROLES AND PERSPECTIVES IN RAISING CULTURAL AWARENESS**

#### **Introduction**

Cultural awareness raising as an integral part of TEFL has recently been the focus of much research and innovation. (Byram, 1997, Holliday, 2004, Kramsch, 1993). Despite developments in methods and materials and increasing understanding of what is required in terms of teachers and students needs and goals, there are still serious pedagogical gaps concerning questions of “culture”. Developers of materials and texts are producing more and more resources aimed at introducing culture, building cross cultural skills and generally raising cultural awareness. This is evident in the plethora of new textbook publications in the Asian EFL market with titles such as *World View* (Longman, 2005), *World Link* (Thompson, 2005), *Identity* (Oxford, 2004), *The English Speaking World* (Macmillan, 2003), *This is Culture* (Nan’un-do, 2005), *Communication and Culture* (Shohakusha, 2000), *Intercultural Communication in a Multicultural World* (Eichoshasha, 1999), *You, Me and the World* (Kinseido, 1997). However most of these titles address cultural issues in name only and in terms of methods, content and

outcomes are little changed from the traditional formula of teacher centered, information exchange exercises, which fail to consider the critical issue of how culture affects language and communication. As Pennycook (1994) states, such materials are “often produced with doubtful relevance to the sociological, educational and economic context of the Outer Circle.” This outer circle or periphery, which includes most varieties of global English, has gained much status as legitimate variations of English, displacing the notion of the native speaker model promoted in most center (North American or British), materials and methods. These developers are also failing to consider the varied circumstances and positions which real world teachers, representative of the periphery, embody and find themselves in. They are instead creating materials for a predominantly western or Anglo-Saxon stereotype reflecting the majority of publishing houses based in either the U.S.A. or U.K. The resulting pedagogy and viewpoint generated, mirror this concentrated demographic as the focus tends to be geared towards teaching neatly packaged, easily explained examples of surface culture. Canagarajah (2002) argues that such materials are designed based on predominantly western based ideologies, considering only these “center” learning and communication styles and including similarly biased cultural content without consideration for the peripheral majority to which such methods or information may be

inappropriate. Subsequent western based ideals heralding skills such as native speaker competence, autonomous, student centered or communicative learning styles, fail to reflect the majority of language learners in the periphery, nor do they consider the state of English as a global language, the existence or validity of minority varieties of English or the many cultural, individual or political differences. He further concludes that; methods are not value-free instruments, but cultural and ideological constructs with politico-economic consequences. (Canagarajah, 2002). There is no "apolitical neutrality of English", therefore it is unwise to overlook the issues of power and social inequality that lie behind English teaching and are manifested frequently in the forms of sexism, classism, and racism in classrooms." Canagarajah (2001), Pennycook (1994), Phillipson (1991), Wallerstein (1983) have criticized these center-focused views such as striving for native speaker fluency through student centered communicative pedagogy, accusing ELT of "helping to maintain unequal core-periphery relations in the capitalist world-economy, and of suppressing diversity of language and thought in the world."

To counter these biases many have called for a critical pedagogy in EFL which would challenge learners' assumptions and expectations, raising their awareness and developing deeper analytical skills needed for intercultural communication.

(Widdowson, 2005, Byram, 1997, Kramsch, 1993). However as Norton and Toohey (2004) point out, critical pedagogy in EFL maintains that both learning and teaching are political processes and language is not simply a means of expression or communication, but "a practice that constructs the ways learners understand themselves, their socio-historical surrounding and their possibility for the future" In considering this, "the first task of the teacher, from a critical-pedagogy viewpoint, is to raise students' awareness of the reproductive process and to empower them to challenge the system. The second concept is resistance theory, which "explains how there are sufficient contradictions within institutions to help subjects resist and subvert such reproduction, gain agency, conduct critical thinking and initiate change". Canagarajah (1999). The change required in Japan represents a clear example of this. In Japan, English is learned primarily as a theoretical language for testing, students have little opportunity or motivation to engage in communication and autonomous or communicative approaches are typically resisted in favor of traditional teacher centered styles. Takashi (2004) in an overview of the Japanese TEFL context, suggests that the approaches applied and supported by popular methodologies and materials in most Japanese TEFL classes are in direct opposition to student's preferred learning and communication styles, and fail to consider the social and cultural expectations of

learners. Teachers as purveyors of language and culture are critical to the successful integration of cultural awareness raising as part of TEFL. However their roles, needs and efforts, are often eclipsed by more pressing concerns such as funding, marketability, or management. Given their diverse circumstances, it is difficult to accommodate and consider EFL teachers as a single group, even within a limited context. Whether individual, institutional, or national differences are considered, the nature of variables and needs are too great to be of any practical use in creating a viable, unified cultural awareness raising pedagogy. However by considering teachers basic concerns, fears and reservations for including a cultural component in their EFL classes, it should be possible to gather relevant information useful in creating support for a more flexible and unbiased approach to introducing cultural content as part of language teaching.

There have been several studies which have focused on understanding teachers perspectives concerning how and what to teach regarding culture (Byram, 1989, Kramsch, 1993, Lessard-Clouston, 1996, Stapleton, 2000). These have tended to be broad studies focusing largely on the problems associated with raising cultural awareness in general rather than addressing the concerns of any particular group of EFL teachers. Stapleton (2000), conducted a basic study of teachers views on introducing

cultural content as part of EFL, concluding that although most teachers agreed that understanding culture was important they were hesitant to include any content or methods for direct cultural awareness raising. The following study builds on Stapleton's research for the purpose of developing a better understanding of teachers overall perspectives on cultural awareness raising in Japan.

The rapid changes taking place globally and locally in terms of the requirements and nature of communication and general international exchange, are often neglected in Language education, particularly in Japan (Honna, 2001, Takanashi, 2004). After more than a decade of widespread information technology and innovation in communications, adequate and practical training of these technologies to EFL teachers are still being over shadowed by the cliché of grammar translation and other long practiced methods of dubious use, which have become fossilized stereotypes of ELT in Japan (Takanashi, 2004). This argument is clearly visible in Japan, where despite high levels of spending on EFL education, relatively few resources are put towards updating teaching methods, curricula or policies. Though some initiatives which promise to address underlying flaws have emerged, their practicality remains questionable due to their placement within a teaching framework whose ultimate goal



still remains the preparation of students for entrance exams. In such an environment, the inclusion of cultural content, which by nature is often arbitrary and subjective, proposes a serious challenge to the status quo. English education in Japan has always necessitated quantifiable results, transferable to a test score, and thus any subsequent value of learning the language, was and still is, to an astonishing degree, viewed as secondary. This type of approach necessarily limits the amount of cultural awareness that can be taught, as such knowledge is difficult to test objectively on an entrance exam. A more qualitative or holistic approach to language learning, inherent in any type of cultural awareness raising methodology, would need to deal with the complex issues of testing and evaluation as well as teaching (Byram, 1997). Though some tests, including TOEIC and TOEFL, have become more communicative, culturally sensitive and are increasingly more common, the end result remains unchanged: English is not taught as a Global Language for practical purposes in Japan. After 6 or 7 years of English Language Training, Japanese students are still, for the most part, unprepared for communication with non-Japanese or in a foreign context (Takanashi, 2004). Combined with the fact that there are very few opportunities to experience English in Japan, most students have a very limited awareness of ‘other’ and their sense of cultural orientations or communication styles are primarily based on stereotypes and passive exposure to

popular media reinforced by textbooks. This raises the question of why more is not being done to revitalize ELT teaching in Japan to include legitimate cultural content and awareness raising, which better reflects the reality of English as an international language.

For the purpose of clarifying what is required in implementing cultural awareness pedagogy, the following will highlight several important arguments, challenges and perspectives from recent and relevant research in the field. The goal of introducing cultural content into the EFL classroom is to engage learners with meaningful and relevant material and information geared towards raising cultural awareness as an essential element of Communicative Competence (Widdowson, 2005, Byram, 1997). Considering global changes and challenges, language learners who have engaged with cultural content as part of their English education are much better prepared for communication with a variety of speakers in the target language than learners who have not (Widdowson, 2005). Recently however the goal behind cultural content inclusion has become fragmented and unclear as many texts and lessons focus on overt, tourist culture knowledge to supplement basic language learning activities. This has a tendency to reinforce stereotypes and cultural imperialism, without fostering

any kind of understanding or relevant engagement. If one of the intended results of applying cultural content to language teaching is to create more flexible and inter-culturally minded communicators, then with whom does the responsibility for the impetus of change lie? Are teachers solely responsible for the outcome of their student's communicative abilities? How much of this rests with students alone or with curriculum designers, educational planners, textbook writers and editors? Addressing these questions and establishing a viable rationale for change is essential for including cultural awareness raising methods.

Sercu (2006) argues that teachers are now required to teach intercultural communicative competence. It follows that new professional demands need to be made on teachers. If foreign language teaching can no longer be regarded as a mainly linguistic task, and it needs to be directed towards the full attainment of communicative competence, including its intercultural dimension, teachers have to be equipped with the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes required to accomplish this wider task in an appropriate way. In addition, teachers have to adjust their views on what it means to teach a foreign language and adapt their teaching approach accordingly. A significant part of the difficulties found in raising cultural awareness in the classroom involve the

fact that most teachers are not sufficiently trained to teach cultural content, are not sure what they should include as cultural content and are unaware that they are often presenting dangerously biased, stereotype reinforcing examples of cultural imperialism, which are of little or no interest and of limited usefulness to the students.

Problems regarding raising cultural awareness cannot be fully explained by a lack of teacher training, however. According to Byram; “Teachers have been encouraged to integrate language and culture in EFL classrooms by passing cultural knowledge and rules of speaking of the native speakers onto the learners, who in turn are expected to use the target language as the native speakers do. Such a notion implicitly suggests that foreign language learners should model themselves on the native speakers, who are usually taken to be speakers of a standard variety of the target language, while completely ignoring the social identities and cultural competence of the learner in any intercultural interaction.” (Byram, 1997). Upon analysis of language teacher’s perspectives regarding issues of cultural awareness raising, it becomes clear that many of the challenges surrounding a pedagogical shift in this direction could be significantly reduced by expanding the diversity and nature of materials and texts that

are available to teachers, as well as improving the quality and type of training and explanation necessary in creating a vision for effectively developing cultural awareness.

Given that the range and type of language skills which students in today's world require, is becoming more comprehensive and diverse, the skills and methods of teachers must also be modified to reflect these changing needs and requirements.

Historically information came at a premium, as it was difficult to obtain, skills of memorization and recall were valued. In this new era however, the problem with information is that it is cheap, superfluous and often irrelevant. As a result, being able to remember, reproduce and access information has become secondary in importance in favor of skills of analysis, critical evaluation and effective processing, as essential communication tools. The latter skills also embody flexibility and awareness which are vital to intercultural communication. Similarly, the native speaker as role model is no longer the optimal target, as mastery of linguistic forms, native like pronunciation and mimicking of phrases are not a necessary criteria for successful communication in the increasingly multicultural world (Alptekin, 2002). A viable cultural awareness raising pedagogy necessitates that learners and consequently teachers need to be aware of differences in communication styles, open to ambiguity, flexible in negotiating meaning

and able to adapt to unexpected changes in even the most basic communicative situations (Takanashi, 2004). Although language learners quickly become aware of these issues once they leave the classroom and enter the real world, either in the form of culture shock, discrimination or total communication breakdown, it is of critical importance to determine how much and to what extent teachers are able to prepare students for these experiences before they leave the classroom. Byram, (1997) identified 5 skill sets (*Savoirs*) representing intercultural communicative competence, as well as a simplified model or benchmark for teachers to plan, implement, and assess cultural awareness raising activities, methods and progress. Based on Byram's 5 *Savoirs* and conceptual definition of intercultural competence, Lies Sercu (2006) specified the knowledge, skills and attitudes that foreign language teachers should possess in order to best raise cultural awareness as part of foreign language learning.

### **Knowledge**

- be familiar with, and have frequent and varied contact with the cultures associated with the target language.
- be aware of student's stereotypes, have strong connection to their own culture while possessing a culture-general knowledge
- know how to select appropriate content, learning tasks and materials.

## **Skills**

- be able to employ teaching techniques that promote the acquisition of cultural knowledge
- be able to help pupils relate their own culture to foreign cultures, to compare cultures and to empathise with foreign cultures' points of view
- be able to select appropriate teaching materials and to adjust these materials should they not allow achieving the aims of intercultural competence teaching.
- be able to use experiential approaches to language-and-culture teaching.

## **Attitudes**

- enthusiastic towards the integration of intercultural competence teaching in TEFL
- motivated to actively work towards achieving that goal.
- form clear objectives of foreign language education in terms of both language learning and cultural awareness raising
- consider the extent that selected teaching materials can serve the purpose of promoting cross-cultural understanding
- flexible in considering student's perceptions and attitudes regarding foreign cultures
- willingness to depart from these perceptions and attitudes when designing the learning process.

Sercu (2006) concludes that teachers perceive culture teaching foremost in terms of teacher-centred transmission of cultural knowledge. To change teachers'

beliefs regarding culture teaching, they need to be exposed to beliefs that provide alternatives for this kind of pedagogy, and that help them perceive intercultural competence, not only in terms of the acquisition of cultural knowledge, but also in terms of the acquisition of intercultural skills and attitudes. In the case of Japan, these changes in perspective represent the greatest hurdles in implementing a shift towards practical cultural awareness raising. According to Takanashi (2004) traditional methods were teacher centered and focused on studying and analyzing the linguistic and cultural differences and were not concerned with understanding them for the purpose of communication, other than what was required for standardized entrance or proficiency tests. Modern methods, on the other hand, take an opposite approach which is equally extreme, in that the focus is predominantly on self-directed communication, expression and highlighting cultural differences, which could cause communication problems. As Takanashi (2004) further points out this goes against the basic learning style and preferences of Japanese students and provides only irrelevant and potentially harmful examples of cultural stereotypes. What is required therefore, in ELT in Japan, is a middle ground between extremes in which the teacher can balance curriculum expectations, requirements and goals with student's needs, preferences and experiences as well as the knowledge, skills and awareness required for successful cross cultural



communication. Key questions which therefore need to be addressed in implementing any kind of cultural training or education should include:

- How can teacher's best introduce cultural content without reinforcing stereotypes, engaging in cultural imperialism or projecting their own personal bias and agendas on to their students while also extending intercultural learning strategies beyond the classroom?
- What is the role of the teacher in facilitating awareness, navigating differences and harnessing/developing cultural diversity as a resource?
- How should teachers begin to use their experience and intuition effectively?
- How should new and inexperienced teachers be initiated into such a paradigm?

In light of the fact that much has been written on the difficulties of teaching cultural awareness in connection with English as a Global Language (Merryfield, 1993, Widdowson, 1998), this study will focus on determining viable solutions for pedagogical reform by considering teacher's perspectives. The following therefore reports on research aimed at describing the extent and nature of university level, EFL

teachers' needs, difficulties, abilities and perspectives concerning the teaching of cultural content and the raising of cultural awareness as part of their EFL curriculum.

## **Perspectives in Practice; A Survey of Teachers Needs**

### **Method and Procedure**

A total of 30 teachers were surveyed in order to gain insight into their teaching contexts, preferences, abilities, experiences and concerns regarding the teaching of cultural content. The instrument (*see Appendix A*) a short survey, consisted of simple yes/no and Likert scale type ranking questions. All teachers were given as much time as necessary and told that the surveys were for research purposes only and strictly confidential. All questionnaires were completed quickly and without difficulty or additional explanation. Consequently the survey attained a 100% response rate for all questions. After completion of the questionnaire, 27 teachers were questioned regarding their views, understanding and concerns in relation to the introduction of cultural awareness raising methods and materials. Although these responses are purely subjective and qualitative in nature, in that there were not a statistically significant or representative number of informants, they did help in providing perspective regarding context and more personal concerns.

## **Subjects and Context**

The subjects surveyed and interviewed in this study consisted of 30 University English teachers from the Department of International Studies and General Education at Utsunomiya University in Tochigi, Japan. Of these teachers, 17.4% were female and 83.6% were male although this proportion is unbalanced it is representative of the overall demographic of university teachers, nevertheless, gender differences were not considered in the final analysis. 60.8% were Japanese teachers and 39.2% were non-Japanese. This distinction was significant in terms of length and type of experience. Most non-Japanese teachers had had teaching experience in a variety of contexts, whereas Japanese teachers had mostly taught only in Japan. However Japanese teachers on average had more teaching experience. The combined average for years of experience was 16.7 years (10.7 years standard deviation) with a range of 2 to 41 years. The majority (91.3%) stated that they taught intermediate level students with the remaining teaching either advanced (4.3%) or low level (4.3%) students. Within these groups, 60.9% said that they taught mostly skill based classes specializing in speaking and listening and 39.1% stated that they taught more content based classes. The class sizes ranged from 10-40 students with an average of 23.7. The teachers backgrounds were predominantly EFL, ESL or Applied Linguistics, (83.3%) with the remaining

16.6% coming from non-language teaching backgrounds including Sociology, Economics, Literature and Political Science.

### **Perspectives and Practices**

In order to better understand teacher's perspectives on classroom practices involving cultural content and intercultural communication skills, several questions in the survey were geared towards highlighting teacher's preferences, fears and frustrations in the classroom. The majority of teachers (82.6%) felt that the most important skills required by Japanese students today are not being taught effectively. These skills included basic oral communication, critical thinking, IT training, networking, analyzing information, expressing opinions, negotiating meaning, overcoming anxiety and building up confidence and motivation. All though the range of skills reported was quite diverse, negotiating meaning, critical thinking and overcoming anxiety are directly relevant to cultural awareness raising in that they facilitate an understanding of communication barriers and a sensitivity towards different perspectives. A further 47.8% were not satisfied with texts or materials stating that material did not engage learners focused on trivial tasks and information exchange were generally repetitive and failed to motivate or generate a personal relevance in the learner.

The remaining 52.2%, taught mostly low level basic speaking or listening skill based classes, although satisfied with their texts did not offer any praise for materials other than that they adequately elicited responses from learners which could be easily tested. Although most teachers (94%) used textbooks, they varied considerably in the amount of time spent using textbooks in class, ranging from 40-100% of class time with an average of 58.3%. This is indicative of teaching style and preference as most teachers used texts for teacher centered activities and support such as dialogue practice 33.3%, language structure and grammar 20%, homework 20%, modeling 13.3% or grounding the lesson 3.3%. This data is important in determining teachers' basic preferences and tendencies as these trends will ultimately reflect levels of rejection or acceptance in moving towards applying cultural awareness raising methods.

## **Results and Discussion**

Evaluating teachers' attitudes towards cultural awareness raising (hereafter CAR) in general, on a likert scale of 1-5, 1 being not very important and 5 being very important, 69.5% ranked CAR 4 or higher with 26.6% ranking CAR at 5 and no respondents ranking below 2. Similarly, the evaluation of the importance of type and method of culture instruction indicated a positive attitude towards including cultural

content and information. (See table 1.) In correlation to these trends, teachers felt strongly, 3.73 (0.78 SD) that it was their responsibility to provide cultural content. This is interesting considering that they self-rated their overall understanding of CAR fairly low at (2.5, 1.0 SD).

**Table 1 Summary of survey results measuring teachers' attitudes towards cultural awareness raising**

Condition	Range		Mean	SD
How often (percentage of class) do you use textbooks?	40%	100%	58.3%	18.68%
Number of years teaching experience in Japan.	5	20	13	5.04
Number of years teaching experience abroad.	0	4	0.9	1.24
Average number of students in your English classes	10	50	28.83	10.05
Class Level	1	3	2.00	0.37
How satisfied are you with cultural content in texts?	1.00	4.00	2.80	1.13
How important is teaching cultural awareness?	2.00	5.00	4.00	0.83
How well do you understand cultural awareness?	1.00	4.00	2.50	1.00
How important is teaching Culture Specific Information?	1.00	5.00	3.30	1.37
How important is teaching Culture General Information?	3.00	5.00	4.30	0.75

I actively try to teach culture.	3.00	5.00	4.16	0.59
I address cultural issues as they arise.	2.00	5.00	3.80	0.89
I teach culture general content.	1.00	5.00	3.43	1.07
I use cultural content for examples.	2.00	5.00	4.33	0.99
I use cultural content for contrastive analysis.	2.00	5.00	3.86	0.86
Language and culture are inseparable.	2.00	5.00	4.20	0.96
I teach target language specific culture.	1.00	5.00	3.30	1.12
I use my own culture to compare/contrast Japanese culture.	3.00	5.00	4.33	0.71
Language teaching should be culture neutral.	1.00	5.00	3.13	1.30
It is too difficult to teach culture in the classroom.	2.00	5.00	3.66	0.99
It is the teacher's responsibility to teach culture.	2.00	5.00	3.73	0.78

There were several significant trends which became apparent upon further analysis of the basic data. These suggested a strong dichotomy between: experienced and inexperienced teachers, teachers who have taught in various contexts and those who have only taught in Japan, and teachers who teach skill based or content based classes. In summary, these 3 categories provide valuable insight into the diverse nature of

teacher's contexts and personal preferences as well as their concerns, perspectives and attitudes towards teaching cultural content.

### **Differences in Teaching Experience**

In order to better understand differences created by length of teaching experience, subject's responses were divided into two groups. These were teachers with less than 10 years of experience (43.4%) and teachers with over 10 years of experience (56.6%). After correlating various levels of experience including 5 and 20 year distinctions, the 10 year division emerged as the critical benchmark at which teacher's perspectives and practices begin to differ significantly. Variations in length and type of experience may seem obvious factors affecting teaching ability, style or attitude.

However in relation to teaching cultural content, the results appear to be opposite from what might be expected. Typically older and more experienced teachers tend to be set in their ways and not open to experimentation with new methodologies or innovations, to the extent that new teachers might. Especially in Japan teachers prefer to teach in the same way they were taught and this, more often than not, leads to the perpetuation of grammar translation, reading and rote memorization (Takanashi, 2004). Although both groups felt strongly that essential skills were not being adequately developed (less



experienced teachers 71.4% more experienced teachers 88.9%), interviews indicated that their perspective regarding what this dissatisfaction entails differed greatly. One would expect perhaps that less experienced teachers, having recently been students themselves, would be more aware of the deficiencies of a traditionally structured approach and be open to more communicative methods which would better serve the students in the future. In actual fact the results of this survey indicate that older and more experienced teachers place a higher value on teaching cultural content and developing cultural awareness and Intercultural communicative competence than less experienced teachers. The reasons for this are yet unclear, however from subsequent interviews the following trend emerged.

Less experienced teachers reported that they are still unsure of themselves in the classroom and prefer low risk methods which have a predictable outcome.

“The books we are required to use do not have much cultural information in them, if there are some specific questions I will have to ask the ALT to help them.”

“Right now it would be difficult to teach anything extra [culture] we have very little time and I am worried I can’t prepare enough for the exams in the Spring.”

“I agree with culture but in my class we have to do only grammar, vocabulary and listening practice. It is very severe.”

(Teachers comments from interviews)

They may not agree with the merit of their methodology but the need for a safe and dependable lesson seems to over shadow what would be most beneficial for the students. Fear of the unknown due to lack of confidence and worry about unfavorable evaluations, seem to be the strongest factor influencing less experienced teacher’s attitudes and perspectives.

“I don’t have enough experience to teach students about America.”

“I think it would be very interesting and useful for students, but how to include it in the lesson? Maybe if the school had some videos or movies.”

“Training would be very helpful, I would also like to understand cultural differences better. I often ask the ALT to explain situations in the lesson.”

(Teachers comments from interviews)

As a result their indication for the need for training was significantly high at 85.7% compared to more experienced teachers at 66.7% as was their significantly higher satisfaction with textbooks (71.4% to 44.4%). Support for textbook preferences also comes from the indication that 85.7% of less experienced teachers felt it was their responsibility to provide cultural content instruction and their ranking of the importance of cultural awareness raising CAR were higher than more experienced teachers (57.1% CAR 44.4% CAR yet only 57.1% actually included any cultural awareness activities or felt they were qualified to do so. There appears a discrepancy in the ranking of importance for CAR as 71.4% of less experienced teachers felt they were qualified to teach CAR but from subsequent interviews, this seems to stem from a lack of clear understanding of the exact nature of CAR.

