IMPACT OF VIRTUAL EXCHANGE ON STUDENTS' INTERCULTURAL
COMPETENCE

The Impact of Virtual Exchange on Japanese University Students

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Abstract

This research investigated the impact of virtual exchange on the intercultural sensitivity, intercultural communication apprehension and ethnocentrism of Japanese university students. Findings showed that virtual exchange improved the intercultural sensitivity of students and reduced ethnocentrism. However, the intercultural communication apprehension of students seemed not to have been reduced after students participated in the virtual exchange program. Student seemed to be apprehensive in communication situations as a result of the asynchronous nature of communication on the virtual exchange platform, the IVEProject, and their limited English skills. While the IVEProject provided opportunities to communicate in English, these opportunities were limited to only text-based asynchronous communication – verbal communication skills were therefore not developed and this appeared to be a reason why students even after participating in the IVEProject exhibited some degree of intercultural communication apprehension. Again, students also appeared to be oblivious to the opportunities provided by their university for intercultural communication such as, their foreign English language teachers and on-campus English communication clubs. Teachers and textbooks also emerged as intercultural competence development and linguistic resources. The findings of this study therefore suggest that text-based asynchronous virtual exchanges might be more impactful on reducing the intercultural communication apprehension of students with the addition of synchronous video communication features. In addition, on-campus English clubs, when promoted, could be of immense benefit to the development of intercultural and communication competence of students, and could mitigate the limitations of a virtual exchange program.

Keywords: virtual exchange, intercultural sensitivity, intercultural communication apprehension, ethnocentrism, intercultural competence and intercultural awareness.

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Introduction

The English language has become a global linguistic force in the world today (Al-Issah, 2016; Nunan, 2003; Rao, 2019). A number of scholars have over the years referred to English as a global language (Crystal, 2019; Northrup, 2013; Pennycook & Candlin, 2017). Governments the world over, especially governments of countries whose first or official languages are not English, are investing a great deal of resources to actualize this dream, and implementing actual policies geared toward raising global citizens (Hashimoto, 2009, 2011, MEXT, n.d). One of the governments leading this charge is the Japanese government, through the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology and Sports (MEXT). Despite the efforts of the government, English education has largely neglected the development of students' Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) in favor of skills required for passing language tests (Donnery, 2022; Fujikawa, 2013; Hagley & Thompson, 2017). One of the contributing factors to this problem is the lack of opportunities for Japanese students (and the society at large) to interact with speakers of English who are foreigners (Miyahara, 2015; Morita, 2014; Watanabe 2013). However, Virtual Exchange (VE) presents an opportunity for Japanese learners to collaborate with other learners overseas with differing cultural background and ethnicities (Hagley, 2021). Again, while previous research (Deacon & Miles, 2022; Hanada, 2019; Hofmeyr, 2021) has investigated the lack of intercultural competence among Japanese students, there is a palpable gap in literature on how virtual exchange and English language courses at universities impact the development of the intercultural competence of students. Therefore, this study will investigate the impact of virtual exchange, specifically the International Virtual Exchange Program (IVEProject), and Soka University's English 2 course on Japanese university students' intercultural sensitivity, intercultural communication apprehension, and ethnocentrism.

Literature Review

Despite the goal of the Japanese government of developing a bilingual society (Hagerman, 2010), preferably with English skills (Hashimoto, 2009; Morita, 2014), a great deal of focus has been devoted to the teaching of English skills necessary for passing English language tests such as TOEIC to the neglect of communication and intercultural competence skills. While some scholars (Ikegashira et al., 2009; Morita, 2014; Shinya, 2020) cite the mono-ethnic nature of the Japanese society as the reason the for the limited communicative and intercultural competence skills among Japanese students, due to lack of adequate opportunities to speak English and interact with foreigners, other scholars (Donnery, 2022; Fujikawa, 2013; Kikuchi, 2019) also cite the nature of the Japanese English education system which is designed to train students adept at passing entrance examinations that lack communicative or intercultural competence development objectives. In light of the latter reason, and the opportunities VE presents for communicative and intercultural competence development (Hagley, 2020), an exploration of the impact of VE on the intercultural competence development of Japanese students would be worthwhile. Therefore, this review of literature will discuss key concepts such as VE, intercultural sensitivity, intercultural communication apprehension and ethnocentrism. This review of literature will begin with research on virtual exchange and features of VE that are hinged on communicative and task-based language teaching. A description of the IVEProject and previous research on the IVEProject will follow this section. Following this section will be a discussion of intercultural communication competence with critical focus on intercultural sensitivity, intercultural communication apprehension, and finally ethnocentrism. The sections on intercultural sensitivity, intercultural communication apprehension and ethnocentrism will begin with definitions, key concepts and previous research and finally concluded with research undertaken on these concepts in the Japanese context.

Virtual Exchange

Institutions of higher learning have over the years introduced Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) into classrooms to develop the intercultural competence of students as well as computer literacy and communication skills through telecollaboration (Wit, 2017). COIL and telecollaboration in general are also usually referred to as virtual exchange (VE). VE is an exchange that is internet-based, between individuals from different countries and backgrounds, conducted in an institutional environment to develop intercultural communicative competence and language skills (Bryam, 1997) through tasks that are structured (Guth & Helm, 2010, p.14. as cited in Gruber & Bailey, 2021). Qu and Hagley (2021) also describe VE as the broad description of all educational set ups that enable students to engage online in order to exchange culture and collaborate on tasks, under the supervision of trained facilitators who are teachers. A key element of VE is the focus on language as a tool for establishing relationships rather than a subject for studies (Belz & Thorne, 2006) between learners who are distant geographically (O'Dowd, 2010). Even more so now that the COVID-19 pandemic has limited human interaction, VE projects will be pivotal in promoting intercultural communication opportunities for students, and alleviate racism and xenophobic beliefs that hinder intercultural understanding (Elias et al., 2021).

According to Dooly and Vinagre (2021) the following are some key features that render VE desirable for educators and other users: (1) VE is flexible to a very large extent and can be easily incorporated into a curriculum or a teaching plan, in diverse classroom environments (face-to-face or hybrid); (2) most practitioners view VE as a tool that offers students the opportunity to collaborate and interact with other participants with whom communication would have been otherwise unlikely, in normal educational settings; (3) VE is considered as the alternative for in-person interaction, and affords mobility for disabled students and students with financial constraints – and thus facilitates language practice, internationalization and inclusion for users from diverse backgrounds; and, (4) a few VEs may reflect elements of self-directed language learning activities

in typical language classroom settings (for example, iTalki and Busuu). In spite of this overlap, VE

is not the same as the Communicative Approach (CA) to language learning.

A major difference between VE and CA is that VE occurs in a space where learners and

teachers in different geographical locations work on specific, designed tasks and activities,

collaboratively. Learning projects that employ CA on the other hand, focus on language learning

tasks that are embedded in communication among learners in the same learning environment. The

key features that set VE apart from CA is the element of teachers and learners in different

geographical locations working collaboratively on tasks. This distinction is important, because the

COVID-19 pandemic has caused a surge in the number of digital or virtual educational platforms

worldwide – facilitating educational activities between individual teachers and students. This

phenomenon is popularly described as online teaching or learning. Even though both VE and CA

can occur over the internet, between learners and an educator in different locations, VE

encapsulates a guided learning process that is mutually supportive, between classes of collaborative

partners, including teachers. Unlike CA, VE extends beyond the traditional one teacher; one class

set up. Regardless of this distinction, communication is at the core of VE in language teaching.

Communication as the Core for VE in Language Teaching

A number of authors report that with regards to language teaching, the roots of VE can be

traced to CA (Brammerts, 1996; Dooly, 2010, 2017; Johnson, 1996; Kern, 1996; Kinginger, 1998;

Kurek & Müller-Hartmann, 2017; Müller-Hartmann, 2006; Vingare, 2017). These roots are

palpable in the key features of CA listed by Brown (2007). Brown (2007) asserts that the features

that bear a direct relationship with VE are: (1) prioritization of cooperation and collaboration in

learning; (2) reconstruction of the teacher-led classroom; (3) a goal to develop language learners

that are autonomous; (4) a focus on learning tasks that equip learners with communication

competences required for communication outside the classroom; (5) accuracy and fluency are to

be viewed as complementary – one is not prioritized over the other; and, (6) prominence on

meaningful use of language; a focus on the development of communicative competences:

sociolinguistic, grammatical, functional, strategic and discourse. The aforementioned characteristics of CA contribute to the components of VE in the teaching and learning of language. These characteristics also highlight the commonality of tasks to both VE and CA.

VE and Task-Based Language learning

The pedagogical design of VE, particularly, the pedagogical design of the IVEProject is built on an approach very identical to communicative language teaching (as evidenced in Brown, 2007). The pedagogical design of VE in general shows considerable likeness to Project-Based Language Teaching (PBLT) (Masats, 2021). Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT) (Gonzalez-Lloret & Ortega 2014) and English Medium Instruction (EMI) or Content and Language Integrated Language Learning (CLIL) (Smit & Dafouz, 2012; Loranc-Paszylk, 2016). This link between VE and CA is evidenced in a number of studies. In 2019, the Evaluate Group headed by renowned names in VE and telecollaboration such as Robert O'Dowd and Kaede Baroni undertook an international survey on the impact of VE on teacher education (for student teachers). The results of this study show that TBLT served as the foundation for developing VE courses for a number of the teachers. This result is attributable to the nature of VE tasks in language learning situations that are hinged on the completion of well-defined tasks between learners (partners) while using language (or the target language) for authentic communication, spontaneously. Research that has drawn connections between CA and VE design have not been limited to only TBLT, but also PBLT (Becket et. al, 2020; Thomas & Yamazaki, 2021). VE projects or curricula that are influenced by PBLT are characterized by the opportunities afforded students to engage in major knowledge-building projects whose impact are far-reaching, beyond the classroom. In addition, these projects incorporate tasks that develop the intercultural competence and foster intercultural understanding between leaners and their virtual learning partners. In the same light, O'Dowd (2018) asserts that EMI and CLIL are pillars for VE just as TBLT and PBLT. The culmination of the incorporation of these approaches to language teaching and learning into VE programs yields foreign language course content that could result in a number of desirable learning outcomes, such as deepened L2

proficiency, enhanced subject knowledge, multiculturalism and unhindered mobility of global citizens that fosters internationalization (Vinagre, 2016).

The IVEProject

In 2004, the International Virtual Exchange Project (IVEProject) was instituted by Eric Hagley, an EFL educator in Japan (Hagley, 2020). The program was developed due to desire of the organizer for his students to use English (that have been taught in class) in Japan, a country where opportunities to communicate in English are scarce (Donnery, 2022) – partly because of the inadequate natives-to-foreigner ratio. The organizer wanted his students to communicate with other EFL students in different countries. As opportunities to communicate in English in Japan were scarce, an international exchange via the internet was the only option. In furtherance of this dream, a broadcast email was sent to a list of language teachers in several countries. At the beginning of 2004, a language teacher in a Colombian vocational school responded – and the first exchange began between their two classes on the platform 'Moodle'. Other teachers expressed their interest in joining the exchange as the organizer presented on the program at conferences around Japan. In 2015, the first large-scale exchange with 869 students and 35 teachers took off, after the organizer went to Colombia to lead a workshop for teachers, whom expressed interest in joining the exchange. The general feedback was positive and the program grew by leaps and bounds, such that in 2017, there were 2,388 participating students from 8 different countries.

The IVEProject occurs on a Moodle platform. Interested teachers send the information of their students to the organizer. The organizer then groups the students. Students are typically grouped with students from other countries to facilitate cultural exchange and communication in English. Sometimes, students are grouped based on their majors. Teachers and students are offered free online tutorials on how to access and use the website. The exchange spans over a 16-week period; 8 weeks in the spring semester and another 8 in the fall semester. During this period, students exchange information and write blogs using texts, links, pictures and videos on topics such as self-introductions, *my hometown*, *my future plans* and *events in our lives*. The topics are

deliberately chosen to be fairly easy for the majority of the students whose level of English is at beginner-level (Hagley, 2016). Participants are encouraged to post, and reply to posts shared by their partners, on the forum. In addition, teachers can monitor the progress of their students as well as the activities of other groups. With regards to assessment, a rubric is readily available for teachers, this notwithstanding, teachers are allowed to assess student performance in any way they deem fit. The project was funded through a KAKEN and JSPS grant, consequently, no participation fees are required.

  Goals of the IVEProject. The IVEProject was developed with a number of goals for participating students and teachers. The goals for students can be largely grouped into intercultural competency goals, communication goals, and digital literacy goals (IVEProject, n.d.). The IVEProject aims to boost the intercultural competency skills of participating students by connecting students of different cultural backgrounds to share culture through asynchronous communication in English. This goal is not limited to deepening the knowledge of student participants about the culture of their counterparts, but also of their own culture as well. The communication goals of the IVEProject are focused on providing students with opportunities to use language introduced in class (Roarty & Hagley, 2021). One way to achieving this goal is for students to obtain an appreciable amount of information about their counterparts. In order to achieve this goal, Roarty and Hagley (2021) advised teachers to teach questioning techniques and appropriate use of politeness in English for communication with strangers to students. Students are then expected to apply these communication strategies and also resolve any communication challenges in English without reverting to their first languages. The last goal for student participants is the development of digital literacy skills. As students use communication tools such as computers, smartphones, multimedia interfaces and the internet to communicate on the IVE platform, their digital skills are expected to develop over a period of time. Finally for teachers, the IVEProject aims to provide and avenue for meaningful output of taught language, and a ground for research into practices that can help teachers improve their classrooms (Roarty & Hagley 2021). Therefore, the three main goals

of the IVEProject for students is intercultural competence development, communication, and the development of digital skills. The goal of the IVEProject for teachers on the other hand, is to provide an avenue for students to practice taught language meaningfully, and conducting research.

Previous Research on the IVEProject. The benefits of virtual exchange programs for L2 learners have necessitated, in recent years, a number of studies. In effect, a plethora of research has been carried out on the IVEProject as well. Hagley (2020) investigated the effects of VE on the cultural and intercultural sensitivity of students in an EFL classroom. The aim of this study was to establish what effects the IVEProject had on (1) Japanese students understanding of their own culture; (2) Japanese students understanding of the culture of their partner in the VE program; and, (3) students' overall impression of the IVEProject. The author compared the results of two independent VEs; one in 2016 and the other in 2017. 303 participants (students) from 16 universities in Japan completed pre-survey and post-survey questionnaires in the 2016 VE program. 264 participants (students) also completed the same pre and post surveys in the 2017 group. The surveys were developed with components from Chen and Starosta's (2000) Intercultural Sensitivity Scale and Bennett's (1986) Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity. The results of Hagley's study are as follows. With regards to students understanding of the culture of their own culture, the results showed that both the 2016 and 2017 batches gained knowledge of their own culture. After the program, students for example agreed with the item "I really know my culture and can explain it to others,"; however, students agreed to this item in 2017 more than in 2016. Evidence that students gained an understanding of their own culture was further deepened by statistically significant positive responses to "I know the taboos in my country's culture and can explain them to others," after both the 2016 and 17 sessions of the IVEProject.

With regards to the effect of the IVEProject on students' understanding of the culture of their partner, students greatly disagreed with the statement, "As long as we all speak the same language, there's no problem," at both the beginning and the end of the program. The author reported that this outcome suggests that the participants were not oblivious to, or in *denial* (Bennett,

1986) of cultural differences at the beginning of the program. A change; however, not significant, was observed at the end of the exchange that students were not in the *denial* stage. In spite of this acknowledgement of cultural differences, the results show students to be polarized in an "us and them" manner (Bennet, 1986) in response to question 2, "My country's culture should be a model for the rest of the world" and questions 3 "People in other countries don't value life the way we do in my country." In response to statement 5 "Foreigners probably can't understand my country's culture," responses suggested that students were not strongly polarized before the exchange, but were slightly leaning toward a polarized zone, in relation to their own culture, after the program in both 2016 and 2017. This observation is evidenced again in statement 9, "My country's culture is very different to other counties," that students reported that their culture and other cultures are dissimilar, but not as much after the exchange. Another interesting finding of the study was shown in students' response to statement 6, "I think it is important for me to learn about many other cultures." As compared to the beginning of the exchange, students expressed no need to learn more about other cultures at the end of the exchange. The author attributes this outcome to the possibility of students being less fearful of foreign cultures after their participation in the IVEProject, hence the dearth of an incentive to learn about other cultures. This phenomenon, the author describes as "the illusion of commonality" (Ware & Kramsch, 2005, p. 200 as cited by Hagley, 2020).

Furthermore, interactional confidence (Chen & Starosta, 2000) was found to have improved in both 2016 and 2017, but to a greater degree in 2017, and this outcome is highlighted by students' positive responses to statements, "I would feel comfortable even if there are many foreigners around me" and "I can say what I really feel more openly in a foreign language than in my own language." Finally, in relation to students' impression of the IVEProject, students generally viewed the VE program as a useful component of their English classes. An appreciable majority 87% (2016) and 83% (2017) of students agreed that the VE was beneficial to the learning of English. Some students were unwilling to exchange information with students from other countries - 15% (2016) and 11% (2017); however, a greater percentage of students - 65% (2016)

and 76% (2017) expressed interest in participating in another VE program. An increment in students' interest in the cultures of other countries was also observed – statements 2, "I didn't learn anything about the other country" (2016: 26%; and, 2017: 29%); 6 "I feel like I started to understand the lives of the people in the other country" (2016: 78%; and, 2017: 76%); and, 11 "I'm more interested in the other country now because of the virtual exchange" (2016: 73%; and, 76%). A drawback to the study was the significantly lower percentage of students (2016: 11%; and, 2017: 14%) expressed interest in being in contact with their VE partners; the author indicates that this outcome is as a result of the short duration of the VE and the limited English skills of students. Overall, 61% (2016) and 58% (2017) agree that the forum was user friendly.

Bissett (2021) also interviewed nine students in a qualitative study at Kanazawa Seiryo University Women's College to investigate how the IVEProject impacted students in the areas of: (a) the willingness of students to improve their English skills; (b) interest in other cultures (c) competence; (d) autonomy; and, (e) relatedness. The interview results suggest that students' frequent use of English on the IVE platform raised their awareness about their limited English. Students therefore expressed the need to improve their English skills in order to be able to express their views and ideas extensively in subsequent encounters with other speakers of English. Some students for instance admitted to an over reliance on translation apps in the past; however, the translation apps were not reliable in some instances. As a result, such students were unable communicate their ideas and messages about Japanese culture to their international counterparts successfully – hence, the need to improve their English skills. In addition, other students felt ashamed at their inability to communicate in English, having been offered a unique opportunity (the IVEProject) to meet and communicate with international students in English. Such students also stated the need to improve their English skills and broaden their knowledge on a variety of topics in order to utilize the communication and networking opportunities that the IVEProject presents.

With respect to interest in other cultures, the findings of Bissett (2021) suggest that all nine students agree that their interest in other countries peaked, because of their participation in the IVEProject. Some students reported that through their interaction on the IVE platform, they realized that the food, culture and scenery of the countries of their partners were different from Japanese food, scenery and culture. These observed differences in culture were not labeled as awkward – this phenomenon, Bennett (1986) describes as Acceptance. Despite realizing the differences in culture, the participants interviewed by the author asserted that the different cultural items of their partners were beautiful and *interesting,* and this observation had stimulated their interest in the foreign cultures encountered. Such students went on further to express their intentions in visiting the countries whose cultures they found interesting and beautiful. Furthermore, another participant remarked that the IVEProject was not only useful in communicating with international students abroad, but also served as a springboard for Japanese students to prepare for communication with foreigners in the future. Again, another participant reported that unlike study abroad that offers students the opportunity to experience one country at a time, the IVEProject presented students with the opportunity to experience multiple countries and cultures at once; and would subsequently recommend the class of the author to first year students - because of the IVEProject. Interestingly, some other participants reported that the IVEProject motivated them to learn more about their country, Japan, because their foreign counterparts were interested in Japanese culture, but the participants were not always able to explain certain aspects of Japanese culture to their partners. For instance, one participant could not explain what *tatami* was made of when asked by a foreign student.

The results of the Bissett (2021) study also showed that students developed a sense of linguistic competence after their participation in the IVEProject. One participant confirmed that the IVEProject offered her the opportunity to learn grammar. Despite learning English grammar in junior and high school, this participant felt that her English improved, because of the IVEProject, hence a feeling of competence. Another participant said she developed a feeling of competence

overtime as she was able to "get messages across using simple English sentences." Other students also ascribed their sense of linguistic competence to the lack of scrutiny of grammatical errors and the lack of a face-to-face interaction on the IVE platform. In addition to linguistic competence, some participants also developed autonomy. One participant recounted that she was constantly looking up words she did not understand in her partners' messages by herself, after which she would write a reply. Another interviewee described how she would research about Japanese culture on the internet in Japanese and then translate her findings into English for the consumption of her international partners on the platform. With regards to the final focus of enquiry of Bissett's study, relatedness, the participants expressed an overall feeling of being appreciated and valued by their international partners. One participant remarked that when she wrote to her friend (her IVE partner) about her English not being "good enough," her friend responded, "it's totally fine," and this feedback of reassurance made the participant "happy." Another participant reported that she was "happy," because her counterparts could understand her "poor English." This feeling of relatedness could be attributed to the fact that both the Japanese students and their foreign counterparts are L2 speakers of English with limited proficiency, who are using English as a lingua franca, hence the sense of commonality. The feeling of relatedness would have been lost if Japanese students were paired with native level partners on the IVEProject.

Other previous research on the IVEProject is Hagley and Cotter (2019) study that investigated the views of both Japanese (N=594) and Columbian (N=402) students on how VE supported language (in this case, English) learning and intercultural development. Overall, the results suggested that students believe that VE is a useful tool that should be incorporated into intercultural and EFL classes. While 81% of the Japanese students agreed that the VE was beneficial to improving their English, 90% of the Columbian students also agreed to same statement. Again, both the Japanese (13%) and Columbian (16%) disagreed to the statement "I didn't learn anything about the other country." By the end of the exchange, 79% of the Japanese students and 96% of the Columbian students agreed that "English is an important language." The students

realized that communication with their foreign counterparts would have been difficult or probably impossible, without a common language, English. This realization would likely cause students to study English seriously. In relation to intercultural development, 77% of the Japanese students and 86% of the Columbian students agreed to the statement "I'm more interested in other countries now, because of the VE," while 70% of the Japanese students and 89% of the Columbian students agreed to have changed their views about the country, because of the VE. These figures suggest that the VE experience opened up students to be more tolerant and appreciative of diversity. In addition, the Japanese students were further investigated for additional positive experiences during the VE. Of the 594 participants, 171 agreed that their linguistic competence improved; 264 reported to have developed a sense of improving their intercultural understanding; while 227 participants developed a "sense of participation in a global community."

Intercultural Communication Competence

The surge in diversity on a global scale has rendered intercultural competence a topic of immense relevance. While what constitutes competence is still fiercely debated, the ability of an individual to accept, interact and understand other individuals of different cultures in meaningful and positive social engagements is a topic worth considering. In spite of the fact that some parts of the world (for example, Japan) remain culturally and ethnically homogenous (Demelius, 2020; Yamamura, 2008) several major cities that are economic hubs (such as Tokyo) have experienced a noticeable transformation in their demographic and cultural landscape as a result of immigration. In contexts identical to the context described above, the success or social mobility of cultural groups or individuals might not be dependent on only the group or individual's skillset or knowledge of specific fields, concepts or their ability to function in a virtual workspace, but also on their level of intercultural competence (IC) (Zakaria et. al, 2004). The establishment of the relevance of intercultural communication competence (ICC) paves way for definitions of the concept. Spitzberg (2009) described ICC as the appropriate and efficient control of interactions between individuals who, to varying degrees, reflect divergent emotive, cognitive, and behavioral

worldviews (p.7). Arasaratnam and Doerfel (2005) on the other hand, simply defined ICC as communication among individuals from various country cultures.

The Learnability of Intercultural Competence

Since competence is the locus of intercultural communication, then questions should be raised about whether intercultural competence can be learned or not (Arasaratnam, 2016). In response to this question, a number of researchers are of the opinion that the process involved in acquiring intercultural competence is developmental (Beamer, 1992; Bennett, 1986; Hammer et. al, 2003). This observation implies that over an extended period of time, through personal experiences and reflection, individuals can learn and gain new perspectives and insights of the world and of other cultures to collectively culminate in the development of intercultural competence. Again, if so then arguments can be advanced for the duration of the IVEProject not being an adequate time period to be truly reflective of intercultural development for all participants. For some participants, their realization and appreciation of otherness that would subsequently lead to intercultural competence would occur much later after the 16-week program is concluded. Nevertheless, research also supports that the view that collaborative learning encourages the development of learners' intercultural competence (Donnery, 2022; Helm, 2009; Roarty & Hagley, 2021; Zhang 2012). This fact also implies that the 16-week collaborative exchange on the IVEProject is a period where students learn and develop their intercultural competence, no matter how short the session is. Conversely, considering that previous studies evince that a number of personality traits contribute to intercultural competence, an argument on whether these traits are innate or learned. Furthermore, research tend to suggest that intercultural competence is the resulting product of the interaction of a number of variables (Arasaratnam, 2016).