“Teaching culture seems like a good idea but I worry about confusing students with too much information.”

“The textbook has many examples of foreign culture, I can also use my experience living in U.S. to tell students about differences with Japan.”

“Culture awareness is knowing how other cultures are different and how to avoid culture shock.”

“I think most students know already about differences in greetings, basic manners or food customs.” (Teachers comments from interviews)

Perhaps with more explanation or training, teacher's attitudes toward cultural awareness activities would become more positive and this result would in turn be more consistent with other data. In the case of more experienced teachers, they appear more secure in the classroom are more aware of the deficiencies in traditional methodology and are therefore more open to innovation and high risk activities which include cultural content and the less predictable aspects of natural communication. More experienced teachers do score lower in their ranking of CAR and feel they do not want relevant training, however they overwhelmingly agree (100%) that it is the teacher's responsibility, that they are qualified and that they actually include cultural content and activities in their classes (88.9%). Again an unclear understanding of the concept of awareness raising is evident in the extraneous score of (66.7%) for this category.

Further research would need to explain this concept in greater detail to insure validity of results (refer to Appendix B for table of results).

### **Differences in Teaching Context Diversity**

Similarly type of teaching experience seems to have a profound effect on attitude and practice towards cultural awareness raising. Following length of experience, type of experience is a strong factor in determining teacher preferences. The survey responses were correlated based on distinctions between local (LE) (60.8%) and international (39.2%) teaching experiences (IE). All of the local experience only teachers were Japanese and all but two of the international experience teachers were non-Japanese (see Appendix B for table of results). Detailed analysis of the variables concerning nationality differences did not seem to be a significant factor influencing teacher's preferences and were beyond the scope of this survey and consequently not taken into consideration. As with the connection between length of experience and preferences, one might also expect that teachers with more diverse experience would be more open-minded regarding change and innovation, than teachers with only local experience. In many responses this is evident however several answers reveal a less consistent trend. Teachers with international experience, though unsatisfied (88.9%)

with the effectiveness of teaching important skills were much more content with text books (66.7% to 42.9% respectively), than local teachers.

The IE group was more positive towards receiving training (77.9% to 64.3% respectively) even though they overwhelmingly responded that they were qualified to teach Cultural Awareness Raising (CAR) (88.9%) and seemed to have a much better understanding of what was involved. This preference for training may stem from a higher appreciation or sensitivity to insider/local knowledge (Byram, 1997) or third place awareness (Kramsch, 1993) and a firsthand understanding that the more you know about a learning context/environment/culture/community, the better you will be able to function.

“Simply memorizing phrases is not communication. Learners need to know and understand how to use them and in what situations.”

“I have heard of some good [intercultural communication] training programs, mostly for business not education, they are all too expensive though and I doubt that most teachers would see the importance.”

“It would be great to teach them [cultural awareness] here but only a few would get it, I think the only way to understand culture is to go there and experience the differences. There is way too much involved to deal with in this type of class.”

(Teachers comments from interviews)

IE Teachers also ranked the importance of CAR (66.7% to 35.7% respectively) much higher than LE teachers and differed significantly on their perceptions of teacher’s responsibility for providing cultural content (100% to 78.6% respectively). IE Teachers were similarly more inclined to include cultural content in their lessons than LE teachers (88.9% to 64.3% respectively). From these results and subsequent interviews, it appears that a more diverse experience has a positive effect on teacher’s perspective and approach to innovation and change. IE Teachers are perhaps more accustomed to accommodating differences and are therefore more flexible and sensitive to communicative problems and needs. Having taught in various contexts these teachers have a unique perspective on the importance of deeper cultural understanding for successful communication and thus hold those aspects of language teaching and learning in higher regard.

“Learners need to know how to communicate with people who are different from them, they can’t learn this in Japan easily, but maybe I can show them by being a representative of my culture and challenging their assumptions about me.”

“Well if I had some control of class size and better classroom management, I could set up some scenarios in which they [students] could role play situations which they could discuss and reflect on as real communication.” That would be the ideal.”

(Teachers comments from interviews)

### **Differences in Content and Method**

The final criterion for comparison, involved differences in content and style of teaching. Responses were analyzed by considering distinctions between content based (CB) (39.2%) and skill based (SB) (60.8%) instruction. For the purpose of this study, skill based instruction was interpreted to include any kind of teaching which focused on language structures or practicing the skills of reading, writing, listening or speaking. Content based instruction referred to the teaching of a subject in English, with little or no attention to language structure or usage. These different teaching contexts,



were analyzed together as few lower level teachers used CB instruction, indicating that level or type of curriculum may dictate the method and nature of instruction.

Considering this strong correlation, there is a significant difference in preferences

between subject teachers and teachers who use skill based methods. The results

however, indicate an incongruous trend, in that context, level, and goals are all strong factors in the consideration of cultural awareness raising activities or content.

Teachers may have exaggerated or understated their preferences, answered according to

what they felt the researcher wanted to hear, or they may have misunderstood the

distinction between skill and content. From post survey interviews, however it seems

more likely that subjects distinguished between what they actually do in practice and

what they feel they should be doing. Teachers felt they had to teach a skill based

curriculum and would have preferred to include more relevant content materials,

sensing a gap between teaching only arbitrary skills out of context and preparing

learners for real world communication. This is further supported by other responses to

the questionnaire which indicate that these teachers have a high preference for teaching

culture but do not actually include any in their classes.

“Well we have very strict curriculum guidelines, it’s difficult to stray from those goals and requirements.”

“I could include cultural information but students more or less know what is on the test already from their cram schools and would question me.”

“Understanding different cultures is very important, I would like to do it very much but there is no room for that type of lesson in the classes I teach here.”

“I hardly ever teach intercultural communication but sometimes I tell them about my experiences.”

(Teachers comments from interviews)

57.1% of SB teachers indicated that they include cultural content in their classes. However as one might expect, due to inherent connections with popular subject matter in language texts, 100% of CB teachers reported that they include cultural content perhaps indicating that they associate content, facts and information with culture. Furthermore, (78.6%) of SB teachers indicated that they would like to receive more

training and felt they were much less qualified to teach CAR activities than CB teachers.

All groups felt fairly strongly (80-89.9%) that it was the teacher's responsibility to provide cultural content and training. Consequently ranking for CAR activities is quite high with little distinction between CB or SB teachers. This result probably stems from SB teachers strong (80%) dissatisfaction with materials and texts and the overall effectiveness (60%) of skills being taught. These results suggest that teachers are highly aware of learner's needs and pedagogical shortcomings, realize what is required but lack the freedom, resources or autonomy to initiate changes. CB teachers in contrast are more or less free to choose their own materials, methods and are therefore more satisfied, yet rank the importance of CAR skills slightly lower. Regardless of this however, both groups feel that important skills are not being taught effectively. Despite the inconsistency of many of the results from the responses of these three groups, there appears a common call for more autonomy and flexibility regarding teacher's roles as change agents and leaders of innovation. Many teachers have a clear sense of what their students will require in the future and what are the most important skills and knowledge for cultural awareness, but feel they are being held back by

administrative or curricular restrictions. If these top levels of education were able to promote an environment of support for teachers to act creatively and independently and include aspects of their own experiences in order to adapt lessons to particular students and circumstances, then a positive momentum towards a practical form of cultural awareness raising could be achieved.

## **Conclusion**

Considering the patterns illustrated by the survey results, several conclusions emerge which could be applied to ELT practices and the development of Intercultural Communicative Competence and cultural awareness raising practices. Most teachers, having once been students themselves and generally having extensive experience learning and working with foreign languages, seem to know what they want and what they should be doing in order to maximize the effect of the classroom experience and their student's potential. The problem lies in changing passive attitudes towards innovation and experimentation and resistance towards a paradigm shift in teaching English as a Global Language for communication as opposed to merely a theoretical language for testing (Hyde, 2000). Teachers need to feel confident that they are able to take initiative and experiment, going against traditional practices to do what they feel is

best for their students in their particular context. If teachers do not lead by example or refrain from taking risks by experimenting in the classroom, then students cannot be expected to demonstrate the same risk and experimentation strategies required in cross cultural communication. In order to break this endless cycle of teachers only teaching what and how they were taught, a system of top/down cooperation, guidance, leadership and training needs to be implemented. More experienced teachers need to take on new roles as mentors, trainers, curriculum planners and materials writers engaging in action research, to better understand the constantly changing context of the classroom. To turn the “old school” obstacle of diversity into a “new school” resource, a cycle of ethnography should be introduced on all levels. Such as ethnographic process would involve teachers purposefully engaging in investigation and observation of their teaching environments in order to carefully record, describe and understand the many variables and influences to determine which type of materials and methods are most affective. In this way the teacher is transformed from a potentially passive recipient of information and innovation to an active researcher and producer and is consequently in a better position to engage the learners in a more meaningful and relevant way (Widdowson, 2005, Ellis, 1997). Initial teacher training therefore needs to be more practical and personal, addressing teacher’s needs, insecurities and fears and provide

teachers with tools, confidence and motivation required to be autonomous change agents. For practical purposes in developing cultural awareness, such training would have to address and promote teachers' awareness of their own as well as material and method biases, understanding of various cultural, national and linguistic stereotypes, sensitivity to students strengths, differences and needs as well as a general sense of encouragement, support and reassurance that innovation, risk taking and challenging traditional perspectives is acceptable and desirable. Teachers must be on the forefront of this paradigm shift and therefore a comprehensive ethnographic method, similar to Spradley's (1980) model for Participant Observation, needs to be applied in order to understand the complete environment, influences, variables and participants involved in language learning. Such an ethnographic approach would also bridge the gap between theory and practice, helping teachers and researchers understand each other and work for their mutual benefit (Ellis, 1997). As teachers have unique access to students learning environments, through participant observation they are in an optimal position to generate data useful for researchers, administrators and materials designers to create and implement more affective cultural awareness raising materials and methods. Teachers by making the transition to active researcher and by applying ethnographic methodologies to their classes will also be set up to better understand and adapt to the

diversity of their students (Frank, 2004). Ultimately these skills, which should also include Byram's five Savoirs and Sercu's subsequent knowledge taxonomy, should be transferred to language learners. In its basic form, cultural awareness necessitates the fundamental ethnographic skills of participant observation, critical thinking, evaluation, informed interaction and objective hypothesis formation. These skills will help language learners to continue to develop as global citizens and intercultural communicators outside the classroom, by instilling a deeply integrated ability to combine language with ethnographic methods to adapt, empathize, react flexibly, improvise, negotiate and engage (Jordan, 2002). In this way, cultural awareness raising can democratize the classroom, empower teachers and provide confidence, experience and motivation for students to actively pursue a connection with language and culture. The development of ethnographic and cultural awareness raising methods as described herein, for teachers and students alike, applied towards discovering, evaluating and understanding the deeper nuances of context, language and individual differences, all of which are essential components of Intercultural Communicative Competence, could have a tremendous impact on the success and practicality of ELT in Japan. In order for this to become a reality however, teachers' basic requirements and concerns need to be met. As teachers are the main purveyors of language and the ambassadors of culture it is

important that they are enabled and encouraged to fully explore and accommodate their unique teaching contexts and subsequently create or choose appropriate methods and materials. The following therefore provides a list of goals and aims which should be considered in implementing any kind of shift towards cultural awareness raising as part of language instruction.

### **Goals and Aims for Accommodating and Addressing Teachers Needs**

- Increase awareness of teachers and learners background in order to understand and eliminate any bias in the materials, culture or methods, while also limiting the reinforcement and fossilization of stereotypes and general subjective enculturation and cultural imperialism.
- Initiate new teachers into a cultural awareness raising paradigm through collaboration, team teaching and other joint efforts in order to benefit from others experiences.
- Empower all teachers regardless of nationality, native/nonnative proficiency, type or length of experience, type, style or level of instruction and institution as well as other affective and contextual factors, to experiment with innovation,



utilize diversity and provide the most appropriate methods for raising cultural awareness in their particular context.

- Strive towards equalizing; balancing and democratizing the Language Class so that all members can participate equally in an ethnographic cycle of heightened awareness and mutual understanding.
- Provide tools, knowledge and support to assist teachers in becoming Intercultural Role Models, Mentors, Guides and Facilitators.
- Create a top/down cycle in which the teacher can act as Ethnographer, Researcher and Change Agent as opposed to a passive recipient of innovation.
- Engage in action research to continually evaluate and re-evaluate contextual elements and participants needs, thus creating a culturally sensitive and appropriate methodology.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF CULTURAL CONTENT IN EFL MATERIALS**

#### **Introduction**

The following study aims at exploring and describing the type of cultural content found in English Language textbooks in Japan. Considering learner's diverse language needs, it has become increasingly important that English as a Foreign Language be taught with accompanying communication skills including critical thinking, intercultural knowledge and understanding as well as a heightened sense of cultural awareness. For the purposes of this study, cultural awareness raising will be defined as any activity which actively seeks to engage learners and broaden their understanding of cultural differences, increase sensitivity to ambiguous communication and promote flexibility and tolerance of otherness and cultural diversity. As most language learning contexts in Japan are limited to the classroom environment and communication opportunities with members of the target language community are few (Takanashi, 2004), it is important that texts and materials provide this missing element of realism and authenticity of context as accurately and objectively as possible. Examples of English usage and communication scenarios in textbooks, need to reflect

how the language is actually used in the real world and should not be limited to the most popular expectations and beliefs. Portraying English through media representations as a language of native speakers, predominantly from America or Great Britain excludes minorities and non-standard variations. The inclusion of these however, has often been problematic especially when deciding whose culture to represent, and how to present cultural content, products and practices associated with language communities and speakers, without stereotypes or essentialist perspectives, reducing a group's culture and identity to basic examples of popular media images, while keeping information relevant and interesting. Representations of culture and language in teaching materials and methods should encompass the diversity and wide range of skills and communication styles embodied by the different groups and communities in which English is actually used and with which learners will likely interact with in the future (Canagarajah, 2002).

Of the roughly 2 billion English speakers in the world, less than 500 million are native speakers (375 million speakers of English as a first language and 375 million speakers of English as a second language) of which only 60% come from a centre English country (U.S. or UK). The majority of English speakers represent the periphery which as a result of its diversity is rarely portrayed or included in popular texts and materials. (Graddol, 1997, Crystal, 2003).

Campbell (2000) argues that schools and teachers play an important role in preparing students for cultural pluralism. They do so by presenting a curriculum that reflects multiple perspectives on issues as well as diverse life experiences, both favourable and unfavourable, and by empowering students to identify the missing, misconstrued and misrepresented voices. Campbell claims that empowering teachers to discuss the types of bias, the reasons behind inclusion or exclusion of cultural information and perhaps a critical comparison of reality are effective ways to utilize otherwise flawed texts in the service of increasing cultural awareness. This raises awareness of students own cultural learning strategies and allows them to actively consider the materials and culture they are exposed to and the effect it has on their communication ability.

Instructional materials play the role of cultural mediators as they transmit overt and covert societal values, assumptions and images (Canagarajah, 2002, Sargent, 2004). Thus, they have the power to positively or negatively influence students' perceptions of their new culture and their ability to acculturate and succeed. According to Ndura (2004) students must be made aware of textbook biases and their effect on their learning process, self-image and society. Consequently, careful examination of

materials is necessary in order to maximise empowering learning experiences and reduce negative and confusing influences created by biased content. “Texts can be seen as representing the personal voice of culture”. (Fenner, 2001:50)

Cultural awareness, for communicative purposes, also requires a connection with personal experiences, and the analysis of one’s own values, identity and culture in order for analysis of a second culture to become real and meaningful. Kramsch, (1998) defines people’s imagination as one layer of culture and this layer can be accessed by using stimulating texts. Imagination in this respect simulates a flexibility in communication and an acceptance of differences fundamental to raising cultural awareness. Awareness raising activities cannot be teacher centered or controlled and need to establish a deeper and personal connection with students’ realities. This suggests that EFL writers should try to build conceptual bridges between the culturally familiar and the unfamiliar in order not to give rise to conflicts in the learner's 'fit' as he or she acquires English. Such bridges can be built, among other ways, through the use of comparisons as techniques of cross-cultural comprehension or the exploitation of universal concepts of human experience as reference points for the interpretation of unfamiliar data. (Alptekin, 1993).

According to Honna (2000) English textbooks in Japan have long been deficient in the type and amount of international content included. In comparison to other countries, texts in Japan tend to focus primarily on language structures and avoid the inclusion of any context or cultural information. This is largely a result of examination practices, the requirement for language to be quantifiable on a paper test and the experience and qualification of most non-native English teachers, many of whom are uncomfortable teaching more abstract elements of language and culture (Stapleton, 2000). In recent years, to counter this, there has been a move to make materials more global. As a result many texts are saturated with cultural information without consideration of accuracy, purpose, presentation or practicality. Takanashi (2004) furthers this by stating that most materials are developed without considering Japanese learning styles and methods used for presenting content and eliciting responses are in direct conflict with the student's fundamental learning and communication styles. In this regard, the more communicative format and autonomous learning style encouraged by most texts and methodologies, goes against the preferred teacher centered or language translation pedagogy. Fenner (2001:54) proposes that, unless there is knowledge and understanding of both cultures, there is no dialogue between the two and it is difficult to obtain the necessary outside and critical perspective of one's own

culture as well as the target one, which must be a requirement for intercultural awareness.

This study analyses tasks and activities, the priorities, shortcomings and methods used to raise cultural awareness in locally and internationally produced textbooks used in Japan'. It then identifies a number of factors in the Japanese language teaching context which influence these approaches to raising cultural awareness.

## **Literature Review**

Difficulty in incorporating materials which develop intercultural awareness is a general problem in the textbook publishing industry (Hall & Ramirez, 1990, Alptekin, 1993, Widdowson, 2005). Shi (2000), for example studied 40 texts used in College English classes in China and found that all information was either selected from western publications or focused primarily on western content. There are several basic reasons for this:

Firstly, introducing target and learners specific culture is not cost effective when publishers are marketing their books to the widest audience possible. Peter Viney an author of several textbooks used throughout Japan states;

“Some books are highly market-specific. But many textbooks are global, and you will find them being used in many countries simultaneously. Some learners prefer a book addressed to their particular problems, others like to feel part of a global pattern. Most of the major adult courses used in Japan are also used in other countries. There are some odd patterns, but the reason that Japanese characters in books tend to meet Latin Americans is because of the sales pattern of books in American English.” (ELT Think Tank, 2000)

Secondly, designing books which engage students and provide relevant and unbiased information is difficult and time consuming, requiring much more research and piloting than usually carried out for standard textbooks. Such material also needs to take into account students’ reason for learning English, their language levels, interests, backgrounds and goals. For material writers, producers and publishers, it is much simpler and cost effective to create textbooks for a general population without considering more specific contexts, needs and interests.

Materials writers also tend to design textbooks primarily with teachers in mind. Focus therefore, is geared towards producing simple and easily comprehensible



input which requires minimal preparation or explanation by the teacher. It is after all the teachers who choose the textbooks and it is likely that teachers will select a book which they are comfortable teaching over one that has cultural content with which they are not readily familiar.

Furthermore, many materials produced by Japanese publishers tend to focus on the notion of “native speaker” as ideal. Emphasizing a language and culture representative of a select group of centre English speakers, which is often unrealistic, irrelevant and showcases a type of proficiency and shared background knowledge which is virtually unattainable for the average language learner (Canagarajah, 2002, Takanashi, 2004, Sargent, 2004). Methods which are aimed at reaching these levels, focus on easily measurable and testable samples and information relying heavily on more linear process of translation, memorization and simplified and easily interpreted cultural representation. This has the effect of creating a level of English proficiency or cultural awareness which is purely theoretical and not representative of real world cultures and communities.

In this way, many texts addressing cultural content are limited to offering information on-“tourist culture”, focusing on aspects of history, geography, festivals, food and other popular artifacts and representations. –

To date the teaching of culture largely consists of the passing on of information regarding various dimensions of the target culture, such as geography, education, food and drink, tourist highlights, politics, the economy, etc.

(Sercu, 2002:62).

Consequently, they may do little more than reinforce stereotypes and exaggerate or misrepresent the target culture (Kramsch, 1993, Byram, 1997, Moran, 2001).

This also has the effect of creating an unrealistic image of an ideal native speaker with a unique culture and communication style. Such a representation, provides an unattainable and discouraging goal for most learners and adds to the increasing dichotomy of ‘otherness’ in which differences are emphasized and contrasted with this theoretical standard and learners are lead to perceive themselves as belonging to one group and English speakers belonging to another (Takanashi, 2004). Cultural awareness

raising includes a graying of these areas by showing how meaning is negotiated and that, in terms of communication, we exist in a mutually constructed culture (Kramsch, 1993, Widdowson, 2005). In this way, differences in background, cultural orientations, communications styles and native or non-native like proficiency are not necessarily obstacles impeding participation in intercultural communication (Byram, 1997).

With regard to cultural content in TESL or TEFL, the majority of materials and texts are based on models of North American Culture and are thus geared towards developing a very limited, loosely defined and not necessarily appropriate brand of cultural awareness (Fenner, 2001). British-EFL materials display a similar bias. Clarke and Clarke (1990) report that there is much stereotyping especially in areas of gender, race, class, and religion. They conclude that Britishness seems to be the standard, and cross-cultural perspectives in communication are deemphasized or denied.

Much has been written in criticism of such approaches (Kramsch, 1993, Byram, 1997, Canagarajah, 2002), and on the need to assist learners to become more aware of cultural differences and of the misunderstandings and miscommunication that such differences can engender. However suggestions of how to achieve these goals

remain sparse. Canagarajah (2002) has suggested that teachers assume a key role in researching, developing and implementing materials unique to their particular environments (and are thus better suited to their students' needs). He argues that this would be an effective strategy against the now common practice of applying the cultural stereotypes as one-size-fits-all teaching solutions. Furthermore, although trends have begun to lean towards further exploring cultural content in language learning as "a pedagogy of difference", (Giroux, 1993) this does not indicate any kind of paradigm shift and much is left to be explored.

The EFL text book remains the dominant medium for providing language learners with examples of target language usage, cultural content and information, however, most texts remain one dimensional, biased and fail to engage the learner in any meaningful way (Widdowson, 2005). The modern student is used to multitasking and interacting with easily accessible and relevant information characteristic of evolving media such as blogs, online social networks, video games or chat rooms (*facebook, youtube or twitter*). Though teachers must aim to work with and contribute to these influences outside the classroom, they often feel that rather than being supporters of, they are involved in a competition with them. (Fenner, 2001:51). Therefore, there is a

greater need for texts to that capture the learner's interest with engaging content that supports the learner's interaction with influences from outside the classroom. Along these lines, Méndez García (2005) concluded that it is important to acquaint the learner with the target language culture for the purposes of:

- enhancing students' knowledge of the world and their knowledge of foreign communities;
- familiarizing them with the most salient behavioral patterns of the target societies;
- promoting attitudes of respect and tolerance;
- fostering reflection upon one's own culture;
- emphasizing the relative role of one's cultural assumptions or developing real intercultural communication in an intercultural world.

If students are able to master these skills, they will be much better equipped to take initiative and responsibility for developing their own cultural awareness raising strategies and actively engage and interact with the cultures they encounter in the real world.

In order to describe and evaluate the cultural information included in many EFL materials, the following will report on a critical analysis and comparison of cultural content from a sample of representative EFL texts used in Japan.

The study examines the presentation of cultural information in textbooks and evaluates them: guided by the following questions:

1. Do the texts actively seek to engage the students through language or cultural content?
2. Does the text offer a neutral perspective on culture? Are students able to interpret cultural representations on their own or are they dictated by more mainstream expectations?
3. Is reference made to the learners own culture in order to establish grounds of comparison?
4. Is culture presented as a list of facts to learn about or is it presented as through open ended information designed to engage the student in comparison and analysis?
5. Does the text present basic stereotypes or do the tasks and activities allow students to make their own discoveries and interpretations?

6. What are the goals of the text books? What is the purpose of including cultural content?
7. Are the goals of the text a linear approach to developing structural aspects of a theoretical, native like proficiency(grammar translation, pronunciation modeling, memorizing idiomatic expressions and dialogues) or a more holistic approach to understanding the diverse culture and communication styles of English as an international Language?

### **Selection of Texts**

The EFL textbooks considered in this study represent some of the most commonly used materials in Japan. They consist of a sample of texts from major publishers, both local (4 texts) and international (5). Two distinct types of texts are examined:

- a) Texts which directly claim to raise cultural awareness either through back-cover claims or in their titles’.
- b) Skills based texts which do not intentionally include or actively seek to present cultural content, These texts are aimed primarily at developing

English Communication skills focusing on listening and speaking abilities  
and exercises most commonly associate with the “conversation class.”

Using the questions outlined above, this survey will analyze cultural content and methodology in relation to the following five criterion:

- **Goals:**

Text book aims with respect to communication

Textbook aims with respect to raising cultural awareness

- **Tasks:**

Active: Allowing students to reflect on, engage with, process or synthesize  
cultural information.

Passive: Presenting students with cultural information with little or no  
opportunity to reflect on, engage with, process or synthesize the information.

- **Presentation:**

Cultural information framed and presented separately from the main body of the  
text

Cultural information incorporated throughout the text



- **Perspective and Representation:**

Images and content are presented in an unbiased light

Images and content promote an unrealistic, stereotypical or ethnocentric perspective.

- **Cultural Artifacts:**

Cultural information as represented by common products including essential cultural elements such as People, Objects, Places, Language, Activities.

Sections and chapters from the textbooks were selected based on their overtly stated goals of raising cultural and relevance to an analysis of this type (including cultural content in simulated situations). Generally the goals of each section were stated in the introduction or on the cover. When this was not done, goals were inferred based on the nature and content of the material. Consistency was maintained through the selection of comparable activities such as dialogues, role plays and listening exercises. As most texts do not address all of the five criteria, they will serve as points of reference for analysis as and when appropriate.

**Table 2. Summary of cultural content and activities in textbooks published internationally**

<b>Text</b>	<b>Goals</b>	<b>Tasks</b>	<b>Presentation</b>	<b>Perspective and Representation</b>	<b>Cultural Artifacts</b>
Day, R. and Yamanaka, J. (2000). <i>Impact Topics</i> . Hong Kong: Longman	Developing cultural awareness, critical thinking, speaking and listening skills.	Active: dialogues and role plays encourage discussion of cultural attitudes and behaviours, but with normalization of North American perspective	Incorporated throughout text with a series of units grouped into 5 main themes, People, Gender, Relationships, Society, Life.	Generic 'western' North American US values, creates a sense of 'otherness' through lack of reflection, interpretation and critical thinking.	Culture specific names, Akira Keiko, Kimo, Sarah. Western marriage service. Image of wedding rings on two hands of different race.
Buckingham, A. (2005). <i>My First Passport</i> . Oxford: Oxford University Press.	Teaching survival English to Japanese students who interact in a foreign culture or with foreign visitors to Japan.	Passive: students are engaged in teacher-controlled material with little or no opportunity to consider issues of appropriate behaviour.	Incorporated throughout text through a story with reoccurring characters chronicling their experiences in the foreign culture.	Representing a dichotomy of cultures, Japan and US are different. No interpretation of differences or consideration of similarities.	Popular names, people and places, common products such as chopsticks, knives, forks, traditional food, fast food, sports.
Stempleski, S. (2005). <i>World Link</i> , Thomson and Heinle	Developing vocabulary, grammar, listening comprehension, and autonomous communication using international themes.	Passive: Short reading exercises with vocabulary or comprehension questions some opportunity for self-reflection through open ended questions.	Culture and communication themes presented as isolated inter-national samples from around the world, little opportunity for connection.	Mostly Center, US or UK, some peripheral images of people mostly Asian or Latin but within western context or displaying western values.	Monuments of famous places, (e.g.) Golden Gate bridge. Images of mostly Caucasian Americans some examples of peripheral culture

Richards, J. C. (1990/2005). <i>New Interchange</i> , Cambridge University Press	English for International Communication, developing 4 skills through exercises incorporating cultural information.	Passive: Reading and listening tasks focusing on developing input and retention skills, some independent activities.	Cultural information is mostly for entertainment value, or for creating a more international or global context.	Images are largely satirical stereo-types of US/UK culture, easily generalized and comprehensible examples and themes.	Popular names, landmarks, food, Greetings in various cultures. Famous people easily identifiable with US culture.
Lee, L. (2000). <i>J-Talk;</i> <i>Conversation Across Cultures</i> , Oxford University Press	Practicing conversation and oral skills by reflecting on and discussing cultural themes.	Semi-Active: Reading and listening activities, with Japanese translations and explanations.	Introductory look at cultural differences in the world focusing on familiar examples Japan, US, Europe	Direct connection to Japanese culture, highlighting differences without awareness	Obvious representations, sushi, pizza, popular names and places, customs and pop culture
Shaules, J. (2004). <i>Identity</i> , Oxford University Press	Conversation text focusing on promoting discussion on cultural themes as well as building English and communication skills.	Active: Listening activities, reflection on cultural values and perspectives. Comprehension, vocabulary and open questions.	Encourages interaction and inquiry of themes, requires teacher interpretation and explanation of content. Some connection to student's culture.	Neutral presentation of materials, style of inquiry remains western based, content is open to interpretation activities are teacher controlled.	Basic examples of cultural products, ceremonies and customs but also includes data on perspectives and communication styles.
Goodwright, C. (eds.) (2003). <i>In the English speaking World</i> , Macmillan Language House	Overview of the English speaking world, encourage students to make inter-cultural comparisons, share their opinions through reading exercises.	Passive, teacher controlled reading exercises, with comprehension questions, true and false exercises, vocabulary matching and multiple choice.	Geographical representation of English speaking world divided by region, supported with facts, quotes and short articles including history and background.	Social Sciences approach and perspective on English Language, incorporating, geography, history, religion, linguistics.	Famous icons, places, events, images; Mandela, Gandhi, King, koalas, kangaroos, beavers, Ottawa, Hollywood, New York, Declaration of Independence.

## **Synthesis of Results: Internationally Published Textbooks**

In terms of facilitating or promoting intercultural learning, the texts reviewed are largely unsuccessful in raising cultural awareness. The trend emerging from the table of results indicates that most internationally published textbooks include easily interpretable, readily accessible examples of culture which fit with students' preconceptions. Although this has the effect of simplifying interpretation it does not allow learners to question, critically evaluate or develop any type of awareness. As a result, cultural content serves only to reconfirm previously held beliefs and thereby further distancing students from the target language group rather than providing an opportunity for learning and understanding. Common representations of culture in the textbooks analyzed include over use of well-known cultural artifacts such as monuments and landmarks (Golden Gate Bridge, Niagara Falls, Statue of Liberty) found in *World Link*, *New Interchange* and *In The English Speaking World*. This is also extended to the inclusion of cultural icons and artifacts including representations of Gandhi, Julia Roberts, Hamburgers, Pizza and kangaroos. (My First Passport, J-Talk, *In the English Speaking World*). When culture is represented as a unique and diverse entity, it is often so obscure and removed from the students' own realities that the examples only serve to confuse rather than to enlighten or build curiosity. An example of this

occurs in the scenario of the international marriage between Sarah and Kimo (Impact Topics) where the names of characters and the disconnection with the context mar the students processing of language and information. Although many of the texts make attempts to actively engage learners with communicative activities and cultural content, albeit oversimplified and obvious examples, for these endeavors to be meaningful and productive, the format presentation and content would need to consider learners own culture in order to establish relevance and a benchmark from which to explore and strive for intercultural awareness. However as international publishers are required to market their texts in multiple regions for diverse groups, this kind of specialization is perhaps not economically feasible. The texts themselves are rich sources of information and language and are useful in that regard, however any type of intercultural learning, would require a creative and innovative teacher in order to develop methods for accessing and applying the information for communicative and awareness raising purposes.

**Table 3. Summary of cultural content and activities in textbooks published domestically**

<b>Text</b>	<b>Goals</b>	<b>Tasks</b>	<b>Presentation</b>	<b>Perspective and Representation</b>	<b>Cultural Artifacts</b>
Abe, Y. and Shaules, J. (1998). <i>Culture in Action; Classroom Activities for Cultural Awareness, Nan'un-do, Japan</i>	Encourage self-inquiry, reflection on concepts and questions on cross-cultural issues. Generate ideas and information on cultural values and artifacts, explore, develop opinions.	Semi-Active: Introduce some images or examples from Japanese and other cultures which are interpreted and considered in terms of how they reflect the culture	Apply cultural studies theories to learning English and understanding differences in own culture as well as other cultures. Awareness is goal but not extended to real world.	Cultural concepts and theory presented out of context and without relevance. Connections are random, one dimensional and not developed or integrated.	Proverbs, images, beliefs, stereotypes and expectations of various cultures used for reflection and analysis. (e.g.) gestures, food, clothes, symbols
Kitao, K. (2003). <i>Intercultural Communication, Shohakusha</i>	Developing speed reading and comprehension, activities aimed almost exclusively at understanding text or developing speed or accuracy	Passive: Reading short passages on intercultural communication, answering comprehension, True/False and vocabulary questions.	Introduction to cultural theory with examples of Japanese and 'Foreign' communication styles, customs and tendencies.	Cultures and communication presented as a continuum with many variables influencing differences. No opportunity for critical thinking.	Gestures, values, perspectives generalizeable examples of individualism, collectivism other tendencies relationships associated with certain cultures.

Hough, D. (2003). <i>Understanding Culture</i> , Kinseido	Build vocabulary and reading comprehension skills, cultural understanding, focus on real communication beyond textbook, in the form of Role Plays or dialogues	Passive: Reading and performing short dialogues, Japanese translation, cloze test, vocabulary, matching exercises comprehension activities.	Structural and analytical approach to cultural theory, primarily skill based connection to real world limited to dialogues and short passages.	No opportunity for the students to engage with the material or provide any of their own ideas or thoughts on the topic. Information tends to be static and arbitrary.	Names, relationships, attitudes and manners reflect norms of western culture, although themes are intended to be international.
Yoffe, L. (2000). <i>Canadian Holiday</i> , Ikubundo	Prepare students for travel and interaction with a specific target culture in this case Canada. Reading dialogues with short vocabulary comprehension exercises.	Passive: Practice dialogues following a student's planning and experience in Canada. Basic comprehension and vocabulary building exercises some open ended questions.	Showcases a Canadian 'homestay' experience in a guide book style format. Looking at examples and facts of 'Canadian' life which are then compared to Japan	Contrastive analysis of culture providing examples of customs and routines out of context with no explanation or opportunity for reflection.	Expected images of Canada and North American Lifestyle; houses, geography, sports, climate, food. Rocky Mountains, Ice Hockey, nature, big yard and living room.

### **Synthesis of Results: Domestically Published Textbooks**

Textbooks developed and marketed domestically, have a greater flexibility for tailoring methods, materials and content for specific needs, contexts and populations. In this way domestic textbooks should have a greater advantage over those published internationally in that they are not bound by any restrictions to include generalized and easily represented examples of culture. However, from the results in table 3, it becomes clear that this is not the case and that domestic texts tend to overgeneralize content to a greater degree than international texts. Although domestic texts do actively endeavor to promote intercultural learning as is evident in the titles and goals (*Culture in Action, Intercultural Communication, and Understanding Culture*), the procedures and format remain prescriptive, overly analytical and dichotomous without providing students opportunities for reflection, interpretation or synthesis. Learners are typically instructed on differences in communication styles and values through examples in their own culture contrasted with examples in foreign or target culture. This reaffirms preconceptions, cements their dichotomous perspectives and creates an overall pedagogy of difference rather than one of inclusive understanding and awareness rising. Information of this type should be arrived at through mutual inquiry, self or group discovery and not presented as matter of fact. In this way textbooks can also create opportunities for learners to discover and reflect on how their own culture works and then extend this awareness to interaction, participation and communication with others; ultimately realizing that cultures are relative not absolute (Liddicoat, 2009).



## **Analysis**

### **International Publishers**

**Text:** *Impact Topics*

Day, R. and Yamanaka, J. (1999/2008) *Impact Topics, Issues, Values*, Longman Asia

Unit: 9 *The Boyfriend*, Theme: Intercultural Marriage, Unit: 6 *Housework*: Gender

Roles, Unit: 3 *Who needs the local language?*: Minority Languages

This text is one of the popular Impact Series produced by Longman Asia. It aims at stimulating discussion and critical thinking on “timely topics” relevant to unspecified students. Although no clear cultural goals are stated, many of the characters have nonwestern names and the scenarios are often set in international venues. The introduction claims to promote an understanding of diverse values, international English and Global communication, however the methodology and content remains dominantly western based in that the cultural experiences, learning strategies and communication styles of a more diverse range of students are not considered.

Goals: The aim of this text, as stated in the introduction, focuses on developing cultural awareness, critical thinking, speaking and listening skills. Unit 9, for example, aims to stimulate thinking on cross-cultural differences by highlighting the problems which surface as a result of an intended intercultural marriage. These problems centre on the negative influence of stereotypes.

Students are asked to think in English and engage in conversation and discussion, sharing their ideas and opinions on the subject. The scenario involves Sarah and her father discussing her plans to marry her boyfriend Kimo. None of the characters are given any cultural identity or orientation apart from Kimo who is, through his nonwestern name, embodies an exotic other which is not explained or qualified.

However, the practice of depicting generally ‘western’ behaviors, such as the way that Sarah addresses her father directly and frankly, makes it difficult for peripheral students (Canagarajah, 2002) to identify with the conversation, the characters or the situation.

The father flatly refuses Sarah’s wishes to marry by stating “Kimo is not one of us...”

However, the text fails to discuss the reason for this attitude or relate it to attitudes and values in student’s own culture.

The text attempts to be neutral by not elaborating on any specific cultural traits and thus culturally appropriate or sensitive, however the nature of the conversation, the tone and the register are obviously white, North American, in that the communication style reflects the perception of Americans as depicted in popular media, as being direct and assertive. This tends to diminish the relevance of the situation as students do not have the background or experience to analyze or interpret the situation, the problems involved or the overt intercultural hurdles of fear, prejudice and discrimination. This example tends to foster an us-versus-them dichotomy and thus runs counter to the goals of cultural awareness raising.

Students are also asked to discuss which differences, such as skin color, religion or language, are the greatest barriers to human relationships. However, little opportunity for reflection is provided, and students are not presented with information or activities which might assist them in developing an understanding of unfamiliar attitudes. This type of activity is therefore likely to reinforce any previously held conceptions of otherness.

In subsequent units, characters have a range of names, including Luis, Keiko, Kan, Kwan, Mark, Susan, Dr. Moon, Hye-Jin, Mali and Yeon-Suk without any reference to culture or significance of the name. Yet all characters seem to embody western values despite the intended intercultural atmosphere implied in an exotic name. Most characters do not reflect the wider range of communication styles that one would expect in a more culturally mixed environment and are predominantly individualistic, opinionated, direct and oblivious to relationships and hierarchies such as senior, junior or public, private which often govern, or strongly influence communication. Such traits are typically associated with North American culture (Takanashi, 2004) and should be offset with alternative qualities in order to accurately represent a more multicultural society. The only characters with Japanese names, Akira and Keiko, are put in a scenario so completely un-Japanese in nature that the whole unit becomes nonsensical and ridiculous to Japanese students. In the text, Akira and Keiko kiss in front of the university library, an act which is highly unlikely to occur within the Japanese context. Having Japanese characters perform actions which are considered socially and culturally taboos is likely to undermine the credibility of the text and its claims to developing intercultural awareness. Students are more likely to discuss whether the

‘Japanese’ characters reflect appropriate Japanese behavior than they are to discuss the concept of appropriate behavior and the way this relates to cultural values.

Similarly, in Unit 6, *Housework*, Kwan and Hye-Jin are an unmarried couple living together. They are having problems because Kwan refuses to do housework so Hye-Jin writes to a local newspaper for advice. Although this may provide an opportunity to analyze cultural differences in gender roles, despite the characters both being from the same culture, it skates over bigger hurdles like the acceptability of living together before marriage or the airing of personal problems in a public forum. The magnitude of these widely held cultural taboos overshadows the main theme and causes the whole exercise to be incomprehensible to most students.

Unit 3 of the same text is titled “Who needs the local language?” involves a discussion between two expatriate men regarding learning a local language versus only relying on English. Although the unit potentially offers the opportunity to consider the role of English as a global language and its effect on minority languages, the story does not go beyond the characters’ personal bias. Unfortunately no reference is made to the cultures associated with the languages, cultural nuances or communication differences. Although this is an EFL text, there is not even an example to support either case or

promote the learning and understanding of English. The unit concludes with exercises titled “becoming international”. These ask the students to hypothesize on the best way to become an international person by choosing statements they agree with regarding studying culture and customs, learning language or making international friends.

Unfortunately these statements are so broad and obvious that they do not allow for much reflection from the students. The final exercise has the students plan a trip to a country and is an ultimate example of promoting tourist culture and reinforcing stereotypes. By having the students decide what they should bring, what they will eat and where they will stay based only on their existing knowledge of a country, the text encourages students to regurgitate preconceptions regarding each country.

Each unit also contains a separate section called “Culture Corner” which is intended to promote cultural learning by providing facts, statistics and other trivia about specific countries. This information includes such facts as percentages of men who do house work in various countries, how to say ‘I love you’ in 10 different languages, and the top 10 problems people have learning a foreign language. These types of facts are at best likely to encourage stereotypical thinking as they are divorced from consideration of cultural context and so appear as exotic bits of information rather than representative

of unfamiliar attitudes and values. It is important for the students to be able to form a real connection with the content and themes of the text in order to consider the issues reflectively, from their own unique perspective, thereby challenging assumptions or making realizations, which lead to increased cultural awareness (Kramsch, 1993).

### **Text: My First Passport**

Buckingham, A. (2005). *My First Passport*, Oxford University Press

Among the most successful books in the passport series, this text, subtitled “English for international communication,” is geared towards preparing students for experiences abroad. The goals in the introduction explicitly state that the focus is on teaching survival English to Japanese students who will find themselves interacting in a foreign culture or welcoming foreign visitors to Japan. There are set themes and language functions such as asking directions, talking about food, customs, and family life, and these are set in three different contexts: Hong Kong, Canada and Japan. The characters in the dialogues are all Japanese students interacting in various situations with members of their respective host family. The exercises are mostly teacher centered activities requiring students to fill in blanks, listen to a dialogue and then practice the

phrases while substituting various vocabulary items. Although cultural information is included in the scenarios such as descriptions of host families houses, routines, family structures and relationships, there is no opportunity for the students to reflect on these. Each unit follows essentially the same pattern of introducing and practicing language chunks to be used in situations frequently encountered when travelling abroad and is therefore, virtually indistinguishable from any standard English phrase book. There is nothing in the lessons to indicate an effort to promote international English or cultural awareness. For a text that claims to provide survival skills for experience abroad there is no provision made for the unexpected or unpredictable characteristics of language and social interaction. Students are led to believe that the phrases they learn will be appropriate in the scenarios described in the text however in reality students are unlikely to encounter situations completely identical to those found in the text. Flexibility in communication, negotiation of meaning and learning to be appropriate by observing, evaluating and interacting are arguably the most important survival strategies for cross cultural communication. Byram (1997) suggests that students engage the language and culture through ethnographies allowing them to seek out and contribute relevant elements of culture autonomously. By failing to include tasks which foster these skills, the text actually serves to limit the student's awareness and ability to participate fully



and successfully adopt appropriate communication frameworks for any new culture they may find themselves in.

Though the majority of the text fails to offer opportunities to develop cultural awareness, the appendices of the text do offer some grounding in the learners own culture by translating and explaining critical elements in Japanese as well as providing a section entitled “my story” where the books’ characters reflect on their intercultural experiences and how they learned from them. The best example of this involves a student visiting an American family’s home and being surprised that, contrary to her expectations, everyone is asked to take their shoes off before entering, as is done in Japan. The lesson she draws is that it is best to follow what everyone else does or ask specifically how to behave before assuming an action is appropriate. This type of exercise is an example of cultural awareness raising as it clearly demonstrates reflection on differences, reevaluation of previously held beliefs and active learning from rather than about culture.

**Text: World Link**

Stempleski, S. (2005). *World Link*, Thomson and Heinle

World Link is a skill-based text focusing on developing English fluency with an international theme. The goals stated include vocabulary, grammar, listening comprehension, and autonomous communication. Each unit follows a similar format starting with the introduction of a theme and some key words followed by an activity asking students to describe a picture and create a dialogue based on the scenario depicted therein. For the most part the activities are open ended and require students to think using English in creative and realistic ways. In terms of language learning such a method can be quite successful as the students are required to imagine a context and decide how to use language appropriately. Activities designed to raise cultural awareness in this text are largely absent, except at the relatively trivial level of ‘tourist culture’ which provides the international “World Link” dimension alluded to in the book’s title. For example, in unit 6, *Communication*, there is a list of common greetings in various countries, advice on what certain gestures mean in different cultures and a set of pictures depicting various people engaged in non-verbal communication actions. These are presented with neither a communicative context nor any explanation or discussion of the role of gesture and of greeting behaviors in different cultures, and are therefore likely to be of limited use to the students. Specifically, the lack of broader

cultural context and engagement is likely to hinder the student's ability to engage with and consider the presented cultures on a deeper level, exploring, for example, the attitudes and values which inform perceived behaviors. Many of the characters in the text also have names designed to be instantly recognizable as non-Western names such as Pilar and Jesus. The arbitrary inclusion of non-western names without context or clarification does not provide the students with any useful cultural information. Furthermore, the gratuitous selection of these names further hinders student's learning in that it is likely to reinforce stereotypes regarding which names are appropriate to which country, ignoring the reality that there may well be native English speaking North Americans named something other than "John or Mary".

**Text: New Interchange**

Richards, J. C. (1990/2005). *New Interchange*, Cambridge University Press

The interchange series is a staple of the EFL textbook lineup, having been in print for almost 20 years. The most recent edition stresses English for International Communication and differs from previous versions in its inclusion of cultural information and more international scenarios. Most of the characters are of different

backgrounds with usually at least one a native speaker from the U.S. or U.K. In unit 5, *Tell me about your family*, Ryan from America and Soo-Mi from Korea are having a conversation on family, marriage, divorce and gender roles.

Students are asked to paraphrase the facts stated by each character in the dialogue (e.g. What does Ryan say about families in the U.S.?) The rest of the unit focuses on understanding statistics with selected information on American family trends and general statistics on other countries (e.g. in Australia 87% of married couples have children). While these sort of statistics undoubtedly provide some insight into the makeup of any given country, they may also be counterproductive in the sense of raising cultural awareness as they lead students to generalize regarding a given population, and thus ignore the large variety of realities that may actually exist in any given country. The statistics also do not involve students learning from context, and are thus not the most appropriate way to raise cultural awareness.

The writing exercise which follows, encourages students to reflect on cultural information. This section begins with a sample statement “In my country most people get married at age...” Such examples are too general and abstract to be of any

usefulness to the student's cultural or linguistic learning. Such an exercise for the purpose of cultural awareness raising should be less matter of fact and more open ended and subjective. Perhaps instead asking questions like; What are important family values and how do they affect marriage trends? How and why might these be different cross culturally or individually? Instead predominantly North American family values and perspectives on marriage are projected upon which students are asked to comment or speculate without the benefit of context for guidance or personal relevance for motivation. As a result the exercises only passively engage students with the cultural content as all clarification must ultimately come from the teacher.

The final section of the unit consists of a reading comprehension exercise on the changing American family. Students read statements from five Americans regarding family matters and are asked to describe the different problems in each family.