If some of these variables are learnable and others are not, then suffice to postulate, that even when equal learning opportunities are provided, the degree to which learners achieve competence will not be homogeneous. Again, there is evidence that supports the fact that certain variables such as ethnocentrism hinder intercultural competence (Arasaratnam & Banerjee, 2007;

Young et. al, 2017). Therefore, while collaborative learning presents a unique opportunity for participants (the students) to improve their intercultural competence, not all students will or can – because socially reinforced negative attitudes are the most difficult to change (Bodenhausen & Gawronski 2013). Thus, students in the IVEProject who harbor prejudices against other participating cultures, may not necessarily benefit from the intercultural environment of the program and all the benefits there is to gain. In this light, assessment and evaluation of intercultural competence should be executed progressively with manifold methods at different points in time over an extended period of time (Deardoff 2006).

Intercultural Communication Apprehension

Communication with speakers of different cultures is embedded with uncertainties (Dong, 2018). This feeling of uncertainty is referred to as intercultural communication apprehension (ICA). Neuliep and McCroskey (1997) describe ICA as anxiety stemming from anticipated or real interaction with individuals from a different cultural or ethnic background. Berger and Calabrese (1975) suggested that the lack of an understanding of nterlocuters during the very first interaction or meeting ignites emotions of apprehension or anxiety among the interactants. In situations involving intercultural communication, the unaccustomedness and novelty evoked by the cultural differences raises the level of uncertainty (Stephan, Stephan & Gudyknust, 1999). Effective intercultural communication is often handicapped by the feeling of anxiety by both, or one party (Lewis, 2019; Widiastuti & Ritonga, 2020). If ICA causes anxiety that jeopardizes an otherwise successful intercultural communication, then individuals involved in such uncomfortable situations would likely avoid opportunities to interact. In support of this assumption, McCroskey and Richmond (1990) observed that communication apprehension is one of the leading indicators of willingness to communicate, not only in intercultural communication, but in intracultural settings as well. Therefore, individuals who are more apprehensive are not forthcoming in interacting in new cultural settings, and also less able to acclimatize to new cultural settings (Gudyknust & Nishida, 2001; Tominaga et. al, 2003). Similar to ethnocentrism, there is a paucity of research on

the relationship between intercultural communication apprehension and proficiency in second languages. Nevertheless, a number of researchers have found a relationship between ICA and ethnocentrism. Dong (2018) conducted a study involving 120 participants (Chinese students) studying in abroad in England on their daily use of English for work, study and social life. The results of the study indicated that instead of engaging natives in communication in English for practice, the participants preferred to practice English by watching TV or listening to the radio. When faced with challenges, the participants sought answers and help by reading books, as opposed discussing their problems with their teachers. This finding evinces two inferences. First, the findings indicate the participants are apprehensive, as the participants seem to blatantly avoid communication opportunities or situations. Second, a substantial level of ICA hampers intercultural communication which eventually derails L2 proficiency.

Intercultural Communication Apprehension in the Japanese Context. Matsuoka (2008) also investigated communication apprehension among 10 female Japanese university students and one male Vietnamese student who provided a point of comparison for the Japanese students. This study focused on two main purposes. The first purpose was to identify factors that cause communication apprehension and subsequently reduce the willingness of students to communicate (WTC). The second focus of enquiry sought to explore the fundamental mentality that underly these factors that cause communication apprehension. With regards to the first focus enquiry, four factors were identified as variables that may cause communication apprehension and reduce WTC. These four constructs are: a) perfectionism; b) competitiveness; c) the face-saving orientation of Japanese society; and, d) the importance of reticence in Japanese society. Unlike the Vietnamese participant, the data obtained from the Japanese participants (the 10 female undergraduates) elucidate 'hardworking student' characteristics that were manifested as perfectionism or competitiveness. Competitiveness for instance, was evidenced by interviewee B. Interviewee B was a member of an English club. As a result of her fluency, she was promoted to an advanced class. However, in the advanced class, realizing her new classmates were more fluent,

she declined opportunities to speak – in order to save face. Similarly, interviewee D exhibited a model student behavior and was concerned about losing face in the presence of other Japanese. However, this participant, felt less pressured when engaged with native English speakers. This mentality, the researcher reported, was influenced by the constant quest for perfectionism and competitiveness among Japanese; which subsequently culminates in significant levels of communication apprehension.

Similar to interviewee D, interviewees E and F exhibited competitiveness in class, because of their belief of being model students, and refuse to accept that other classmates are better speakers of English – and this mentality, the researcher, reported that resulted in interviewees E and F showing significant levels of communication apprehension. Interviewee G on the other hand, observed that her apprehension for communication heightened, because of her meticulous study of English - in order to be perfect in English. This practice; however, discouraged her WTC. Interviewee H on the other hand was not cognizant of her fear of communication. Despite interviewee I maintaining that there were no psychological constraints to communication, Matsuoka (2008) observed a subconscious inferiority complex when this participant compared herself (a student who is lacking in verbal proficiency) to her classmates (highly proficient returnee students). The author indicates that this comparison generated communication apprehension which the participant was oblivious to. The researcher also reported that, because of the travel experience of the participant in Malta, where she encountered culturally distinct individuals, she lacks a desire for competitiveness or perfectionism – and therefore, the Japanese norm of valuing silence may not be a hindrance to communicating verbally with others in English. Interviewee J, the final participant, also exhibited traits of competitiveness and perfectionism. Even though this participant had an enjoyable communication in Canada, she desired to be acknowledged by Japanese peers as a fluent speaker of English, and is also concerned about losing face. Participant J share a similar mentality with participant E who was a home-stay student in Australia.

With regards to the research question which focused on the fundamental mentality that underlies the factors that influence communication apprehension among Japanese university students (perfectionism, competitiveness, the face-saving orientation of Japanese society, and the importance of reticence in Japanese society), other-directedness was found to be the fundamental mentality underpinning these factors. Matsuoka (2008) briefly describes other-directedness as the state of an individual being overly concerned about their image in the eyes of others or the general public. The author indicates other-directedness might promote groupism, shame-conscious and face-saving tendencies that are manifested as perfectionism and completeness, and these traits were exhibited by the participants. Matsuoka reports that these traits were prevalent among the Japanese participants, because of the general notion in Japan that remaining silent is more desirable than when being vocal might ignite trouble or a misunderstanding. Therefore, a significant number Japanese similar to the participants in Matsuoka's study, who ascribe to this notion, might exhibit a fear for communication in environments that offer opportunities to communicate, regardless of the cultural background of the prospective interlocutors. Despite these challenges, the author suggests some solutions. Matsuoka suggests the use of humor in classrooms to alleviate communication apprehension and increase WTC. Furthermore, McIntyre and McDonald (1998, cited by Matsuoka, 2008) contends that a pleasant audience that offers positive reactions or responses can also reduce communication apprehension. Brophy (1996, as quoted in Matsuoka, 2008) suggested that creating collaborative (not competitive) learning environments that normalize mistakes as a part of the learning process will reduce perfectionism. Finally, even though the use of L1 in class is still contentious, Matsuoka (2008) affirms that the use of L1 in class may reduce student nervousness (a cause of communication apprehension) and improve WTC levels.

In another study from Keaten et al., (1997), communication apprehension among Japanese elementary (1 kindergarten and 2 elementary) and secondary school (2 junior and 1 high school) students were examined; however, this study was conducted with an intracultural focus, not intercultural. Communication apprehension was measured by The Personal Report of

Communication Fear (PRCF) (Keaten et al., 1997). The results of this study were compared to the communication apprehension levels of American students of the same age as the Japanese students. Two major findings emerged in the results. Firstly, levels of communication apprehension increased gradually as students progressed from kindergarten through the final year of high school. Secondly, the differences between K-12 American students and Japanese students on the PRCF were minimal. In addition, three major factors emerged from this study as the reasons for communication apprehension among Japanese students: a) a general fear of communicating; b) the fear of communicating in the classroom; and, c) the fear of communicating with strangers. The authors found classroom apprehension to be the most significantly increased apprehension factor for Japanese students. The average score for first graders was 1.86, while final year high school students averaged 3.22. Conversely, increment in the fear of communicating with strangers was not as significant as the fear of classroom room communication (2.3 in the first grade to 2.93 in the 12th grade).

This finding warrants the importance of cultivating a conducive classroom atmosphere that will develop a positive attitude toward communication among Japanese students. Furthermore, given that the results show a significant levels communication apprehension among senior year junior and high school Japanese students than elementary school students, the authors argue that this increment in communication apprehension among senior year students could be as a result of the entrance examination pressure which is likely to induce shyness or heighten communication apprehension. The anxiety about the entrance examination, subsequently affect other aspects of the lives of students, such as how students would feel about communication (Keaten et al., 1997). The authors also suggested an investigation of classroom situations and characteristics that promote the fear of speaking among Japanese students.

Intercultural Sensitivity

Scholars such as Chen and Starosta (2000) indicated that intercultural sensitivity (IS) and intercultural competence are not equivalent concepts, but argue that the former is a perquisite of the latter. In an earlier study in 1997 that led to the development of intercultural sensitivity scale, the authors viewed intercultural sensitivity as the emotional (affective) aspect of intercultural competence. Chen and Starosta (1997) defined intercultural sensitivity as the ability of an individual to develop emotions geared toward appreciating other cultures and their differences to advance desirable behaviors in intercultural communication. The authors regard the concept as an element of ICC that is composed of three dimensions: affective, cognitive and behavioral abilities. The affective aspect is denoted by intercultural sensitivity, the cognitive aspect by intercultural awareness, and the behavioral aptitude by intercultural effectiveness (Chen, 2010; Chen & Stratrosta, 1996). Chen and Starosta assert that intercultural sensitivity is a major precondition for ICC. The authors contend that intercultural sensitivity encapsulates five abilities: (a) respect for cultural diversity, (b) interaction engagement, (c) interaction confidence, (d) interaction attentiveness, and (e) interaction enjoyment – the totality of these abilities is intercultural sensitivity. The findings of the authors indicate that persons with a high level of intercultural sensitivity are generally attentive, perceives and adapts easily to new cultural or social situations and exhibit observable levels of self-esteem, empathy and is more successful in intercultural communication situations.

Furthermore, Bennett (1986) also conceptualizes intercultural sensitivity as a process of development, through which individuals are able to progress from a state of ethnocentrism to an ethnorelative stage. Bennett postulates six transformational stages or processes in the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS).

Figure 1

The Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (Bennett, 1986)

Denial	Defense	Minimization	Acceptance	Adaptation	Integration
Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Stage 5	Stage

Ethnocentrism   →   Ethnorelativism
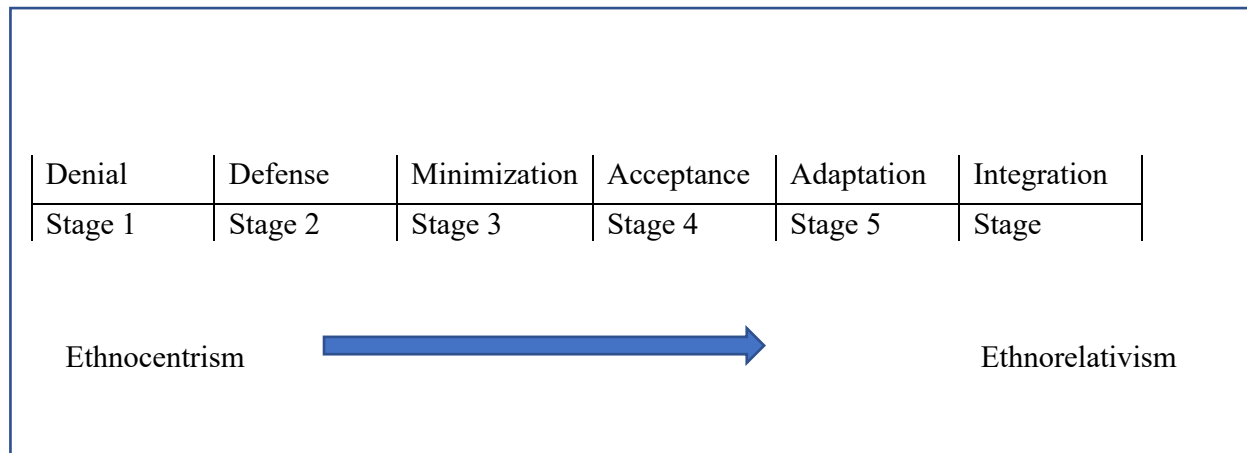
Denial. The first stage of the DMIS is the denial stage. At this stage the individual refuses to acknowledge the existence of differences in culture, or the relevance of others who are culturally different. The perception of otherness is not elaborately formed, such that individuals who are culturally different may be vaguely labeled as minorities or foreigners, or not recognized at all. The existing paradigms for individuals to recognize their own culture are far more advanced than those available for others. In essence, a cultural group may perceive themselves as more human or real than others. Members of a cultural group who are in denial of the existence of diversity are disinterested and sometimes, unsympathetically hostile to intercultural communication. In organizations on the other hand, the author says Denial is realized through the unavailability of structures or systems to first of all, recognize and then accommodate cultural diversity.

According to Bennett (1986), denial (the denial of cultural diversity) arises when members of a group that prefers sameness or stability, such as those in the Japanese Society (Demelius, 2020; Laurence at. al, 2021 Neuliep et. al, 2001), due to some situations that they encounter, are forced to come to terms with otherness abruptly. For instance, when a substantial number of immigrants or refuges relocate to a new society, or when a community has to deal with cultural diversification in a workforce, or an organization that has embarked on a globalization agenda. In the initial stages

of this novelty, the new environment is polarized, as sameness is overemphasized and differentness is suppressed. One would view himself and compatriots as sophisticated as compared to the unsophisticated other. However, the reconciliation of this polarization begins when one begins to perceive other groups in more specific and sophisticated ways. At an individual level, this resolution can be achieved when other individuals are personified through personal contact or media (such as the IVEProject). At the level of organizations, the resolution of denial can occur when diversity is acknowledged through policies such as the use of multiple operational languages, and corporate publications that exhibit visual diversity.

Defense. When issues of denial are reconciled, individuals transition into a state where they stage a defense against cultural differences. This stage of the DMIS can be conceptualized as a classification of "us" and "them," where the outgroup individuals are acknowledged more than they were in the denial stage, but in a stereotypical manner. Individuals tend to be critical of others who are culturally different and as a result blame general societal problems on cultural differences. Therefore, ingroup members perceive the notion of "us" as superior and "them" as inferior.   In other words, the ingroup individuals defend their cultural ideologies and their reflection of the perception of the world in the face of a perceived threat. The author goes on to assert that a variation of defense*,* reversal, can also be experienced when groups swap poles, and "them" denotes superior and "us," inferior. At a personal level, this switch of poles can be exemplified through individuals who tend to romanticize other cultures, while being critical of their own culture. At international levels, "going native" is popularly used as the informal synonym for reversal. In a domestic context, the phrase "false ally" may be ascribed to a dominant group in a state of reversal*,* which has assumed the role of the "oppressed" despite their lack of experience or understanding of oppression.

For organizations, the author observes that defens*e* is pronounced through mantras that glorify the preeminence of its organizational structure and national cultural roots. Such organizations occasionally, express reversa*l* by supporting the activities of minorities, but with stereotypic underpinnings. For instance, shopping sprees for the female spouses of company

executives, even when all the female spouses might not fit the generalization. The stage of defense surfaces when "us" and "them" are forced into an engagement. The prominent visibility and overstated generalizations of others generates feelings of danger, redlining and other segregationist practices. However, when real contact is inevitable, a focus on the differences in power (such as benefit or abuse) bolster the polarized defense or reversal encounters. Defense resolution on the other hand, is achieved by centering on commonalities, such as the equality of human species and shared values. In organizations, defens*e* is routinely reconciled through team-building activities that amplify mutual dependence.

Minimization. The minimization stage comes next after the reconciliation of "us" and "them" in the defense stage. Here, the individual preserves their core cultural norms by hiding differences highlighted in defense under the guise of "cultural similarities" between oneself and others. These perceived similarities are rooted in familiar components of an individual or the cultural view of the majority of a group. Individuals believe that others share in their personal experiences, or that certain fundamental values and convictions transcend cultural and social boundaries, and hence apply to everyone (irrespective of the whether others are aware or not). The foregrounding of cross-cultural similitudes produces "tolerance," whereas superficial social contrasts are observed as the variations of the universal themes common to humanity. In spite of these commonalities, minimization also clouds profound social or cultural contrasts for both individuals and organizations. Organizations at this point tend to overstate the benefits of unprejudiced equal opportunities, thereby veiling the existence of privilege enjoyed by the dominant culture. Contending with these deep-rooted differences may result in individuals withdrawing to the prior ethnocentric stage of *Defense.*

Bennett (1986) remarks that for a number of individuals, the minimization issue is their desire to cast similarity and oneness on a wide and diverse world, and the adamant resistance to that world forfeiting its genuine diversity. The implication of this desire is that as more individuals yearn for more engagement with others on the premise of shared values, the more likely that such

individuals will be forced to contend with momentous cultural differences. A similar phenomenon is witnessed in organizations, where an overemphasis on "unity" breeds uniformity in excess. This situation causes the organization to decentralize and emphasize diversity. This strategy, however, results in inevitable divisiveness. With both personal and organizational cases, reconciliation occurs when issues of likeness and contrast, unity and diversity, are dialogued – on the grounds that similarity affords one the opportunity to appreciate differences, and unity offers a focus on diversity.

Acceptance. The fourth stage of DMIS is the stage of acceptance. At this stage, the individual or a group becomes cognizant, at both behavioral and cognitive levels, of themselves and others with regards to cultural contexts and components that conform in complexity, but are dissimilar in form. The acceptance of the differences in culture do not necessarily equate to agreement. The differences in culture might be judged negatively, but not in an ethnocentric sense, because the judgment by default is not predicated on the nonconformity of cultural norms and values. For the same reason that a bibliophile would want to complete the reading of one novel and proceed to several other novels, individuals at the stage of acceptance are inquisitive about cultures and the differences that exist between cultures. In spite of these individuals being curious, their inadequate knowledge of other cultures together with their nascent perceptual malleability inhibits the adaptation of their behavior different cultural contexts. At the level of organizations, *Acceptance* is evidenced in the rhetoric and support mechanisms for "diversity and inclusion, nevertheless, intercultural sensitivity is yet to considered as a prerequisite for multicultural leadership (Bennett, 1986).

The author suggests that one challenge with acceptance is the desire to reconcile awareness of cultural relativity with the issue of ethicality. At this stage, individuals strive to be respectful to the cultures of others, and in furtherance of this goal, may assume a naïve or paralytic stance that suggests the other culture is neither bad nor good, it is only different from theirs. This position ignores the fact that all behaviors require a judgement to be made, and the basis of judgement

should be devoid of ethnocentrism in the form of defense (superiority) or universalist terms, such as *all cultures are the same* (minimization). After the multiplicity of ethnocentric and ethical positions are reconciled, the involved parties must employ contextual relativism (the understanding and acknowledgment of goodness in context) before an ethical commitment is consented to.

Adaptation. After the issue of ethicality is resolved, a group or an individual can then progress to the stage of adapting to cultural differences. The individual undergoes a process of the development of empathetic and sensitive skills in order to get accustomed to the differences in culture and progress to a multicultural level. This process is facilitated by a perspective taking mechanism (empathy for others). This context-shifting mechanism enables an individual to experience the world in a manner that mirrors a reality of participating in a different culture. Emotions of appropriateness are consequently generated, and these feelings in turn generate authentic behavior that is desirable in the alternative culture. An example of this shift is bicultural individuals who switch to the desirable practices of a particular culture when their environment changes, in order to be functional in their new environment. The core of adaptation is authenticity, and since individuals are able to shift among a number of social settings, in which setting do their true identities or personalities reside? In order to reconcile this dilemma, the definition of identity can be extended to accommodate all the repertoire of identities and personalities that one employs to navigate the plethora of contexts in this world.

Integration. The sixth and final stage of the DMIS is the integration stage. Resolving the issue of authentic identity facilitates the sustainability of the integration of cultural diversity into communication. At this stage, the individual is able to develop an ethnorelative identity to enable them enjoy the differences in culture. Thus, individuals who are interculturally sensitive possess the ability to offer and accept positive emotional feedback, pre-, during or post-interactions, and this quality results in increased levels of satisfaction that enables such individuals to acquire sufficient social orientation requisite for understanding oneself, as well as the feelings of counterparts (Gudyknust & Kim, 2002).

Intercultural Sensitivity in the Japanese Context. Intercultural sensitivity has been investigated in the Japanese context by a number of studies. One study undertaken by Hagley (2020) investigated how VE affected the intercultural sensitivity of students in an EFL classroom. The author analyzed results from two different VE sessions – one in 2016, and the other in 2017 involving 303 and 264 Japanese university students, respectively. The results for both years showed that students improved in the areas of intercultural sensitivity, interactional confidence, appreciation of differing cultures. The culmination of these improvements led to a general increase in motivation to learn English. In both the pre- and post-questionnaires, students agreed resoundingly that they would be willing to interact with others as long as they both speak the same language. This response suggests that students were not "in denial" (Bennett, 1986) of the cultural differences that exist between Japanese and non-Japanese (in this case, the foreign counterparts in the VE). However, in both 2016 and 2017, students agreed that Japanese culture should serve as the example for other countries in the world. Similarly, students also reported that foreigners did not value life in the same as Japanese. The responses of students reflected cultural differences in a polarized "us and them" (Bennett, 1986) manner. Even though students agreed that they would be willing to interact with others who speak the same language, the same language students seemed to have had in mind was Japanese and not English.

The author reported that even though students were not significantly polarized, participation in the exchange may have polarized students. Thus, cultural differences that were otherwise unknown before the exchange, became apparent as students interacted frequently with participants who were culturally different. In spite of this observation, students did not feel that Japanese culture was different from other cultures as much as before, by the end of the exchange. Another interesting finding was that students expressed a lack of desire to learn more about other cultures at the end of the exchange. This response was in a sharp contrast to the desire of students to learn more about other cultures at the beginning of the exchange. Hagley observes that students at the end of the exchange were not as much interested in learning about other cultures as before,

because the fear of foreigners and other cultures dissipated as a result of participating and interacting with foreigners frequently in the exchange. Furthermore, the interaction confidence (Chen & Starosta, 2000) of students increased with students agreeing to be comfortable in the midst of a large number of foreigners. Increment in the interactional confidence of students was further demonstrated in responses to item 11 (being able to express oneself freely in a foreign language than in Japanese). The changes were statically apparent in both the pre- and post-mean scores for 2016 (3.78; 3.62) and 2017 (3.81; 3.49).

In another study, Toda and Maru (2018) examined the correlations between the intercultural sensitivity of Japanese nurses (using the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale) and their cultural competence in nursing while caring for foreign patients (using the Cultural Competence in Nursing Scale). One major finding was that the Japanese nurses in this study had limited interactional confidence when communicating with foreigners. This finding was supported by the insignificant score of the participants on the *interaction confidence* (Chen & Starosta, 2000) subscale, *I feel confident when interacting with people from different cultures* (a mean score of 2.1). The authors report that this finding was as a result of the participants' interest in a foreign language (English) different from the languages of the majority of foreign patients such as Vietnamese, Chinese and Korean. Therefore, the majority of foreign patients spoke languages that the participants had no learning experience in or interest in learning. This mismatch could be the reason for participants lacking confidence during encounters with foreigners. Subsequently, Toda and Maru (2018) suggested that nurses in countries such as Japan that is not culturally diverse should participate in educational interventions to improve the intercultural sensitivity of health workers. Again, the results evidenced no significant correlations between personal factors of the nurses (such as, engagements with foreigners outside of work, years of clinical experience and experience of living abroad) and intercultural sensitivity. In view of this finding, the authors suggest that the extent to which an individual is exposed to different cultures might not affect their level of intercultural sensitivity.

Ethnocentrism

Social interaction in any given context is influenced by ethnocentrism (Neuliep et al., 2001). Every time two individuals interact, they come along with a wealth of culturally established beliefs, emotions, and behaviors. The cultures of societies hardwire their members on how to think, controls the emotions of individuals, and influences how one acts, especially when engaging with others. Sumner (1906, as cited by Dong et. al, 2008) developed the theoretical concept, ethnocentrism. Sumner asserted that within homogeneous societies, individuals perceive the world through the lens of their culture, and judge others based on their own culture. Again, Ting-Toomey (1999) opined that ethnocentrism is manifested in our defense of attitudinal tendencies that can compel one to view their cultural practices and values as superior, and also perceiving their cultural methods of living as the proper and most the reasonable way of living life. From Ting-Toomey's explanation of ethnocentrism, ethnocentrism then is a normal behavior and typical of humans (Wrench et al., 2006), in order to fulfil group and individual needs for the purposes of in-group inclusion, identity scrutiny and predictability (Ting-Toomey, 1999, p. 157). Ethnocentrism is then important for group identity and solidarity in homogeneous cultural contexts. However, even though insignificant levels of ethnocentrism can be beneficial to in-group development and patriotism (at a national level), some scholars (Gudyknust & Kim, 2002; Martin & Nakayama, 2005; Neulip & M,cCrosky, 2001) have observed that a significant level of ethnocentrism is detrimental to intercultural communication.

Berry and Kalin (1995) observed that ethnocentrism could be viewed as the substitute for a severe antagonism towards all outgroups. The researchers carried out several studies on this topic in Canada and argued that ethnocentrism exhibits an absence of cultural diversity, a general bigotry for outgroups and seeming preference for ingroups over outgroups. This dearth of tolerance for cultural diversity is likely to result in deleterious prejudices against outgroup members (Dong et. al, 2008; Utych et. al, 2022). The observation of Sumner about homogeneous societies can be

applied to Japan as well, since Japan is largely monoethnic and homogeneous (Demelius, 2020; Laurence at. al, 2021 Neuliep et. al, 2001).

Ethnocentrism in the Japanese Context

As compared to the United States for instance, Neuliep et. al (2001) reported that the population of Japan is extensively homogenous (ethnic Japanese account for 99.4% of the population). The authors also pointed out that the geography of Japan naturally isolates the country from the rest of the world. Historically, there is a record of Japan isolating itself politically from the rest of the world. Gudyknust and Nishida (1994) mentioned the 265-year period where the Tokugawa government implemented the *Sakoku*, policy of seclusion that banned contact between foreigners and Japanese. The authors added that Japanese citizens who left the shores of Japan were prohibited from returning, or would face the death penalty. Itoh (1996) indicates that a majority of Japanese in present day maintain a Sakoku mindset and this mentality dictates how foreigners are treated. This mindset towards outgroups or foreigners in general is reflective of the Japanese word that denotes a non-Japanese, *gaijin* (people who are from outside). Even though the term is not deemed derogatory, *gaijin* connotes the exclusiveness of the Japanese and most foreigners find the word offensive. Itoh goes on to affirm that the Japanese are generally averse to change and are apathetic towards the assimilation of foreigners into the Japanese society. The author exemplifies this situation by reporting that even residents of Korean descent, born and raised in Japan who speak native-like Japanese are labeled as *gaijin.* Even though these studies are dated, recent studies (Machida 2020; Goharimehr, 2018) show that ethnocentrism is still prevalent in Japanese society. The literature presented here warrants an investigation of ethnocentrism among in participants in exchange programs, virtual or face-to-face to ascertain whether such programs may reduce this tendency.

Overcoming Ethnocentrism. Ethnocentrism can be reduced through a number of ways such as multiculturalism and social learning at very specific levels in higher education (Austria et al., 2015; Cuyugan et al., 2017). Gabon (2021) observes that the challenge with reducing ethnocentrism in educational contexts such as universities is discursive, in that, the process involves both feeling and thinking. In present times, educational environments are largely influenced by the influx of cultural diversity practices such as cultural sensitivity, diversity management programs, and intercultural communication competence in general (Gabon, 2021; Pahayahay et al., 2017). In the context of a multicultural society or a multicultural educational environment, intercultural communication competence, that would ultimately result in desirable behaviors such as respect for others and active listening, could be improved through increasing the social intelligence of the individuals or students involved (Kaya et al., 2021). In general, human beings tend to be sensitive to cultural differences (Tagle, 2021). Due to this reason, there is a need to assist individuals and groups to not only be open to differences in cultures, but also be reminded that diversity can be positive and at the same time acknowledged during discourse. When this understanding is established, intercultural collaboration can be promoted through social learning to produce enormous benefits that will advance intercultural communication competence and reduce ethnocentrism (Dong & Collaco, 2008; Valderama et al., 2018).

Social Learning. Bandura (1977) affirmed that social learning is a gradual process of learning social behaviors through the observation and imitation of others. In the same vein, Laland, (2004) observed that a substantial number of personality theories projected that behavior is induced by innate forces in the form of impulses and needs, usually operating subconsciously and as a result, social learning can be described as a cognitive process that occurs in social contexts mainly through explicit instruction or observation, even without direct reinforcement or motor reproduction (Bandura, 1977). Furthermore, the discourse on the importance of social learning to cultural diversity management has been expanding (Reed et al., 2010). This discourse captures the observation of behavior, because learning is also facilitated through the observation of punishments

and rewards, a process Renzetti et al. (2012) referred to as *vicarious reinforcement*. Social learning ultimately provides an elaborate model that yields desirable models for behavior in a multicultural environment inundated with an array of learning experiences (Gabon, 2021; Tagle, 2021). In light of this observation, Tagle (2021) suggests 13 measures that can promote multiculturism and reduce ethnocentrism. These measures are shown in Table 1 (see Appendix P).

Conclusion of Literature Review

The literature presented supports claims that VE affords learners opportunities to engage in communicative activities and develop their intercultural competence. Studies further suggest (Kurek & Müller-Hartmann, 2017; Müller-Hartmann, 2006; Vingare, 2017) that VE designs are influenced by communicative language teaching methodologies such as TBLT, CLIL and PBLT. This characteristic of VE design opens an opportunity for the current study to evaluate not just the impact of VE as a whole on intercultural sensitivity, intercultural communication apprehension and ethnocentrism, but how the VE design (including task and materials) contribute to the development of the intercultural competence of the participants of this study. Chen and Starosta also observed that intercultural sensitivity is required in the development of intercultural competence. This study will further establish whether the communication with partners from different cultural backgrounds, over a period of time improves intercultural sensitivity and reduces intercultural communication apprehension and ethnocentrism.

Statement of the Problem

The Japanese government has through MEXT emphasized the importance of cultivating global human resources equipped with rich communication and linguistic skills (Hagley 2021, MEXT, n.d), and an overall spirit of intercultural understanding. A major driving force advancing the attainment of this goal is English education. However, research over the years studies (Donnery 2022; Fujikawa, 2013; Ikegashira, 2009; Kikuchi, 2019) have shown that English education in Japan has been highly successful in equipping students with requisite skills for English language tests – primarily grammar and grammar translation skills. This approach to learning ignores the development of students' communicative and intercultural competence. A major stumbling block preventing teachers from developing the communicative and intercultural understanding and competence is the nature of Japanese EFL classrooms and Japanese society at large (Donnery, 2022). Even though MEXT policies over the years have caused a surge in the number of foreign teachers of English in Japan, classroom interaction in English occurs between Japanese students (Roarty & Hagley, 2020). Outside the classroom, students still have few opportunities to interact with speakers of English in authentic situations. This approach to language teaching and learning stifles creativity and promotes ambiguity, passive-aggressiveness and hostility among students (Donnery, 2022). Being a predominantly homogeneous and monoethnic country, Japan produces a substantial number of citizens who are not interested in other languages and cultures (Donnery, 2022). This lack of interest in other languages and cultures has the tendency of raising ethnocentrism (Hinenoya & Gatbbonten, 2000; Yoo & Donthu 2005) and intercultural communication apprehension (Bao, 2015); and also reducing intercultural sensitivity (Toda & Maru, 2018).

Despite the many challenges mentioned above that promote ethnocentrism and intercultural communication apprehension and reduced intercultural sensitivity, virtual exchange presents a unique opportunity for Japanese students to communicate in English with students from other countries (Hagley, 2021). Whiles previous literature (Campbell, 2011; Tanaka, 20027) have

focused on interaction between EFL students and native speakers, this study will focus on interaction in English between Japanese and EFL students from a wide range of countries not restricted to only Asia, but also South America.

Purpose of the Study

The broad purpose of this study was to investigate the impact of virtual exchange on Japanese university students' intercultural sensitivity, intercultural communication comprehension, and ethnocentrism. Participation in the IVE project nudges students into the reality of appreciating otherness (Hagley, 2020). This shift in turn alleviates ethnocentrism and intercultural communication apprehension, and further intensifies intercultural sensitivity (Donnery, 2022). Furthermore, previous studies on the impact of virtual exchange have largely employed survey instruments such as Chen and Starosta's (2000) Inter Cultural Sensitivity Scale; Neuliep & McCroskey's (1997a) Generalized Ethnocentrism Scale (GENE); and Neuliep & McCroskey (1997b) Intercultural Communication Apprehension Scale to measure the levels of the aforementioned constructs in participating students.

In addition, the present study assessed the syllabus, class activities and materials of the English 2B course at Soka University to investigate how not only students' participation in the IVEProject, but also the English language course and associated class activities and assignments develop the intercultural competence of students. In furtherance of this goal, teachers were interviewed on their beliefs and reasons for the chosen class activities and tasks. Students were also interviewed for their views on class activities and tasks and how these activities have developed their intercultural competence and acceptance of otherness. Finally, the present investigated whether participation in the IVEProject reduces intercultural communication apprehension and ethnocentrism, after students were afforded the opportunity to interact with students from other cultures for 16 weeks.

Significance of the Study

The findings of the present study may be useful to educators, students, researchers and policymakers. Of the aforementioned stakeholders, ethnocentrism, intercultural communication apprehension and intercultural communication competence tends to impact students the most. However, students and educators work hand-in-hand. Thus, the findings of this study will guide teachers into taking an active role in incorporating activities and lessons geared toward the development of the intercultural competence of their students, into their English language curriculum. Specifically, lessons and activities that will develop students' intercultural cultural sensitivity and at the same time reduce ethnocentrism and intercultural communication apprehension. Again, the findings of this study will foreground the importance of virtual exchange in mitigating the lost opportunities of Japanese students to communicate in natural settings in English with other speakers of English for the purposes of communication and cultural exchange to foster intercultural competence and international understanding.

In addition, researchers may be able to use the findings of the present study as a springboard to advance the discussion on these critical social impact topics in order to formulate new theories as well as solutions that are practical and specific to the English language teaching and learning community in Japan, in order to promote diversity and intercultural communication; and peaceful coexistence. For policymakers, the findings of this research will prove invaluable, not only to reaffirm the importance of implementing policies that foster intercultural competence, but also policies that will create a permanent spot for virtual exchange in English languages courses at Japanese universities, and the possibility of the introduction of VE to junior and high schools. Furthermore, since there is a scarcity of avenues in Japan for students to communicate in English with speakers from other cultures, the implementation of the latter will go a long way to afford students opportunities to engage in meaningful interactions and cultural exchanges – this engagement aims to develop the intercultural competence and tolerance of students over the time spent on the IVE platform. Finally, the findings of this study will serve as a blueprint for course

developers to design English language courses targeted at developing the intercultural competence

of Japanese students.

Methodology

This study investigated the impact of virtual exchange on university EFL students'
intercultural competence development, specifically, the impact of virtual exchange on intercultural
sensitivity, intercultural communication apprehension and ethnocentrism. The data for this study
was gathered within a two-month period from four teachers teaching the "English 2B" course and
their students, at Soka University. The "English 2B" is an English communication course aimed
developing the four language skills of CEFR A2 level first-year students at Soka University. A
mixed methods approach influenced by a hybrid of a constructivist and pragmatic worldview
(Creswell & Creswell, 2018) was employed to answer the research questions. This process began
with a content analysis of the English 2B course, teacher interviews (Appendix A) and class
observations (Appendix B), student interviews (Appendix C) and ended with student surveys with
three validated instruments: the Inter Cultural Sensitivity Scale (Chen & Starosta, 2000) (Appendix
D), Intercultural Communication Apprehension Scale (Neuliep & McCroskey, 1997b) (Appendix
E), and Generalized Ethnocentrism Scale (GENE) (Neuliep & McCroskey, 1997a) (Appendix F).
The data from these surveys was compared to the data from IVEProject's pre-course Pre-
Questionnaire and then triangulated with the student interview data. The following sections:
research questions, research context, participants, instrumentation, procedures and data analysis
will further detail contents of this research design.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to establish the following: (1) whether students become
interculturally sensitive towards individuals and cultures other than Japanese and Japanese culture
after participating in the IVEProject; (2) whether a relationship exists between ethnocentrism and
an apprehension to engage individuals from different cultures in communication in a foreign
language (intercultural communication apprehension); and finally (3) if participation in the
IVEProject and the opportunities afforded Japanese students to communicate and exchange cultural
information with students from countries such as Colombia and Mexico, as a result, reduces

ethnocentrism and intercultural communication apprehension. The following research questions aided in finding the answers for the subjects of inquiry of this study.

1. Do students become interculturally sensitive as a result of participating in the IVEProject?

2. Is there a relationship between ethnocentrism and intercultural communication apprehension?

3. Does participation in the IVEProject reduce ethnocentrism and intercultural communication apprehension?

These research questions served as the foundation for the interview questions for both the IVE classes and non-IVE classes. However, for non-IVE classes, interview questions were targeted at the impact of the English 2B course on students with respect to ICA, IS and ethnocentrism.

Research Context

The present study was situated in Soka University, a private university in western Tokyo. The students are first-year university who have about 12 years of English education (from grade 4 to high school. Students are B level students of English. The level of English proficiency of students is equivalent to the Common European of Reference (CEFR) A2 level. Students are; however, expected to attain CEFR A2+ level upon completion of the English 2B course. The English 2B course is a sequel to the English 1B course that students were enrolled in, in the first semester. Students met two times a week for this course over a period of 15 weeks in the 2022 fall semester. The major objective of this course is to develop the communicative skills of students in the areas of listening, speaking, reading and writing and to also foster the development of other study skills and autonomous learning. This general objective is further expressed in a number of CEFR can do-statements for all the four language skills. For instance, speaking (students can sustain routine conversations without undue effort); listening (students can comprehend expressions and phrases that are related to topics of immediate importance); reading (students can comprehend simple texts on familiar topics); and writing (students can write simple paragraphs and essays using known vocabulary and expressions). The description of the English 2B suggests that the main focus of the

course is communication, and not ICC. Therefore, the number of ICC lessons might vary from to class, depending on the individual teacher. The teachers of this are English language teachers with a minimum of a master's degree and varying years of teaching experience.

Participants and Sampling

A total of 48 EFL students and five teachers were sampled for the present study. The 48 students were sampled from a total of four different classes; however, all the classes are first year English classes for CEFR level A English learners. With the exception of one student in Class A who is Korean, all students are Japanese with Japanese as their L1 and are studying English as a foreign language. Students are aged between 17 and 20 years. Two sets of classes (Class A and B) are participating classes in the IVEProject – by extension, the students in this category are also participating in the IVEProject. Conversely, classes C and D are not participating the IVEProject – as a result, students in this category have no IVEProject experience – the comparison group. The teachers on the other hand, are individual teachers for classes A, B, C, D and E. Borg (1999) and Janzen (2007) suggested that four to six participants are to be sampled for interviews and observations centered on teacher beliefs and the implementation of these beliefs in the classroom. For this study, four teachers were interviewed and observed. The investigator sent emails to both IVE and non-IVE teachers to express intentions of including their classes in this study. Only two classes were participating in the IVEProject as of the sampling period (fall 2022), and the teachers of both classes agreed to be participants in this study. The non-IVE teachers were contacted in the same manner as the IVE teachers. Two out of the five non-IVE teachers agreed to participate in this study. This group of teachers and their classes served as the comparison group. The fifth teacher, Teacher E agreed to be interviewed, and participated only as an interviewee for two reasons. First, this participant teaches a lower-level class. A comparison between this class and the other classes would be a mismatch. Finally, this class participated in the IVEProject only one semester as opposed to classes A and B that participated for two semesters. Therefore, Teacher E was

interviewed to find out the reason why s/he withdrew the participation of his/her class after the

spring semester. A summary of the background of the teachers is presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2

Summary of Teacher Background Information

Teacher	Years of Teaching Experience	Cultural Background
Teacher A	25 years	Homogenous
Teacher B	1.5 years	Homogenous
Teacher C	8 months	Homogenous
Teacher D	8 months	Multicultural
Teacher E	25 years	Homogenous

Teacher A is an EFL educator with 25 years of experience. This teacher is from inner circle

(Crystal, 2003) country that is culturally homogeneous, and holds a doctorate degree. The teacher

of class C and B on the other hand are from culturally homogenous expanding circle (Crystal, 2003)

countries, with master's degrees and 1.5 years and 8 months EFL teaching experience, respectively.

Teacher D; however, is from a multi-cultural outer circle country with 8 months teaching

experience and a master's degree. All 4 teachers teach the English 2B course, and this is the basis

for their selection for this study. Again, the teachers of classes A and B have incorporated the

IVEProject into their classes, while the teachers of classes C and D have not. Since this study aimed

to investigate the impact of the IVEProject and the English 2B course on students' intercultural

competence development, the students in all the classes of the selected teachers, except Teacher E

were automatically selected for this study as well.

Out of the 48 students in the four classes, 39 students representing 81.25% completed the

surveys. However, only 6 students representing 12.5% agreed to be interviewed. Of the six

interviewees, three are students of class A, one student from class C and two students from class

D. There were no volunteers from class B. Therefore, there was student interviewee representation from one IVE class (class A) and two non-IVE classes (classes C and D). There were two interviewees from class A; two males and one female named Yuji, Shota and Akane. There was one male interviewee from class C named Toshiya and two female interviewees from class D whose names are Kaede and Saki. All the names stated here are pseudonyms and not the real names of participants.

Instrumentation

The present study employed three validated scales: Chen and Starosta's (2000) Inter Cultural Sensitivity Scale, Neuliep & McCroskey (1997b) Intercultural Communication Apprehension Scale and Neuliep & McCroskey's (1997a) Generalized Ethnocentrism Scale (GENE) (Appendix D, E and F, respectively). All three instruments have been tested for reliability and validity and provided the quantitative data for this study. These instruments were administered to students in the second week of December in the 2022 Fall semester. The data from these surveys were compared to data from the IVEProject Pre-Survey Questionnaire (Appendix G). Semi-structured teacher interviews (Appendix A) and student interviews (Appendix C), class observations (Appendix B) and content analysis of the English 2B course were also utilized to collect qualitative data for this study. The following headings will expound details about the instruments mentioned above.

Inter Cultural Sensitivity Scale

The first survey instrument that was used to collect data for this study was Chen and Starosta (2000) Inter Cultural Sensitivity Scale (see Appendix D. This 24 Likert item survey was used to assess the intercultural sensitivity of participants (students). The survey instrument has a reliability coefficient of .86 and has five dimensions: (1) interaction engagement, (2) respect of other cultures and cultural differences, (3) intercultural confidence, (4) enjoyment of interaction, and (5) intercultural attentiveness. Items 1, 11, 13, 21, 22, 23 and 24 constitute the Interaction Engagement dimension and this factor measured how participants felt during the process of

participating in intercultural communication, especially in the IVEProject. The Respect for Cultural Differences dimension (items 2, 7, 8, 16 and 20) assessed how participants tolerated other cultures and cultural differences in general, in their counterparts. The degree of a participant's confidence in the course of the intercultural communication was measured by the third dimension, Intercultural Confidence (items 3, 4, 5 ,6 and 10). Interaction Enjoyment (items 9, 12 and 15) borders on how a participant reacts to communication which is culturally different. And finally, a participant's willingness and invested effort to understand what the other interlocuter is communicating in an intercultural communication situation was measured by the Intercultural Attentiveness dimension (items 14, 17 and 19). A higher score on the instrument translates to a higher level of cross-cultural awareness and comfort in intercultural communication situations for respondents.

Generalized Ethnocentrism Scale (GENE)

Ethnocentrism was measured with the Neuliep and McCroskey's (1997a) Generalized Ethnocentrism Scale (GENE) see Appendix B. This survey instrument is an 18 Likert item survey instrument. The survey instrument has been tested for reliability and has a reliability score of .80. The instrument has 18 items. A "1" represents "strongly disagree" and a "5" represents "strongly agree." An example item states "Other cultures should try to be more like my culture."

Intercultural Communication Apprehension Scale

The next instrument is Neuliep & McCroskey (1997b) Intercultural Communication Apprehension Scale. See Appendix C. This 16 Likert item survey instrument was used to measure participants' degree of apprehension in intercultural settings. The instrument has a reliability scale of .942 A. "1" represents "strongly disagree" and a "5" represents "strongly agree." An example item states "I am tense and nervous while interacting with people from other cultures." A higher score on the instrument translates to a higher level of communication apprehension for respondents.

IVEProject Pre-survey Questionnaire

One questionnaire sourced from the IVEProject – Pre-survey Questionnaire (Appendix G) and General Questionnaire (IVEProject, n.d.) (Appendix H) was used as the baseline for assessing changes in students' levels of intercultural sensitivity, ethnocentrism and intercultural communication apprehension. The survey has 16 items and was developed based on The Racism, Acceptance, and Cultural-Ethnocentrism Scale (RACES) survey (Grigg & Manderson, 2015). The RACES survey was developed to measure racist and ethnocentric attitudes in Australians. The IVEProject surveys were carved out of the RACES survey; however, incorporate items that measures intercultural apprehension and sensitivity as well. For instance, in the General Questionnaire, "I could understand the English of the students in other countries" and "My confidence to communicate with people in other countries" are indicative of measures of intercultural sensitivity and intercultural communication apprehension, respectively – and this is the reason for the inclusion of the data of this survey. The instrument uses a Likert scale of "-5" which represents "I very much disagree with this" and "5" which represents "I very much agree with this." This survey served as the baseline for measuring improvements of the intercultural competence of the IVE classes (Class A and B).

Interviews (Semi-structured teacher and student interviews)

Teacher and student interviews were conducted to investigate (1) the teacher beliefs about intercultural competence development; set goals for their respective classes and how these goals would be achieved, and (2) student beliefs and attitudes towards class activities aimed at intercultural development. The interview data was useful in investigating the views of teachers on the progress of students, and to establish whether there was match or mismatch between the expectations of teachers and students as evidenced in Nunan (1995).

Class Observation

The researcher observed classes A, B, C and D four times each. A class observation form (Appendix B) was utilized to gather data during the observation. The observation broadly assessed the instructional components and class managements aspects of the classes, and how class activities promoted students' intercultural sensitivity, and reduce students' intercultural communication apprehension and ethnocentrism. During the observation, prime focus was on teacher and student actions and the corresponding times that the actions occurred.

Content Analysis

The researcher collected documentations such as course syllabi, textbooks and teacher-made handouts to investigate how text materials used by teachers of the English 2B course developed students' intercultural competence. In addition to course syllabi, the researcher also evaluated and analyzed the current English textbook used in the English 2B classes for themes related to the development of students' intercultural competence introduced in the units.

Procedures

A mixed methods research design (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) was employed for the present study. The impetus for this approach is that both quantitative and qualitative data present unique sets of information – detailed views of the participants are sourced in the qualitive data, and performance on instruments and scales is collected quantitatively. This mixed methods research design therefore required a double-layered data collection phase – a qualitative and quantitative phase. The qualitative phase complements the quantitative phase because survey instruments for instance, did not capture nuances or in-depth details of participants' responses. A qualitative phase therefore, provided further insights into the responses of participants. Subsequently, the qualitative data triangulated the quantitative data to present the responses of participants in whole. For the present study, the qualitative phase was carried out with the Inter Cultural Sensitivity Scale (Chen & Starosta, 2000), Intercultural Communication Apprehension Scale (Neuliep & McCroskey,

1997b) and Generalized Ethnocentrism Scale (GENE) (Neuliep & McCroskey's, 1997a). The qualitative phase, on the other hand, utilized interviews, class observations and content analysis.

Data Collection

Data collection was carried out in three stages: the pre-collection stage, the collection of qualitative data, and finally, collection of quantitative data. During the pre-collection stage, all data collection instruments were prepared. Survey instruments, interview questions and the class observation form together with pre- and post-observation questions were prepared. Again, the three survey instruments were translated from English to Japanese for the understanding of students and was followed up with a pilot study to ascertain the suitability of the translated versions of the survey instruments. Teachers of classes A, B, C, and D were contacted via email and informed about the intentions of the researcher to include the contacted teachers, their students and their course and course materials in the present study. The aforementioned stages marked the end of the pre-collection stage. The data collection stage began with the collection of course documentation, class observations and teacher interviews. Student interviews and the three surveys were administered later in the semester when students had covered a significant amount of coursework.

Content Analysis. The qualitative data collection phase began with an analysis of the English 2B course. Content analysis is the systematic compression and classification of the words of a text into categories based on coding rules (Krippendorf, 1980, as cited by Stemler, 2000). A broader definition of content analysis is offered by Holsti (1969, as cited by Stemler, 2000) as any technique employed objectively and systematically for the identification of specific features of messages. The definition of content analysis offered by Holsti does not restrict the scope of content analysis to only textual analysis, but also the coding of data that is graphic in nature such as pictures or student drawings (Stemler, 2000). In light of the definitions above, the content of the English 2B class, including the course syllabus, textbook, tasks, teacher-made handouts and other class materials were analyzed to determine how the course reduces ethnocentrism and intercultural communication apprehension, and how course content improves the intercultural sensitivity of

students. Course materials were sourced from the four English 2B teachers who participated in this study. Hard-copy materials were handed over face-to-face to the researcher on campus, and other materials in digital or electronic formats were delivered to the researcher via email and Google Drive.