Although this exercise requires reflection on the culture it is biased in nature, as it provides students with an already completed contrastive analysis with a conclusion, and does not provide an opportunity for objective comparison with the students own realities. Such activities are only useful if the cultural information comes from the

students and is evaluated within context in order to fully appreciate and understand the causes, effects and interpretations which constitute awareness (Kramsch, 1993).

### **Text: J-Talk**

Lee, L. (2000). *J-Talk; Conversation Across Cultures*, Oxford University Press

This two book series of “communication across cultures” is a conversation style text that takes a more active approach to cultural awareness raising. The introductory *J-Talk* (L. Lee, K. Yoshida and S Ziolkowski, 2000) text has obvious cultural themes, such as greetings, food, and manners, which are related to the students’ own culture and explained using examples in Japanese. This is helpful for the students and allows them to reflect on issues, language and culture. However the exercises and content are oversimplified and so extremely limited and arbitrary in nature that they fail to engage students on any deeper level. As an example, Unit 2 (*Kiss, Bow or Shake hands*) addresses questions of the collision of different cultural norms in cross-cultural communication. The unit begins with an exercise asking students to interpret four pictures in terms of the gestures, situations and relationships depicted. This would seem like a worthwhile exercise for raising awareness except that suggested responses are

provided so there is nothing left for the students to think about or bring to the discussion.

The subsequent exercises consist mostly of multiple choice and fill in the blank activities and are cultural only in so much as their content showcases a country other than Japan. The activities focus on language and vocabulary building only, and require no reflection on student's own, or other cultures. In such an exercise the students are passive recipients of cultural information and are not encouraged to delve deeper by exploring/discussing the behaviors depicted in the pictures, and comparing them with Japanese behavior in comparable situations. The final exercises also exhibit this limited showcase of culture, asking the students to match gestures with their corresponding meaning and country they are likely to be used in. The choices are seemingly arbitrary as there is nothing to link the gestures with any deeper understanding of people, culture or the role of nonverbal language in communication. Canada, China, Japan and India are selected and gestures for each country are presented as unique to that country, ignoring the fact that the multicultural make up of many countries provides for a broad range of gestures which might be encountered.

One additional part of the final activity involves the students selecting a country and role playing a conversation using gestures as if they were from that country,

while the other students watch and try to guess which country is being modeled. Such an activity fails to engage or connect with the students own realities (Méndez García, 2005), and runs the risk of trivializing cultural awareness and objectifying manners, reducing cultural awareness to customs, values, and communication styles objectified as facts to be studied, practiced and remembered. This text treats teaching cultural awareness in the same manner as it teaches grammar, taking a structured and rules-based approach when a more open ended interpretative and flexible approach to learning from culture is required.

### **Text: Identity**

Shaules, J. (2004). *Identity*, Oxford University Press

The second text in the series *Identity* (J. Shaules, H. Tsujioka and M. Iida, 2004) is slightly higher in level and offers a more in-depth inquiry into culture related topics. Similar to the first text, this edition also tries to actively address cultural issues and raise awareness. The goals are clearly stated as promoting discussion on cultural themes and the topics included range from Values, Communication Styles and Gender to Culture, Diversity, Politeness and Global Community. At a glance this text appears to



take an open ended and interpretive approach and thus seems well suited as a cultural awareness raising tool. However as with the previous text in the series, the activities fail to engage the students in critical inquiry or reflection. Unit 2, *Values*, aims at understanding the underlying aspects of human behavior, culture and communication by highlighting what different people consider important. The first exercise involves listening to a dialogue between two students in London. Kijana, an exchange student from Nairobi, receives some bad news from his family and informs his roommate Matt that he will have to return to Kenya to manage the family business. Matt states that such demands are unfair and he doesn't need to listen to what his family tells him to do. Following this the students are asked to check their comprehension and reflect on their own values by imagining how they would react in a similar situation. This is a good activity. However, potential answers are listed in a table, thus pre-empting discussion. All the students need to do here is check the answer which best matches their opinion. The only critical thinking activity has the students elaborate on their preferences and choices for the future and for leading a happy life. Again most of the answers are provided and the amount students are able to contribute autonomously is limited. Thus, while providing a good basis from which to teach cultural awareness, it would seem that

the text undermines its goals in an attempt to provide a more teacher friendly (e.g. checkboxes are easy to grade) set of activities.

### **Text: In the English speaking World**

Goodwright, C. (eds.) (2003). *In the English speaking World*, Macmillan Language House

This comprehensive and highly internationally oriented text claims on its cover, to “encourage students to make inter-cultural comparisons and share their opinions”. The book is basically a reading resource but also provides some opportunity for listening and speaking. The aim of the text is to give a complete overview of the English speaking world by providing 20 short essays written by people from the countries or regions where English is spoken. Each essay offers some facts, history, cultural information and perspective on the English language and the diversity of the people who speak it. The text is very clearly organized with each chapter presenting a short article, some quotes from famous citizens and comprehension questions regarding content. Each section concludes with a short listening activity which is usually authentic, such as a radio broadcast from Hong Kong before the colony was returned to China.

After listening, students are asked to give their opinions, make predictions regarding missing information and share their ideas on any cultural assumptions connected with the main theme. In principle this is a worthwhile activity. However, the amount and scope of the questions are too limited to allow for much meaningful consideration of the information presented.

In the section on English in South-East Asia, Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia are highlighted. Each country is represented by a brief article that describes one of the unique features of the region or the people. There is no introduction or basic explanation of the country in terms of geography, history, religion, society or people. Such basic information would be helpful in providing background or the context required for relevance and meaningful interpretation and reflection. The reading on Malaysia for example is a short anecdote on arranged marriages, although this is interesting, it serves only to encourage the students into thinking that this may be the norm in Malaysia, whereas highlighting the diversity of the country may be more useful from an intercultural awareness perspective. Each section also provides a brief overview of how English came to be part of the culture. While this could make for interesting discussion and comparison, there is no framework for such a discussion present in the

text, and thus students are not given an engaging context, that would draw out their own interests and establish relevance to the material presented, through which to interact with the data. The only opportunity for reflection and discussion comes from the interesting and provocative nature of the articles which range in theme from war, business and politics to music, literature and food. These are however only loosely connected to the featured countries and thus the lack of context for the information presented in the articles serves to limit the insight into the culture that is being described.

Although this book is quite well researched and organized it is designed for the widest possible audience. It is a text that could well be used in the 20 regions of English speaking nations listed. The drawback of this marketing strategy is that student's individual needs, cultures, differences and preferences are not considered and the book's basic format remains anchored in a predominantly western perspective. The texts focus on providing easy to evaluate activities, such as multiple choice, or true and false questions, marks it as teacher centered and it does not really allow for the students to engage with the material or bring much of their own culture and experience to the activity or lesson. The materials and content, largely made up of multiple-choice and

similarly non-open ended activities, encourage passive learning of information by not providing an opportunity for students to explore further or relate the material to their own reality and are perhaps better suited for self-study. Although the content is interesting it is mostly academic in nature and there is little opportunity to reflect on cultural information in a way that would serve to raise awareness. For this book to be successful in this regard, it would need to be heavily supplemented by student specific, teacher created materials that might motivate students to engage and reflect on the issues covered in connection with their own realities. This would however defeat the purpose of having a textbook in the first place.

### **Summary of Analysis**

The fundamental problem surrounding the approach to including cultural content or activities to promote cultural awareness in internationally published textbooks, lies in the fact that they are international and must be marketed as such. For learners to make a connection with cultural information in a way which might benefit communication, interaction and understanding of differences, the appropriateness and relevance of materials needs to be considered. Unfortunately when addressing the needs of a diverse range of target demographics, individual differences cannot be considered

or catered to in any realistic sense. As a result the textbooks are geared towards fulfilling teachers' needs and not those of students. In this regard, the texts also rely heavily on commonly held beliefs and stereotypes regarding culture, as these make teaching of concepts and information simpler. However, merely including cultural information and facts does not allow for any greater understanding or raising of awareness. Students need to be able to internalize, process, interpret and relate to the information, contexts and situations they are exposed to through textbooks in order for the included material to have any purpose other than infotainment. The texts similarly ignore differences in communication styles and values which have a strong effect on learning styles, preferences and outcomes (Takanashi, 2004). In several of the texts members of multicultural communities are represented in name to give a sense of diversity, however their portrayed behavior, attitudes and basic characteristics are not varied and tend to be North American by default. The way in which most materials and activities are presented and developed also follows a standard format which is largely inflexible and tends to follow North American values and learning styles. Texts marketed in Asia need to consider that not all students are comfortable giving opinions, disagreeing, speculating, sharing experiences or generally communicating frankly in the presence of peers. Although such a communicative approach may be prized in North

American markets, in many parts of Asia especially Japan, it is not. Texts calling for active discussion, debate or critical thinking on unfamiliar subject matter, also need to consider the students paradigm and slowly build up this type of methodology, allowing a more varied and flexible approach to engaging with the content personally as well as publicly.

### **Domestic Publishers**

Locally published texts differ from those published internationally in two fundamental ways. First they are designed and written with a specific group of students in mind; they are often supplemented with explanations in Japanese and tend to consider the learner's communication styles and preferences. Second, in terms of content and style, they focus more on teacher centered methods, and activities and skills which are easily tested. Also, as resources are perhaps more limited than is the case with larger publishers, presentation and design is usually simpler and more conservative than is the case with international textbooks. Authors also seem to have much more control over the final product and editing is minimal. Materials can be designed for a specific demographic without consideration of any other conflicting agenda.

Although local publishers may have an advantage over larger publishers, without grounding and guidance this freedom can lead to loosely organized texts of low quality with unclear outcomes or goals. The challenge for local publishers is to design quality books which consider students and the learning environment, allow learners to engage with cultural content and guide them towards a meaningful and achievable goal extending beyond the classroom into more autonomous and lifelong learning and achievement of cultural as well as more multilevel awareness. The texts selected here represent five major publishers and are all texts which focus on either English for international situations, or directly on teaching intercultural communication or cultural awareness.

**Text: Culture in Action; Classroom Activities for Cultural Awareness,**

**Abe, Y. and Shaules, J. (1998). Nan'un-do, Japan**

This text is one of the older texts in this study and is one of the only titles which directly focuses on raising cultural awareness. In this way the goals are very straightforward and simple. Each unit presents a theme of self inquiry which requires students to reflect on a concept or question, hypothesize and generate information and



ideas on a cultural value or artifact and then share their opinions. The communicative activities are sparse, being limited to completing lists, ranking categories or filling in blanks. In terms of content, Unit one addresses the question “What is culture?” Students hypothesize about this and are then asked to imagine where they would take a foreign visitor to Japan and why. Although this allows introspection and elaboration by considering foreign culture, students only have their own limited knowledge of what the ambiguous notion of a “foreigner” entails and will therefore most likely over-generalize, oversimplify and reinforce stereotypes through this type of exercise. For example, responses such as “I wouldn’t take an American guest to a tea ceremony because Americans don’t like to sit on the floor” are likely to occur. Unit two asks students to reflect on what it means to be Japanese. The question proposed is “Who is more Japanese?” This is followed by a list of qualities ranging from race, and place of birth to ability to read and write kanji. This may lead to appreciation and awareness of Japanese culture but is highly unlikely to prepare or help learners with understanding others who are different.

The cultural elements of this text focuses more on cultural theory and does not address any of the practical elements of communication or interaction which are the

main purposes of raising cultural awareness (Widdowson, 2005). The text would be much better if it included some interactive tasks and activities from specific examples geared towards eliciting more practical skills. Such examples could then be easily interpreted and related to students own realities, internalized and used for a bridge to help establish starting point for cultural awareness. These would also serve to engage and subsequently motivate students by establishing connections and relevance. As an interesting supplement for advanced learners this book is useful. However may be challenging for students without international experience on which to draw.

What is missing in this text is the perspective of “other”: everything is grounded in or taken from Japanese culture and there is little possibility for comparison or development of awareness. Students are prompted to learn about and question their own culture, however, without countering examples there is limited possibility for raising awareness in an international sense nor true reflection or cultural appreciation. Although the book does not try to stereotype or simplify other cultures, by presenting Japanese cultural norms and situations as universal within Japan, it in effect homogenizes all Japanese which is equally counterproductive in that it creates and unrealistic benchmark to be compared with a non-domestic notion of otherness.

Students are left thinking that Japan and Japanese culture are one uniform entity, in contrast to the array of difference found throughout the rest of the world. This runs counter to the aims and objectives of a cultural awareness pedagogy. Having students negotiate their own culture from which to objectively view others as well as actively engage with relevant content which can be connected to their own realities, needs and experiences. (Kramsch, 1993, Byram, 1997, Widdowson, 2005).

### **Text: Intercultural Communication**

Kitao, K. (2003). *Intercultural Communication*, Shohakusha

As with the previous text this title focuses on cultural content. The goal of this resource is developing speed reading and comprehension, and the activities within the text are aimed almost exclusively at confirming comprehension and developing speed. This lack of interaction with the cultural elements presented within the book suggests that the inclusion of them was an afterthought, rather than a core element of the book. The content material is however interesting in that it presents the research of intercultural communication pioneers Edward Hall and Geert Hofstede in an easy to understand form with clear examples. Students learn about cultural dimensions,

communication styles, and the collectivist, individualist and high and low context dimensions of culture however they are not encouraged to reflect on these concepts or apply them to either their own or a different culture. Student interaction is limited to comprehension questions, true or false questions, fill in the blank, and simple yes/no exercises. In concept this book could be very useful but requires a section which allows students to expand their thinking and extend information and concepts to the real world.

Unit one, which asks the question “What is culture?” Provides some common and vague definitions such as shared values, beliefs and behaviors, but these definitions are of questionable value in assisting learners in developing cultural awareness, in that many of them are arbitrary oversimplifications of popular cultural representations. The examples provided are similarly generalized, exemplified by statements such as “Americans are well known individualists.” and “Norwegians strongly dislike standing out...” There is no context or qualifying information and therefore this material serves only to reinforce and encourage stereotypes of perceived national differences. Thus in attempting to raise cultural awareness, the text actually hinders the cultural awareness process that would otherwise be one of the main goals of teaching intercultural communication.

## **Text: Understanding Culture**

Hough, D. (2003). *Understanding Culture*, Kinseido

The goal of this text is to develop vocabulary and reading comprehension. It is similar to the previous two examples in that it also proposes to develop cultural understanding and in that it is mostly structural and analytical in its approach. As with other texts, a holistic approach to cultural content presentation is avoided in favor of more contrastive and analytical means. This method is preferred for introducing basic elements of cultural information which are simplified into easily explained and understood, generalizations and stereotypes. A fundamental difference with this text is the focus on real communication in the form of dialogue as opposed to reading of text alone, which serves to more actively engage the student. Unit one begins with the often used question of “What does culture mean to you?” However, instead of providing an academic answer, a conversation between two students discussing this question is modeled. The students in the dialogue give their opinion, disagree and try to reconcile their differences in opinion. Although the characters are Japanese in name, the dialogue, tone, manner and nature of the conversation seems to exhibit American values in the way students clearly express their opinions and disagree strongly with each other. The

characters provide some examples of what culture may or may not be and then simply decide to agree that culture is just shared customs, values and beliefs. At this point the text begins to follow the standard pattern of structure, testable skills and teacher centered learning. The exercises that follow the dialogue include a translation into Japanese, a comprehension check, and several cloze type vocabulary building and matching activities. From this it becomes clear that the goal of the text is not what is implied by the title “Understanding Culture.” as there is no opportunity at all for the students to engage with the material or provide any of their own ideas or information on the topic. This is especially surprising given that the theme is “What does culture mean to you?” For cultural awareness raising purposes (Kramsch, 1993, Byram, 1997, Widdowson, 2005), it would have been useful to have the students interact with the material and each other by either; acting out the dialogue, perhaps changing certain parts or including their opinions using the dialogue as a framework, reflecting on the content as it relates to their knowledge of Japan and other countries, speculating as to the accuracy or validity of the information, brainstorming some other ideas or generally engaging with the material in a deeper and more meaningful way.

**Text: Canadian Holiday**

Yoffe, L. (2000). *Canadian Holiday*, Ikubundo

This text differs from other domestic publications in that it is designed to prepare students for travel and interaction with a specific target culture. There is a story that unfolds throughout the book which follows the main character, a Japanese University student named Midori, as she prepares to visit Canada and subsequently interacts with a variety of different Canadians during her travels. The content is in dialogue form, highlighting Midori's Canadian experiences as she converses with people like Pierre, Renee and Bruce to find out about Canada. Although the communication is realistic in that it provides a context and some relevance, as many students will likely make similar excursions, the content borders on stereotypical in that it showcases mostly Canadians of European descent, ignoring the actual diversity found within the country. Much of the interaction is standard language that could be found in any English text book published anywhere in the past 30 years. The factual content focuses on geography and climate, which tends to be common knowledge and reinforces commonly held stereotypes that most people already know and associate with Canada. The content fails to prepare students for real communication with Canadians

and does little to illustrate the diversity of the population. Communication is treated as a difficulty highlighting the typical problems Japanese are expected to have regarding decision making, travel and interacting with foreigners. Students are not encouraged to explore how they might overcome these difficulties, or why they might occur, and the information seems to serve only as entertainment or to create the “Canadian” atmosphere implied by the book’s title. The activities are similar to those of the texts outlined above and consist of vocabulary building and reading comprehension exercises. As with previous texts, there is no opportunity for critical thinking, evaluation or reflection on the content or cultural information. The students are presented with limited and arbitrary images of culture which is also reflected in the random vocabulary words featured in each scenario. In this way the material becomes very dry and unrealistic, serving only to reinforce the expectations of travelling abroad such as staying with an all-white, nuclear family or eating typically North American food, rather than prepare them for the unexpected.

It would be much more beneficial if learners discovered through Midori that if they went to Vancouver that; their host families may not be of white Anglo-Saxon heritage but perhaps Sikh, Lebanese or Korean, there are many languages spoken



besides French and English and if they were to walk around downtown, no one would look at them and assume they were tourists. It is after all the challenging of commonly held assumptions and preconceptions that is cultural awareness.

### **Summary of Analysis**

Considering the data from the comparative analysis of domestically published textbooks, several conclusions with regard to intercultural learning can be made.

Although domestic texts contain much interesting cultural content and information, this is never fully developed beyond standard trivia or knowledge acquisition activities.

Students should be enabled to bring their own information to the class, study their own cultures independently and be exposed to cultural facts and knowledge more indirectly and objectively. Although the materials are designed in consideration of student's

backgrounds and culture, the content and activities do not attempt to bridge cultures or to develop a deeper understanding that would benefit intercultural communication or

awareness. Studies are generally left flat and one dimensional without opportunity for reflection or objective processing. The main concern of the texts would appear to be

teachability and ease of assessment. Cultural elements are carefully structured and

presented in an effort to make them as unambiguous as possible. The purpose of this is

to relieve the burden of the teacher in a teacher centered context, who would otherwise have to interpret the cultural information alongside the students. This is problematic in that apart from including cultural representations, it would entail a major paradigm shift in local teacher's perspectives and teaching styles. Several texts do take a more qualitative approach to intercultural learning (*Culture in Action, Understanding Culture*) however these are never expanded on in a way that would allow students to relate examples to their own lives or apply information to real world communication. Beyond presenting robust cultural information, texts promoting intercultural learning need to provide guidelines, opportunities and strategies for transferring theoretical knowledge into practical skills.

## **Conclusion**

The majority of texts reviewed in this survey fall short in meeting the requirements for effective cultural awareness raising, such as critical thinking, flexibility and tolerance for ambiguity, highlighted at the outset of this study. While several titles attempt to address some of the criteria, it is the combination of these elements more so than the inclusion of any one of the parts that foster intercultural inquiry, awareness and understanding (Byram, 1997). In order to communicate and

interact in intercultural situations in the real world, students need a heightened, multilevel awareness which is best developed through a range of tasks, diversity of content and an opportunity to ground discoveries in their own culture. This type of multilevel awareness would include meta-cultural skills (Reimann, 2005) such as empathy, negotiation, critical thinking, flexibility or tolerance of ambiguity as well as familiarity and understanding of Byram's (1997) '*savoirs*', criterion for intercultural communicative competence.

Considering the eight questions posed in the Literature Review, very few texts provided either an opportunity for reflection or for relating cultural elements back to the students own culture or even a means for the students to relate information on culture to experiences in the real world in a way that would promote cultural awareness. From the eight questions proposed for evaluation, the following conclusions can be made.

1. *What are the goals of the text books? What is the purpose of including cultural content?* The goals and purpose for including cultural content tend to be varied.

In the case of international publishers several texts actively seek to help learners understand cultures. However with the local publications the goals

remain structural and the inclusion of cultural content is for the most part arbitrary.

2. *Are the goals of the text a linear approach to developing native like proficiency or a more holistic approach to understanding the diverse culture and*

*communication styles of English as an international Language?* None of the texts considered in this study had goals far reaching enough to be of any help in answering this question. Most materials remained either teacher or classroom centered and were not directly open to more autonomous learning outside of the classroom. The nature of cultural awareness raising requires that much of the enquiry and learning continue outside the classroom (Norton, 2001, Jordan, 2002, Sercu, 2002).

3. *Do the texts actively seek to engage the students through language or cultural*

*content?* Many texts have goals aimed at engaging students with interesting and relevant language and content, However, much of the cultural content is decontextualised and does not involve reflection or comparison with the students own culture. This means that most textbooks fail to provide an adequate framework for raising cultural awareness. The approach towards considering and interpreting different perspectives as well as the presentation

and inquiry of exercises and activities involving cultural content, is often too limited to promote deeper understanding or self-motivated and autonomous learning.

4. *Do the texts offer an unbiased perspective of culture?* Several texts do try to maintain an unbiased or neutral perspective of culture. However the attitudes, values and behaviors represented in many of the texts tend to be heavily western based. Learning styles do not consider the appropriacy of non-North American or more diverse classroom contexts; For example, communication is overly direct, casual and individualistic to accurately represent the diversity of cultures implied in the content.
5. *Do the texts consider the learners' culture?* Most texts do not consider the learner's culture. This may be because international publishers need to maximize marketability while many domestic publishers are obliged to meet specific requirements for teacher centered materials and assessment criteria. As long as teachers remain the main purveyors of language materials, textbooks will continue to be geared towards teacher marketability and therefore focus on teacher's needs, teachability and ease of use rather than student's diverse needs, identities and culture.

6. *Is there any connection or reference made to the learners own culture in order to establish relevance? Is culture used purely as a source of facts to learn about or is it presented as stimulating material which students can learn from?*

Reference to learner's cultures is usually in the form of translation or allusion to an expected difference or stereotype. Many texts, especially those produced by local publishers, are predominantly teacher centered and as a result cultural content is often presented as easily explained or understood reading material to practice and reinforce the learning of grammar, vocabulary and reading comprehension.

7. *Do the texts further basic stereotypes or is material presented objectively for students to make their own discoveries and interpretations?* Most texts do nothing to dispel previously held beliefs and stereotypes and many texts indirectly reinforce the notion that Japanese have a natural difficulty in international situations because cultures are so different and unique. Students are encouraged towards accepting a dichotomy of difference rather than developing a sense of inquiry.

For the most part, the texts reviewed did not actively engage students in that there were few autonomous exercises to stimulate inquiry outside the classroom or connect with the students own realities in any meaningful way. Cultural content and materials are generally presented out of context and with little attempt to establish comparisons with students own culture and experiences. Most characters in dialogues and stories display characteristics, communication styles, values and attitudes which are typically North American in nature. This is perhaps these texts' most critical failure with respect to developing cultural awareness. Takanashi (2004) among others points out that cultures differ with respect to parameters such as whether they are high context or low context and favor individualism or collectivism. Notions of class (power distance), register (tone/politeness), indirect or direct communication known as *tatemae/hone* in Japanese as well as communication distinctions between public and private circles referred to as *uchi/soto* also play a major role in affecting communication in general and classroom communication in particular and these points need to be examined and explored if students are to develop intercultural awareness. Thus forced dialogue, which tends to be an unfamiliar scenario performed or read out of context and without any validating explanation of non-linguistic elements in the classroom, which is neither autonomous nor connected with student's own communication styles, and

without a topic that the learners can engage, serves neither to improve language ability nor to increase cultural awareness. Without personal involvement, it is doubtful whether the learners acquire the skills that they need. (Ricoeur, 1992).