Class Observation Procedures. The content analysis of the English 2B course would have been incomplete without an observation of how the analyzed materials are utilized in actual lessons for the benefit of students. As a result, the content analysis was followed by 30 minutes to one and half hours of class observations of the classes of Teachers A, B, C and D. Classes A, B, and D were observed four times each, while Class C was observed three times. These classes were observed during the 2022 spring semester, from late October to early December. Before the observation, the researcher contacted the respective teachers via email to explain the purpose class observations, and then proceeded to schedule dates for the class observation. After the dates were agreed upon by both parties, and teachers informed their students about the observation, and the researcher proceeded with the observation. However, before the observation, teachers were required to sign the class observation informed consent form (Appendix L) to serve as an official proof of their consent to be observed by the researcher. Due to conflicting schedules between the investigator and teachers, the investigator was unable to observe the classes in person. As a result, classes were recorded with a camera. The contents of the video were then transcribed on a class observation sheet (Appendix B).

Teacher Interview Procedures. The class observations were followed by teacher interviews. During the class observations, the researcher began to discuss possible interview dates with the participants. Interview dates were subsequently scheduled at the convivence of both parties. All participants agreed for the interviews to be conducted online via Zoom. The participants were then sent a copy of the informed consent form (Appendix J) together with the interview questions (Appendix A) via email. All participants agreed to the interview and this agreement concluded the interview schedule. The interviews began with a brief introduction and explanation of the purpose

of the interview. The researcher sought the permission of the participant before recording. The interviews last between 40minutes and one hour. The researcher used the record function on Zoom to record the interview session and a notebook to write down salient information. The audio files of the interviews were then uploaded to the Otter ai platform to be transcribed. Transcripts of interview data were downloaded and later analyzed.

Student Interview Procedures. The collection of qualitative data began with teachers and ended with a student interview. Upon the request of the researcher in the initial email, the teachers announced in their classes for students who would be interested in an interview with the researcher. Again, after the class observation, the teachers assisted the researcher to announce to students about the plan of the researcher to sample students for a group interview. The target number of participants for each class was 4. The purpose of the interview was explained to students by the teachers and investigator. The investigator created a Google Form (Appendix O) for the registration of students who were interested in being interviewed and shared the link with the teachers. Subsequently, the teachers shared the Google Form with their students. Students indicated their preferred interview dates and times and the researcher contacted students via email and arranged interview dates accordingly. The interviews last between 40minutes and one hour.

Group interviews (one group for each class) were conducted on Zoom between the participants, the researcher and a translator. Four students from Class A, one from Class C and three from Class D agreed to be interviewed. However, on the day of interview for Class A and D, one student from each was absent. There were no volunteers for Class B and the investigator followed up with a second and third request, but no student volunteered. The investigator also made a second and third follow-up requests for Class C, but no additional volunteers signed up for the interview. Therefore, three students from Class A, one from class C and two from Class D were the interviewees for this study. Students were sent a copy of the student interview questions (Appendix C) and informed consent form (Appendix K). via email, a week ahead of the interview date. Interviews were conducted on Zoom in both English and Japanese by the investigator and an

interpreter. The interpreter, a second year MA TESOL graduate student co-chaired the interviews with the investigator and asked and explained questions in Japanese for student when students could not understand or express their thoughts in English. The interpreter also translated students' responses from Japanese to English during the interview (for the investigator), and interview data after the interview for data analysis.

Survey Procedures. In order to obtain quantitative data, three surveys were administered to students. Before the survey was administered, the participating teachers were informed in the initial email soliciting research participation, two months ahead of time, about the researcher's plan to survey their students. All teachers agreed, and later informed their students. Participation in the survey was voluntary and only students who consented to participation participated. The three survey instruments, the Inter Cultural Sensitivity Scale (Chen & Starosta, 2000), Intercultural Communication Apprehension Scale Neuliep & McCroskey, 1997b) and Generalized Ethnocentrism Scale (GENE) (Neuliep & McCroskey's, 1997a) were originally written in English; however, the participants are students with limited English skills – so the instruments were translated into Japanese for the comprehension of the participants. The researcher hired a native Japanese graduate student enrolled in the TESOL program to translate the instruments, because of the limited Japanese abilities of the researcher.

After the instruments were translated, a lecturer of English who is a native Japanese speaker vetted the translated versions of the instruments in comparison to the original English translations to ensure accuracy. Subsequently, the lecturer reviewed and approved the Japanese versions of the surveys – Japanese translation of the IS survey (Appendix O); Japanese translation of ICA survey (Appendix P); and the Japanese translation of the GENE (Appendix Q). The translated instruments were then used to create a survey on Google Forms. The survey also included the informed consent form for student surveys. Next, a pilot study was conducted with the Google Form version of the surveys to 11 students in the class of Teacher E. The students in the pilot study did not encounter any challenges with the survey items. However, item 13 on the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale had

only one response option instead of 5. This oversight was detected during the pilot study and was later rectified, before the surveys were administered to the actual participants of this study. Finally, with the pilot survey completed, a copy of the survey in Google Form was created for each class and the link to the forms were shared with the teachers. On the day of the survey, the Google Form link to the survey was shared to students via Google classroom. The survey was completed by all students in class by 10 minutes.

Data Analysis

All data qualitative and quantitative data collected were analyzed independently. The quantitative data from the three survey instruments were analyzed with descriptive statistics using Microsoft Excel. The results from the content analysis; class observations; teacher interviews; and student interviews, all of which constitute the qualitative data were analyzed through coding. The coding of all qualitative data was based on the codes-to-theory model of coding by Saldaña (2012).

Figure 2

Codes-to-theory model for qualitative inquiry (Saldaña, 2012)
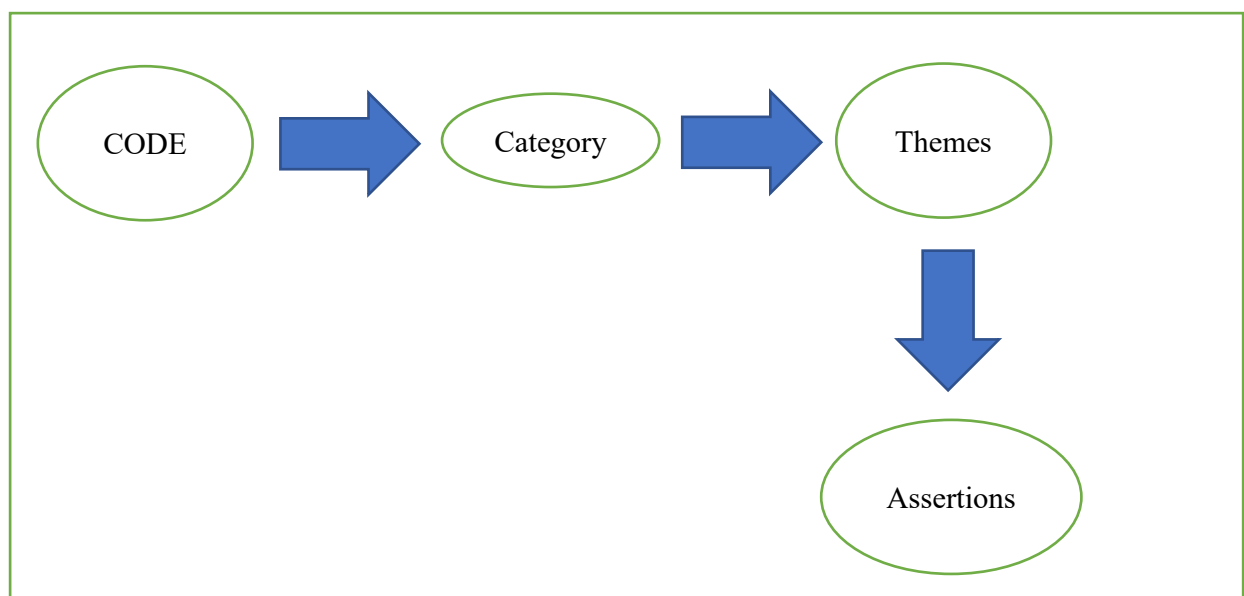
Saldaña describes coding as a process of classification and arranging items in a systematic order, in order to assign certain items to a specific category, because the grouped items share some characteristics. The coding process of this model begins with data collection and transcription (if

necessary), followed by the categorization and subcategorization (if necessary) of items into codes. The categories and subcategories are then analyzed for themes or concepts that match themes identified in the literature, or new themes and concepts that emerge from the data. After this stage, theories are formulated or assertions could be made based on the identified themes and concepts.

Table 3

Categories and codes

CATEGORIES	CODES
Virtual Exchange	Development of intercultural competence, collaboration on tasks, language as a tool for collaboration, not subject, communication
Intercultural Sensitivity	Positive emotions toward different cultures, denial, defense, minimization, acceptance, adaptation, integration
Intercultural Communication Apprehension	Anxiety, uncertainty, different cultural background, fear of communicating, fear of making mistakes, fear of communicating with strangers, importance of reticence in Japanese culture, limited English skills,
Ethnocentrism	My culture is superior, tolerance, intolerance, cultural diversity, social learning, learning about other cultures

The qualitative data of the current study was coded in the same process described above. All interviews were recorded on Zoom. The audio files of the recordings were then transcribed with the Otter.ai program into text format. The text formats of interview recordings were then coded into categories based on the codes in Table 3. Course documentation and data from class

observation notes were analyzed for codes manually and then coded based on the codes in Table 3

as well.

Results

This section presents the results of this study. This study analyzed quantitative and qualitative data to investigate the impact of VE on the intercultural cultural sensitivity, intercultural communication apprehension, and ethnocentrism of Japanese university students. Findings will be presented under six subsections: (1) IVE Pre-survey Questionnaire; (2) survey results; (3) teacher interviews; (4) student interviews; and (5) class observations; and (6) course content analysis. All subsections begin with the presentation of results and end with key findings from the results. The results are presented in the order of subsections above.

IVE Pre-survey Questionnaire

The results of the IVE pre-survey questionnaire administered in May 2022 (the beginning of the 2022 IVE session) is presented below. The pre-survey questionnaire is on a 11-point Likert scale with 16 questions on intercultural sensitivity intercultural communication, ethnocentrism and virtual exchange. Scores from one to five represent a disagreement to the statements; a score of six represents neutrality; and scores from seven to eleven represent an agreement to the statements. The higher a score, the stronger the agreement to a statement, and vice versa. Only 14 students consented to their responses being used for research. Table shows a summary of the results.

Table 4

IVE Pre-survey Results

Statement	M	SD
1. Having people from many different countries in my country is a good thing.	9.62	2.14
2. Those from some countries are more violent than others.	4.92	2.53
3. I only feel safe around people from the same background	5.38	2.69
4. Making friends with people from different cultures is easy.	5.69	2.78

5. Living peacefully with people from different countries in my neighborhood would be easy   5.85   2.64

6. People from other countries are not as friendly as those from mine.   3.23   1.83

7. I only feel comfortable around people from my country.   3.85   2.58

8. We need to share the same culture in order to form a friendship.   6.07   2.75

9. I like communicating with people from different countries.   7.46   3.23

10. I do not trust people from some countries.   2.92   1.32

11. Only people from my country can really know me   4.38   2.43

12. Online friendships can influence the way I think.   7.31   2.46

13. We should be taught about people from different countries in school.   9.38   2.63

14. I do not understand people from other countries.   6.77   2.89

15. Online friendship is more superficial than face-to-face friendship.   6.62   2.40

16. True friends are those from my own culture.   4.00   2.30

As shown in Table 4, students agreed (*M* = 9.62) to item one that states *Having people from many different countries in my country is a good thing.* Again, students agreed less to item five, *Living peacefully with people from different countries in my neighborhood would be easy* – acknowledging that adapting and coexisting with cultural differences might be challenging. This response notwithstanding, item 13, *We should be taught about people from different countries in school,* received a high agreement from students with a mean score of 9.38. Furthermore, the results show disagreement to negative statements about cultural diversity and differences, such as items six (*M* = 3.23) and seven (*M* = 3.85). The results indicate that students agreed more to positive statements about cultural differences; and disagree with negative statements about cultural differences.

Of the 16 items, only item nine, *I like communicating with people from different countries,* focuses on communication with individuals from different cultures. This item reflects an intercultural communication apprehension component. A mean score of 7.46 to this item shows that students, at the beginning of the IVEProject, were willing to communicate with foreigners. Again, this result does not indicate a strong agreement on an 11-point Likert scale. On the other hand, other items such as items two, three, ten and sixteen reflect items aimed measuring ethnocentrism among students prior to their participation in the IVEProject. The mean scores for items two, *Those from some countries are more violent than others;* three, *I only feel safe around people from the same background;* ten, *I do not trust people from some countries*; and sixteen, *True friends are those from my own culture* are 4.92, 5.38, 2.92 and 4.00 respectively. All these scores indicate consistent disagreement with the statements of items stated above. Again, this result, by extension show that students were not ethnocentric prior to the IVEProject.

Key Findings

The results of the IVEProject presurvey questionnaire show that students appreciated cultural differences and were open to learning about cultural differences prior to participating in the IVEProject. In spite of the positive attitude of students to cultural diversity, students also acknowledged the challenges that could emanate from living amongst individuals who are culturally different. Nevertheless, the result also indicate that students agreed that learning about cultural differences should be an important aspect of school. In addition, the results according the to the mean score of item nine (7.46), also show that students enjoyed communicating with foreigners before their participation in the IVEProject. Finally, students seem to disagree with items with ethnocentric connotations. The means scores range from 2.92 to 5.38 – indicating that prior to the IVEProject, students were less ethnocentric.

Survey Results

This section presents the survey results for intercultural sensitivity, intercultural communication apprehension and ethnocentrism for the IVE classes and non-IVE classes. The results of the IVE class will be first presented, followed by results for non-IVE classes. The sections end with key findings of the survey results. T

IVE Classes

Table 5 shows the combined results of the IVE classes (for raw results, see Appendices Q, R and S). Class A had 14 students while class B had nine students. The results show a mean of 3.51 for the IVE classes on the intercultural sensitivity scale. These scores indicate that students in the VE classes have a high level of intercultural sensitivity. With regards to intercultural communication apprehension, respondents in the IVE classes scored a mean 3.01. This mean score indicates that students in the IVE classes experience communication anxiety with individuals who are culturally different.

Table 5

Survey Results for IVE Classes A and B

Variable	M	Range		SD
		Min.	Max.	
Intercultural Sensitivity	3.51	1	5	1.05
Intercultural Communication Apprehension	3.01	1	5	1.18
Ethnocentrism	2.73	1	5	1.21

Note: N = 23

Again, with respect to ethnocentrism, IVE respondents scored a mean of 2.73 indicating a moderate level of ethnocentrism among students of the two classes. The results in Table 3 show that the IVE students have an appreciable degree of intercultural sensitivity; intercultural communication apprehension; and a moderate level of ethnocentrism.

Non-IVE Classes

Table 6 shows the combined results of the non-IVE classes (for raw results, see Appendices T, U and V). There were seven respondents from Class C and nine respondents from Class D. Both class C and D has a student population of 11 each. With regards to intercultural sensitivity, the results show a mean score of 3.58. This result indicates that the non-IVE students seem to be interculturally sensitivity.

Table 6

Survey Results for non-IVE Classes C and D

Variable	M	Range		SD
		Min.	Max.	
Intercultural Sensitivity	3.58	1	5	1.00
Intercultural Communication Apprehension	2.76	1	5	1.25
Ethnocentrism	2.50	1	5	1.00

Note: N = 16

With regards to intercultural communication apprehension, the results show a mean score of 2.76. This result indicates that the non-IVE students experience a moderate level of intercultural communication apprehension. Finally, the results show a mean score of 2.50 for ethnocentrism. This result indicates that non-IVE students have a moderate level of ethnocentrism. Overall, the results show that students in the non-IVE classes have a high degree of intercultural sensitivity; and a moderate level of intercultural communication apprehension and ethnocentrism.

Key Findings

The results for the two IVE classes and two non-IVE classes show no major differences between the two groups. Both groups seem to be interculturally sensitive and show a moderate level of ethnocentrism. However, the results show that the IVE classes have a higher level of communication apprehension than the non-IVE classes.

Teacher Interviews

This section presents the interview results of the four teachers interviewed for this study. The results will be presented under six main areas: (1) course goals; (2) effect of teacher cultural orientation on teaching intercultural competence; (3) student collaboration; (4) intercultural communication apprehension; (5) intercultural sensitivity; and (6) ethnocentrism. The results of the IVE teachers, Teacher A and Teacher B will first be presented and the responses of both teaches will be compared. Following the IVE teachers will be the interview results of the non-IVE teachers, Teacher C and Teacher D. The results of the non-IVE teachers will be then be compared to the of the IVE teacher. In addition, the interview results for Teacher E highlighting the benefits of the IVEProject to his students and why he decided to withdraw the participation of his class from the IVEProject after one semester. Finally, this section will end with key findings of both the IVE and non-IVE teachers.

IVE Teachers

Both IVE teachers indicated that the main goal of the English 2B course is to develop the language skills of students. In spite of the similar view on the broad goal of the course, Teacher A and B differ in the amount of class time and approach to teaching intercultural competence related activities. While Teacher A prioritizes the development of intercultural competence, Teacher B focuses on the development of language skills of students, even though both teachers are IVE participants. The following is the interview results for Teachers A and B.

Course Goals. Both Teacher A and Teacher B indicated that the goal of the English 2B course is communication and the development of the communication skills of students in the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing. In spite of this agreement, both teachers presented varied responses on whether the development of the intercultural competence of students is a syllabus requirement. The comments from both teachers suggest that the intercultural competence development of students is at the discretion of teachers and not a syllabus requirement. The following are some comments from the teachers.

My syllabus, yes, I think I expressly said it somewhere. – Teacher A

No. What we actually do in the classroom [in terms of intercultural competence development], is about 10 to 15%. If you talk about what we do outside of class, maybe to 20 to 25%. Teacher B

These comments demonstrate that the course developers and coordinators of the English 2B course did not explicitly state the development of the intercultural competence of students as a syllabus requirement. As a result, while one class may prioritize the intercultural competence development, another class would not, because the decision seems to depend on the individual teacher and not the syllabus.

Effect of Teacher Cultural Orientation on Teaching Intercultural Competence. With regards to this topic, both teachers seem to agree that their cultural orientation influences their teaching of intercultural competence in class, but from different perspectives. While Teacher A teaches intercultural competence to their students, because of their desire to be in contact with

individuals who are culturally distinct, Teacher B teaches intercultural competence, because of their desire to present students with the perspectives of the broader nonnative English-speaking world – possibly because Teacher B is a nonnative teacher of English. The following are some comments from the teachers.

> Oh, yeah, so it's like, I've yearned for multiculturalism, but in my life, I went from one homogenous society to another. […] I understand that the nature of homogeneity, and like, there's this yearning to make contact with others. And yet this kind of feeling like, I'm not quite sure how to do it. And within Japanese cultural tendencies, unless, it's very structured, it's really uncomfortable for people to do it. It's only like the odd Maverick can strike out on their own. So yeah, I can sympathize with the students on a cultural level, and on a linguistic level, because I was forced to study the Irish language from the age four to 18. And that made sure we absolutely hated it. Teacher A

> So, I don't really explicitly teach it, but I think they [his cultural orientation] did influence me in the way that I just try […] to show students different perspectives. Like, there's this strong connection that I see about English, and it is always US English or Australian English. That's what I'm trying to kind of change a little bit in the classes. – Teacher B

The comments of Teacher A demonstrate teacher empathy for students, because of personal experiences. Due the Teacher A's experience with homogeneity (that is prevalent in the country of her students) and their yearning for multiculturalism, they commiserate with their students with a similar experience, and this connection is one reason that drives Teacher A to develop the intercultural competence of students. Teacher B on the other hand is driven by their position as a nonnative teacher of English to expose students to cultures that are not from native English-speaking cultures.

Student Collaboration. With regards to the most important elements of interest to teachers when student collaborate on tasks, both teachers focus on peer support, but Teacher A also focuses less on grammar (accuracy) and more on fluency.

> If there's a weak student, are the people around helping and encouraging, or shunning? […] students have had six years of accuracy, so I expressly tell them when it's going to be about accuracy, and that is for

> essays. I'm looking for coherence and the content and does it flow? […] I don't go after people for grammar, especially not at the B level. I think at this stage grammar has kind of been the demotivating factor. – Teacher A

> So, they should have good rapport with each other. And, they should be a team, which is actually not a problem, usually, because the classes that I have, they're from the same faculty. – Teacher B

In these classes, both teachers are similar on their mutual focus on peer support and positive team-building dynamics. Teacher A on the other hand focuses on fluency, and not accuracy, because students have had extensive grammar instruction in junior high and high school, and at this point, a focus on grammar is not paramount - because grammar is demotivating. The last comments of Teacher A reflect the communication goal of the English 2B class that both teachers mentioned.

Intercultural Communication Apprehension. While Teacher A indicated that her students do not experience language anxiety, because of their course of study, Law, Teacher B maintains that he cannot comment on the language anxiety of students, because he is unable to measure language anxiety.

> I don't think there's language anxiety in that class. These are Law students. They are potential police officers, prosecutors and lawyers. They're not afraid of anyone. They don't really have language anxiety. – Teacher A

> It's hard to measure. Because, again, […] you know, the only chance for them to talk with speakers of English is in the IVE. Of course, there's a chit chat club, but I cannot really observe them. Right, I cannot be standing there and looking at how they're doing. – Teacher B

Teacher B; however, indicated his students' hesitation to communicate on the IVE platform, and this hesitation was due confusion that resulted from a cultural clash, and not as a result of unwillingness or anxiety on the part of students.

> So yeah, in terms of the IVE project, I see that sometimes they struggle, because I remember there's this one post, which started with a self-introduction. And there's one person from Columbia, who attached

their photos. And students were really like, Ah, so they were really surprised because the message itself

from the Colombian person was quite direct. And they attached some photos [...]. Teacher B

Again, when teachers were asked about materials or measures introduced in class to prepare

students for intercultural communication, Teacher A mentioned the IVEProject and Quick Write

(a writing activity in Class A) and Teacher B mentioned also mentioned the IVEProject and the

Chit Chat Club (an on-campus club where Japanese students communicate in English with

facilitators who are foreigners).

> Quick Write. […] don't worry about accuracy. And please do not use copy paste from translation tools
>
> because that defeats the purpose. […] So, my feeling is that the IVEProject is viewed as a space to be
>
> personal, and that they don't have to worry about fluency but they do need to worry about the other person
>
> that the person does not speak Japanese does not understand Japanese grammar structures. So just be
>
> careful. Keep your sentences short. And, you know, just explain yourself. – Teacher A

> The materials that I use are IVEProject related. Again, there is the Chit Chat Club. […] I think so [that
>
> the IVEProject has prepared students for communication with foreigners] because they didn't have a lot
>
> of opportunities to actually use English outside of the classroom. […] But this is one of those few
>
> opportunities where they can communicate outside of the class. – Teacher B

These comments suggest that the IVEProject provides students with opportunities to communicate

with foreigners which might alleviate anxiety that would stem from communication with foreigners

in the future, by eliminating the novelty of intercultural communication. Teacher A also mentions

that the IVEProject does not focus on the fluency of students. This comment is relevant to reducing

the intercultural communication apprehension of students given that reasons for the language

anxiety in the class of Teacher A all revolve around fluency and correctness in English. For instance,

her students' communication apprehension with foreigners emanates from fear of committing

errors and being ridiculed as a result; Shota also explained that his nervousness is rooted in his

limited English skills; and for Akane, her inability to respond accurately in conversations.

Intercultural Sensitivity. Teachers were asked about materials and activities introduced class to develop positive emotions in students towards other cultures, and also, if the development of positive emotions in students is a syllabus requirement. With regards to materials and activities, Teacher A indicated that she introduces aspects of her culture in class. Teacher B on the other hand, mentioned occasional topics on cultural differences.

> It's very interesting if we can bring aspects of our culture just to get the students to go *this gaikoku place, has a lot of different things.* I do try and include things that and show students different cultures. Remember last year, last semester, we went on Street View. So like, stuff like that, you know, that there is more to life than Japan. – Teacher A

> [...] one was with the traditional clothes. And also when we discussed food, we had a pair discussion about table etiquette [from different countries] […] and students were kind of surprised to learn that in a lot of countries people eat with their hands, but they don't use [hands to eat in Japan], and it's actually good manners to eat with your hands [in other cultures].

In response to whether the development of intercultural development is a syllabus requirement, both teachers, were split in their responses. Teacher A responded in the affirmative, while Teacher B responded in the negative.

> Yeah. [It is a requirement] For this course to teach lessons and activities geared towards developing positive attitudes towards different cultures and different people. I believe it's built into CEFR somewhere. We're not totally CEFRized, yet at WLC […] At Soka, the students are kind of primed for this kind of thinking that, you know, unity and diversity and all that. – Teacher A

> It is not explicit. […] First of all, it's not necessarily a language skill […] so it kind of steps out of the zone of language learning. And again, I want to develop it, and I try to do it occasionally. – Teacher B

These comments indicate that the development of the intercultural competence of students, and in this case, intercultural sensitivity is at the discretion of the teacher and not a syllabus requirement. While development of intercultural sensitivity is a core aspect of Class A, Class B sparsely treats topics related to intercultural sensitivity, because intercultural sensitivity, according to Teacher B

steps out of the zone of language learning and is not necessarily a language skill. Teacher A also mentioned the effect institution policy (Soka philosophy of diversity and inclusion) on the intercultural sensitivity of students.