English for Intercultural Communication is by no means a new concept and has long been regarded as an essential component of language learning. (Merryfield, 1993, Holliday, 1994, Pennington, 1995). Although supporting perspectives have become quite popular in Japan over the past few years, no serious advances towards incorporating them into viable cultural awareness pedagogy seem apparent. The idea of a supreme native speaker with a single language and unique culture remain the benchmarks from which to gauge proficiency and competence, while the notion of English as an international language with its many diverse cultures, forms and representations remains elusive and abstract. Cultural references in textbooks are in fact mostly limited to titles, unit chapters and arbitrary content or tourist information. When culture is presented it is usually either biased, oversimplified or without a validating context. As teachers remain the chief gate keepers of content in the classroom and teachability and testability are key factors effecting text selection, in the case of Japan, a more holistic approach to cultural awareness raising does not seem feasible at present.



Teachers require content to be easily understood and synthesized by students. Simple explanations, concrete examples and quantifiable progress in the form of test questions, scores or vocabulary achievement are essential components of a marketable textbook. Although positive cultural awareness raising necessitates attention to more qualitative skills such as critical thinking, interpretation, creativity, reflection and analysis, and developing understanding (Byram, 1997) such an approach is not supported by most texts as it would be too problematic for most teachers to implement.

As this analysis has indicated a common problem in text books in Japan is that they are too prescriptive in nature. Most texts are crammed with exercises and explanations designed to be teacher friendly and avoid the problem of running out of materials to teach. However this runs counter to awareness raising goals and notions of communicative language teaching. Texts aimed at raising intercultural awareness need to be open-ended and flexible (Sargent, 2004, Takanashi, 2004). Much of the content and ideas should come from the students and many of these activities would be more effective if the students had the freedom to do what they wanted with them (Widdowson, 2005).

Impediments to the implementation of a viable and appropriate approach to cultural awareness raising method paradoxically include the plethora of textbooks and related multimedia available for teachers and students. In the University context, few schools consider the goals of their language programs or the needs of students when selecting textbooks, often resulting in syllabi which are modeled after the textbook, rather than shaped by student need (Stapleton, 2000). Although textbook writers and publishers have embraced technology in order to appear innovative and flexible, developing CDs, DVDs, downloadable content and extensive web support for teachers and students, efforts to modify texts to include more culturally sensitive and awareness raising content or methodology to coincide with user's evolving needs as speakers of English as an International Language have been largely neglected. (Stapleton, 2000). As an example, in order to be relevant to and capture the interests of students, texts and materials are loaded with references to iPods, blogging, hybrid cars and other examples of the latest trends and technology. This is indicative of textbooks emphasis on highlighting change on a superficial level without addressing varying perspectives, increasingly diverse communication styles and contexts and other similar, shifts in the needs of students (Takanashi, 2004).

The textbooks reviewed here have the potential for being strong instruments of cultural awareness raising by including interesting subjects and themes for promoting reflection and critical thinking. However the format, language and presentation fail to engage students and in many cases even have the opposite effect. Textbooks examined in this survey, would be much more successful if the information and scenarios included were more authentic and the exercises more open ended. Were this the case, students would be able to bring their own realities to the lesson and thereby compare, contrast and speculate on the origin and reason behind certain cultural differences. This would also provide the realism and relevance required in cultural learning (Méndez García, 2005). If the students are able to invest their own cultural values and information into the process then they will be more motivated to actively participate in inquiry and discussion as well as learn from each other.

### **Implications for textbook writers and publishers**

Fenner (2001:54) proposes that, unless there is knowledge and understanding of both cultures, there is no dialogue between the two and it is difficult to obtain the necessary outside and critical perspective of one's own culture as well as the target one, which must be a requirement for intercultural awareness. The findings of this study

further support these claims in that the textbooks analyzed do little to foster an independent and dynamic experience of target language culture which is fundamental to awareness raising. In order to ensure an unbiased and objective representation of content materials essential for raising cultural awareness, developers need to consider the following;

- Clearly state short-term learning outcomes of the lesson.
- Explain the long-term positive and/or negative outcomes of the lesson.
- Expose or explain any bias contained in the lesson materials,
- Consider how the lesson materials empower the students to become responsible citizens sensitive to differences in context, culture and communication.
- Consider how the materials empower students to critically examine their life experiences and their relationships with others in their communities and the world.
- Ensure that lesson materials encourage the students to take charge of their lives and actively participate in the transformation of their world into one that is inclusive, equitable and just. Teachers also need to increase their awareness of the perceptions and learning experiences.

Strategies teachers can employ to supplement and effectively utilize otherwise flawed texts in the teaching of cultural awareness include;

- Preparing supplementary teaching materials
- Actively engaging students in reflective and critical discussions of alternative cultural\_perspectives.
- Including students' unique experiences into lessons, effectively demonstrating diversity within any given culture and cultural situation, countering the oversimplifications often presented in texts.

**CHAPTER FOUR**

**CULTURAL AWARENESS RAISING THROUGH LEARNER**

**ETHNOGRAPHIES**

**Introduction**

**Culture and Communication**

The role of culture as an integral part of language teaching has become increasingly popular and significant. Unfortunately it remains ambiguous and problematic in that there is little consensus on how or what aspects of culture to incorporate (Byram, 1997, Canagarajah, 2002, Tomic, 1998, Dlasaka, 2000). Most texts and materials present only irrelevant, over simplified examples of culture out of context and teachers generally introduce culture subjectively based on their personal experiences, background and bias (Sargent, 2004). As a result students have difficulty making their own interpretations and tend to create an “us and them” world view and perspective which does little more than reinforce stereotypes and communication barriers. Ward, Bochner and Furnham (2001) in a study of the affective factors of cultural exchange, found that because language teaching does

not prepare students for experience of other people and other cultures, the learners find themselves in culture shock when confronted with less common communicative situations. The result is that often young Japanese language learners, who have spent significant time in the classroom and are no doubt more proficient in English than previous generations, are still surprised when they encounter interlocutors who do not match their expectations or preconceptions from English texts and are uncomfortable, if not incapable, of communicating in ambiguous or unfamiliar situations (Takanashi, 2004).

Byram (2004) identifies the flaw in current methods in that this type of “culture” teaching is deficient in incorporating flexibility and accommodating the unpredictable realities of communication. If a learner miss-identifies an interlocutor based on certain learned assumptions or preconceptions, whether within their own society or cross culturally, they will bring into interaction the wrong set of rules, beliefs and ways of behavior. This is highly likely to lead to misunderstanding and communication breakdown. He further states that although they may have enough language and social knowledge to clarify the situation, the combination of prejudices, stereotypes, lack of common knowledge and difficulty using a foreign

language will likely prevent good interaction and communication unless the interlocutors have a basic understanding of intercultural communicative competence. He suggests that teachers need to develop methods which work to understand others perspectives, to anticipate and act to overcome misunderstanding and to see one's own assumptions from the viewpoint of others. Appadurai (1997) refers to the shifting image others develop through extensive and varied interaction as "*ethnoscapes*". As tourists, immigrants, refugees, guest workers, visitors or hosts, regardless of the type of sojourn or interaction, today's language learners require a flexible and evolving outlook and way of being. It is important for teachers to incorporate a wider range of skills and knowledge to help students fully develop a broader and more flexible worldview and an inclusive "*ethnoscape*" which will facilitate communication in unfamiliar situations. Jordan (2000), Byram (1997) and Roberts (2002) have documented successful developments in cultural awareness raising by applying ethnographic methods to exploring language groups, sub cultures and communities to better understand the diversity of culture, values and perspectives which are essential to intercultural communication.



## **Rationale for Ethnographic Methodology**

*In a drop of water you can see the whole ocean. Chinese Proverb*

An ethnographic approach to cultural awareness raising, as part of language learning for the purpose of developing intercultural communicative competence, is a simple and practical means of introducing learners to a diverse range of communication strategies while facilitating their quest for cultural knowledge and understanding. According to Spradley (1979:3), ethnography is "the work of describing a culture". The goal of ethnographic research is "to understand another way of life from the native point of view". Traditionally this approach is associated with exotic anthropology, characteristic of the work of Margret Mead, studying remote, primitive cultures by living with the natives to gain an insider's perspective. Spradley suggests that it is a useful tool for "understanding how other people see their experience". He emphasizes, however, that "rather than *studying people*, ethnography means *learning from people*". Ethnographic research in this way can be directly applicable to raising cultural awareness and exploring the variables affecting culture and communication, which are the essence of

intercultural communicative competence. Applying ethnographic methods to language learning on different levels, teachers can try to see the classroom and lessons from the perspective of students and in terms of what their needs and goals are, and students can transcend expectations and apprehensions and attempt to see the language and culture from the perspective of those they intend to communicate with. The principles of ethnographic research can be applied to language learning and benefit learners in the following ways:

**Hypothesis formation and testing:** Students are free to form their own opinions regarding the target language culture or community. These can be based on anything from real experiences, to popular stereotypes; however they need to be observed, tested and described to properly understand their validity and legitimacy in the culture. In this way the students are able to understand the source of bias and subjectivity becoming more culturally aware in the process.

**Fieldwork:** Students enter the population to fully experience and gain firsthand knowledge of the significant behaviors, artifacts and perspectives required for a more complete understanding.

**Participant observation:** Students actively engage and interact with informants in the target population in order to gain membership, understanding culture from an insider's perspective.

**Interview:** In order to reinforce observations or dispel misconceptions, students can question and confirm findings in a more direct and less ambiguous or interpretive manner. Helping gain confidence in communication and observation skills, building comfort towards interacting with and using target language.

**Triangulation:** By looking at cultural phenomena from different angles, using various techniques and approaches, students learn to maintain an open mind and flexible attitude helping them develop a broader and more tolerant perspective.

**Reflection:** Students internalize and synchronies their experiences, reconsidering previously held beliefs, interpreting data and new information, reevaluating changes in perspective and their own role in the communication process and position in any cultural exchange.

**Holism:** Students learn to extend their findings and experience to the greater population as well as future communicative experiences without over generalizing or creating stereotypes. They can extend their findings and strategies to other contexts keeping in mind that each case is different and that and expectations or conclusions must be flexible and constantly reevaluated.

**Process:** Data collection and interpretation is an ongoing process with no real beginning or end. Information and discoveries are not fixed or static and all meaning is negotiated and constantly revisited and reevaluated. This will help students gain a flexible awareness and understanding, which may be readily adapted to different contexts.

**Naturalism:** Students learn and are able to apply practical techniques and strategies in the real world as opposed to being limited to theories and artificial communication of the language classroom. This builds confidence and allows students to experience culture and communication in context.

**Multiple Techniques:** By using different methods and strategies to explore and understand the culture, such as observation, interviews, surveys or artifact analysis, students are able to develop deeper perspectives and a more complete understanding of the community which can also be extended to future experiences.

**Multiple Perspectives:** By considering a diverse range of information at different levels, in different situations and from different informants, students are able to develop empathy and a multifaceted approach to viewing experiences by achieving both an emic (insiders) and an etic (outsiders) perspective and considering different types of behavior as valid and representative of the culture regardless of where it comes from or whether it is contradictory of previous experiences and beliefs.

According to Hammersly (1990), the focus of ethnography includes a deeper language and culture learning, analysis and interpretation of specific events, actions or situations as well as a compliment of archival or historical, observational, and interview methodologies. Through this type of triangulation, three types of data are produced (literal, descriptive and quotation). Apart from establishing a degree of validity and reliability this method ultimately produces a more comprehensive and

complete perspective of the behaviors and culture in question. Students subsequently develop a wider perspective which is also grounded in concrete research from a variety of sources. By engaging in activities both inside and outside the classroom, students participate in autonomous fieldwork and actively pursue more practical methods of cultural understanding. Applying ethnographic research methods students engage, explore and interact with other cultures locally and in target language communities. As students are in charge and free to shape their own perspectives they are able to reach a 3rd place identity (Kramsch, 1993) or neutral position from which to objectively observe differences, create their own unique, unbiased world view and ultimately become more sensitive, tolerant, open-minded and compassionate towards others.

Successful communication requires mutual understanding, and the journey to understanding others must first begin with knowing yourself. How are you unique? What do you have in common with your friends, family and others in your community? How are you different? What are your strengths and weaknesses? How do you communicate with people who are different from you?

In today's world it is no longer enough that language learners merely have a command or a level of competence in a standard or textbook variety of English. As a Global Language, English is rapidly changing and metamorphosing into many unique and diverse varieties, based on the minority cultures which use the language for their own specific purposes, within their own specific contexts. It is highly likely that Standard English will be replaced by local branches in the near future (Crystal, 2003, 2005). As a result, being able to copy behavior and perform like a native may be of limited use. Today's English learners require a deeper understanding and a comprehensive arsenal of meta-skills which will assist them with acquisition and navigation of the finer nuances and sub levels of communication and interaction.

By approaching difference as a resource rather than as a barrier and by engaging in Ethnographic research through observation, participation, interviews, surveys, interaction with others and reflection on discoveries. Learners will develop their own world views as well as the skills they require to communicate effectively.

These include: the ability to model, understand, and operate flexibly in the world in any given culture, create one's own appropriate context for living, cross

over from one culture to another and become a cultural “shape shifter”, learn how to learn, develop tolerance for ambiguity and difference, strong sense of self and self-reliance, perceptiveness, open-mindedness, empathy, adaptability, flexibility, critical thinking, curiosity, motivation, non-judgmentalness and an overall warmth in human relationships.

### **Rationale for the Japanese Context**

Recently, the demographic of the Japanese university classroom is rapidly changing. With the drastic decrease of regular student numbers many universities are pursuing more creative avenues to stay relevant and delay their decline. Some of the more constructive efforts which do not include economic restructuring, faculty reduction or overcrowded classrooms, involve opening the universities up to a greater diversity of students especially: *shakai-jiin*, (*mature students*) and *ryugakusei* (*foreign students*). As populations of “neets” (those without education, experience, employment or training) and “freeters” (temporary or contract workers) also increase and high school students take a year off or enter university exam preparation cram schools, there is a move away from traditional perceptions of what is an appropriate age to be a student. This is especially evident at the post graduate



level where undergraduates who discover their prospects for employment are bleak return for more education (McNeill and Matsumoto, 2009). In short the average age and demographic makeup of university students is changing (Mature students 25+ 10-20%, Foreign students: 20-30%).

With this new diversity comes a greater challenge for the teacher in trying to accommodate the different backgrounds and meet the various needs, but also a wealth of opportunity in setting the students up to learn from each other's experiences. The question then is; *How to make use of this new resource?*

Whether the learning environment is homogenous or diverse, there is a wealth of ethnographic information and opportunity for the average language learner. Every classroom is full of subcultures, micro-cultures and co-cultures that have nothing to do with nationality. All students differ in their backgrounds, memberships, interests, perspectives, and other socio-psychological or affective traits. After exploring their own identities and perspectives, learners can turn this reflexive information outward and explore differences among their peers, communities, and social circles. Through self-directed ethnographic research such as observation, interview, or survey, students

can delve deeper into everyday life, bringing to the surface new information and understanding of differences and diversity at home that they previously ignored or were oblivious to.

EFL educators in Japan should strive to foster meta-cultural or ethnographic competence with which learners are able to rise above their preconceptions, stereotypes, and generalizations in a sense, transcending the part of their identity rooted in culture and nationality (Reimann, 2005). Achieving such an objective and unbiased worldview is fundamental to communication with people of different backgrounds in unfamiliar contexts, using a common language, and it is both a desirable and essential part of intercultural communicative competence. If EFL learners can develop skills that allow them to become sensitive and aware of differences within their own communities, then they will be better equipped to handle ambiguities and differences that exist elsewhere. As a result, they will become much more competent communicators and well-rounded global citizens.

If one of the fundamental goals of language education is to increase cultural awareness and intercultural communicative competence (Byram, 1997, Sercu, 2006)

then such a change in demographic is a huge step in the right direction and a valuable asset. Such diversity is useful in the practical consideration of cultures and a key to understanding differences, identities, communities, worldviews, communication styles, perspectives and other social phenomena (Widdowson, 2005). Traditional attempts to integrate culture and language learning through textbooks and simplified media, have met with limited success. Most efforts rely on heavily biased and stereotype reinforcing information (Sargent, 2004). They also tend to overly focus on obvious differences, exploring differences out of context, resulting in detachment, misunderstanding, oversimplification and irrelevance. Today's learners require a deeper understanding and a command of comprehensive skills which will assist them with acquisition and navigation of the finer nuances and sub levels of communication and interaction (Takanashi, 2004). For the purpose of finding the best means for raising cultural awareness, teachers need to consider the variety of skills learners require for communication besides language, how these might be taught or acquired out of context and how classroom diversity can be used as a resource. This study aims at addressing these points and the need for more balanced and practical cultural learning in order to raise student's awareness levels and develop real intercultural communicative competence.

## **Cultural Awareness Raising Tasks**

In the pursuit of creating practical language learning methodologies tailored more toward learners' goals, needs, and potential experiences in the real world, task-based learning has been at the forefront in developing and promoting essential skills. Considering that the environment in which most language learners will be communicating in the future is becoming increasingly more intercultural and diverse, language tasks should reflect this by focusing on developing the skills required for navigating and understanding these new and unfamiliar contexts.

Although intercultural communicative competence has been considered an important goal of English as a foreign language (EFL) for some time (Byram, 1997; Kramsch, 1993), many of the methods and materials used to train learners or raise cultural awareness are limited in scope to learning about culture rather than learning from culture (Widdowson, 1998). Materials tend to provide irrelevant and largely trivial snapshots of cultural knowledge (Liddicoat, 2008), and tasks and methods often fail to actively engage learners or promote skills required for negotiating meaning.

According to Willis (1996), an appropriate classroom task is “a goal-oriented activity in which learners use language to achieve a real outcome” (p.53). Willis also suggests that language use in tasks should reflect language use in the outside world. However, language use in the outside world is quite ambiguous, and activities and tasks based on predetermined or structured scenarios tend to miss the nuances and subtleties of meaning negotiation, which is essential to accurate and successful communication. Nunan (1989) similarly states that a task “is a piece of classroom work which involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing, or interacting in the target language while their attention is principally focused on meaning rather than form” (p. 10). As such, according to Nunan, a language learning task is an activity that has a nonlinguistic purpose or goal with a clear outcome and that uses any or all of the four language skills in its accomplishment by conveying meaning in a way that reflects real-world language use.

This approach to language learning and teaching is practical on a local or classroom level. However, the problems that persist center more on what exactly constitutes real-world language use and how meaning can be created or negotiated through a common target language between people of different backgrounds and

communication styles in unfamiliar contexts, where even basic common sense, values, and perspectives are in a perpetual state of flux. Acquisition of these skills requires a refocusing of goals and ideas for communicative competence. Shehadeh (2005) concludes that “what is needed, therefore, is an approach to L2 [second language] learning and teaching that provides a context that activates language acquisition processes” (p. 14). However, if such contexts are indeed constantly changing and unpredictable, how can they be reproduced in a classroom or structured language learning environment for the purpose of practicing tasks in order to acquire real-world skills?

Widdowson (1998) asserts that learners cannot be rehearsed in patterns of cultural behavior because these are too unpredictable and cannot be reproduced in the classroom. However, he also suggests that the classroom context is a community with its own cultural reality and conventions, and that this offers a unique environment in which language and culture are not just learned but learned from. Tasks more representative of the real world can then be integrated into the classroom as a methodology that will:

provide for communicative competence by functional investment, engaging the learners in problem-solving tasks as purposeful activities but without the rehearsal requirement that they should be realistic or “authentic” as natural social behavior. These tasks should then be systematically linked to the things learners need to do in the real world, incorporate what we know about the nature of successful communication, and embody what we know about second language acquisition. (Widdowson, 1987:71)

Similarly, Bygate (1987) suggests that through oral interaction routines or tasks in which participants are constantly negotiating meaning, such as an interview or a dinner party, learners are able to practice skills such as evaluation, explanation, justification, and predication, and generally learn how to manage interaction in terms of who is to say what, to whom, when and about what.

Addressing the lack of a clear intercultural pedagogy, Byram (1997) proposes that “learners need to see their role not as imitators of native speakers but as social actors engaging with other social actors in a particular kind of communication and interaction which is different from that between native speakers” (p. 21). Byram’s

model, which describes a series of skills to facilitate intercultural observation, participation and interaction, provides that the ultimate goal of language teaching should not be to become a native speaker but an intercultural speaker. In addressing the requirements for an intercultural speaker, Byram establishes a comprehensive model of intercultural communicative competence geared toward developing culture-specific as well as general knowledge and skills for learning about, becoming involved in, and successfully negotiating intercultural communicative interactions. This model consists of a combination of the knowledge and skills needed to be an intercultural speaker and participate in communication in any context.

To put this into practice and prompt learners to acquire the range of real-world skills needed for negotiating meaning and communicating in ambiguous, unfamiliar, and evolving environments, a critical and autonomous task-based approach is required. Applying an ethnographic methodology using a form of participant observation and critical inquiry (outlined in Spradley, 1979, and described in more detail later in the chapter), learners are able to engage real-world language and culture, pursue relevant and meaningful goals, and develop communication skills and strategies such as critical thinking, evaluation, flexibility, and tolerance for differences that will



prepare them to communicate at an intercultural level. This chapter describes a task-based approach to developing intercultural communicative competence and an increased sense of cultural awareness, incorporating Byram's (1997) model as part of a basic EFL training curriculum.

## **Context**

The ethnography project depicted here was inspired by Roberts, Byram, Barro, Jordan, and Street (2000) but designed to be carried out entirely in the target language and more easily adapted to accommodate various levels, contexts, class sizes, environments, or purposes. The flexible nature of these intercultural communication activities stems from the fact that they incorporate tasks in which differences are not obstacles to be overcome; rather, they are used as valuable resources to explore and understand communication styles and culture. Most of any language learning context, whether homogenous or diverse, is rich with individual differences and subsequent curiosities that form the basis for ethnographic research as well as an impetus for communication. Moreover, these differences serve as strong motivators and incentives to engage learners' interests in relevant communication tasks and activities. If learners can harness the target language to meet the basic needs they have for communication with their peers, then substantial progress toward competence will likely follow.

The initial context in which this project was tested consisted of four classes of Japanese university students. The class sizes ranged from 15 to 80 students. Each class met once per week for 90 minutes and varied in terms of goals, structure, and methodology. The classes included (a) a basic English conversation component in which the focus was on developing fundamental speaking and listening skills, (b) an intermediate-level content-based component on comparative culture in which exploring and learning about cultural differences in English was the primary goal, and (c) a more advanced research English component geared toward more structural aspects of language as well as the skills required for inquiry, such as critical thinking, organization, analysis, and interpretation.

### **Curriculum, Tasks, Materials**

As an introduction to ethnographic methodology, students are given some basic explanation, readings, and practice exercises based on materials and ideas from Spradley's *The Ethnographic Interview* (1979) and *Participant Observation* (1980). These include a brief synopsis of what ethnographic research entails, how it is conducted, how conclusions are reached, and how results are interpreted. The process of triangulation, which involves viewing some social phenomena on three separate

occasions, from three different perspectives, and using varied techniques or measurements to obtain a more objective and unbiased interpretation, is particularly relevant at this stage. It is important here to explain to students that their conclusions are flexible and open to interpretation, reevaluation, and modification, and are not so much conclusions as detailed descriptions of a particular event, in a particular context, at a particular time and can only be used to try to better understand certain aspects of the community in question and not as an overall generalization for the population. A clear understanding of this process, its limitations, and purpose is essential to developing related intercultural communication skills.

Part of this introduction also involves having students review examples of ethnographic studies and complete a hypothesis development exercise with which to brainstorm ideas, speculate on causes and effects of social behavior, consider the best means by which to observe or otherwise collect relevant data, and generally develop ideas and a plan of action for conducting their own ethnographic studies (see Tables 4 and 5).

Essentially, an ethnography, in the sense of an anthropologist living among natives, is a portrait or picture of an example of human behavior or activity at a specific time and in a specific context. To be considered valid, this type of research requires detailed “thick description” of events, observations, and circumstances of data collection. The following is an outline provided for the classes involved in this project:

Ethnography is the process of describing a culture. It means creating a portrait of a people. Ethnography is a written description of a particular culture, including communities, perspectives, people, products, and practices. This type of research is based on information collected through fieldwork that usually involves a process known as triangulation. Triangulation is a way of getting accurate and unbiased data by using at least three different sources or methods; typically these are interviews, observation, or surveys.

The goal of ethnographic research is to get an insider perspective and understanding of another way of life. Rather than studying people, ethnography focuses on learning from them in order to better understand how we perceive others and social differences (Spradley, 1979).

There are many situations and ways in which ethnographic research can be done. In fact, each one of us unconsciously does

ethnographic research every day. Whenever we enter a new environment, try something new, or meet new people, we automatically try to get as much information as we can by observing the situation and others' behavior, asking questions, participating, listening, or reading.

Ethnographic research is a cycle with no real beginning or end. Because social behavior is unique and unpredictable, it is impossible to make any final conclusions that can be generalized to all people of particular group. There are, however, some important steps that make getting started easier, as Spradley (1980) states:

1. Identify a problem; observe some interesting behavior, something you don't understand or would like to know more about.
2. Create some research questions; brainstorm ideas; try to develop a hypothesis by identifying possible causes, reasons, or explanations for what you have observed.
3. Think about the best way or method to answer your questions or prove/test whether your hypothesis is true or false.

**Table 4. Examples of Ethnographic Activities That Can Be Done Locally**

<b>Phenomenon</b>	<b>Hypothesis</b>	<b>Method</b>
Some lunch specials are more popular than others.	Teachers prefer rice dishes; students prefer noodle dishes.	Observation, interview
Male/female behavior between classes is different.	Men usually smoke alone; women talk in groups.	Observation, survey
Different age groups use mobile phones differently.	Young people use games, music, mail; older people check news, weather, mail.	Interview, survey

**Table 5. Questions to Answer When Exploring Cultural Behavior**

Who	Who is involved? How many? What are their roles/relationships? What is their background information?
What	What exchanges, actions, and events occur? What type of communication or interaction?
Where	Where does the behavior take place? What are the context and situation?
When	When does the behavior occur? What time, day, season? What events affect or are affected by it?
Why	What is the purpose of this behavior? Is it conscious, unconscious, planned, or spontaneous?
How	How are the actions involved related? What kind of verbal/nonverbal communication is used?

After the introduction to the basic principles of ethnographic research, learners can engage in small interview and brainstorming activities in which they explore the diversity of the classroom or practice the basic skills required for conducting ethnographic research, such as interviewing, critical analysis, and interpretation. As a means of further developing skills and perspectives required for exploring other cultures and raising cultural awareness, students also participated in several preliminary activities. Five of these tasks, which were designed to focus on fostering a deeper sensitivity to differences and heightened levels of inquiry, observation and participation as a part of an overall ethnographic competence, are described in the remainder of this section of the chapter.

### **1) Perception and Perspective Analysis**

*Activity 1:* Visual illusions and abstract picture interpretation

*Goal:* To illustrate how preconceptions influence people's interpretation of reality

*Procedure:* Students are shown pictures of visual illusions as well as ambiguous and abstract images and asked to write a description of what they see (see Figure 1).

Each picture is viewed only briefly and is followed by a comparison with others and a detailed explanation.

*Rationale:* People tend to see only what they expect or want to see. Individual differences of perception and perspective effect how they experience reality.

Stereotypes, generalizations, and prejudices lead people to interact with the world in a limited way. By understanding this process, learners are able to broaden their outlook by reevaluating their first impressions and initial expectations, which enables them to become more tolerant and flexible.

*Materials:* The materials for this task consist of a set of images large enough to be presented as a slideshow.

### **Perceptual Set (We See What We Want to See)**

Often our expectations, beliefs, and values influence how and what we perceive, and as a result our reactions and interpretations may not be accurate. This usually results in illusion, ethnocentrism, prejudice, stereotypes, racism, and discrimination. When this happens between people and cultures, communication becomes very difficult or impossible.



## **Questions**

Where do you think a person's worldview originates?

Do you think all people of a culture share exactly the same worldview? Why?

What do you think shapes a person's worldview?

Without lifting your pencil off the paper, connect all nine dots using only four straight lines.

Look at the following pictures. Write down your impressions.

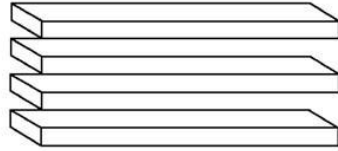
What did you see? Do others agree with your interpretations?

How is it possible for individuals to look at the same picture and have different interpretations?

# What do you see?



Description:



Description:



Description:



Description:



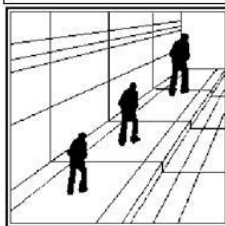
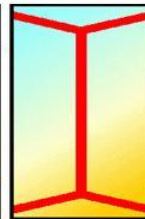
Description:

A

B



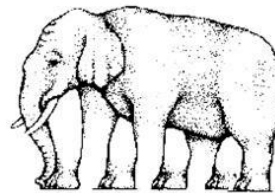
Description:



Description:



Description:



Description:

**Figure 1 Ambiguous Images and Illusions**

## **2) Self and Group Awareness**

*Activity 2:* Discovering, exploring, and comparing public and private identities

*Goal:* Determining subcultures, communities, and social influences

*Procedure:* Students are given a series of questionnaires and communication tasks in which to explore their backgrounds and understand the influences in their lives as well as the factors that make them unique members of their communities.

*Rationale:* By looking inward and understanding the influences that shape their identity, students are able to understand the extent to which individual differences can vary and how diverse their communities really are.

*Materials:* The materials for this task consist of an Experience and Perspective Survey, a Life Event Timeline (Figure 2), group membership analysis, and an Identity and Critical Incident Activity (Figure 3).

### **Experience and Perspective Survey**

Answer the following questions and compare your responses with others. Think about how your different experiences shape the person you are and how you view the world and others. How similar are your responses to those of other students in the class?

### *Background*

Describe your family.

What sort of things does your family do together?

What are some important memories of your childhood? Do they affect your view?

### *Age*

How old are you?

In what ways does your age affect your outlook?

How has your worldview changed as you have grown older?

### *Home*

Where do you live?

Have you experienced any big moves or changes?

How does your location affect your view?

### *Relationships*

Who are your closest friends?

Which family members are you closest to?

Why are these people important to you? How do their opinions influence yours?

### *Travel*

Where have you traveled?

What experiences did you have during your travels?

How have they influenced you?

### *Values*

Describe your religious beliefs (if you have any).

What are the most important things in life?

How do these beliefs affect your outlook?

### *Education*

What schools did you attend when you were younger?

Describe your teachers, classmates, and education?

How do these influence your view?

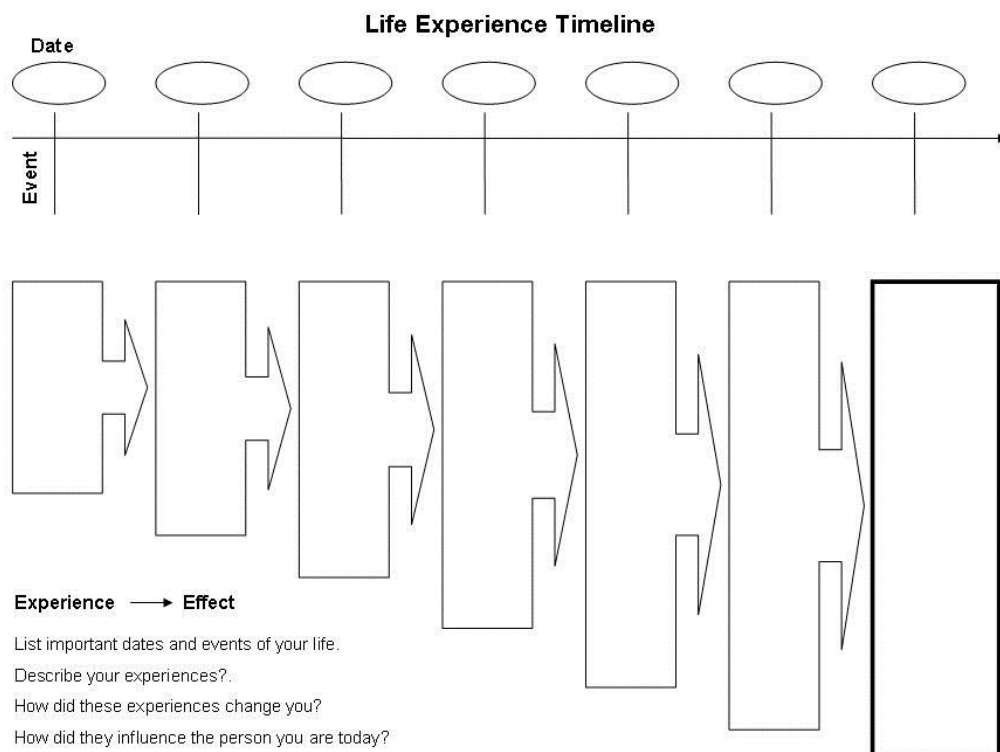
### *Interests*

What books, television shows, movies, and other media have influenced your worldview?

How do you spend your free time?

What are your hobbies?

How do these affect your view?



**Figure 2 Life Experience Timeline**

Source: Reimann, 2005.

Make two lists about your identity. Think about how you see yourself compared with how others see you. Include information about family, friends, community membership, roles, and relationships.

**Private Identity**

**Public Identity**

I see myself as...

Others see me as...

<p>How are the lists different? How are you influenced by others and by your culture?</p> <p>Is your identity/personality consistent? How do you change in different situations?</p> <p>Write down your feelings about or reaction to the following situations.</p>	
<b>Situation</b>	<b>Your character/actions</b>
You have to give a presentation in class. It's a nice, sunny day.	
You have to give a presentation in class. Your dog just died.	
You promised to invite a friend for dinner, and you just got paid.	
You promised to invite a friend for dinner, and your wallet just got stolen.	
Your father asks you about school, and you just got an A on a report.	
Your father asks you about school, and you just failed an important test.	
How do your actions/feelings change depending on the situation?	

**Figure 3 Identity and Critical Incident Activity**

Source: Reimann, 2005.

### **3) Exploring Core Values**

*Activity 3:* Short story interpretation and character analysis

*Goal:* To gain insight into the common value and belief systems of a community and to understand that, although basic values and the notion of common sense are largely culturally determined, they cannot always be universally extended to each member of that community

*Procedure:* Students read “The Parable” and rank the characters in order of preference. They also provide reasons for their choices and make a list of each character’s strengths and weaknesses. The teacher then writes the preferences of the entire class on the board to make a group comparison and gain some perspective on individual differences in values. As an extra activity, students can discuss the role of gender and whether it would make a difference to the outcome or ranking if the gender of the characters was reversed.

*Rationale:* Students are generally surprised by the range of differences in the evaluation and ranking of basic qualities and values. Believing firmly that they are a



member of the group, it is quite an eye-opener to discover that not all of their peers interpret actions or regard basic values in the same way.

*Materials:* The materials for this task consist of the following parable.

### **The Parable (Alligator River)**

Mary is a woman of about 21 years of age. For several months she has been engaged to a young man named Greg. The problem she faces is that between her and her fiancé there lies a river. No ordinary river, but a deep, wide river filled with hungry alligators.

Mary wonders how she can cross the river. She remembers Kevin, who has the only boat in the area. She then approaches Kevin, asking him to take her across. He replies, “Yes, I’ll take you across if you’ll stay with me for one week.” Shocked at this offer, she turns to another acquaintance, Rob, and tells him her story. Rob responds by saying, “Yes, Mary, I understand your problem. But it’s your problem, not mine.” Mary decides to return to Kevin and stays with him for one week. Kevin then takes her across the river.

Her meeting with Greg is warm. But on the evening before they are to be married, Mary feels she must tell Greg how she succeeded in getting across the river. Greg responds by saying, “I wouldn’t marry you if you were the last woman on earth.”

Finally, Mary turns to her friend Mark. Mark listens to her story and says, “Well, Mary, I don’t love you . . . but I will marry you.” And that’s all we know of the story.

Source: Holmes & Guild, (1973:1)

### **Analysis**

1. Read the story and rank each of the five characters in order of your approval of them. (1=best, 5=worst)
2. Write a short comment for each character explaining your reasons for ranking.
3. In the space next to the characters’ names, assign qualities or faults that you think these people have (e.g., kind, mean, cheerful).
4. Compare your answers with your fellow students. How are they different?  
Why are they different?
5. What can these answers tell you about your values and those of others?

6. If you had to be one of the characters in the story, which would you be? Why?

7. Do you think your answers would be different if the roles of male and female characters were reversed? Why or why not?

#### **4) Participant Observation and Fieldwork in the Classroom**

*Activity 4: Anthropology exercise*

*Goal:* To practice observation, interpretation, analysis, and taking field notes

*Procedure:* Divide the class in to three groups: Culture A, Culture B, and a team of anthropologists. But do not explain why or how you are separating them. Give groups A and B a simple communication or question-and-answer task or activity to complete, and explain to the anthropologist group that they are to observe and try to interpret any differences or interesting behavior. Finally, provide groups A and B with different, opposite, or conflicting communication rules or guidelines to which they must strictly adhere. These can be improvised as appropriate to the class but should include some obvious differences in communication styles such as eye contact, touch, personal space, gestures, and other aspects of nonverbal communication. The group of

anthropologists is to observe and describe the communication of groups A and B, taking careful field notes that can be recorded on the chart in Table 6.

*Rationale:* All students are under the impression that they are simply completing a basic communication exercise. Once their partners begin to act in a manner outside of what they consider normal, communication difficulties and even total failure might occur. Students will need to adapt quickly in order to complete the activity and observers will be able to witness, record and interpret first hand some typical difficulties characteristic of intercultural communication.

*Materials:* The materials for this task consist of instruction cards, basic question and answer task and a chart on which to record field notes, comments and reflections (Table 6).

**Table 6 Field Note and Reflection Chart**

Write down any questions, ideas, insights, or new information from your experiences exploring culture.	
<b>Language</b>  What new words, phrases, expressions, and communication styles or strategies did you learn, use, or experience?	
<b>Culture</b>  What interesting information did you learn about identities, communities, people, actions, perspectives, or values?	
<b>Observations</b>  Watch your classmates and friends closely.  How do they act, react, and interact differently in different situations?	
<b>Discoveries</b>  What did you find out about yourself and others? How have your perspectives changed?	
<b>Reflection</b>  How do you feel about what you've seen, experienced, and learned? Do you think any of this has changed you?	

Upon completing these introductory activities, students will have gained some perspective concerning individual differences and the existence of subcultures in their classroom community. Now that their curiosity and awareness have been raised and stimulated, they are in an ideal position to begin questioning the basic elements of their culture, common values, and beliefs, and are therefore also ready to conduct a self-directed ethnographic study of behavior or phenomena in their local community.

### **The Local Ethnographic Research Project**

The data and information described herein, follows a survey of ethnographic and cultural awareness raising activities designed to develop Byrams' competencies and help students achieve a neutral, 3<sup>rd</sup> place from which to view cultural differences objectively. The subsequent ethnographic skills and abilities represent the basic requirements language learners need to become successful communicators. However theoretically sound, a practical means of fostering such skills and abilities is challenging and for there to be any kind of universal applicability to other contexts, a more complete picture of student's experiences and changes in perspective is needed. The following will therefore, describe a locally conducted ethnographic project and report on student

impressions, participation and outcomes in terms of changes in cultural awareness levels as well as any other developments in intercultural communicative competence.

The preliminary tasks described in this report were successful in raising student's basic awareness to differences, increasing flexibility in communication and fostering skills of observation and inquiry. These form the basis of an ethnographic competence and culminate in a meta-cultural mindset, which can be further developed and extended beyond the classroom. Each task served to develop a critical element of these skills and abilities, preparing students for the main ethnographic activity as well as for an active role in participatory communication, cultural exchange and interaction in the real world.

The *Perception and Perspective Analysis* task served as a form of observational training, and as an initiation into understanding the levels of diversity within in a single group. As students' interpretations of simple, yet ambiguous images tended to vary considerably, they began to question why they did not all see the same thing. This comparison led to a self-discovery of the variations within cultures, individual differences as well as an overall reflection of perceptions, preconceptions and attitudes.

This type of analysis and realization was also an important first step in developing ethnographic skills, as comments indicated that it was difficult to view other cultures objectively without first understanding the limitations of one's own perspectives.

Similarly, *The Self and Group Awareness* task helped to build an understanding and appreciation of individual and group differences and similarities. Focusing on established and well known communities, the activity explored relationships, membership and subsequent attitudes. An awareness of the dynamics involved here as well as the extent to which they differ, is an important precursor to observing, analyzing and interpreting types of interaction within other communities. After completing the exercises in this task and gaining a more complete understanding and appreciation of their own relationships, students were in a better position to objectively observe and evaluate those of other groups.

Through the *Exploring Core Values* task, students were able to gain an in-depth view of the covert aspects of their perspectives and world view. This activities strength was in making the familiar strange and questioning subconscious beliefs and values which were previously regarded as common sense. Not only did students become



aware of the differences in deeply held values and attitudes, they realized that these are often context specific and that variability is not just controlled by culture or group membership. Common values and perspectives became much more ambiguous and open to interpretation, leaving the students shocked but also prepared to accept and understand similar differences when engaging with others. Bringing these underlying and typically hidden variables to the surface had a significant impact on the student's sensitivity to individual differences and overall cultural awareness.

The *Participant Observation and Fieldwork in the Classroom* task combined previous developments and realizations into a practical skill based classroom activity. This activity harnesses the sensitivity to differences, heightened level of inquiry and new self-awareness and applied it towards developing more overt ethnographic skills, such as participant observation, interaction, analysis interpretation, note taking, reviewing and reporting; all in preparation for engaging in real fieldwork. Although this was in effect a simulation activity, students were actually exploring real differences in communication styles and behaviors and the results were interesting, insightful and reinforced the practical aspects of fieldwork and observation. As the nature of the similarities and differences students were asked to explore were representative of those

in real life communicative situations, this activity was a useful initiation to active fieldwork and participant observation, which are the backbone of ethnography.

Overall the 4 preliminary activities were successful in raising awareness to differences and building the practical skills of observation and inquiry and eliciting positive attitudes towards engaging with unfamiliar or ambiguous contexts, situations and communities.

## **5) Ethnographic Task; Engaging in Fieldwork**

*Goal:* The primary purpose of this ethnographic fieldwork activity is to gain a better understanding of individual differences and a broader perspective of social interaction and communication on different levels by considering a basic aspect of culture or society and critically analyzing, evaluating, and questioning all factors involved in the phenomena, including the origins, reasons, participants, contexts, artifacts, meanings, consequences, relationships, and perspectives. In short, students dissect an element of social behavior ( $x$ ), isolating the variables and placing them under

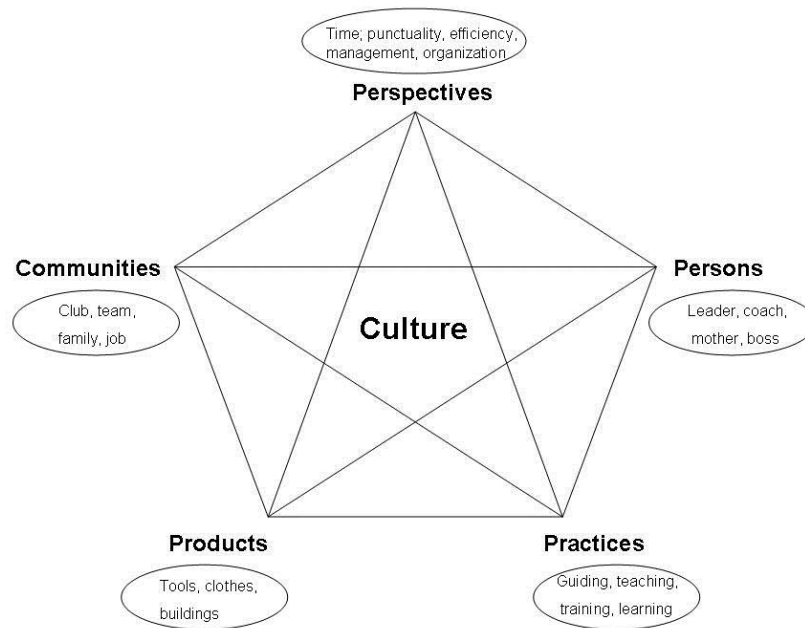
a microscope to better understand: Why does  $x$  happen? Does everyone do  $x$ ? When?

Where? With whom?

*Procedure:* After reflecting on some sample studies and reviewing the basic principles of Spradley's (1979, 1980) observation and interview procedures, the ethnographic project begins with students brainstorming topics and developing research questions. To help them visualize some of the more abstract aspects of cultural phenomena, some guidance in determining significant and observable features was provided. Moran (2001) developed a model for categorizing cultural dimensions in a way that can be easily understood and applied to the investigation and understanding of learners' specific contexts. Moran's cultural dimension diagram (Figure 4) clearly shows how simple elements of culture are interconnected to create a larger social entity. This type of deconstruction was useful in formulating ideas and parameters for creating the ethnographic study.

*Materials:* The materials for this task, figures 5 and 6, consist of charts and tables designed to help learners develop and organize their ideas in order to create

practical goals for fieldwork research. (Figure 2), group membership analysis, and an Identity and Critical Incident Activity (Figure 3).



**Figure 4 Diagram of Cultural Dimensions**

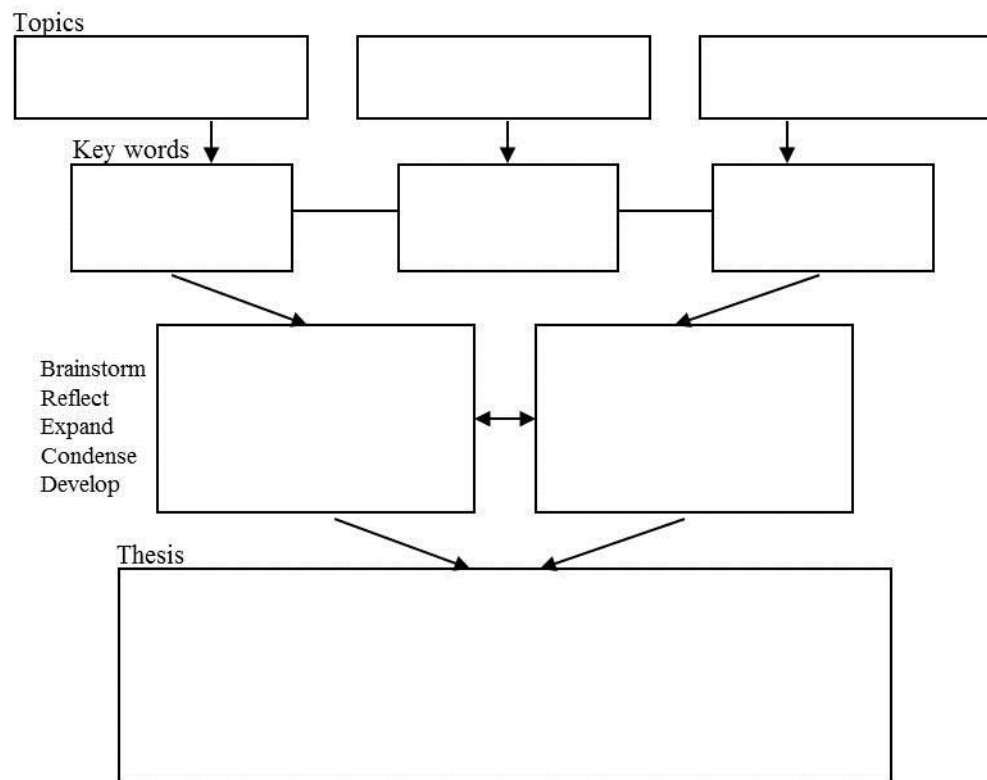
Source: Adapted from Moran, (2001:24)

By applying Moran's (2001) model, learners were able to analyze their own cultures and to visualize more concretely how the dimensions are interconnected as well as how the combination of influences and variables in their lives is unique.