Ethnocentrism. With regards to ethnocentrism, teachers were asked about what their classes do to ensure that their students are tolerant of other cultures and if the IVEProject has reduced ethnocentrism among their students. In response, Teacher A mentioned their personal experiences while Teacher B indicated that they have not particularly worked on tolerance in class, but discussions about politeness.

> Like, when things come up, I try and pull experiences from different places I've been, or different places I've lived [for students] to explore their own belief systems and just do not allow or just look at their own culture with objectivity without being overly emotional, and to look at others in the same way. – Teacher A

> I don't think I have done anything with tolerance. But you know, we talk about just being polite […] just general rules students came up with at the beginning of the semester. But those rules do not concentrate specifically on different cultures. It's just you know, communication rules, […] communication matters. – Teacher B

The comments from Teacher A further highlight her earlier comments on introducing aspects of her culture (in this case, her personal experiences) to class to expose students to differences. The comments of Teacher B again highlight his comments on intercultural sensitivity, that intercultural sensitivity (in this case, ethnocentrism) is somewhat ignored in his class, because intercultural development steps out of the zone of language learning.

In response to whether the IVEProject has reduced ethnocentrism, Teacher A agreed that the IVEProject has reduced ethnocentrism in Class A. Teacher B on the other hand, could not state categorically.

> Yes, definitely. It opens their eyes to know [that], other people don't automatically speak English, the default position is not English. And the fact that the other students are also nonnative, this really helps them to understand like, the world is not a pack of English speakers out to get you. – Teacher A

I have no idea to be honest, so you might ask them like during the interviews. – Teacher B

Again, Teacher A reported that students might be less ethnocentric, because of the Soka philosophy of diversity and value creation which instills positive attitudes and emotions in students towards diversity. This exemplifies the role of educational institutions in the development of intercultural competence in students.

Non-IVE Teachers

The results show that both the non-IVE and IVE teachers acknowledge that primary goal of the English 2B course is development of the four language skills. Both non-IVE teachers also indicate that intercultural competence development or culture in general is not a major component of their class. Class activities focused on intercultural competence development seem to be random and infrequent in Classes C and D. The teachers; however, stated that cultural awareness is crucial to language learning and should be an essential aspect of their course in the future, pending course revision. The responses of teachers on the major interview areas in presented below.

Course Goals. Both Teacher C and D, similar to Teacher A and B, stated that the primary goal of the course is the development of the communication skills of students in the four language skills. With regards to whether the development of the intercultural competence of students is a syllabus requirement, both teachers, similar to Teacher B (IVE) indicated that intercultural development is not a syllabus requirement. Also, Teacher D, similar Teacher B (IVE) indicated that culture is not a major part of their classes at the moment.

It is not explicitly stated in our syllabus. I just checked last this Wednesday in our meeting.

The thing is, like you know, we are working on a CEFR project - the WLC, so they like to align the course and lessons to CEFR course descriptions but cultural awareness is a very important part of CEFR. They didn't include that in the course syllabus. I think that's a possible [area for] improvement in the future. Cultural awareness is a very essential part of CEFR, but they didn't include it, so I'm curious about the reason. – Teacher C

I have not seen that in the syllabus. So, I would say no. I think this is something more like, we kind of, in the modern age to the current day and age, we need to do these things, right? It's more of, you're just

aware as a teacher that you kind of have to highlight certain things. […] culture is not too big a part of my class at the moment, but wherever we see things that are culturally varied, we reinforce that point – Teacher D

These comments again demonstrate that the teaching of intercultural competence in these four classes, even though English 2B course is aligned to CEFR (that prioritizes intercultural competence development), is at the discretion of individual teachers. With the exception of Teacher A, Teacher B (IVE), Teacher C and D (both non-IVE) indicate that the development of intercultural competence and cultural awareness is not stated explicitly in their syllabus.

Effect of Teacher Cultural Orientation on Teaching Intercultural Competence. Both Teacher C and D, similar to the IVE teachers, indicated that their cultural orientation influences their teaching of intercultural competence.

I believe so. From the textbook, in the first unit, I discussed some taboo topics and taboo questions with my students to inquire about taboo topics and taboo questions in Japan or these type of questions in Japan. […] And I also shared some types of taboo questions in China with my students. – Teacher C

Chinese culture, and Malay culture [in Singapore], we don't always agree. Especially in terms of religion. For Chinese in Singapore, pork is important, but the Malay don't touch pork at all. It's a hallal thing, right? If you are Malay, you are Islamic, like that is the so-called default assumption, so, in my teaching, I always tell my students, right, we might see certain things in a textbook, but this is not always the case. – Teacher D

Student Collaboration. Both teachers focus on participation when students collaborate on tasks. In addition, Teacher C similar to Teacher A and B (IVE), also indicated that they focus on peer support in class when students are engaged in tasks. Again, Teacher C and D focus communication and engagement. This focus reflects the general goal of the English 2B course which is communication.

I, personally, I care about interaction the most. Whether they are actively interacting with each other, And I also observe, peer scaffolding. whether they can support each other. For example, if one student who cannot express himself or herself clearly, his or her partner might play the role to scaffold or to rephrase the meaning and that's important. – Teacher C

So, in terms of communication, what I watch out for is whether they participate to begin with. Whether they are just passive or do they actively listen, and then ask relevant questions. And then when they ask questions, and are they sensitive about asking a question? Do they think about politeness? Do they come off as rude? – Teacher D

These comments suggest that both the IVE and non-IVE teachers are in agreement on the most important elements during in-class student collaboration and interaction. None of the four teachers seem to focus on grammar or accuracy. Teachers are all in favor of factors that promote communication and collaboration.

Intercultural Communication Apprehension. In response to whether students exhibit anxiety when tasked to communicate with individuals from a different cultural background, both teachers indicated that their students do not experience communication anxiety with foreigners. Teacher C indicated that the lack of anxiety among her students could be due to students being Education students who are aspiring to be teachers in the future. Teacher A (IVE) passed the same comment about their students, that Class A does not experience communication anxiety, because the students are Law students who are aspiring to be lawyers, prosecutors and police officers in the future.

To answer this question, because all of them are Japanese so the only foreigner is me. When they interact with me, I don't think they face some anxiety or they feel uncomfortable. Because actually their background, you know, I think that's part of their background. They are Education students, so many of them might be teachers in the future. [...] I require them to visit to Chit Chat Club three times per semester. […] that's the compulsory. And they say it's very *laku*. It means that is makes them feel at ease. Yeah, so I think they have a very positive image of Chit Chat Club. Teacher – C

> Can't say. We send them to the Chit Chat Club as part of the WLC syllabus, so the staff might be somebody from a different culture. But whether they exhibit anxiety, I can't tell because I'm not there every day go to the Chit Chat Club. For the most part, they have been going regularly. So I would assume that they are okay with it in general. – Teacher D

With regards to material and measures introduced in class to prepare students for communication with individuals from different cultures, both teachers indicated that no materials or activities have been introduced in class. Teacher C; however, mentioned the teaching of useful phrases and skills for general communication in English.

> It's not, purposely for communicating with foreigners, but we have explicit teaching session about discussion skills. How to show your active listening and how to check understanding like the expressions of "how come" "really" "do you get me", "do you see what I mean?" So, I teach those expressions explicitly in class. – Teacher C

> So for the most part, the answers should be no, I think there's no explicit materials that are prepared for them to fit in this purpose. So it's more of usually, in the sense that whenever opportunities arise, we might want to consider certain things. – Teacher D

Unlike the non-IVE teachers, the IVE teachers mentioned the IVEProject as an activity that is preparing their students for communication with foreigners in the future. Despite this difference between the IVE and non-IVE classes, students in both classes are mandated to attend Chit Chat Club session where students communicate with foreign facilitators in English, so students of both groups experience communication with foreigners.

Intercultural Sensitivity. In response to what materials and activities teachers introduce in class to develop in students, positive emotion towards cultural differences, both teachers indicated that the development of the intercultural sensitivity of their students is not a major aspect of their classes.

> Actually, I only integrate cultural differences in some speaking tasks. So, apart from that, it is not a big portion of my class. – Teacher C

> For the most part, it's really based on like the textbook, the progressions. Or if the textbook, brings something up that is relevant culturally to develop cultural sensitivity, then yes, we do work on those things. But for other times, we don't really focus on that. We focus a lot on like, developing the grammar and vocabulary. – Teacher D

The 2 non-IVE teacher are similar to Teacher B (IVE); all three teachers develop the cultural sensitivity of students occasionally when a topic occurs by chance. Teacher A (IVE); however, indicated that she introduces her students to aspects of her culture regularly to develop the cultural sensitivity of students. This assertion by Teacher A was confirmed by her students who indicated in the interview results that their teacher provides their class with opportunities to learn about her culture and the differences in other cultures.

With regards to whether developing the cultural sensitivity of students is a syllabus requirement, both teachers, similar to Teacher B (IVE) indicated that the development of the cultural sensitivity of students is not a syllabus requirement. Teacher C responded "No," while Teacher D offered an elaborate response in the negative.

> I think the syllabus for the most part does not state this. So this is really left up to the teachers.
>
> I don't have the time. Sounds like an excuse, but in some places, I don't have the time to spare to work on certain things that I would like. And so, for my classes right now my focus is getting them to write better due to collaborative work better, because the collaboration at the start of semester was not great.
> – Teacher D

Again, the comments of Teacher D echo the trend in the data that suggest that the development of intercultural competence (in this case intercultural sensitivity) is at the discretion of individual teachers.

Ethnocentrism. Given that the IVEProject is not a part of the non-IVE classes, questions about how Teacher C and D ensure that their students are tolerant of other cultures were limited to only the English 2B course and class activities. Both teachers indicated that ethnocentrism is not a focus of their course and as such, the English 2B course will probably not reduce ethnocentric tendencies among students. In addition, Teacher C reported that majority of her students are learning a third language, which students would not do if students harbor any ethnocentric emotions.

Actually, no. And the thing is, many of them are learning a third language like Spanish, Korean or Chinese. So, you know, if they do have ethnocentric emotions, they won't choose to learn a third language. – Teacher C

It's a good question. And I would say probably not. Okay, we haven't really had that cultural aspect in the class. I think it is something that I'm looking at. So back again to my inexperience as a teacher, so whenever chances arise, I make use of them, but I haven't really taken it upon myself to create opportunities for them. But there's also this thing. So, this textbook itself isn't a great cultural introduction. Teacher D

Teacher D mentions that his inexperience as a teacher could be a reason why he does not focus on activities and lessons that could reduce ethnocentrism among his students. Noteworthy to also mention, that Teacher C (non-IVE) has 8 months teaching experience and Teacher B (IVE) has 1.5 years of teaching experience. Teacher A (IVE) on the other hand has 25 years of teaching experience and is the only teacher that seem to consider cultural awareness and intercultural development in her class. Therefore, all the inexperienced teachers (Teacher B, C and D) on one hand do not seem to prioritize cultural awareness and intercultural competence development as much as the teacher who is experienced.

Interview Results for Teacher E

Despite the withdrawal of Teacher E from the IVEProject, the teacher observes that the program had positive impact on students. Teacher E indicated that the IVEProject enabled some of their students to think about communication beyond language, and promoted an awareness of cultural differences.

I remember one example […] a Japanese female student was communicating with a Colombian, male student. And this Colombian student said something like, oh, I want to visit Japan, we should have dinner then. And then my female student was quite surprised by this. And I said, don't worry about it. I think he's just being friendly, or he's being playful. I wouldn't take it too seriously. So, I do think moments like that are interesting, because it made this student think beyond linguistic matters. – Teacher E

These comments suggest that the IVEProject exposes students to nuances that exist between Japanese conversation norms and the conversation norms in foreign countries that Japanese students might be unaware of – and these differences, if not brought to light might hinder an otherwise successful intercultural communication opportunity.

With regards to why Teacher withdrew his students from the IVEProject, the teacher mentioned the level of the students in Class E, unfavorable administrative procedures for Japanese students and the lack of readiness of freshmen university students for VE programs.

> […] about IVE project in general, I think the target is more intermediate level students, and my students are below that. I found it a bit awkward to get started. Like there was a learning curve to learn the system. And then my students had to learn that system as well. And I think that I think it could be a smoother, I think if they figured out a smoother way to get it off the ground. […] some students would not do the work unless I included class time. And so, I felt like some students were, were doing it just because it's homework and weren't invested in the task beyond that. – Teacher E

> So, for instance, the IVE project made a kind of orientation video. And the person who made the video to me is speaking at upper intermediate level throughout. And he's showing all of the English pages, but when the students use it, they're using the Japanese pages. And I just think like, if it was if the whole administrative part was set up a bit more, step by step for beginners, or lower-level students, I think it would be a smoother way to get off the ground with it. […] Also remembering that these students had just been in high school like two months previously. So, it's quite a leap, to go from high school to be starting something like this. To be clear, I'm not anti IVEProject, but these are some of the reasons why I did not continue it [the IVEProject]. I think I would be more confident if I was doing this with B level students. – Teacher E

These comments evince that the IVEProject was challenging for the students of Class E whose level of English is comparatively lower than the main classes that this study focused on, Classes A, B, C and D. The level of the students in Class E ranges from TOEIC scores of 200-300, and the university ranks students in this range as level "A," the least ranked English proficiency level at

the university. Subsequently, Teacher E reported that he would be confident to enroll a "B" level class in the IVEProject. Noteworthy to add that Class A, B, C and D are all "B" level classes.

Key Findings

The results show that the IVEProject reduces ethnocentrism; promotes intercultural sensitivity and cultural awareness; and reduces intercultural communication apprehension. In spite of the positive effects of the IVEProject on raising cultural awareness, teacher personality and in-class activities seem to also impact the intercultural competence development of students. In addition, the results show that teaching of intercultural competence is not grounded in the course syllabus. As a result, teacher discretion is the key determiner of whether intercultural lessons are taught to students or not. Furthermore, the results show that classes that are not involved in the IVEProject do not prioritize intercultural competence development, and, course materials and class time are insufficient in developing the intercultural competence of students. Teachers with fewer years of teaching also seem to focus a great deal on the language development language skills. In addition, both IVE and non-IVE students, as indicted by teachers, do not experience language anxiety. Teachers attribute the lack of language anxiety among students to the course of study of students. Finally, the results also show that the IVEProject might be challenging for freshman university students with limited English proficiency and limited learning autonomy

Student Interviews

This section presents the interview results of 3 IVE students from Class A, 1 non-IVE student from Class C and 2 non-IVE students from Class D. The results will be presented under 3 major headings: (1) intercultural communication apprehension; (2) intercultural communication apprehension; and (3) ethnocentrism. The results of the only IVE class that participated in the interviews, Class A, will first be presented. The IVE students are Yuji, Shota and Akane. The results for the IVE class will be followed by the non-IVE classes, Class C and D. The non-IVE students are Toshiya (Class C); and Kaede and Saki (Class D). This section will finally end with the key findings of the results of both the IVE and non-IVE classes.

IVE Class A

The results show that all 3 students experience anxiety in communicative situations with foreigners. Fear of committing mistakes accounted for the anxiety of 1 student, while limited English skills accounted for the other two students. All three students also noted that the IVEProject and their English class has reduced their anxiety in communicative situation with foreigners. All 3 students also agree that the IVEProject has improved their appreciation of cultural differences. Finally, the results show that the IVEProject changed prior negative student feelings towards foreigners. The result is presented in-depth below.

Intercultural Communication Apprehension. All 3 interviewees reported to feel nervous when in communicative situations with foreigners. Limited English skills accounted for the nervousness of Shota and Akane while fear of making mistakes accounted for why the third interviewee, Yuji experiences anxiety in communicative situations with foreigners in English.

> Yes. I am afraid of making mistakes. I also know that when foreigners speak Japanese and make mistakes, Japanese sometimes make fun of their mistakes and because of this, I am more afraid to speak with foreigners, because I fear they too will laugh at my English mistakes. – Yuji

> Yes, a little nervous. I am not good at English, because I am not sure if I can speak appropriate English with foreigners. If I can't have a conversation with them [foreigners], I feel sorry for them. – Shota

> Yes. Sometimes I am unable to understand what others [foreigners] are saying [in English] so I also don't know how to respond and this creates awkward moments and everyone just stops speaking. These awkward moments make me feel sorry for those I am speaking with and because of this I am reluctant to talk to foreigners [in English]. – Akane

With respect the impact of the IVEProject on the intercultural communication apprehension of students, the results also show that the IVEProject reduced the communication anxiety of students all 3 students. Yuji and Shota indicated that IVEProject provides an opportunity to use English beyond the classroom. For Akane, she has also realized through the IVEProject, that her English

could function as a communication tool. The IVEProject has overturned the prior unwillingness of Shota to communicate with foreigners to willingness to communicate.

> Yes. Compared to communication with Japanese, there are less opportunities to speak English, but through the IVEProject, I have met a student from Columbia whom I would not have met if not for the IVEProject, and this has given the more opportunities to use English. – Yuji

> Yes. Before this project I was not willing to communicate with foreigners, because I cannot speak [English] well, and also, I worried about how others will feel if I am unable to make them understand me. These things stressed me and I did not want to speak English because of them, but after the project I am beginning to speak with foreigners more. – Shota

> Yes, a little. Usually in the classroom, the person I speak English with the most is the teacher, but through the IVEProject I realized that my actually English works as a communication tool to communicate with others on the platform. – Akane

Intercultural Sensitivity. The results show that the IVEProject has improved the cultural awareness and appreciation of cultural differences of 3 students. Yuji reported to have learned about some of the tendencies of Colombians, Shota learned about Colombian food and, Akane learned about marriage ceremonies and festivals of other countries. These comments suggest that the IVEProject caused students' *acceptance* (Bennett, 1986) of cultural differences.

> Yes. Through the IVE, I learned about some tendencies of other countries. For example, in Columbia, they prefer to talk about football, because they love it. So, I have been able to see the tendencies of people from different countries. – Yuji

> Yes. […] I am also thankful for teacher who introduced us to the IVEProject, because I have learned about cultural differences through the program. I learned about food from Columbia. - Shota

> Yes. I have learned about marriage ceremonies and festivals. Most of the time, some festivals are related to religious ideas in different countries. Now I understand how religious ideas are different in different countries. – Akane

Ethnocentrism. With the exception of Yuji who harbored no prior IVEProject prejudices towards foreigners, the results show that 2 students, Shota and Akane had preconceived notions about foreigners. While Shota was scared to interact with foreigners, because of cultural differences; Akane perceived foreigners to be over-confident and self-centered. These notions prevented students from communicating foreigners.

> The IVEProject has not really changed how I feel about foreigners. I find it normal to talk with foreigners. I have no bias against foreigners. I like to know the personality of individuals rather than judging them by biased views against their group. – Yuji

> Before, I was scared to talk to foreigners because of the differences in culture and norms. I didn't know what is appropriate in a conversation in different countries, so I was scared of the possibility offending someone, because I didn't know their culture. – Shota

> Before the IVEProject, I felt foreigners were overconfident and self-centered and because of this I was scared of talking with them [foreigners]. – Akane

For Yuji, the IVEProject has not changed his feelings towards foreigners. Yuji has no bias against foreigners and prefers to judge foreigners based on their individual personalities and not on generalized perceptions of their ethnic or cultural group. Before the IVEProject, Shota on the other hand, was scared to engage foreigners. This fear; however, was not borne out of an animosity towards foreigners, but due to the fear of offending foreigners for the lack of an understanding of what is appropriate and inappropriate in a foreign culture during conversations. Finally, Akane, before the IVEProject perceived foreigners as self-centered and over-confident and this view of foreigners resulted in Akane being scared to engage foreigners in communication.

The question on how interviewees felt towards foreigners before the IVEProject was followed by the question on how the interviewees felt towards foreigners after the IVEProject experience. Yuji already indicated that his feelings towards foreigners did not change after the IVEProject, because he did not harbor any biases towards foreigners prior to his participation in the IVEProject. Shota and Akane on the other hand changed their perception of foreigners, because

of their IVEProject experience. Shota transitioned from fear of differences to interest in differences. Akane also transitioned from intolerance to tolerance. The following are some comments from Shota and Akane.

> Before the IVEProject, I was scared of differences, but after this project I found that there are similarities. The similarities make me comfortable in speaking and I am less scared of offending others. I am now interested in learning about China. On the platform, there are many Columbians. One day I saw a student from China and I became curious about China since that day. – Shota

> […] actually, after this project, I found that foreigners are very friendly and they sometimes have a similar way of thinking as me, so because of the similarities I found through the IVEProject, I am now more comfortable with talking with foreigners – Akane

Before the IVEProject, the awareness of the differences that exist between Japanese and foreign cultures caused Shota to fear interacting with foreigners. However, Shota now finds the similarities in diversity and these similarities replaced his initial fears – as a result of participating in the IVEProject. Similar to Shota, Akane transitioned from intolerance to intolerance. Before the IVEProject, Akane described foreigners as "self-centered" and "over-confident," nonetheless, after interacting with foreigners on the IVEProject platform, Akane now describes foreigners as "friendly." Akane also adds that she learned that sometimes the foreigners she interacted with on the platform "shared a similar way of thinking" with her. As a result of this positive experience, Akane is comfortable with interacting with foreigners. These comments from Shota on Akane demonstrate that the IVEProject develops positive emotions of one cultural group about another and deconstructs prior biased notions of a cultural group.

Student Interview Results – Class C (Non-IVE)

This section presents the student interview result of the Class C, the first non-IVE class. Only one student volunteered to be interviewed. This Interviewee would be referred to as Toshiya. The results indicated that Toshiya experiences anxiety in communicative situations with foreigners and his English class not improved this situation. However, Class C has improved Toshiya's

appreciation of cultural differences. The results also show that Toshiya has developed interest in other countries as a result of his personal interests and English class. Finally, unlike the IVE students, Toshiya is interested in studying abroad. The interview result will be presented in order of intercultural sensitivity, intercultural communication apprehension, and ethnocentrism.

Intercultural communication Apprehension. The results indicate that Toshiya is nervous in communicative with foreigners in English, because of his limited English skills, similar to IVE students Shota and Akane.

> Yes, because my English is not good. […] The speech of foreigners is too fast for me, so I panic because I cannot understand many words. – Toshiya

These comments demonstrate that reason behind the apprehension of Toshiya is two-fold. The first part indicates that Toshiya is limited in his English-speaking abilities, similar to Shota from Class A. The second half first reflects limited listening abilities, because of the fast speech rate of foreigners, and then, because of the limited vocabulary of Toshiya. The difficulty in understanding foreigners was also expressed by Akane from the Class A. In addition, the English class of has not reduced the communication anxiety Toshiya experiences with foreigners. This is in contrast to the IVE students whose communication anxiety has been reduced by the IVEProject. Toshiya stated that his English class not improved his limited English skills that causes his communication apprehension with foreigners.

> No. I have difficulty with listening and also knowing the right response to give when someone says something to me, so I need more speaking and listening practice, but there is no exposure to listening or speaking activities in the class. […] I think it will be helpful if the teacher does the activities, we do at the Chit Chat Club in class. - Toshiya

These comments demonstrate that the English class of Teacher C, according to Toshiya, has not contributed to the development of the listening and speaking skills of Toshiya, because of the limited number of communicative activities in class. Toshiya finally suggests, that introducing the communicative activities at the Chit Chat Club into Class C would be instrumental to improvement

of his English skills. The Chit Chat Club is a compulsory out-of-class English communication club on campus that students visit to communicate with foreign facilitators on diverse topics.

Intercultural Sensitivity

The results indicate that Class C has improved Toshiya's appreciation of cultural differences. Toshiya also mentions Teacher C as a resource for his appreciation of cultural differences.

> My previous English classes focused more on grammar and vocabulary and the teachers were Japanese so they did not touch on topics related to different countries or cultures […] but now in university, the professor is Chinese and she talks about China and other countries, so there have been more opportunities to learn about other culture and countries. – Toshiya

This comment demonstrates that Teacher C, similar to Teacher A as mentioned by the interviewees IVE, are resources that aid in the improvement of their students' appreciation of cultural differences. Both teachers introduce aspects of their own culture together with aspects of other cultures to their students to develop positive emotions towards cultural differences. This comment also indicates Toshiya's *acceptance* (Bennett, 1986) of cultural differences. Toshiya also mentioned that he has not learned about cultural difference from the textbook, because the textbook is not used frequently in his class.

Ethnocentrism. The results show that Toshiya is not prejudiced against different cultures and foreigners. Toshiya maintains a neutral stance and his comments do not reflect ethnocentrism. These comments demonstrate that Toshiya believes in the uniqueness of all cultures and as a result, rejects the comparison of culture. A similar response was given by IVE students, Yuji and Shota.

> Each language and each culture have its own uniqueness and its advantages and negative parts […] so even though Japanese language and Japanese culture has its unique and good points, I cannot compare it to other cultures. – Toshiya

Again, the results indicate that Class C has not reduced ethnocentrism in Toshiya, because prior to enrolling in the class, Toshiya was not prejudiced towards foreigners and foreign cultures. Toshiya has; however, gained interest in foreign countries, because of Class C and his interest in history.