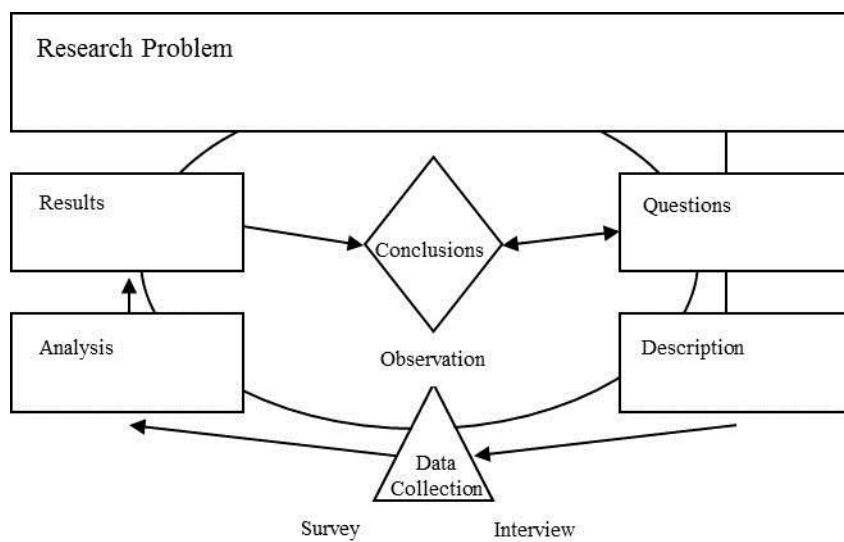
After considering the dynamic of the classes, these initial activities were carried out in pairs, groups, or independently. Most of the planning, however, was

completed as homework, with class time being used mainly for receiving advice and feedback from peers and the teacher. Once students had sufficiently contemplated an area of interest and determined a viable hypothesis and research questions, they began to formulate the logistics of their research, including method of data collection; type of subjects; and timeframe for collecting, analyzing, and organizing data in order to make a formal report and presentation of their experience and results. At this point, it is important that the teacher reviewed students' plans and provided guidelines regarding subject matter and feasibility. It was also necessary to clarify to students that they should not be intrusive in their fieldwork and must respect their subject's privacy, state their intentions, and ask permission to use the data obtained.

The flow charts in Figures 5 and 6 were used to help students brainstorm, develop, and visualize their ideas, formulate a research plan, and work out a feasible method of data collection. As indicated by the arrows, all ideas contribute to the development of a thesis or testable hypothesis. Similarly, the arrows in Figure 6 indicate that the ethnographic cycle is a continuous reevaluation of data and has no beginning or end.



**Figure 5 Topic and Hypothesis Development Chart**



**Figure 6 Diagram and Flowchart of the Ethnographic Cycle**

The following are examples of topics that students' hypotheses and research questions have focused on:

- types of exchanges and rapport between customers and employees at convenience stores
- individual differences in shyness and the use of personal space
- male/female differences in eye contact and power distance
- investigation of the “unnatural” right-handedness phenomenon in Japan
- differences in cell phone dependence and usage among university students
- cross-cultural differences in expressing and displaying affection publicly
- variations in interaction between male and female university students
- English usage among young people; exploring “Japanglish”
- Differences in acceptability of silence in conversation (Is silence golden or uncomfortable?)
- intercultural variations in dating rituals
- individual differences and preferences in brand selection (toothpaste)
- variations in fashion trends and clothing preferences by students of different faculties

After completing their fieldwork and analyzing data, students begin to process their results in a clear and concise way that is suitable for making a presentation to the entire class. The extent to which students are able to empirically support their findings can vary according to experience and other curriculum requirements. For the purpose of this project, however, statistical significance of results is considered secondary to more holistic qualities such as overall experience, personal interpretation, and reflection. It is more important that students are able to view their culture from different perspectives rather than establish whether their hypotheses are true or false.

The final task in this project is to create a Microsoft PowerPoint presentation introducing the topic, describing results, and highlighting experiences and insights for the purpose of stimulating discussion and reflection, thereby promoting critical thinking skills and raising the awareness of the entire group.

Each presentation is planned for 10–15 minutes, including time for questions and discussion. Depending on class size, time restrictions, and student abilities this can be shortened considerably to less than 5 minutes or changed entirely to a simultaneous group poster presentation in which all members present their work interactively. The



format in this case is kept flexible and informal to encourage audience participation and to reduce the anxieties of the presenters. Students are primarily evaluated on their ability to interpret and reflect on the significance of their research and on their participation in discussions. To accommodate the different levels and goals of particular special needs classes, assessment criteria can be expanded to include more structural aspects of presentation delivery, quality of data collection and analysis, or overall originality of research. However, if the curriculum goals are indeed raising cultural awareness and developing intercultural communicative competence, then a more holistic consideration of students' experiences is best.

## **Reflections**

Overall, the results indicate that the project was successful in that students responded well to the tasks and classroom activities, comments were positive, research topics were creative and insightful, and methods were innovative. The quality of discussion stimulated during the presentations was also high, indicating that students were indeed able to develop a critical and more flexible approach to viewing their communities and thereby broadening their perspectives and perhaps also their worldviews.

Although the ethnographic project does not duplicate the travel-abroad experience, it is able to recreate the experience of difference and diversity that is in essence the crux of living in a foreign community comfortably and being able to communicate successfully. The analysis of student work and subsequent feedback indicates that an ethnographic approach to developing intercultural communicative competence, exposing students to local differences and opening their eyes to the diversities at home, is the first step to developing global understanding.

## **Analysis of Ethnographic Tasks and Approach to Cultural Awareness Raising**

### **Method**

In order to better understand how students perceive active cultural awareness raising tasks as part of language learning, an attitude survey (see Appendix C) was designed to elicit student's views on four main facets of their ethnographic research project experiences. These included; practical aspects of overt skills and tasks such as presenting, writing up research, hypothesis development and conducting interviews, holistic elements such as perspectives on overall language and communication development, attitudinal changes, including perspectives towards cultures and individual differences and finally a reflective evaluation, emphasizing more personal

considerations on self-improvement in terms of skills connected to cultural awareness and communicative competence. The questionnaire used three types of questions to elicit a full range of responses. These included both a Likert scale answer option ranking preferences from 1-10, yes/no questions as well as space for open-ended responses. In this way, participants with time and interest in the survey topic were able to expand on their answers, while those with little time or interest could simply circle numbers on the Likert scales. This also provided a variety of data types which could be cross referenced and analyzed. A ranking scale of 1-10 was also selected over the standard 5 category Likert type scale because of the tendency of Japanese students to arbitrarily choose an average score of 3 when faced with difficult or ambiguous choices. It was hoped that having a scale with a wider range would resolve the skewing of answers of this type and yield more accurate and representative results.

## **Procedure**

After participating in the ethnographic project and activities, students completed surveys regarding their experiences and their overall impression of ethnographic methods for raising cultural awareness. Following the final presentations of the students' research projects, subjects were given surveys to take with them and

complete for the following class. This was done in order to allow the maximum time for reflection and consideration required for eliciting representative and meaningful data. Students had one week to complete the surveys and were told participation was voluntary and that information would be confidential and anonymous. It was important that students understood that neither the survey data nor non participation would be used to evaluate them in anyway. As a result all surveys were returned and the rate of completion was 100%. The only instructions provided were regarding how to best fill out and complete the different question types as well as a basic explanation of the purpose of the questionnaire, which was to get feedback in order to improve the course and the project methodology.

## **Subjects**

The subjects which participated in all three phases of the cultural awareness raising project described here, consisted of four classes of third year university students in the Department of International Studies at Utsunomiya University. All students were majors of International Studies and were studying English regularly in a variety of different classes. The classes in which this project was undertaken were both intermediate and advanced English Seminar classes. Although English proficiency was

variable between classes, all students had been studying English for a minimum of six years. Language proficiency and prior experience abroad or interacting with members of other cultures was not considered as the goals of the survey were to determine the effect of the tasks on changes in perspective, awareness and skills which contribute to intercultural communicative competence. Of the 75 subjects surveyed, 25 were male and 50 were female. Although these proportions may have some effect on answers and outcomes, gender differences were not considered for the purposes of this survey. Similarly all other extraneous variables such as age, experience, nationality (most subjects were Japanese) and background were left to vary randomly and were not considered significant in the final analysis. The only question aimed at measuring prior experience was in regards to familiarity with ethnographic research methods, as this may have had an effect on students attitudes and abilities towards the project, however all students indicated that they had never conducted ethnographic research before and were unfamiliar with related terms and processes such as triangulation, participant observation, fieldwork or hypothesis formation. These were therefore explained and demonstrated during preparation classes through examples and practice exercises.

## **Results and Discussion**

From the surveys completed, by students participating in the ethnographic projects and the type of responses and comments generated, a more complete picture of the benefits of such a pedagogy become clear. Questionnaires were successfully completed by all 75 students who participated in the project. Based on the student's comments, (See Appendix E), it is evident that participation was a positive and beneficial experience. Most students indicated that, although difficult and challenging, they enjoyed the project and felt that they developed some useful skills. Few students noted that this project improved their English levels, however this type of self analysis is often difficult and in this case may be premature. Analyzed in connection with the survey results, the extent of other skills developed becomes apparent. In terms of creating a working hypothesis, presenting or discussing ideas, conducting fieldwork, creating surveys and writing up research the results indicate a marked improvement and deeper awareness of required skills and abilities. The following will provide a more detailed analysis of data and results.

## **Research Methods**

Questions geared towards gauging students' experience in conducting ethnographic research included comparing their preferences for aspects of research methods, the degree of perceived difficulty and their overall ability or confidence in engaging in research related activities such as hypothesis formation, fieldwork, writing up and presenting results. These were divided into both ranking Likert scale type and open-ended long response type questions. Students' answers indicated a general positive attitude towards ethnographic research ranking, on a scale of 1-10, their participation as 7.89. With respect to isolated skills, students preferred less structured activities such as informal discussion of ideas and fieldwork (8.56 and 7.44 out of 10 respectively). Writing up research results and making and giving presentations on findings were ranked lowest at 6.0 and 6.11 out of 10 respectively. However these still indicate a positive attitude towards the research structures in general and when compared to levels of perceived difficulty are understandable. As a result of their lack of experience with formal research of this type, students' perceived presenting, writing, and fieldwork as most difficult, scoring each element of the research process as 7.44, 7.33 and 7.11 out of 10 respectively. In contrast discussion and hypothesis development were ranked as 5.0 and 6.67 out of 10 respectively, indicating only a moderate level of difficulty.

Self-evaluation of ability in these areas was similarly lower than other aspects.

Presentation ability was ranked lowest at 4.11 followed by hypothesis development 5.11, and writing up results at 5.56 out of 10. Students comments support these results and indicate that there overall attitude towards research procedures was favorable.

“I learned how much information we can understand from studying about one small thing. And that it can spread to several possibilities of studying human behavior and relations.”

“Giving a presentation in English is the most important. It’s not just writing or speaking English, so I have to consider the content of the research.”

“To make a presentation – preparing takes much time to understand well.”

“Developing hypothesis, I think this was very important because we have to motivate ourselves with our own hypothesis and the research will have a good beginning.”

“I prefer conducting fieldwork research because I could understand the conclusion as experience. It’s unforgettable.”

“Fieldwork research can be more exciting because you can actually interact with people. But it can be more complicated since all of us has different thoughts and idea, it would be hard to put together the results.”

“Fieldwork research is not easy as it seems. I prefer fieldwork research (although it depends on the situation) because I can see for myself.”



Although challenging, students seemed to enjoy (see Appendix E) and view the ethnographic research methodology tasks as a positive experience. This is further evident from the yes/no responses in which 100% of all subjects indicated that they found ethnographic research difficult but that they would like to try it again in the future.

“It’s a good technique but difficult and takes much time, I don’t think I can use it often.”

“I hope [to try this again] I enjoyed very much.”

“I think we often do people watching but don’t think about it scientifically.”

“I want to ask questions about cultural differences again.”

## **English and Communication**

Responses pertaining to English language proficiency or improvement of communication skills were variable as many students could not see the direct connection between the tasks and language learning. This is partly because the project was nontraditional in that it was student centered and controlled, conducted primarily in a context outside the classroom and focused on skills not typically associated with EFL learning in Japan. As a result only 55.6% of students responded that the project

activities positively affected their English ability. However considering that the students favorably viewed communicative tasks such as topic discussion and conducting interviews, as well as formal language tasks such as hypothesis formation, research writing and presentation, which indirectly develop critical thinking, organization and negotiation skills, essential to communication; it is possible to conclude that the research project did positively affect their English ability. This is further supported by individual comments which suggest that activities covertly influenced language proficiency and since students are likely not aware of this, a direct question such as: Did this activity help improve your English skills? is perhaps not an accurate indicator.

“I forgotten how important the English speaking is, even though I’m a student of Faculty of International Culture, I haven’t used English a couple of years at all. But I realize I can’t do my research without English.”

“I can’t say that it effected to improve my English but I noticed the survey question would sound different when translating into another language.”

“It effected on not only my ability of writing English but of speaking.”

“At University are few the opportunities to practice English and talked to Japanese.”

“I noticed that I can’t to express my abstract feeling in English. If I were good at English I could tell my thought to others.”

The comments by students do however indicate a raised awareness of their language ability and signify a change in perspective regarding which skills are important for improving overall communicative competence.

### **Cultural Awareness**

Indicators of development in cultural awareness are similarly difficult to measure directly and accurately as many changes are likely subtle, underlying, inseparable from other variables or apparent only through long term observation. Therefore direct measures of cultural awareness raising, improvement of understanding differences or development of a different perspective will likely yield results which may not be representative of actual changes. Students responses to such direct questions concerning cultural awareness do in fact indicate a positive influence. For example; 100% of students responded yes to “I developed a different perspective” and “I better understand my topic and the topics of others”, but only 68.4% responded yes to “I improved my cultural awareness”.

Although this illustrates a positive effect, the most significant information indicating a development in cultural awareness comes from students’ comments and

from the nature and quality of their research projects and presentations, particularly with respect to analyzing, interpreting and discussing results. This is evident from the comments below.

“I thought many Japanese had same thinking but actually there is much difference.”

“I could see much diversity in even smaller groups.”

“I was able to study and think about what I never noticed in my daily life.”

“I became to pay attention to the difference way of thinking not only different culture but also generation.”

“I learned how much information we can understand from studying about one small thing. And that it can spread to several possibilities of studying human behavior and relations.”

### **Attitudes and Perspectives**

In regard to students’ overall impressions on participating in the project and their experiences, many students seemed to react positively to the change in teaching and learning style and preferred the informal and autonomous nature of ethnographic research. This is primarily evident in comments;

“I can make a hypothesis, branch idea easier than reading research for me.”

“I prefer conducting fieldwork research because I feel like studying more than reading.”

“Fieldwork because reading in book is also theory when you conduct a research it must be in the field.”

“I like the interaction with informants (fieldwork), Reading research can get tedious.”

“I think it is more interesting than reading but I prefer reading because I don’t have enough time to look over a wide range.”

“Induction from data I like. Fieldwork is concrete.”

“After I finish this research, I could guess what people are thinking and feeling with body languages.”

“Observing and interviewing, collecting data gave me a lot of different views.”

Direct questions also demonstrated positive attitudes in that 100% of students thought the activities were useful, they would like to try them again, they developed a different perspective and they felt they understood the presented topics better. The overall ranking for the project was 78.9% and 88.9% responded that they were also inspired to investigate their topics further. However 100% also indicated that this project was difficult and 55.6% responded that they needed more instruction. This is further apparent from comments regarding how the teacher could have been more helpful. In this respect many students answered that they needed more explanation, demonstration and help with structural or technical elements such as vocabulary, hypothesis design, research and fieldwork methods.

“[Teacher should] help clarify hypothesis.”

“I need help of vocabulary when I couldn’t recollect the word.”

“I would like you [teacher] to recommend me some textbooks concerning it [my topic] and read and discuss.”

“[Teacher should] correct report before presentation [grammar and vocabulary]”

The results though somewhat mixed, nevertheless represent strong indicators that the project had a successful impact on students and was a generally positive motivation to explore other cultures as well as their own. The fact that students also enjoyed each other’s presentations and were able to understand and discuss other topics and cultural issues well, similarly shows constructive developments in both language and cultural competence and understanding. Although the Ethnographic Project does not duplicate the travel abroad experience it does simulate a realistic context for negotiating differences and understanding diversity which is in essence the crux of living in a foreign community comfortably and being able to communicate successfully. Overall the results seem to support an ethnographic approach to developing Intercultural Communicative Competence, as exposing students to local differences, opening their eyes to the diversities at home is the first step to a developing a global understanding and cultural awareness.

## **Conclusion**

Considering the challenges which all people face when engaging in another language and culture, it is clear that learners need to become more reflexive and to develop meta-cultural skills and awareness in order to make sense of the multiple domains and diverse contexts they will experience. From the results reported here, it becomes evident that ethnographic research based activities are an effective means to take advantage of the resources available in the language classroom and provide a complete spectrum of communicative competence and cultural awareness raising tasks.

Student initiated ethnographies promote the development of qualities which are invaluable in negotiating and coping with differences and difficulties as encountered in various aspects of intercultural exchange, integration, interaction and communication. The type of meta-cultural knowledge and experience achieved through this type of inquiry, allows students to develop the ability to model, understand, and operate flexibly in the world in any given culture, the ability to learn how to learn, and the ability to create one's own appropriate context for living. Through the acquisition of this ethnographic competence, learners develop skills such as; easily crossing over from one culture to another, becoming transcendent, or "meta" to culture, understanding how to

avoid the bias of presuppositions and value judgments of any single culture, knowing how to interact, in order to be to be effective, productive, and appropriate, Some of the skills which might be developed as complimentary, meta-cultural strategies include: tolerance for ambiguity, open-mindedness, empathy, flexibility, adaptability, curiosity, strong sense of self, tolerance for difference, perceptiveness and an ability to take risks and fail. An ethnographic approach further opens up the domain of pedagogy to learners, democratizes the language classroom, allows learners to negotiate or shift between cultures, have teachers and learners be more reflective and critically aware of strategies and processes, develop meta-pedagogical, critical, “becoming appropriate” and overall cultural awareness’s. By applying these methods, strategies and goals to a framework, outlining what teachers might be able to expect and accomplish, providing guidelines and suggested parameters, pooling general knowledge, experience and intuition gleaned from teacher-researchers’ case studies across the board, both from periphery and western paradigms, a comprehensive and effective ethnographic research based approach could be successfully implemented in most teaching contexts, which would provide learners with the full spectrum of tools, knowledge and skills they will require to become competent navigators and negotiators of language and culture.



In identifying a need for a “cultural re-thinking” in language teaching, Tomic (1998) describes how “Languaculture” Agar (1994), a form of cultural awareness, is at the heart of communicative competence, and should be developed into a critical pedagogy to prepare learners cognitively and affectively for exploring other cultures. The applied aspects of this approach are inherent in ethnographic methodology and encompass Giroux’s (1993) “pedagogy of difference” which encourages tolerance, exploration of identity, challenge of common sense and an overall transforming of the classroom from a mere instructional site to a rich pool of diversity, discovery and heightened awareness. This perception of difference as a resource rather than as an obstacle, is fundamental to the development of the meta-cultural strategies and skills required for raising cultural awareness. The role of the teacher in such a pedagogy, would be as a guide and mentor, exploring, discovering and learning alongside the students. Rather than teaching about differences and how to cope and act appropriately, conflict, bias, inequality, communication breakdown and culture shock, can be recreated through critical incidents, simulations and other activities and experienced through observation and ethnographic inquiry and interaction. This approach allows learners firsthand; to use and develop the skills, tools and awareness they need to become “shape shifters” and “postmodern survivors” (Lifton, in Pederson, 1996). In light of his, it is

essential for present language education pedagogy to adequately prepare learners for the world they will encounter by providing more than just language tools. The ethnographic methods and activities, as described herein, consider individual needs, differences, cultures, learning environments and paradigms, build on teachers knowledge and experience, while also compiling and analyzing strategies which are common across cultures. Raising cultural awareness in this way, has the potential for a universally appropriate pedagogy integrating a diversity of skills, perspectives and experiences, with the promise of producing individuals and societies which are truly, communicatively competent.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SYNTHESIS**

The studies reported on herein, represent a longitudinal analysis designed to explore, understand and ultimately advance the practices, methods, attitudes and outcomes surrounding EFL teaching in Japan. By understanding the history, cultural background as well as the origin of beliefs and perspectives towards teaching and learning styles, goals and preferences in the Japanese teaching context, it was possible to identify challenges and suggest methods for an overall development of a critical pedagogy which would incorporate a cultural awareness raising methodology. As EFL in Japan is typically taught in terms of linear competence in 4 skills, with emphasis on input (listening and reading) and structure (grammar and vocabulary) there is a critical need for increasing students exposure to cultural components and understanding of communicative elements of language learning and usage (Takanashi, 2004). Although learners require cultural knowledge as much as they require grammar and vocabulary (Liddicoat, 2008), usually English is taught separately from culture.

Issues pertaining to culture, if covered at all, are limited to overt and context specific knowledge, such as easily observable rituals, artifacts and practices. A deeper understanding of the underlying values, communication styles and other covert examples of beliefs and attitudes, which are the essence of cultural awareness, as well as a key part of communicative competence, are generally ignored. Results described in chapter 2, pertaining to teachers roles and attitudes, tend to confirm this in that teachers either do not feel comfortable teaching the more ambiguous and hidden aspects of culture or are not sure how to include them into a viable curriculum which could be objectively structured and assessed. Similarly, the critical analysis of EFL textbooks in Chapter 3 revealed that most materials contain only superficial examples of overt tourist culture, such as exotic names or places, stereotypical artifacts and activities such as drinking tea, eating hamburgers or shaking hands. This knowledge does little to develop a deeper understanding of the culture and tends to only reconfirm previously held beliefs, preconceptions and stereotypes; thereby also cementing the students us/them perspective and subsequent dichotomous attitude. Furthermore in terms of cultural awareness raising the textbooks do not explore any underlying values, attitudes or communication styles associated with the language or any relevant community, nor do they consider the learners own culture, promote any positive attitudes towards the target

culture community, or any other general sense of inquiry, which might result in a deeper cultural understanding and more positive communicative experience. As a conclusion a cultural awareness raising pedagogy was proposed consisting of several tasks and activities designed to develop participatory and interactive skills such as observation, analysis, interpretation and reflection, which develop a form of ethnographic competence by applying ethnographic research methods to EFL teaching and learning practices.

Ethnographic research as a possible means for developing cultural awareness and communication skills has drawn attention particularly in the Council of Europe. Here, where communication with peoples of different language and culture backgrounds is almost a daily event, the necessity for developing an awareness of difference and a sensitivity for the ambiguous, as part of language learning is well documented (Sercu, 2004, Byram, 1997, Jordan, 2002). However, such goals and practices, which are the underlying characteristic of an ethnographic approach, need to incorporate a broader spectrum of disciplines beyond linguistics or anthropology, but also including the full range of social sciences such as geography, history, sociology, psychology,

communication and economics. These also need to be extended into teacher training if there is to be sufficient momentum to successfully carry out a complete paradigm shift.

Many of the influential studies mentioned in this investigation, (Byram, (1997), Roberts, Byram, Barro, Jordan, and Street, (2000) and Jordan, (2002), though innovative and highly relevant, are missing a crucial link of “self-awareness”, which binds cultures together and is the essence of intercultural understanding. Part of this acceptance and understanding, according to Hall (1976, 213-214), is “...a glimpse of the strengths and weaknesses of one’s own system.” Kramsch (1993) refers to this as finding a “third space”, a common ground from which to view culture objectively. Similarly, Scarino (2009) calls for a greater emphasis on balancing the “self” with the “other” which she refers to as a sense of inter and intra-culturality. Without a valid or grounded starting point, students lack perspective and any introduction to culture becomes trivial and irrelevant. Learners need to consider the origins of their own worldview, their backgrounds, experiences, memberships, community and role in society in order to discover and feel comfortable with their unique identities. This also allows them to look outward at the unknown. Such reflexivity requires making the familiar strange, analyzing everyday events and finding meaning in the mundane,

making the invisible visible. This is the essence of ethnography, the basics of ethnographic competence and the starting point for the journey towards cultural awareness.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: Teachers Needs and Perspectives Survey

#### Teachers Needs and Perspectives Survey

Please take a few moments to answer the questions below

The purpose of this questionnaire is to learn about the general perspectives of teachers in Japan.

All information collected will be kept confidential. Thank you.

#### Demographic Information

Do you have a background in ESL or EFL?		<b>yes</b>	<b>no</b>
If <b>no</b> in what field is your background or training?			
Number of years teaching experience in Japan:			
Number of years teaching experience outside Japan:			
Nationality			
Average number of students in your English classes			
<b>Level</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>Intermediate</b>	<b>Advanced</b>
Main skill focus(es) of the courses you teach ( <b>circle a maximum of three</b> )			
<b>Speaking</b>	<b>Listening</b>	<b>Reading</b>	<b>Writing</b>
		<b>Multi-skill</b>	<b>Content Based</b>

#### Teaching Materials

Do you use textbooks? If **yes** how often? **no** / **yes%** **of class**  
**time**

#### What do you use textbooks for?

dialogue practice    structure                      cultural content                      grammar                      grounding lesson  
 homework                      model                      other

What is a textbook you really like or use often?

Do you supplement your textbooks with other material? **yes/ no**

If **yes** Why/How?

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

How satisfied are you with how culture is portrayed in textbooks?	not very satisfied	not sure	very satisfied
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What are some problems with how culture is portrayed in texts?

biased	America centered	stereotypical	vague	accurate
too specific	trivial	too general	informative	<b>other.</b>

How important is teaching cultural awareness?	1	2	3	4	5
	not very important		not sure		very important

How well do you feel you understand cultural awareness?	1	2	3	4	5
	not very well		not sure		very well

How important is teaching cultural specific information such as greetings: in Japan people bow in America you shake hands (etc.).	1	2	3	4	5
	not very important		not sure		very important

How important is teaching culture general information such as notions of individualism, collectivism (etc.).	1	2	3	4	5
	not very important		not sure		very important

Do you do any cultural awareness raising activities in your classes? **yes/no**

If yes can you give an example?

If you include cultural content in your classes is that information concerned with factual/overt culture like food, music, people, housing, etc?

Can you give your own example?

If you include cultural content in your classes is that information concerned with covert culture values, beliefs, attitudes, etc?

Can you give your own example?

What sort of cultural information is important for language learners to know? **(circle 3)**

food	beliefs	perspectives/orientations
communication styles	clothes	manners
holidays & ceremonies	values	world view
		<b>other.</b>

	strongly disagree	disagree	not sure	agree	strongly agree
I actively try to teach culture	1	2	3	4	5
I address cultural issues as they arise	1	2	3	4	5
I teach culture general information	1	2	3	4	5
I use cultural content for examples	1	2	3	4	5
I use culture for contrastive analysis	1	2	3	4	5
Language and culture are inseparable.	1	2	3	4	5
I teach target language specific culture	1	2	3	4	5
I use my own culture for contrast and comparison with Japanese culture.	1	2	3	4	5
Language teaching should be culture neutral	1	2	3	4	5
It is too difficult to teach culture in the classroom	1	2	3	4	5
It is the teacher's responsibility to teach culture.	1	2	3	4	5

Do you try to develop any of the following as part of language teaching?

**yes/ no**

If **yes** please indicate which ones **(circle up to 3)**.

creativity	flexibility	negotiating meaning	sensitivity to differences	critical thinking
tolerance for				

ambiguity      empathy      ability to fail      perspective      ***other*** .

Rank the following in order of importance to EFL (1=most important, 15= least important)

creativity	flexibility	negotiating meaning	sensitivity to differences	critical thinking
listening	speaking	grammar	writing	pronunciation
tolerance for ambiguity	empathy	ability to fail	perspective	<b><i>other</i></b>

Would you like to receive teacher training on Cultural Awareness Raising?      **Yes / No**

### **Interview Questions**

How important is cultural awareness raising for EFL students in Japan? (Why?)

What do you do in your classes to raise cultural awareness?

How do you find the cultural content in the text books you use?

How satisfied are you with texts and materials available to you?

What would you like to see changed?

What are some difficulties teaching culture?

If English is really a global language spoken in many different cultures, how do you think we might be able to teach cultural awareness?

Do you do anything to teach these?

Do you teach any contrastive analysis of culture? English this but Japanese that...

Do you teach about culture or do you use it for examples?



What are some skills which you think are important for cultural awareness?

- Being able to communicate and understand persons who are different from you
- Information about customs, food, manners of a specific target culture.
- Concrete examples from target culture or
- General information about cultural differences and communication styles
- Self-awareness and understanding own identity

How do you feel about receiving teacher training in relation to cultural awareness raising?

## Appendix B: Teachers Needs and Perspectives Survey Results

Condition	Results			
Nationality	Japanese 60.8%		Other 39.2%	
Do you have a background in ESL or EFL?	Yes 83.3%		No 16.7%	
Do you use textbooks?	Yes 93.3%		No 6.7%	
Do you supplement textbooks with other material?	Yes 73.3%		No 26.7%	
Do you use any cultural awareness raising activities?	Yes 73.3%		No 26.7%	
Do you teach any of the following skills as part of TEFL?	Yes 36.7%		No 63.3%	
Condition	Range		Mean	Sd
How often do you use textbooks?	40%	100%	<b>58.3%</b>	18.68%
Number of years teaching experience in Japan.	5	20	<b>13</b>	5.04
Number of years teaching experience abroad.	0	4	<b>0.9</b>	1.24
Average number of students in your English classes	10	50	<b>28.83</b>	10.05
Class Level	1	3	<b>2.00</b>	0.37
How satisfied are you with cultural content in texts?	1.00	4.00	<b>2.80</b>	1.13
How important is teaching cultural awareness?	2.00	5.00	<b>4.00</b>	0.83
How well do you understand cultural awareness?	1.00	4.00	<b>2.50</b>	1.00
How important is teaching Culture Specific Information?	1.00	5.00	<b>3.30</b>	1.37

How important is teaching Culture General Information?	3.00	5.00	<b>4.30</b>	0.75
I actively try to teach culture.	3.00	5.00	<b>4.16</b>	0.59
I address cultural issues as they arise.	2.00	5.00	<b>3.80</b>	0.89
I teach culture general content.	1.00	5.00	<b>3.43</b>	1.07
I use cultural content for examples.	2.00	5.00	<b>4.33</b>	0.99
I use cultural content for contrastive analysis.	2.00	5.00	<b>3.86</b>	0.86
Language and culture are inseparable.	2.00	5.00	<b>4.20</b>	0.96
I teach target language specific culture.	1.00	5.00	<b>3.30</b>	1.12
I use my own culture to compare/contrast Japanese culture.	3.00	5.00	<b>4.33</b>	0.71
Language teaching should be culture neutral.	1.00	5.00	<b>3.13</b>	1.30
It is too difficult to teach culture in the classroom.	2.00	5.00	<b>3.66</b>	0.99
It is the teacher's responsibility to teach culture.	2.00	5.00	<b>3.73</b>	0.78

### Teaching Background

Condition	Frequency	Percent
EFL or ESL	25	83.3
Economics	2	6.7
Literature	1	3.3
Political Science	1	3.3
Sociology	1	3.3

**What do you use textbooks for?**

<b>Condition</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Dialogue practice	10	33.3
Structure	6	20.0
Homework	6	20.0
Model	4	13.3
Grounding lesson	2	6.7
Cultural content	1	3.3
Grammar	1	3.3

**How do you supplement textbooks?**

<b>Condition</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Dialogues	1	3.3
Film clips	1	3.3
Games	1	3.3
Local realia	1	3.3
News paper	1	3.3
Own material	1	3.3
Pictures	1	3.3
Songs	1	3.3
Stories	1	3.3
Vocabulary	1	3.3

**What cultural information is important?**

<b>Condition</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Beliefs	9	30.0
Manners	7	23.3
Values	7	23.3
Communication Styles	6	20.0
Holidays	1	3.3

**What are problems with cultural content in textbooks?**

Condition	Frequency	Percent
America Centered	10	33.3
Stereotypical	6	20.0
Irrelevant	4	13.3
Activities are not good	2	6.7
Biased	2	6.7
Context is unclear	2	6.7
Level inappropriate	2	6.7
Trivial	2	6.7

**Which values do you develop as part of EFL?**

Condition	Frequency	Percent
Tolerance for ambiguity	9	30.0
Creativity	7	23.3
Critical Thinking	7	23.3
Negotiating	3	10.0
Flexibility	2	6.7
Sensitivity	2	6.7

**Which are of most importance to EFL?**

Condition	Frequency	Percent
Tolerance for ambiguity	4	13.3
Negotiating Meaning	4	13.3
Listening	4	13.3
Speaking	3	10.0
Flexibility	3	10.0
Grammar	2	6.7
Creativity	1	3.3
Empathy	1	3.3
Motivation	1	3.3
Pronunciation	1	3.3
Ability to fail	1	3.3

## Appendix C: Survey of Ethnographic Research Tasks and Project

### General Post Activity Questions: Ethnographic Research Feedback Survey

Have you ever done ethnographic research before?	Yes	No
Was this activity useful for you?	Yes	No
Did you find this type of research difficult?	Yes	No
Would you have liked more instruction from the teacher?	Yes	No
Did this activity help you better understand the different subjects studied?	Yes	No
Would you like to try this activity again?	Yes	No
Do you better understand your topic now?	Yes	No
Are you inspired to try further research on your own?	Yes	No
Do you feel that you look at cultural and social issues differently now?	Yes	No
Do you feel that you have a better understanding of the topics presented by others?	Yes	No
Did this activity help improve your English skills?	Yes	No
Did this activity help improve your level of cultural awareness?	Yes	No
How did this activity affect your understanding of cultural differences?		
What communication skills do you think you developed through this activity?		
Do you think you will be able to apply any ethnographic methods towards communication with others? If yes give an example or explain how.		
What is the most important skill you learned or developed through this activity?		
How does conducting fieldwork research compare to reading research?		
Which do you prefer? Why?		
What did you like best about this activity?		

Which would you like to learn more about?
<b>Hypothesis development, survey design, interviewing, observation, writing research, presentation</b>
What effect, if any, did this activity have on your English ability?

**Rank the following in order of your preference (1=low 10=high)**

Developing Hypothesis	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Conducting research/ Fieldwork	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Writing up results	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Presenting in class	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Classroom discussion	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Other:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

**Rank the following in order of difficulty (1=easy 10=difficult)**

Developing Hypothesis	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Conducting research/ Fieldwork	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Writing up results	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Presenting in class	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Classroom discussion	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Other:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

**Rank the following in order of your ability/confidence (1=weak ability 10=strong ability)**

Developing Hypothesis	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Conducting research/ Fieldwork	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Writing up results	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Presenting in class	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Classroom discussion	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Other:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Overall I would rank this activity as:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
--	----------------------

How could the teacher better help you?

Please add any comments or suggestion on the back of this paper.



## Appendix D: Ethnographic Research Tasks and Project Survey Results

Question	Min	Max	Mean	Sd.
Gender	1.00 <sup>1</sup>	2.00	1.67	0.48
Ethnographic research experience	1.00 <sup>2</sup>	2.00	1.56	0.50
This activity was useful	1.00 <sup>2</sup>	1.00	1.00	0.00
This type of research is difficult	1.00 <sup>2</sup>	1.00	1.00	0.00
I needed more instruction	1.00 <sup>2</sup>	2.00	1.44	0.50
I better understand subjects presented	1.00 <sup>2</sup>	1.00	1.00	0.00
I would like to try this activity again	1.00 <sup>2</sup>	1.00	1.00	0.00
I better understand my topic	1.00 <sup>2</sup>	1.00	1.00	0.00
I am inspired to investigate further	1.00 <sup>2</sup>	2.00	1.11	0.32
I developed a different perspective	1.00 <sup>2</sup>	1.00	1.00	0.00
I understand other topics better	1.00 <sup>2</sup>	2.00	1.22	0.42
I improved my English ability	1.00 <sup>2</sup>	2.00	1.44	0.50
I improved my cultural awareness	1.00 <sup>2</sup>	2.00	1.11	0.46
Preference in hypothesis development	5.00 <sup>3</sup>	10.00	6.89	1.55
Preference in conducting fieldwork	4.00 <sup>3</sup>	10.00	7.44	2.09
Preference in writing up results	3.00 <sup>3</sup>	9.00	6.00	1.85
Preference in classroom presentation	5.00 <sup>3</sup>	9.00	6.11	1.69
Preference in classroom discussions	5.00 <sup>3</sup>	10.00	8.56	1.80
Difficulty in hypothesis development	5.00 <sup>3</sup>	9.00	6.67	1.43
Difficulty in conducting fieldwork	3.00 <sup>3</sup>	10.00	7.11	2.21
Difficulty in writing up results	3.00 <sup>3</sup>	10.00	7.33	2.19
Difficulty in classroom presentation	4.00 <sup>3</sup>	10.00	7.44	2.14
Difficulty in classroom discussions	1.00 <sup>3</sup>	8.00	5.00	2.34
Ability in hypothesis development	3.00 <sup>3</sup>	7.00	5.11	1.30
Ability in conducting fieldwork	4.00 <sup>3</sup>	8.00	5.89	1.47
Ability in writing up results	1.00 <sup>3</sup>	8.00	5.56	2.44
Ability in classroom presentation	1.00 <sup>3</sup>	8.00	4.11	2.41
Ability in classroom discussions	3.00 <sup>3</sup>	10.00	5.89	2.36
Overall research activity ranking	5.00 <sup>3</sup>	10.00	7.89	1.62

N=75<sup>1</sup>1=male, 2= female, <sup>2</sup>1=yes, 2=no, <sup>3</sup>1= low score 10= high score

### Results Summary

Category	Percent				
Gender	Male 33.3%		Female 66.7%		
Questions	Yes		No		
Ethnographic research experience	44.4%		55.6%		
This activity was useful	100%		0.0%		
This type of research is difficult	100%		0.0%		
I needed more instruction	55.6%		44.4%		
I better understand subjects presented	100%		0.0%		
I would like to try this activity again	100%		0.0%		
I better understand my topic	100%		0.0%		
I am inspired to investigate further	88.9%		11.1%		
I developed a different perspective	100%		0.0%		
I understand other topics better	77.8%		22.2%		
I improved my English ability	55.6%		44.4%		
I improved my cultural awareness	68.4%		31.6%		
	Very Low	Low	Neutral	High	Very High
Preference in hypothesis development	0.0%	0.0%	44.4%	44.4%	11.2%
Preference in conducting fieldwork	0.0%	11.2%	33.3%	22.4%	33.3%
Preference in writing up results	0.0%	22.4%	33.3%	33.3%	11.2%
Preference in classroom presentation	0.0%	0.0%	66.6%	33.3%	0.0%
Preference in classroom discussions	0.0%	0.0%	22.4%	11.2%	66.6%
Difficulty in hypothesis development	0.0%	0.0%	44.4%	44.4%	11.2%
Difficulty in conducting fieldwork	0.0%	22.4%	11.2%	44.4%	22.4%
Difficulty in writing up results	0.0%	13.8%	13.8%	44.4%	33.3%
Difficulty in classroom presentation	0.0%	11.2%	33.3%	11.2%	44.4%
Difficulty in classroom discussions	22.4%	0.0%	55.5%	22.4%	0.0%
Ability in hypothesis development	0.0%	33.3%	44.4%	22.4%	0.0%
Ability in conducting fieldwork	0.0%	22.4%	44.4%	33.3%	0.0%
Ability in writing up results	22.4%	0.0%	22.4%	55.5%	0.0%
Ability in classroom presentation	33.3%	33.3%	11.2%	22.4%	0.0%
Ability in classroom discussions	0.0%	33.3%	22.4%	33.3%	11.2%
Overall research activity ranking	0.0%	0.0%	22.4%	44.4%	33.3%

N=75

## **Appendix E: Student's Comments on Ethnographic Project Participation**

### **How did this activity affect your understanding of cultural differences?**

- "I could see some things more clearly."
- "Making questions about very basic things seemed too easy but the answers were very interesting."
- "I thought many Japanese had same thinking but actually there is much difference."
- "I could see much diversity in even smaller groups."

### **What communication skills do you think you developed through this activity?**

- "Not sure maybe patience and timing."
- "Listening and observation skills, I could be more precise and careful."
- "I think I could learn other peoples mind more and become sensitive."
- "Maybe I could understand a little why communication is so hard."
- "I could know my strong and weak point in my communication and can try to be better. I am too shy and no confidence but interview was good experience."

### **Do you think you will be able to apply any ethnographic methods towards communication with others?**

- "It's a good technique but difficult and takes much time, I don't think I can use it often."
- "I hope so I enjoyed very much."
- "I think we often do people watching but don't think about it scientifically."
- "May it can help me understand some difference point."

### **If yes give an example or explain how.**

- "Next time I meet foreigners I can try to understand them more."
- "I can try to watch carefully firstly before judging some different manner."
- "I want to ask questions about cultural differences again."

### **What is the most important skill you developed through this activity?**

- "Write a report in English."
- "I became to pay attention to the difference way of thinking not only different culture but also generation."

- “I learned how much information we can understand from studying about one small thing. And that it can spread to several possibilities of studying human behaviour and relations.”
- “Giving a presentation in English is the most important. It’s not just writing or speaking English, so I have to consider the content of the research.”
- “To make a presentation – prepare.”
- “Developing hypothesis, I think this was very important because we have to motivated ourselves with our own hypothesis and the research will have a good beginning. “
- “Patience”
- “Listening to others opinions”

### **How does conducting fieldwork research compare to reading research?**

#### **Which do you prefer? Why?**

- “I can make a hypothesis, branch idea easier than reading research for me.”
- “I prefer conducting fieldwork research because I could understand the conclusion as experience. It’s unforgettable.”
- “Fieldwork research can be more exciting because you can actually interact with people. But it can be more complicated since all of us has different thoughts and idea, it would be hard to put together the results.”
- “Fieldwork research is not easy as it seems. I prefer fieldwork research (although it depends on the situation) because I can see for myself.”
- “I prefer conducting fieldwork research because I feel like studying more than reading.”
- “Fieldwork because reading in book is also theory when you conduct a research it must be in the field.”
- “I like the interaction with informants (fieldwork), Reading research can get tedious.”
- “I think it is more interesting than reading but I prefer reading because I don’t have enough time to look over a wide range.”
- “Induction from data I like. Fieldwork is concrete.”

#### **What did you like best about this activity?**

- “To develop the idea”
- “After I finish this research, I could guess what people are thinking and feeling with body languages.”
- “I was able to study and think about what I never noticed in my daily life.”
- “Interviewing by asking questions.”
- “Everybody’s presentation.”

- “Observing and interviewing, collecting data gave me a lot of different views.”
- “No reading research.”
- “Listening to teacher’s experience and young people’s opinions.”
- “Direct communication is best.”

**What effect if any did this activity have on you English ability?**

- “Writing research and presentation”
- “I forgotten how important the English speaking is, even though I’m a student of Faculty of International Culture, I haven’t used English a couple of years at all. But I realize I can’t do my research without English.”
- “I can’t say that it effected to improve my English but I noticed the survey question would sound different when translating into another language.”
- “It effected on not only my ability of writing English but of speaking.”
- “At University are few the opportunities to practice English and talked to Japanese.”
- “I noticed that I can’t to express my abstract feeling in English. If I were good at English I could tell my thought to others.”

**How could the teacher better help you?**

- “To correct report before presentation (grammar and vocabulary)”
- “I should have asked for help, then I understand better.”
- “Maybe the teacher could show us one presentation as an example.”
- “He made me think deeply about Japanese Culture, during class not only contemporary topic but also tradition in Japan were studied. And research topic were fabulous.”
- “Help clarify hypothesis.”
- “I need help of vocabulary when I couldn’t recollect the word.”
- “I would like you to recommend me some textbooks concerning it and read and discuss.”

## Appendix F: List of Relevant Publications

- Reimann, A. (2010) Task-Based Cultural Awareness Raising Through Learner Ethnographies. *In Applications of Task-Based Learning in TESOL*, A. Shehadeh & C. Coombe (eds.) Chapter 5, (49-66).
- Reimann, A. (2009). Creating Culture, A Review of Cultural Awareness Raising Materials. *Canadian Content*, (19)2, 16-17.
- Reimann, A. (2009). A Critical Analysis of Cultural Content in EFL Materials. Utsunomiya University, *Journal of International Studies*, (28)2, (85-101).
- Reimann, A. (2009). Exploring Canadian Multicultural Society through Student Ethnography. *Canada Project in Kyushu Colloquium*, Institute for Regional Studies at The International University of Kagoshima, Japan, (4)1, (48-58).
- Reimann, A. (2008). A Task Based Approach to Raising Cultural Awareness. Utsunomiya University, *Journal of International Studies*, (25)2, (129-146).
- Reimann, A. (et.al.). (2008). Multicultural Perspectives in Language Teaching. Utsunomiya University, *Journal of International Studies*, (57)1, (141-154).
- Reimann, A. (2008). Exploring Canadian Multicultural Society through Student Ethnography. Utsunomiya University, *Journal of International Studies*, (25)1, (153-164).
- Reimann, A. (2007). Canadian Ethnographic Project: Exploring Multicultural Society. *Canadian Content*, (17) 3, (1-5).
- Reimann, A. (2007). Intercultural Communication, Defining Competence. Utsunomiya University. *Journal of International Studies*, (24)2, (137-151).
- Reimann, A. (2007). Teachers Roles and Perspectives in Raising Cultural Awareness. Utsunomiya University, *Journal of International Studies*, (23)1, (131-143).

- Reimann, A. & O'Dowd, G. (2006). Learner Awareness: Untold Stories. JALT 2005 Conference Proceedings, *Sharing Our Stories*. (76-98).
- Reimann, A. (2006). Engaging the other; Review of Adrian Holliday's Intercultural Communication. *Canadian Content*, (16) 2, (18-19).
- Reimann, A. (2006). Utilizing Classroom Diversity. Utsunomiya University, *Journal of International Studies*, (21)1, (79-90).
- Reimann, A. (2005). Developing Meta-Cultural Skills, Strategies and Awareness Support for a Meta-Cultural Approach. Utsunomiya University, *Journal of International Studies*, (20)2, (73-79).
- Reimann, A. (2005). Taking Responsibility: Strategies for cultivating student leadership. JALT, *Learner Development, Context, Curricula, Content*. (77-83).
- Reimann, A. (2005). Developing Meta-Cultural Awareness Strategies. JALT 2004 Conference Proceedings, *Language Learning for Life*. (218-331).
- Reimann, A. (2005). Language, Culture and Curriculum; An investigation of students cultural orientations, communication styles and strategies. *Canadian Content*. (15)1, (1-5).
- Reimann, A. (2005). Exploring Learner Meta-Cultural Awareness. Nihon University. *Studies in International Relations*, (25)4, (139-152).
- Reimann, A. (2004). Towards an Ethnographic Paradigm in Second Language Acquisition Research. Utsunomiya University, *Journal of International Studies*, (17)2, (133-40).