> Before, I did not have bad feelings towards foreign countries, but after taking my English class I feel more interested in other countries and cultures. […] I want to learn more about Germany, Russia and Korea, because I like history. Germany, Russia and Korea's history is very interesting for me, so I want to learn. [...] I am not scared of foreigners. I hesitate to talk to them, because of my English is not good.
>
> – Toshiya

These comments demonstrate that Toshiya is not ethnocentric, but tolerant of other countries – he is interested in the history of Germany, Russia and Korea. The comments also indicate that the curiosity of Toshiya (in this case curiosity about history) has influenced his emotions towards foreign rather than his English Classes. Both Toshiya and Yuji both harbor no biases towards foreigners, because of their curiosity.

Class D (Non-IVE)

This section presents the interview results of the final and non-IVE class, Class D. Two female students volunteered for this interview. These two students will be referred to as Kaede and Saki. Both Kaede and Saki: (1) feel nervous in communicative situation with foreigners; (2) indicated that their English class has improved their appreciation of cultural differences; and (3) did not express ethnocentric views about foreigners. The interview result will be presented in order of responses related to intercultural sensitivity, intercultural communication apprehension, and ethnocentrism.

Intercultural Communication Apprehension. The results indicate Kaede and Saki similar to IVE students Shota and Akane, and non-IVE student, Toshiya are nervous in communicative situations with foreigners in English, because of their limited English skills. The following are some comments from Kaede and Saki on the reason for their anxiety in communicative situations with foreigners in English.

> Yes. I can't speak English that's why I'm worried to speak [with foreigners] […] because English is difficult. It is difficult for me to remember vocabulary so whenever I have to talk to foreigners, I fear that they [foreigners] might not understand me. – Kaede

> The pronunciation of native speakers is different from how Japanese speak English and this scares me when I have to talk with foreigners in English. And also, native speakers speak very fast so it is hard for me to catch most of the things they say, and also, I cannot express myself. This is why I feel nervous when I have to communicate with foreigners in English. – Saki.

The comments above indicate that the communication apprehension of Kaede with foreigners stems from her limited vocabulary which renders communication challenging for her. As a result, Kaede fears that she might be unable to communicate her ideas in English. Saki on the other hand, hints that her limited English skills, just as Kaede, is the reason for her anxiety. However, while the limited English skills of Kaede is hinged on limited vocabulary, the limited English skill of Saki is hinged on listening challenges due how fast native speakers speak in comparison to Japanese speakers of English, and also, her in ability to express herself. Kaede, and Toshiya (Non-IVE) are similar in their challenge with limited vocabulary. Saki is also similar to Toshiya (Non-IVE) with regards to the perception of the speech rate of native speakers as "fast." Saki is also similar to Akane (IVE) with regards their inability to express themselves.

The results show that Class C has not reduced the communication anxiety of Kaede, but seem to have improved the confidence of Saki.

> No. The class content and activities are easy, so even though we use English in class, the activities don't help me to be confident in communicating with foreigners […] it's hard to say my English class has helped me. Even though it's a class about communication, it hasn't helped me a lot. – Kaede

> Yes, a little. My teacher speaks fast compared to other native speakers, so sometimes it's difficult to understand. – Saki

These responses do not indicate that Class D has reduced the communication anxiety of Kaede and Saki. Kaede seems disappointed in the class, because even though the English 2B course is communication focused, the content and activities of Class D are irrelevant to the development of communication skills of Kaede. Saki observes that Class D has contributed to the development of her communication skills; however, this contribution is not impactful; and also mentions the fast speech rate of Teacher D which results in Saki not understanding her teacher sometimes. Kaede

also confirms Saki's claims about the "fast speech" of their teacher. The sentiments expressed here by this non-IVE class pertaining to their English class not developing their communication skills and confidence for communication with foreigners was also expressed by Toshiya, the other non-IVE student. However, this is in contrast to Yuji, Shota and Akane from Class A (IVE Class) reported that IVEProject and their English class with Teacher A has developed their communication skills and confidence for communication with foreigners.

Intercultural Sensitivity.   With regards to whether Class D has improved students' appreciation of cultural differences, both Kaede and Saki agree that their class has improved their appreciation of different cultures and countries. Kaede attributes her appreciation of cultural differences to the textbook as a resource, while Saki ascribes her appreciation of cultural differences to class activities and her own curiosity. The following are some comments from Kaede and Saki.

> Yes. I think my English class has helped me to learn about different cultures and countries. The textbook we use in class shows us many things about different cultures and countries from all over the world. For example, the textbook shows marriage celebrations in different countries and this was interesting for me. – Kaede

> Yes. For example. We have been asked to make a presentation on different countries and this has helped me to learn more about other countries. I do not know the country I will be choosing for my presentation, but I am interested in Iceland, Finland and Norway. I am very interested in Iceland, because of the similarities between Iceland and Japan such as the cold weather, the number of earthquakes and the culture of eating fish. I have been curious and interested in Iceland, because these similar points and want to learn more for my presentation. – Saki

Kaede mentioned that she learned about marriage celebrations from the textbook. This marks the second time for marriage ceremonies to be mentioned by interviewees. Akane (IVE) is the other interviewee who mentioned marriage ceremonies, but she learned about the marriage ceremonies of other countries on the IVEProject platform. Again, similar Kaede, Akane (IVE) mentioned the textbook as a resource from which she has learned about cultural differences.

However, whereas Akane mentions both the textbook and the teacher, Kaede mentions only the textbook. Saki, on the other hand, mentions her curiosity that ignites her interest in other cultures that bear similarities with Japanese culture. These comments indicate that the non-IVE students have learned about cultural differences from their classes, while the IVE students have learned about cultural differences from both their English class and from the IVEProject.

Ethnocentrism. While Kaede comments reflect ethnocentric tendencies, because she believes Japanese culture is superior to other cultures, Saki exhibits indifference by indicating that she cannot compare Japanese culture to other cultures.

> Diffcult to say […] Yes. I think Japanese cultures is better than other cultures, because I only know about Japanese culture and it has its own uniqueness. I don't have a deepened knowledge of other cultures so I don't know their points to compare with Japanese culture. – Kaede

> Japan is an island surrounded by the ocean and even though we have advanced technology to interact with foreigners, there are less opportunities to interact with foreigners so I can't say Japanese are better than foreigners. – Saki

From these comments, Kaede's reason behind her belief that Japanese culture is superior is as a result of an inadequate knowledge of foreign cultures, the same reason why Saki cannot decide whether Japanese culture is superior to foreign cultures. However, Kaede and Akane (IVE) are similar in their views on the uniqueness of Japanese culture. Saki is similar to Yuji (IVE), Shota (IVE) and Toshiya (Non-IVE) who all did not compare Japanese culture nor Japanese to foreign cultures and their people.

On the question of whether their English class has changed their feelings towards foreigners, Kaede reported that she is learning about different cultures in her class, nonetheless, the class has not changed her feelings towards foreigners, because she is tolerant of foreigners. Saki on the other hand changed her views about foreigners from non-English speaking countries.

> I am learning more about different cultures in my English class and it has helped me expand my knowledge on foreigners. My feelings towards foreigners are same as before I joined this class. I have no negative feelings towards foreigners. – Kaede

> My first semester English teacher was from France and she spoke and taught us in English. That experience made me realize that if I can speak English, I can communicate with foreigners [...] Initially I thought people from non-English speaking counties such as France could not speak English, but I learned that English is a communication tool for all foreigners. – Saki

Even though Kaede stated earlier that Japanese culture is superior to foreign cultures, she stated in her second comment that she has no negative feelings towards foreigners. The recent comment demonstrates that Kaede's previous comment on the superiority of Japanese culture is predicated on her affinity for her own culture and lack of knowledge of foreign cultures. For Saki, her encounter with a non-native teacher of English nudged her to realize that she too is capable of using English as communication tool. This comment form Saki suggests again that a teacher can be a resource not only to develop positive emotions in students towards foreigner culture, but develop positive emotions in students about themselves. Finally, despite the positives experiences Kaede and Saki experienced in their English class, neither is interested in learning about other cultures; However, Yuji and Akane are interested in learning about the Colombia as a result of their IVE experience.

Key Findings

The results show that the IVEProject seem to promote intercultural sensitivity and reduce ethnocentrism and intercultural communication apprehension. Another interesting trend in the result is that limited English skills emerged as the major cause of the intercultural communication of students and not ethnocentrism or other cultural factors. Again, non-IVE students learn about cultural difference just as IVE students, but seem to experience intercultural communication apprehension less than IVE students.

Class Observations

This section presents the results of the classroom observation data of IVE Classes A and B, together with non-IVE Classes C and D. The sections beings with information about the number of times each class was observed in Table 7 followed by the class observation results for all classes in Table 5 and finally, key findings from the class observations. 3 (Classes B, C, and D) out of the 4 classes were primarily focused on linguistic development lessons, while only Class A reflected lessons with both linguistic and sociocultural topics. Therefore, prime focus will be on sociocultural elements of Class A that connected to intercultural sensitivity and ethnocentrism which are two major variables that this study is investigating.

Table 7 shows the number of times each class was observed together with the total number of hours of class observation for each class. With the exception of Class C, all classes were observed 4 times each. Classes are 1.5 hours long, therefore, the total class observation time for 4 times of observation for Classes A and D is 6 hours each. Class B has the second highest number of class observation time with 5 hours of class observation time. Class B has 5 hours of class observation time despite being observed 4 times, because the first observation lasted 0.5 hours. While the last three observations lasted 1.5 hours each. Class C was the least observed class in terms of actual number of class observations which was 3, and total number of hours observation which is 4.5 hours.

Table 7

Number of class observation and total hours of class observation

Class Name	Teacher of Class	Number of Times Observed	Total Hours of Class Observation
Class A	Teacher A	4	6
Class B	Teacher B	4	5
Class C	Teacher C	3	4.5
Class C	Teacher D	4	6

Results of Class Observation

The class observation data for Classes B (IVE), C (non-IVE) and D (non-IVE) show no evidence of lessons or activities focused on intercultural sensitivity, intercultural communication apprehension, and ethnocentrism. Class B, C, D with respect to the class observation data were a largely language-focused classes. The class observation data for Class A; however, show language and sociocultural lesson components. Some of the sociocultural components of class, even though not extensive, reflect themes related to intercultural sensitivity, intercultural communication apprehension and ethnocentrism. Given the low number of intercultural-focused lessons in all four classes, a summary of the class observation data will be presented and categorized into four main areas; (a) content; (b) group dynamic; (c) student-teacher relationship; and (d) student participation. Table 8 presents a summary of the class observation data.

Table 8

Summary of class observation results

Class Name	Content	Group Dynamic	Teacher-Student Relationship	Student Participation
Class A	• Linguistic • Sociocultural	• Groups • Shared Roles	• Friendly • Relaxed	• Active • Volunteers
Class B	• Linguistic	• Groups • Shared Roles	• Friendly • Relaxed	• Partially passive
Class C	• Linguistic	• Groups	• Friendly • Relaxed	• Active • Volunteers

Class D	• Linguistic	• Groups	• Friendly	• Active
			• Relaxed	• Volunteers
			• Extensive L1 use	

Note: IVE classes are in shades of blue and non-IVE classes are in shades of green.

In the *Content* column, classes with only linguistic are classes whose observation data show lessons focused on the development of the four language skills and grammar. Class A is the only class whose data showed consistent trends of sociocultural discussions in lessons. In addition, *Group Dynamic* relates to how students are grouped, whether in pairs or in groups of three or more. For all classes, group formations were in threes and fours. Pair work was observed a few times in each class, but was not frequent. *Shared Roles* is indicated for both IVE classes A and B. Each group member in Classes A and B was assigned specific roles: group leader, writer, timekeeper and reporter. The sharing of roles among students in the manner described has been labeled *Shared Roles* for Classes A and B as shown in Table 8.

Teacher-student Relationship relates to the in-class relationship between teachers and the students. For all classes observed, there was no visible tension between teachers and students. In Class D, extensive L1 use in class was observed between teacher and students. In Classes A, B and C, L1 use was observed, but less frequent as compared to Class D. Instances of L1 use in Classes A, B and C were for quick single-word translations and brief explanations of concepts for clarification purposes only, but L1 use in Class D reflected extensive teacher-to-student and student-to-teacher exchanges. Therefore, L1 use was stated as a *Teacher-student Relation* marker for Class D. Finally, *Student Participation* captures the overall student contribution in class and the willingness of students in volunteering answers to questions posed by teachers. Students in all classes were talkative and volunteered answers, except students in Class B.

Class A. Lessons in Class A were a mixture of language and communication related activities and this reflected the communication goal of the English 2B course. In addition to the

language and communication activities, discussions on sociocultural were observed. Some examples of language and communication related activities observed in Class A include the Quick Write activity, compound adjectives and a job interview activity. In addition, three sociocultural discussions were observed in Class A. Two of these were indicative of intercultural sensitivity development, while one is 1 is indicative of awareness raising about ethnocentrism. The following are the details of first the discussion related to intercultural sensitivity, followed by the discussion related ethnocentrism.

   Intercultural Sensitivity. The first sociocultural topic was observed in the first observation. During a discussion on divorce and child custody in Japan, Teacher A compared the legal process and culture of divorce in Japan to the legal process and culture surrounding divorce in her country, where divorce processes are lengthier than in Japan. This example is indicative of intercultural sensitivity development. Again, in the third observation, during a discussion about the dress code at junior high and high school, Teacher A explained that in her country, students were not allowed to wear bangs below their eyebrows, in the past; compared to Japan where this restriction is nonexistent. This discussion, again, is indicative of intercultural sensitivity development.

   Ethnocentrism. In another discussion in during the fourth observation, Teacher A asked students the reason behind the massive infrastructure investment projects undertaken by the Japanese government in South-East Asian countries. The majority of students maintained that these projects are executed by the Japanese government for trade purposes. In response, Teacher A explained that the Japanese government is committed to these investments as reparations for World War 2 in order to foster peace and prevent the repetition of the atrocities associated with wars, such as the events in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Teacher A further added, the Cambodia-Japan Friendship Bridge was constructed in Cambodia as a sign of peace and friendship. This discussion is indicative of an activity geared towards highlighting the negative consequences of ethnocentrism, and the positive effects of peace and cooperation.

Class B, C, and D. The classes of Teacher B, C and D focused primarily on language and communication related such as presentation skills, grammar, paragraph development and vocabulary acquisition. While these areas on language learning are crucial to language development, these areas are not particularly important to this study and related research questions. In addition, Teachers B, C and D indicated during the interviews that cultural awareness and intercultural competence development are not a major part of their classes and the observation data affirmed this assertion. Therefore, the presentation of classroom observation data concludes with no further data with regards to Classes B, C and D and continues with key findings in the next section.

Key Findings

The findings of the classroom observation demonstrate that all classes with exception of IVE Class A focus primarily on the linguistic development of students. Again, the classroom observation data show that teaching of intercultural competence and cultural awareness is at the discretion of individual teachers. In addition, apart from course materials, the teacher could be a resource for intercultural development and cultural awareness. Furthermore, only IVE classes practiced role sharing among students. Also, student participation was pronounced in all classes except IVE Class B. Finally, all teachers also balanced the used more English than Japanese in class, except non-IVE Class D.

English 2B Course Content Analysis

The results of the course content analysis show a concentration of teacher-made materials on language development than intercultural competence development for all 4 classes. *Linguistic* represent language (listening, speaking, reading, writing and grammar) materials. Of the 44 teacher-made materials analyzed for Class A, 33 (75%) are materials for language skills development, 10 (23%) are materials that promoted intercultural sensitivity, and 1 (2%) is targeted at ethnocentrism. The result show no intercultural sensitivity related materials for Class A. For Class B, 10 (63%) of teacher-made materials were language development materials, while

intercultural sensitivity and ethnocentrism received one item each, representing 6% for both variables. Four materials (25%) of the materials for Class B were intercultural communication apprehension related. Of the 34 items analyzed for Class C, 24 (71%) were language development materials, 3 (6%) were intercultural sensitivity materials, 5 (25%) were intercultural sensitivity materials and 3 (6%) were ethnocentrism related materials. Finally, the results showed that all 27 (100%) of Class D materials were language development materials. Table 9 shows a summary of the results.

Table 9

English 2B Course Content Analysis

Variable	Class A	Class B	Class C	Class D
Linguistic (%)	75	63	71	100
Intercultural Sensitivity (%)	23	6	6	0
Intercultural Communication Apprehension (%)	0	25	14	0
Ethnocentrism (%)	2	6	9	0

Note: Class A (N = 44); Class B (N = 16); Class C (N = 34); Class D (N = 27).

Results of Textbook Content Analysis

The World English textbook is a four-skill English language textbook with 12 units. Each units contain a different grammar point and language activities with cultural items and themes. Due to the focus of this study, only cultural items were analyzed. The textbook also contains Ted Talk videos in each unit. These Ted Talk videos were not included in the result, because the videos were not available to the investigator. Therefore, only text and graphic materials of all 12 units were included in the results. The results show a total of 42 cultural items across the 12 units of the textbook. All 42 items from different cultures from around the were items geared towards sensitivity development. The results show no matches for intercultural communication and ethnocentrism. Table 10 show the continental distribution of the 42 intercultural sensitivity items.

Table 10

Continental Distribution of Textbook Cultural Items

Continent	Number of items ($N = 42$)
Africa	5
Australia	1
Asia	11
Europe	10
North America	8
South America	3
Unspecified	4

Key Findings

With respect to teacher-made materials, the results show no major differences between the IVE classes (A and B) and the non-IVE classes (C and D). The majority of teacher-made materials are materials targeted at developing the language skills of students. The differences in the distribution of intercultural competence development (in this case, intercultural sensitivity; intercultural communication apprehension; and ethnocentrism) materials across IVE Classes A and B, and non-IVE Class C are not remarkable. Only non-IVE Class D showed a considerable number of teacher-made materials for language development. The textbook on the other hand introduces a number of cultural items; however, all of these cultural items are presented to show cultural difference and this form cultural representation is indicative of intercultural sensitivity.

Discussion

This study found that VE, in this case the IVEProject improved students' intercultural awareness, tolerance for foreigners, intercultural understanding; and reduces communication anxiety with foreigners. In addition, the IVEProject was found to complement English language courses and teacher efforts in improving the intercultural competence of students. The findings foreground the essence of VE in language classes as a component for cultural and linguistic development. The following subsections present how the findings answer each research question.

With regards to the first research question that inquired whether students became interculturally sensitive as a result of participating in the IVEProject, the student interview results showed that all three students in the IVE class gained cultural sensitivity, because of their participation in the IVEProject. This finding is consistent with the findings of Hagley (2020) that found that the IVEProject improved the intercultural sensitivity of the 2016 and 2017 participants. The students in this study indicated that the IVEProject helped them to gain knowledge on the cultural differences of other participating countries such as Columbia. This exposure to, and noticing of cultural differences is what Bennet (1986) described as acceptanc*e* of cultural differences. In spite of this awareness, Bennet (1986) observed that the mere acceptance of cultural differences does not guarantee agreement. These differences could be judged positively or negatively due to the novelty of the encountered cultural differences, and this situation leads to curiosity among individuals at the *acceptance stage* of the DMIS. Interestingly, the results indicated that all three IVE students in this study – who are new to the cultural differences encountered on the IVEProject – are at the *acceptance* stage, and two are curious of culturally different groups and individuals.

Furthermore, the results of this study also indicated that the English classes of the non-IVE students improved the intercultural sensitivity of the comparison group as well. Non-IVE students attributed their exposure to cultural differences to the textbook and teachers. Similar to the IVE students, the non-IVE students seem to be at the *acceptance* stage as well. This similarity between

the two groups despite the advantages of Class A and B, indicate that the IVEProject facilitates *acceptance* just as the English language class. Therefore, even though the IVEProject promotes intercultural sensitivity, the results of this study show that the contributions of the exchange to the IS of students did not advance beyond *acceptance* to the stages of *adaptation* and i*ntegration* (Bennett, 1986). Personal interest in a culture could on the other hand, lead to *adaptation* as exemplified by Kaede (non-IVE student) who intends to do a presentation on Korea, because of her interest in Korean Dramas. In addition, non-IVE students mentioned their teachers and textbooks as the primary source of content pertaining to intercultural sensitivity. In light of results from teacher interviews that indicated that three teachers with the exception of Teacher A focused on linguistic content to the neglect of intercultural competence development, an argument could be advanced that students in IVE Class B would have been exposed to less opportunities for intercultural sensitivity development if not for the IVEProject. In spite of the lack of a virtual exchange program in the non-IVE classes, the teachers and the textbook served as valuable sources of intercultural information and intercultural sensitivity development in general. The limited opportunities to develop intercultural sensitivity, in classes whose lessons were dominated by language and communicative activities could be mitigated by the virtual exchange programs such as the IVEProject that provide out-of-class alternatives for intercultural interaction.

With regards to the second research question that sought to inquire if there was a relationship between ethnocentrism and intercultural communication apprehension, the student interview results showed that there is no relationship between the two variables. Despite the observation of scholars such as Arasaratnam and Banerjee (2007), Young et. al (2017) that ethnocentrism hinder intercultural competence and by extension increase ICA, the results of this study showed that limited English skills is the prime factor that caused the intercultural communication apprehension of students. This finding was reported by two of three IVE students and all three non-IVE students (five out of six students total), during the student interviews. The other IVE student mentioned the fear committing mistakes as his reason for experiencing anxiety

in communicative situations with foreigners. This finding suggests that linguistic competence is a

major determiner of comfort and agency for Japanese students to engage in communication with

foreigners in English. The emergence of limited English skills as the principal cause of intercultural

communication apprehension of five out of the six interviewees is further strengthened by the

finding of Dong (2018) that limited L2 proficiency stifles intercultural communication which

further derails proficiency in a second language, as L2 students avoid opportunities to interact with

speakers of the target language. Furthermore, the only IVE student who did not cite limited English

skills as the cause of his communication anxiety, Yuji, cited the fear of committing mistakes.

Matsuoka (2008) observed that two of the major causes of communication apprehension and

willingness to communicate among the students in her study were perfectionism and the face-

saving orientation of Japanese society. These students are similar to Yuji who expressed feelings

of being afraid, that foreigners might laugh at his mistakes, because he knows Japanese ridicule

foreigners that speak broken Japanese. Despite this remark by Yuji, he spoke quite fluent English

for his level during the interview and showed an appreciable level of understanding of the

investigator in English. In spite of Yuji's fluency which frequent practice could improve, he seems

to be concerned more about perfection and face saving; just as the students in Matsuoka's study.

In relation to the third research question that inquired whether the IVEProject reduces

ethnocentrism and intercultural communication apprehension, the IVE Pre-survey Questionnaire

results showed that prior to joining the IVEProject, students had less ethnocentrism and an

appreciable level of intercultural commination apprehension. The post IVE survey results on

ethnocentrism and intercultural communication apprehension other hand, seem to indicate that the

level of ethnocentrism and intercultural communication apprehension among the IVE-classes did

not reduce after engagement on the IVE platform. Nevertheless, the student interview results

indicated that ethnocentrism reduced for one out of the three interviewed IVE students. Except IVE

student Akane, the other two IVE interviewees, Shota and Yuji observed that all cultures are unique

and should not be compared. Akane on the other hand, maintained that Japanese are not better than

foreigners, because foreigners are more outgoing than Japanese. Nevertheless, Akane maintains that Japanese culture is superior to foreign cultures, because there are unique aspects of Japanese culture, and she is proud of this uniqueness. In this way, Akane was similar to non-IVE student, Kaede who also mentioned that Japanese culture is superior, because she is limited in her knowledge of foreign cultures. As Ting-Toomey (1999) explained, ethnocentrism is a normal human behavior that allows one to fulfil group needs for the purposes of inclusion, solidarity and group identity in homogeneous contexts such as Japan in which this study is situated – so the comments from Akane and Kaede seem to conform in terms of solidarity and group identity purposes. The student interview results, at the same time, seem to demonstrate an impact of the IVEProject on the ethnocentrism of Akane. Akane indicated that before the program, she perceived foreigners to be self-centered and overconfident and was scared to interact with foreigners as a result. Akane's perception of foreigners as overconfident and self-centered is as a result of cultural differences; and Tagle (2021) notes that human beings tend to be hesitant to embracing cultural differences. This notwithstanding, Akane discovered through the IVEProject that foreigners are friendly and think in the same manner as her sometimes. Subsequently, Akane seemed to be more comfortable with foreigners than she was before the IVEProject. Thus, Akane transitioned from intolerance to tolerance, because of the IVEProject. This finding further suggests that the IVEProject reduces ethnocentrism and also aligns with the claims of Gabon (2021) and Tagle (2021) that ethnocentrism can be reduced when an individual engages with others from different cultural groups.

With the exception of non-IVE student Kaede, Saki and Toshiya together with IVE students Yuji and Shota all did not express ethnocentric views. These students explained that foreigners and foreign cultures are unique just as Japanese and Japanese culture. The students further added that their perception of foreigners is devoid of bias or prejudice. Thus, the IVEProject had no effect on the ethnocentrism of Shota and Yuji, because these two students harbored no ethnocentric emotions towards foreigners before joining the IVEProject. In addition, this finding also suggests that the

tendency of an individual to be ethnocentric is dependent on personality and perhaps training from

school, family, religion or other social group – given that Teacher A observed that her students are

not ethnocentric, but opened to diversity, probably because a number of the students have received

Soka education that propagates a philosophy of diversity, inclusion and value creation.

The second half of the third research aimed at finding out if the IVEProject reduces

intercultural communication apprehension. With regards to this question, the results of the student

interviews indicated that Yuji appreciates the opportunities that the IVEProject has offered him to

use English. Shota is now willing to interact with foreigners more than he did, before joining the

IVEProject due to his perceived fear of cultural differences. Akane also indicated that she

discovered through the IVEProject that foreigners are friendly and share similar views with her,

but was scared to interact with foreigners before the IVEProject, because she perceived foreigners

as self-centered and overconfident. These comments from the interviews demonstrate that the

IVEProject reduced the ICA of students. Nevertheless, the survey results indicated mean score of

3.01 for the IVE classes as opposed to 2.76 for the non-IVE classes. This finding seems to indicate

that the IVE students despite their interview responses that reflected reduced intercultural

communication apprehension still experienced considerable intercultural communication

apprehension. Again, finding shed light on the impact IVEProject not being a face-to-face

communication platform on the preparedness of participating students in real life face-to-face

communication situations with foreigners in English – given that majority of interviewed students

indicated that their source of ICA is their limited English skills. Therefore, while the IVEProject

increases students' motivation (Donnery, 2022) to use English, this motivation might be limited to

asynchronous text-based communication and not face-to-face communication. The anxiety of

communicating of in face-to-face situations with foreigners could linger on after the IVEProject,

because of the mismatch between text-based communication and verbal communication.

Educational Implications

The findings of this research highlight a number of educational implications. The first implication is that teachers conduct their lessons in accordance with the prescribed syllabus. The main goal English 2B course was primarily focused on the development of the communication skills of students in the four-language skills. Therefore, even though the teacher interviews and classroom observation data showed that three out of the four teachers were focused on developing the linguistic skills of students, these teachers cannot be faulted for paying less attention to intercultural competence development, because while intercultural competence development might be desirable in language learning situations, the concept was not a goal for these classes. The teaching of intercultural competence was therefore at the discretion of the individual teacher and even though teachers indicated that their department and syllabus is aligned with CEFR that prioritizes intercultural competence development, intercultural competence development was not stated as a course goal. As a result, teachers and course developers must ensure that EFL syllabi are apportioned for an appreciable quota of intercultural development lessons together with language lessons. Given the limited class time for the development of intercultural competence and awareness and limited opportunities for Japanese students to interreact with foreigners in English, teachers could consider out-of-class alternatives such as the IVEProject for the benefit of their students.

Again, the findings of this study showed teachers and the textbook could be resources for intercultural competence development, and not just virtual exchange programs. All teachers in this study were observed as resources for cultural awareness and intercultural competence development. Students of Teacher A and C for instance reported that their teachers brought aspects of their culture to class, and this act has promoted students' awareness of cultural differences. Teacher B and D also noted that even though culture is not a part of their classes, they expound on the cultural topics that are presented in the textbook. As shown in the background information of the teachers, Teacher A was the most experienced (25 teaching experience) and this teacher introduced more cultural

components in lessons based on personal experiences and lesson materials than other three teachers. In spite of this, even though the less experienced teachers may have lacked cultural experiences, these teachers shared culture in class when the textbook presented a cultural item or topic. Therefore, if teachers are furnished with supplementary materials that assist in the teaching of intercultural competence and awareness, students may still be able to learn about cultural differences regardless of how experienced their teacher is. In addition, both IVE and non-IVE students recounted a number of instances where the textbook provided information about the cultural practices and materials such as food of different cultures. This could mean that textbooks that are replete with intercultural information on a diverse number of cultural groups could be instrumental to the intercultural competence development of students of educational institutions that are not members of virtual exchange programs. Therefore, leaders of educational institutions should endeavor to provide students and teachers with teaching and learning materials that promote intercultural competence and awareness.

Furthermore, the classroom observation showed consistent L1 use in Class D as compared to the other classes. Despite the findings of Matsuoka (2008) that L1 use diminishes communication apprehension, the students of Class D demonstrated an appreciable level of communication apprehension and added that their EFL class has not improved their communication a great deal, even though the class is a communication-focused class. Students also complained of their challenge in understanding the accents of foreign speakers of English, and challenge in keeping up with the speech rate of non-Japanese speakers of English. This discovery demonstrates that EFL teachers who are mostly foreigners (in the context of Japan) should strive for adequate use of English in the classroom in a teaching and learning context where there are limited opportunities for students to practice English. For most students, class engagement with teachers and classmates would be the only opportunity to use English. Such students are then disenfranchised when teachers speak the L1 in many instances that the L2 could be used as the medium of instruction and communication. Thus, teachers are also linguistic development resources to a majority of students.

In addition, the results showed that students might not recognize the opportunities universities and other educational institutions offer for intercultural communication. When students were asked about opportunities that their English classes offer for intercultural communication, all students seemed not to recognize their teachers and the English-speaking clubs on campus. However, all the teachers are foreigners teaching in Japan and one would expect that students would take advantage of the opportunity of meeting their teachers two times every week to get accustomed to intercultural communication. Surprisingly, when the students in this study were asked about their experiences with interacting with foreigners, students looked outward, far away from their English language classroom, and concluded that there were little to no opportunities to interact with foreigners. This line of assessing their learning opportunities suggests that students seem to believe the foreigners who they could communicate with are in distant lands. In addition, even though the English 2B course requires all students to visit the Chit Chat Club in order to interact in English with facilitators that are foreigners, the IVE students mentioned only the IVEProject as the only avenue that their class afforded them to engage with foreigners; while the non-IVE students stated that their classes did not provide enough opportunities to speak English and communicate with foreigners. In light of this finding, universities and ELF department heads should strive to draw the attention of students to the opportunities created on campuses for intercultural communication. The promotion of these opportunities such as the Chit Club and the presence of foreign EFL teachers could help students immensely and at the same time compensate for the lack of a face-to-face communication feature of some virtual exchanges such as the IVEProject.

Recommendations for Further Research

The present study brought forth a number of recommendations for future research due to the findings and limitations. The first recommendation would be for research into how to improve the IVEProject. The IVEProject participants interviewed in this study showed positive emotions towards intercultural communication, the survey results showed that students were apprehensive towards intercultural communication. This finding suggests that students might be open to the idea of interacting with foreigners on a VE platform, but would experience anxiety in real life verbal commination contexts. Teacher B for instance who had incorporated the IVE in his class noted his doubts about the impact of the IVEProject on verbal communication. In light of this finding, a video component should be incorporated into the IVE platform in future sessions, and further research would be required to ascertain how the IVE platform would improve the verbal communication of participants. Furthermore, Teacher E indicated that his withdrawal from the IVEProject was because his lower-level English students found the IVEProject challenging due to students' limited English skills and autonomy. This means that students who are not proficient in the target language might be denied the opportunity to develop their English and intercultural competence skills. Further research would be required on how virtual exchange programs can be adapted for students who are less proficient in the target language, and have less learner autonomy. Finally on virtual exchange, there were no pretests on intercultural sensitivity, intercultural communication apprehension and ethnocentrism in this study. Future with pretests on these variables might yield insightful results on the impact of virtual exchange on these variables

The following are recommendations for further research targeted improving the English learning experience of students. Some students in this study also indicated that they were hesitant to engage foreigners in communication because of their perceived differences between Japanese and foreigners. Such students therefore avoided communicating with foreigners in order not to offend foreigners whom they might communicate with – because of their lack of knowledge of the norms and communication etiquettes of foreigners. Future research is therefore required to

investigate whether students become apprehensive to intercultural communication when exposed to cultural differences. Furthermore, given that all students seemed not to have recognized their teachers and English-club as linguistic resources for development of their intercultural and English language skills, further research is required to investigate how universities can promotes English-language clubs and foreign EFL teachers as language and cultural resources for Japanese students. Again, most students responded positively to the interview question on ethnocentrism. One reason that could have influenced the non-ethnocentric responses from students could be because of the investigator, who is a foreigner. Students might therefore have responded positively, and refrained from expressing negative views abouts foreigners in order not to be abrasive to the investigator. Further research would be required to ascertain how Japanese students would respond to questions about foreigners and foreign cultures in a study led by a Japanese investigator Further research between a Japanese investigator and Japanese participants would be required to demonstrate if students will express differing views on ethnocentrism

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Conclusion

This study offers an understanding of the positive impact of virtual exchange of the improvement of intercultural awareness, intercultural competence and intercultural understanding of Japanese university students. Students are exposed to a number of opportunities to experience diversity and intercultural awareness that bears positive effects on language development, comfort in communication and tolerance of differences when involved in a virtual exchange program as this study and previous research indicate. However, ordinary EFL lessons also complement the contributions of a virtual exchange program. Therefore, virtual exchange programs are not an alternative to EFL course, but a useful component. In addition, teachers are also important resources to the linguistic and intercultural competence development of students, especially students who lack the advantage of participating in a virtual exchange program. Therefore, teachers are encouraged to create opportunities in class for the language and intercultural competence development of students. Finally, practical implications of this study suggests that EFL course developers and teachers should consciously endeavor to allot a considerable percentage of course content to the intercultural competence development of students; and also, for organizers of virtual exchange programs to design programs suitable for les proficient L2 and autonomous learners.

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Appendix A

Teacher Interview Questions

A. Teacher Background

a. How long have you been a teacher?

b. Can you briefly describe your cultural background? Multicultural or homogeneous?

c. How have you ever been in contact with individuals from cultural backgrounds different from yours? Where and how?

c. Do you think your cultural orientation influences your teaching of intercultural competence to your students? How?

B. Virtual Exchange (Collaboration)

1. What skills are required by your students to collaborate and communicate effectively with others in English? (Brown, 2007; Dooley & Vinagre, 2021).

   a. How are these skills presented by you, and practiced by students in the classroom?

   b. Is the teaching of these skills stated explicitly in the syllabus?

   c. How are these skills beneficial to your students, or how have these skills benefited your students?

   d. What do you look out for the most when your students collaborate on tasks? (Brown, 2007).

<Bonus question for IVE classes>

e. How do you think collaboration on tasks, or on the IVEProject has helped your students?

C. Intercultural Communication Apprehension

2. Do your students exhibit anxiety when tasked to communicate with individuals from different cultures? (Neulip & McCroskey, 1997).

   a) What do you think is the reason for your student's anxiety?

   b) What is the level of your student's English proficiency?

   c) Do you think your student's level of English proficiency is adequate for communicating with other speakers of English who are not Japanese?

    d) For what reasons would your students avoid opportunities to communicate with non-Japanese persons?

    e) Have you implemented any measures, or introduced any materials in class to prepare your students for communication with individuals that are not Japanese? Can you elaborate on some of these measures and materials?

< Question for IVE classes>

    f) Do you provide your students with information about the other students they collaborate with on the IVE platform? How does this information help your students?

D. Intercultural Sensitivity

3. Do you implement class activities, or introduce materials that develop in students, emotions geared toward appreciating other cultures and their differences? Can you give some specific examples? (Bennett, 2017; Chen & Starosta, 1997).

    a) Does the syllabus require you to educate students about different cultures from around the world?

    b) What percentage of class time, or this course is devoted to developing positive attitudes in students about other cultures? How frequent do you such exercises?

    c) How do your students respond to topics and discussions about other countries or cultures?

E. Ethnocentrism

4. How do you ensure that your students are tolerant of other cultures? Can you recount some specific ways you have done this? (Tagle, 2021).

    a. Is the student population of this class ethnically homogenous or not?

    b. How do you mitigate the unavailability of cultural diversity in your classroom?

    c. What materials or class activities have you introduced to enable students to not view or judge other cultures based on Japanese cultural practices and norms? (Sumner, 1906).

d. Have you ever noticed or experienced an ethnocentric attitude in class among your students? What did you do about this?

e. How have you encouraged your students to engage individuals of a different cultural backgrounds in communication to ask questions in order to understand the other group about their cultural practices? (Tagle, 2021).

<Question for IVE classes>

f. Do you think the IVEProject has reduced ethnocentrism in your students? How?

F. Course and course Materials

6. What are the goals of this course? What practical ways have you implemented towards the attainment of these goals?

a) How are text materials selected for this course?

b) What requirements did the textbook satisfy? Why did you choose this textbook?

c) Is the development of students' intercultural competence a syllabus requirement? How have you ensured that this requirement is met in your own way?

Appendix B
Pre and Post Classroom Observation Questions

Pre-Observation Questions:

1. What are the goals / objectives of this lesson (i.e., what are the students expected to be able to do by the end of the lesson?) (Wajnyrb, 1992)

2. What teaching strategies / methods / activities will be used in the classroom?

3. How will students show what they are learning?

4. Would any part of the lesson focus on the development of intercultural competence? If yes, what activity would you do?

5. What kind of lesson materials do you currently use in the classroom? (MEXT 2014; Tomlinson, 2013)

6. What beliefs as a teacher influence what you do in the classroom? Can you give specific examples? (Wajnyrb, 1992)

7. Is there anything you would like me (the observer) to pay close attention to? (Wajnyrb, 1992)

Post-Observation Question:

1. Were the goals/ objectives of the lesson achieved? (Wajnyrb, 1992)

2. Did any part of the lesson not go according to plan?

3. How do you feel the lesson went overall? Why?

4. Was the lesson successful in developing any intercultural competence skill? How?

5. In your opinion, did the materials and activities complement your course/lesson goals and objectives? (MEXT 2014; Nation, 2008; Tomlinson, 2013)

Class Observation Notes

Time	Teacher Actions	Student Actions	Notes

Appendix C
Semi-Structured Student Interview Questions

A. Student Background

1. How long have you been studying English?

    a) Do you have any friends or family members who are not from Japan?

    b) Have you ever communicated with any foreigners in the past?

B. Intercultural Communication Apprehension

2. Do you feel nervous when you have to communicate with foreigners in English?

    a) Has your English class helped you to be confident in communicating with foreigners in English?

<Question for IVEProject students>

    b) Do you think the IVEProject has made you more comfortable in communicating with foreigners in English?

C. Intercultural Sensitivity

3. Do you think your English class has helped you to appreciate different cultures or countries? How or why?

<Question for IVEProject students>

    a) Do you think the IVEProject has improved your appreciation of cultural differences? How or why?

D. Ethnocentrism

4. Do you believe Japanese people/Japanese culture is better than others?

    a) Has your English class changed the way you feel about other countries or foreigners?

    b) Are you now interested in learning about any foreign countries, because of your English class?

    <Questions for IVEProject Students>

    c) How did you feel about interacting with foreigners before joining the IVEProject?

    d) Has your feelings about interacting with foreigners changed, because of the IVEProject?

e) Are you now interested in learning about any foreign countries, because of the IVEProject?

Appendix D
Intercultural Sensitivity Scale

Below is a series of statements concerning intercultural communication. There are no right or wrong answers. Please work quickly and record your first impression by indicating the degree to which you agree or disagree with the statement. Thank you for your cooperation.

> 5 = strongly agree
> 4 = agree
> 3 = uncertain
> 2 = disagree
> 1 = strongly agree
>
> Please put the number corresponding to your answer in blank after the statement

1. I enjoy interacting with people from different cultures. _____

2. I think people from other cultures are narrow-minded.   _____

3. I am pretty sure of myself in interacting with people from different cultures. _____

4. I find it very hard to talk in front of people from different cultures. _____

5. I always know what to say when interacting with people from different cultures. _____

6. I can be as sociable as I want to be when interacting with people from different cultures. _____

7. I don't like to be with people from different cultures.   _____

8. I respect the values of people from different cultures.   _____

9. I get upset easily when interacting with people from different cultures. _____

10. I feel confident when interacting with people from different cultures. _____

11. I tend to wait before forming an impression of culturally-distinct counterparts. _____

12. I often get discouraged when I am with people from different cultures. _____

13. I am open-minded to people from different cultures.   _____

14. I am very observant when interacting with people from different cultures. _____

15. I often feel useless when interacting with people from different cultures. _____

16. I respect the ways people from different cultures behave. _____

17. I try to obtain as much information as I can when interacting with people from different cultures. _____

18. I would not accept the opinions of people from different cultures. _____

19. I am sensitive to my culturally-distinct counterpart's subtle meanings during our interaction. _____

20. I think my culture is better than other cultures. _____

21. I often give positive responses to my culturally different counterpart during our interaction. _____

22. I avoid those situations where I will have to deal with culturally-distinct persons. _____

23. I often show my culturally-distinct counterpart my understanding through verbal or nonverbal cues. _____

24. I have a feeling of enjoyment towards differences between my culturally-distinct counterpart and me. _____

Appendix E

Intercultural Communication Apprehension Scale

Below is a series of statements concerning intercultural communication. There are no right or wrong answers. Please work quickly and record your first impression by indicating the degree to which you agree or disagree with the statement. Thank you for your cooperation.

> 5 = strongly agree
> 4 = agree
> 3 = uncertain
> 2 = disagree
> 1 = strongly agree
> Please put the number corresponding to your answer in the blank after the statement
>
>
> Please put the number corresponding to your answer in the blank before the statement

1. I dislike interacting with people from different cultures. _____

2. Generally, I am comfortable interacting with a group of people from different cultures. _____

3. I am tense and nervous while interacting with people from different cultures. _____

4. I like to get involved in group discussions with others who are from different cultures. _____

5. Engaging in a group discussion with people from different cultures makes me tense and nervous. _____

6. I am calm and relaxed with interacting with a group of people who are from different cultures. _____

7. While participating in a conversation with a person from a different culture, I feel very nervous. _____

8. I have no fear of speaking up - in a conversation with a person from a different culture. _____

9. Ordinarily I am very tense and nervous in conversations with a person from a different culture. _____

10. Ordinarily I am very calm and relaxed in conversations with a person from a different culture. _____

11. While conversing with a person from a different culture I feel very relaxed. _____

12. I'm afraid to speak up in conversations with a person from a different culture. _____

13. I face the prospect of interacting with people from different cultures with confidence. _____

14. My thoughts become confused and jumbled when interacting with people from different cultures. _____

15. I enjoy interacting with people from different cultures. _____

16. Communicating with people from different cultures makes me feel uncomfortable.

_____

Appendix F
Generalized Ethnocentrism Scale (GENE)

Below are items that relate to the cultures of different parts of the world. Work quickly and record your first reaction to each item. There are no right or wrong answers. Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each item using the following five-point scale. Please put the number corresponding to your answer in the blank after the statement

Strongly Disagree = 1; Disagree = 1; Neutral = 3; Agree = 4; Strongly Agree = 5;

1. Most other cultures are backward compared to my culture. _____

2. My culture should be the role model for other cultures. _____

3. People from other cultures act strange when they come to my culture. _____

4. Lifestyles in other cultures are just as valid as those in my culture. _____

5. Other cultures should try to be more like my culture. _____

6. I am not interested in the values and customs of other cultures. _____

7. People in my culture could learn a lot from people in other cultures. _____

8. Most people from other cultures just don't know what's good for them. _____

9. I respect the values and customs of other cultures. _____

10. Other cultures are smart to look up to our culture. _____

11. Most people would be happier if they lived like people in my culture. _____

12. I have many friends from different cultures. _____

13. People in my culture have just about the best lifestyles of anywhere. _____

14. Lifestyles in other cultures are not as valid as those in my culture. _____

15. I am very interested in the values and customs of other cultures. _____

16. I apply my values when judging people who are different. _____

17. I see people who are similar to me as virtuous. _____

18. I do not cooperate with people who are different. _____

Appendix G

IVE Pre-Questionnaire Survey

Please help us with our research by completing this survey.

Advanced settings   Questions   Feedback   **Preview**   View All Responses   Non-respondents

Previewing Questionnaire
Pre-survey   🖨 Print Blank

Page 1

1 * Please write 3 words that come to mind when you hear the word "Foreigner". "外国人 "という言葉を聞いて思いつく言葉を3つ書いてください。日本語でもいい

[_____]

2 * 文化 "という言葉を聞いて思いつく言葉を3つ書いてください。日本語でもいい Write 3 words that you think of when you hear the word "culture".

[_____]

3 * Have you ever been abroad for a total over 2 weeks? 海外に、２週間以上、行ったことがありますか？

○ Yes ○ No

4 * Do you have friends from foreign countries？　あなたには外国人の友人がいますか？

○ Yes ○ No

5 * What do *most people in your country* think about the following statements?
–5 is "*most people* in my country very much *disagree* with this"
and
5 is "*most people* in my country very much *agree* with this"

あなたの国の**ほとんど**の人は、次の記述についてどう考えていますか。
-5は、"私の国の**ほとんど**の人はこれに**非常に同意していない**"
であり
5は「私の国の**ほとんど**の人はこれに**とても同意している**」です。

	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5
Having people from many different countries in my country is a good thing. 私の国にいろいろな国の人がいることは、いいことだと思います。	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Those from some countries are more violent than others. ある国の人たちは、他の国よりも暴力的です。	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I only feel safe around people from the same background. 私は、同じ背景を持つ人々と一緒にいるときだけ安全だと感じる。	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Making friends with people from different cultures is easy. 異なる文化の人と友達になるのは簡単だ。	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Living peacefully with people from different countries in my neighborhood would be easy. 私の家の近所で、異なる国の人々と平和に暮らすのは簡単だ。	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
People from other countries are not as friendly as those from mine. 他の国の人々は、私の国の人々ほど友好的でない。	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	?	○
I only feel comfortable around people from my country. 私は自分の国の人としか居心地の良さを感じない。	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

We need to share the same culture in order to form a friendship. 友好関係を築くには、同じ文化を共有する必要がある。	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I like communicating with people from different countries. 私は異なる国の人々とコミュニケーションをとるのが好きだ。	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I don't trust people from some countries. 私はある国の人々を信用しない。	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Only people from my country can really know me. 私のことを本当に知っているのは、私の国の人だけだ。	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Online friendships can influence the way I think. オンライン・フレンドシップは私の考え方に影響を与えることがある。	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Appendix H

Informed Consent for Research Participation

(Student Survey Questionnaire)

Title of the research: The Impact of Virtual Exchange on Japanese University Students
Principal Investigator: Eugene Hayford Addo

1. Research outline
A. Objective of the study
The purpose of this study is to investigate the impact of virtual exchange on Japanese university students' intercultural sensitivity; intercultural communication comprehension; and ethnocentrism. Teacher beliefs, course materials and classroom activities will also be assessed to ascertain how they affect the development of the intercultural competence and international posture of students.

B. Research design and procedures
The investigator will implement both qualitative and quantitative measures including collection of documentations, conducting interviews, classroom observations and the administering of surveys. Existing documents such as the current course syllabi and course materials for the English 2B course of the WLC used in Soka University will be accessed and examined. Semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions will be used to interview English teachers and students to gather information not explicitly stated in existing literature for this research context. The researcher will observe four English 2B classes in Soka University – two participating classes in the IVEProject and two non-participating classes in the IVEProject to observe how classroom instruction influences the development students' intercultural competence and international posture. The observation will include a pre-observation and post-observation interview with the teacher. The pre-observation interview will be combined with the semi-structured interview. Students will be interviewed to solicit their views and experiences in the IVEProject. Three surveys will also be administered to students to gather information on the levels of students' intercultural sensitivity, ethnocentrism and intercultural communication apprehension.

C. Releasing of study results
Research results will be included in possible publications in national or international peer-reviewed academic publications and presentations at national of international conferences or symposia. No identifying information of any participant will be apparent in any publication or conference presentation.

D. Data collection method
Survey questionnaires will be administered individually at the convivence of participants. Surveys include Likert item statements and will take about 10 minutes of class time to finish. Participants will complete the survey outside of class time at their convenience when survey takes more than 10 minutes.

E. Selection of participants
Four WLC teachers of the English 2B course will selected for interview and observation. A total of 60 students who are enrolled in the classes of the selected teachers for this study will also be interviewed and respond to survey questionnaires. The final number of participants of this study will be dependent on the number of teachers and students who will be willing to agree to the Informed Consent Form and participate in this study.

F. Anticipated risks
There are no potential physical, psychological, nor social risks to the participants. In addition, participants are free to withdraw from the research at any time without penalty.

G. Potential benefits of the research to the participants or society
Upon completion of the present study, the findings of this study will foreground the importance of virtual exchange in mitigating the lost opportunities of Japanese students to communicate in natural settings in English with other speakers of English for the purposes of communication and cultural exchange to foster intercultural competence and international understanding. Again, the findings of this study will guide teachers into taking an active role in incorporating activities and lessons geared toward the development of the intercultural competence of their students, into their English language curriculum – specifically, lessons and activities that will develop students' intercultural cultural sensitivity - and at the same time reduce ethnocentrism and intercultural communication apprehension.

2. Protecting personal information
All information obtained in this study will be kept strictly confidential and anonymous. Data collected through interviews will only be accessed by the principal investigator, Eugene Hayford Addo. All data will be stored on a portable, password protected data storage device that will be kept secure in a locked desk at the Graduate Building on the Soka University campus. Data will only be accessed via the storage device by a computer that is not connected to the Internet or a Wi-Fi connection. All data will be destroyed (electronic data will be deleted, paper interview notes and surveys responses will be shredded) by March 18, 2033.

3. Participation in research

- Participation in this research is voluntary.
- You will not be disadvantaged by not choosing to participate in this research.
- You will be able to withdraw from this research at any time without being disadvantaged or penalized.
- You will receive a copy of this informed consent form.

1. **Contact information**
   Investigator
   Eugene Hayford Addo
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   Email: richmond@soka.ac.jp

I have read the explanation written by the investigators. I sufficiently understood about the objectives of the study, research design, procedures and methods of protecting personal information. By signing below, I agree to participate in this research.

Participant Signature: Date:

_____   _____
Investigator Signature: Date:

_____   _____

Appendix I

Informed Consent for Research Participation

(Teacher Interviews)

Title of the research: The Impact of Virtual Exchange on Japanese University Students
Principal Investigator: Eugene Hayford Addo

1. Research outline
A. Objective of the study
The purpose of this study is to investigate the impact of virtual exchange on Japanese university students' intercultural sensitivity; intercultural communication comprehension; and ethnocentrism. Teacher beliefs, course materials and classroom activities will also be assessed to ascertain how they affect the development of the intercultural competence and international posture of students.

B. Research design and procedures
The investigator will implement both qualitative and quantitative measures including collection of documentations, conducting interviews, classroom observations and the administering of surveys. Existing documents such as the current course syllabi and course materials for the English 2B course of the WLC used in Soka University will be accessed and examined. Semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions will be used to interview English teachers and students to gather information not explicitly stated in existing literature for this research context. The researcher will observe four English 2B classes in Soka University – two participating classes in the IVEProject and two non-participating classes in the IVEProject to observe how classroom instruction influences the development students' intercultural competence and international posture. The observation will include a pre-observation and post-observation interview with the teacher. The pre-observation interview will be combined with the semi-structured interview. Students will be interviewed to solicit their views and experiences in the IVEProject. Three surveys will also be administered to students to gather information on the levels of students' intercultural sensitivity, ethnocentrism and intercultural communication apprehension.

C. Releasing of study results
Research results will be included in possible publications in national or international peer-reviewed academic publications and presentations at national of international conferences or symposia. No identifying information of any participant will be apparent in any publication or conference presentation.

D. Data collection method
Interviews will be conducted individually at the convenience of the participants. The interview will include open-ended questions and will take about 30 to 45 minutes. The interview will be recorded and transcribed.
.

E. Selection of participants
Four WLC teachers of the English 2B course will selected for interview and observation. A total of 60 students who are enrolled in the classes of the selected teachers for this study will also be interviewed and respond to survey questionnaires. The final number of participants of this study will be dependent on the number of teachers and students who will be willing to agree to the Informed Consent Form and participate in this study.

F. Anticipated risks

There are no potential physical, psychological, nor social risks to the participants. In addition, participants are free to withdraw from the research at any time without penalty.

G. Potential benefits of the research to the participants or society

Upon completion of the present study, the findings of this study will foreground the importance of virtual exchange in mitigating the lost opportunities of Japanese students to communicate in natural settings in English with other speakers of English for the purposes of communication and cultural exchange to foster intercultural competence and international understanding. Again, the findings of this study will guide teachers into taking an active role in incorporating activities and lessons geared toward the development of the intercultural competence of their students, into their English language curricula – specifically, lessons and activities that will develop students' intercultural cultural sensitivity - and at the same time reduce ethnocentrism and intercultural communication apprehension.

2. Protecting personal information

All information obtained in this study will be kept strictly confidential and anonymous. Data collected through interviews will only be accessed by the principal investigator, Eugene Hayford Addo. All data will be stored on a portable, password protected data storage device that will be kept secure in a locked desk at the Graduate Building on the Soka University campus. Data will only be accessed via the storage device by a computer that is not connected to the Internet or a Wi-Fi connection. All data will be destroyed (electronic data will be deleted, paper interview notes and surveys responses will be shredded) by March 18, 2033.

3. Participation in research

- Participation in this research is voluntary.
- You will not be disadvantaged by not choosing to participate in this research.
- You will be able to withdraw from this research at any time without being disadvantaged or penalized.
- You will receive a copy of this informed consent form.

2. **Contact information**
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   Tokyo 192-8577 Japan
   Email: richmond@soka.ac.jp

I have read the explanation written by the investigators. I sufficiently understood about the objectives of the study, research design, procedures and methods of protecting personal information. By signing below, I agree to participate in this research.

Participant Signature: Date:

_____   _____
Investigator Signature: Date:

_____   _____

Appendix J

Informed Consent for Research Participation

(Student Interviews)

Title of the research: The Impact of Virtual Exchange on Japanese University Students
Principal Investigator: Eugene Hayford Addo

1. Research outline
A. Objective of the study
The purpose of this study is to investigate the impact of virtual exchange on Japanese university students' intercultural sensitivity; intercultural communication comprehension; and ethnocentrism. Teacher beliefs, course materials and classroom activities will also be assessed to ascertain how they affect the development of the intercultural competence and international posture of students.

B. Research design and procedures
The investigator will implement both qualitative and quantitative measures including collection of documentations, conducting interviews, classroom observations and the administering of surveys. Existing documents such as the current course syllabi and course materials for the English 2B course of the WLC used in Soka University will be accessed and examined. Semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions will be used to interview English teachers and students to gather information not explicitly stated in existing literature for this research context. The researcher will observe four English 2B classes in Soka University – two participating classes in the IVEProject and two non-participating classes in the IVEProject to observe how classroom instruction influences the development students' intercultural competence and international posture. The observation will include a pre-observation and post-observation interview with the teacher. The pre-observation interview will be combined with the semi-structured interview. Students will be interviewed to solicit their views and experiences in the IVEProject. Three surveys will also be administered to students to gather information on the levels of students' intercultural sensitivity, ethnocentrism and intercultural communication apprehension.

C. Releasing of study results
Research results will be included in possible publications in national or international peer-reviewed academic publications and presentations at national of international conferences or symposia. No identifying information of any participant will be apparent in any publication or conference presentation.

D. Data collection method
Interviews will be conducted in groups at the convenience of the participants. The interview will include open-ended questions and will take about 30 to 45 minutes. An interpreter will be present to translate interview questions for participants in Japanese. The interview will be recorded and transcribed. Survey questionnaires will be administered individually at the convivence of participants. Surveys include Likert item statements and will take about 10 minutes of class time to finish. Participants will complete the survey outside of class time at their convenience when survey takes more than 10 minutes.

E. Selection of participants
Four WLC teachers of the English 2B course will selected for interview and observation. A total of 60 students who are enrolled in the classes of the selected teachers for this study will also be interviewed and respond to survey questionnaires. The final number of participants of this study

will be dependent on the number of teachers and students who will be willing to agree to the Informed Consent Form and participate in this study.

F. Anticipated risks
There are no potential physical, psychological, nor social risks to the participants. In addition, participants are free to withdraw from the research at any time without penalty.

G. Potential benefits of the research to the participants or society
Upon completion of the present study, the findings of this study will foreground the importance of virtual exchange in mitigating the lost opportunities of Japanese students to communicate in natural settings in English with other speakers of English for the purposes of communication and cultural exchange to foster intercultural competence and international understanding. Again, the findings of this study will guide teachers into taking an active role in incorporating activities and lessons geared toward the development of the intercultural competence of their students, into their English language curricula – specifically, lessons and activities that will develop students' intercultural cultural sensitivity - and at the same time reduce ethnocentrism and intercultural communication apprehension.

2. Protecting personal information

All information obtained in this study will be kept strictly confidential and anonymous. Data collected through interviews will only be accessed by the principal investigator, Eugene Hayford Addo. All data will be stored on a portable, password protected data storage device that will be kept secure in a locked desk at the Graduate Building on the Soka University campus. Data will only be accessed via the storage device by a computer that is not connected to the Internet or a Wi-Fi connection. All data will be destroyed (electronic data will be deleted, paper interview notes and surveys responses will be shredded) by March 18, 2033.

3. Participation in research

- Participation in this research is voluntary.
- You will not be disadvantaged by not choosing to participate in this research.
- You will be able to withdraw from this research at any time without being disadvantaged or penalized.
- You will receive a copy of this informed consent form.

3. **Contact information**
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I have read the explanation written by the investigators. I sufficiently understood about the objectives of the study, research design, procedures and methods of protecting personal information. By signing below, I agree to participate in this research.

Participant Signature: Date:

_____   _____

Investigator Signature: Date:

_____   _____

Appendix K

Informed Consent for Research Participation

(Class Observation)

Title of the research: The Impact of Virtual Exchange on Japanese University Students
Principal Investigator: Eugene Hayford Addo

1. Research outline
A. Objective of the study
The purpose of this study is to investigate the impact of virtual exchange on Japanese university students' intercultural sensitivity; intercultural communication comprehension; and ethnocentrism. Teacher beliefs, course materials and classroom activities will also be assessed to ascertain how they affect the development of the intercultural competence and international posture of students.

B. Research design and procedures
The investigator will implement both qualitative and quantitative measures including collection of documentations, conducting interviews, classroom observations and the administering of surveys. Existing documents such as the current course syllabi and course materials for the English 2B course of the WLC used in Soka University will be accessed and examined. Semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions will be used to interview English teachers and students to gather information not explicitly stated in existing literature for this research context. The researcher will observe four English 2B classes in Soka University – two participating classes in the IVEProject and two non-participating classes in the IVEProject to observe how classroom instruction influences the development students' intercultural competence and international posture. The observation will include a pre-observation and post-observation interview with the teacher. The pre-observation interview will be combined with the semi-structured interview. Students will be interviewed to solicit their views and experiences in the IVEProject. Three surveys will also be administered to students to gather information on the levels of students' intercultural sensitivity, ethnocentrism and intercultural communication apprehension.

C. Releasing of study results
Research results will be included in possible publications in national or international peer-reviewed academic publications and presentations at national of international conferences or symposia. No identifying information of any participant will be apparent in any publication or conference presentation.

D. Data collection method
Observations will be conducted in four different classrooms at the convenience of the participants. The observation will include a pre- and post-observation interview, which should take no longer than 30 minutes. The observation length will depend on the participants' availability and convenience.
E. Selection of participants
Four WLC teachers of the English 2B course will selected for interview and observation. A total of 60 students who are enrolled in the classes of the selected teachers for this study will also be interviewed and respond to survey questionnaires. The final number of participants of this study will be dependent on the number of teachers and students who will be willing to agree to the Informed Consent Form and participate in this study

F. Anticipated risks
There are no potential physical, psychological, nor social risks to the participants. In addition, participants are free to withdraw from the research at any time without penalty.

G. Potential benefits of the research to the participants or society

Upon completion of the present study, the findings of this study will foreground the importance of virtual exchange in mitigating the lost opportunities of Japanese students to communicate in natural settings in English with other speakers of English for the purposes of communication and cultural exchange to foster intercultural competence and international understanding. Again, the findings of this study will guide teachers into taking an active role in incorporating activities and lessons geared toward the development of the intercultural competence of their students, into their English language curricula – specifically, lessons and activities that will develop students' intercultural cultural sensitivity - and at the same time reduce ethnocentrism and intercultural communication apprehension.

2. Protecting personal information

All information obtained in this study will be kept strictly confidential and anonymous. Data collected through interviews will only be accessed by the principal investigator, Eugene Hayford Addo. All data will be stored on a portable, password protected data storage device that will be kept secure in a locked desk at the Graduate Building on the Soka University campus. Data will only be accessed via the storage device by a computer that is not connected to the Internet or a Wi-Fi connection. All data will be destroyed (electronic data will be deleted, paper interview notes and surveys responses will be shredded) by March 18, 2033.

3. Participation in research

- Participation in this research is voluntary.
- You will not be disadvantaged by not choosing to participate in this research.
- You will be able to withdraw from this research at any time without being disadvantaged or penalized.
- You will receive a copy of this informed consent form.

4. **Contact information**
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   Tokyo 192-8577 Japan
   Email: richmond@soka.ac.jp

I have read the explanation written by the investigators. I sufficiently understood about the objectives of the study, research design, procedures and methods of protecting personal information. By signing below, I agree to participate in this research.

Participant Signature: Date:

_____   _____

Investigator Signature: Date:

_____   _____

Appendix L

Informed Consent for Research Participation

(Collection of IVEProject Pre-course Survey Data)

Title of the research: The Impact of Virtual Exchange on Japanese University Students
Principal Investigator: Eugene Hayford Addo

1. Research outline
A. Objective of the study
The purpose of this study is to investigate the impact of virtual exchange on Japanese university students' intercultural sensitivity; intercultural communication comprehension; and ethnocentrism. Teacher beliefs, course materials and classroom activities will also be assessed to ascertain how they affect the development of the intercultural competence and international posture of students.

B. Research design and procedures
The investigator will implement both qualitative and quantitative measures including collection of documentations, conducting interviews, classroom observations and the administering of surveys. Existing documents such as the current course syllabi and course materials for the English 2B course of the WLC used in Soka University will be accessed and examined. Semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions will be used to interview English teachers and students to gather information not explicitly stated in existing literature for this research context. The researcher will observe four English 2B classes in Soka University – two participating classes in the IVEProject and two non-participating classes in the IVEProject to observe how classroom instruction influences the development students' intercultural competence and international posture. The observation will include a pre-observation and post-observation interview with the teacher. The pre-observation interview will be combined with the semi-structured interview. Students will be interviewed to solicit their views and experiences in the IVEProject. Three surveys will also be administered to students to gather information on the levels of students' intercultural sensitivity, ethnocentrism and intercultural communication apprehension.

C. Releasing of study results
Research results will be included in possible publications in national or international peer-reviewed academic publications and presentations at national of international conferences or symposia. No identifying information of any participant will be apparent in any publication or conference presentation.

D. Data collection method
The Pre-Questionnaire and General Questionnaire pre-course survey data of the IVEProject will be collected at the convenience and approval of participants.

E. Selection of participants
Four WLC teachers of the English 2B course will selected for interview and observation. A total of 60 students who are enrolled in the classes of the selected teachers for this study will also be interviewed and respond to survey questionnaires. The final number of participants of this study will be dependent on the number of teachers and students who will be willing to agree to the Informed Consent Form and participate in this study.

F. Anticipated risks
There are no potential physical, psychological, nor social risks to the participants. In addition, participants are free to withdraw from the research at any time without penalty.

G. Potential benefits of the research to the participants or society

Upon completion of the present study, the findings of this study will foreground the importance of virtual exchange in mitigating the lost opportunities of Japanese students to communicate in natural settings in English with other speakers of English for the purposes of communication and cultural exchange to foster intercultural competence and international understanding. Again, the findings of this study will guide teachers into taking an active role in incorporating activities and lessons geared toward the development of the intercultural competence of their students, into their English language curricula – specifically, lessons and activities that will develop students' intercultural cultural sensitivity - and at the same time reduce ethnocentrism and intercultural communication apprehension.

2. Protecting personal information

All information obtained in this study will be kept strictly confidential and anonymous. Data collected through interviews will only be accessed by the principal investigator, Eugene Hayford Addo. All data will be stored on a portable, password protected data storage device that will be kept secure in a locked desk at the Graduate Building on the Soka University campus. Data will only be accessed via the storage device by a computer that is not connected to the Internet or a Wi-Fi connection. All data will be destroyed (electronic data will be deleted, paper interview notes and surveys responses will be shredded) by March 18, 2033.

3. Participation in research

- Participation in this research is voluntary.
- You will not be disadvantaged by not choosing to participate in this research.
- You will be able to withdraw from this research at any time without being disadvantaged or penalized.
- You will receive a copy of this informed consent form.

5. **Contact information**
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   Tokyo 192-8577 Japan
   Email: richmond@soka.ac.jp

I have read the explanation written by the investigators. I sufficiently understood about the objectives of the study, research design, procedures and methods of protecting personal information. By signing below, I agree to participate in this research.

Participant Signature: Date:

_____   _____

Investigator Signature: Date:

_____   _____

Appendix M

Japanese Translation of Intercultural Sensitivity Scale

異文化への感受性に関するアンケート

以下の文は異文化コミュニケーションに関するアンケートです。それぞれの質問に対して、正解、不正解はありません。できるだけ短時間で自分が直感的に感じたことや、思ったことに当てはまる番号を答えてください。ご協力ありがとうございます。

> 5 = 当てはまる
> 4 = やや当てはまる
> 3 = わからない
> 2 = やや当てはまらない
> 1 = 当てはまらない
>
> 文を読んだ後、自身の考えに当てはまる番号を下線部分に書いてください。

1. 自分とは異なる文化を持つ人々と交流するのは楽しい。 ＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

2. 自分とは異なる文化を持つ人々は視野が狭い。＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

3. 自分とは異なる文化を持つ人々と交流することに自信がある。 ＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

4. 自分とは異なる文化を持つ人々の前で喋ることは自分にとって難しいことだ。 ＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

5. 自分とは異なる文化を持つ人々と交流する時、いつも何をいうべきか理解している。 ＿＿＿＿＿＿

6. 自分とは異なる文化を持つ人々と交流する時、自分がなりたいだけ社交的になることができる。 ＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

7. 自分とは異なる文化を持つ人々と一緒にいるのは好きではない。 ＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

8. 自分とは異なる文化を持つ人々の価値観を尊敬する。 ＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

9. 自分とは異なる文化を持つ人々と交流するとすぐ、動揺してしまう。 ＿＿＿＿＿

10. 自分とは異なる文化を持つ人々と交流することに自信がある。 ＿＿＿＿＿

11. 自分とは異なる文化を持つ人々と交流する際に、実際に関わるまで偏見を抱かないようにしている。＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

12. 自分とは異なる文化を持つ人々と一緒にいる時、弱気になってしまう。＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

13. 自分とは異なる文化を持つ人々に対して、偏見がない。　＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

14. 自分とは異なる文化を持つ人々と交流する際注意深くなる。　＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

15. 自分とは異なる文化を持つ人と交流する時、役に立たないと感じる。＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

16. 自分とは異なる文化を持つ人々の振る舞いに敬意を持っている。　＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

17. 自分とは異なる文化を持つ人々と関わる時、できる限り相手の文化や考え方を配慮するようにしている。　＿＿＿＿＿＿

18. 自分とは異なる文化を持つ人々の意見は受け入れない。　＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

19. 交流の際に、自分とは異なる文化を持つ人との些細な考え方の違いに敏感になる。＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

20. 自分の文化は他文化と比べて優れていると思う。　＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

21. 交流する際、文化的に異なる人の意見に対して前向きな意見を言う。＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

22. 文化的に異なる人々と交流する機会を避けてしまう傾向がある。　＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

23. 相手と文化的に異なる考えがあった際に、相手の考えに対する理解をきちんと言葉にして示すようにしている。　＿＿＿＿＿＿

24. 自他文化の違いについて楽しいと感じる。　＿＿＿＿＿＿

Appendix N

Japanese Translation of Intercultural Communication Apprehension Scale

異文化コミュニケーション理解に関するアンケート

以下の文章は異文化コミュニケーションに関するアンケートです。それぞれの質問に対して、正解、不正解はありません。できるだけ短時間で自分が直感的に感じたことや、思ったことに当てはまる番号を答えてください。ご協力ありがとうございます。

---

5 = 当てはまる

4 = やや当てはまる

3 = わからない

2 = やや当てはまらない

1 = 当てはまらない

文章を読んだ後、自身の考えに当てはまる番号を空白の中に書いてください。

---

1. 他文化の人々（グループ）と交流するのが嫌いだ。 ＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

2. 一般的に、他文化の人々（グループ）と交流することは気楽だ。 ＿＿＿＿＿

3. 他文化の人々（グループ）と交流する時、緊張して気が張り詰める。 ＿＿＿＿＿＿

4. 他文化の人々（グループ）とグループディスカッションをすることが好きだ。 ＿＿＿＿＿

5. 他文化の人々（グループ）とグループディスカッションをする時、緊張して気が張り詰める。 ＿＿＿＿

6. 他文化の人々（グループ）と交流する時、落ち着いている、または平然としている。 ＿＿＿＿＿

7. 他文化の人と会話をしている時、とても緊張する。 ＿＿＿＿＿

8. 他文化の人と喋る時、自分から発言することに抵抗を感じない。 ＿＿＿＿＿

9. 普段、他文化の人（個人）と喋る時、緊張する、または気が張る。 ＿＿＿＿＿

10. 普段、他文化の人（グループ）と喋る時、落ち着いている、または平然としている。 ＿＿＿＿

11. 他文化の人（個人）と喋る時、落ち着いている。 ＿＿＿＿＿

12. 他文化の人と喋る時、自分から発言することが怖い。 ＿＿＿＿＿

13.他文化の人々と関わるという見込みが将来自分にはあると自信を持って言える。
_____

14. 他文化の人々と交流する時、自分の考えがごちゃごちゃになる、または混乱してしまう。　　_____

15. 他文化の人々と交流するのは楽しい。　　_____

16. 他文化の人々と会話することは自分にとって不快だ。　　_____

Appendix O

Japanese Translation of Generalized Ethnocentrism Scale

一般的自民族中心主義に関するアンケート (GENE)

以下は、世界における異なる場所の文化に関する設問です。素早く、それぞれの第一印象を選んでください。正解、不正解はありません。それぞれの質問に対して５段階でどの程度賛成・反対か、文の隣にある空欄に数字で示してください。

当てはまらない= 1; やや当てはまらない= 2; わからない = 3; やや当てはまる = 4; 当てはまる= 5;

1. 大多数の他の文化は自身の文化より劣っている。　＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

2. 自分の文化が他の文化にとっての模範、手本となるべきだ。　＿＿＿＿＿＿

3. 他の文化の人々が自国に来た時、彼らの振る舞いは変だと思う。　＿＿＿＿＿

4. 他国の生活様式は自国のものと同等に妥当なものだ。　＿＿＿＿＿＿

5. 他の文化は自身の文化を真似するべきだ。　＿＿＿＿＿＿

6. 他の文化の価値観や習慣に興味がない。　＿＿＿＿＿＿

7.自国の人々は他の文化から学ぶことがたくさんある。　＿＿＿＿＿

8. 他文化の人々は彼らにとって何が正しいことなのか分かっていない。＿＿＿＿＿

9. 他文化の価値観や習慣を尊敬している。　＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

10. 他の文化は自国の文化を見習う方が賢明だと思う。　＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

11. 大多数の多文化の人々は我々の文化様式で生活した方が、より幸福になれると思う。　＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

12. 他文化の友達がたくさんいる。　＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

13. 自国文化の生活様式は、「とても良い」とされている他文化と同等のものだ。　＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

14. 他国の生活様式は自国と同等なほど妥当なものではない。　＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

15. 他国の価値観や習慣にとても興味がある。　＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

16. 異なる人々を評価する時に、自身の価値観を基準として判断する。　＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

17. 私は自分と考え方が似ている人を素晴らしい、もしくは尊敬に値する人間だと考えており、異なる考え方の人より優れていると考えている。　＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

18. 自分と考えの異なる人とは協力しない。　＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

Appendix P

Table 1

Measures to reduce ethnocentrism and promote multiculturalism (Tagle, 2021)

1. Acknowledging the importance one has, because of their ethnic origin.
2. Be cognizant of your ethnocentric attitudes and their intensity, be open to modifying your actions and attitude's when necessary, and understand why change is important.
3. Be appreciative of differences, and when individuals in your environment behave differently, do not conclude that they are making a mistake.
4. Engage individuals of a different cultural backgrounds in communication and ask questions in order to understand the other group about their cultural practices.
5. Educate yourself about other ethnic groups by reading, participating in training sessions, lectures and presentations geared towards the understanding of other cultural groups.
6. Always endeavor to understand and be understood. When necessary, rephrase your questions or comments for the benefit of the person to foster mutual understanding.
7. Strive to identify stereotypes, discrimination and prejudices and speak up when they occur.
8. As a manager of a team, review the goals and norms of your team regularly to ascertain if group goals and practices are predicated on inclusion and pluralism. And, if a faction develops and tend to dominate other group members, be open to alterations.
9. Learn about the lifestyles and traditions of other countries. You can appreciate cultural diversity when you maintain an open mind to diversity.
10. Never make assumptions and remember that individuals of a different cultural backgrounds have traditions, customs and values that must be respected.
11. Remember the golden rule "treat people the way you would want them to treat you" and this would result in mutual respect.

12. Design and include social intelligence training in your routines to advance active listening and mutual respect and this might result in intercultural collaboration.
13. Refrain from taking offense, and when you realize that a comment you are about to pass might be offensive, pause and rephrase your statement in order to not offend those you are communicating with.

Appendix Q

Table 11

Intercultural Sensitivity Survey Results for IVE Classes

Item	M	SD
1. I enjoy interacting with people from different cultures.	4.09	0.95
2. I think people from other cultures are narrow-minded.	4.09	1.08
3. I am pretty sure of myself in interacting with people from different cultures	2.83	1.19
4. I find it very hard to talk in front of people from different cultures.	2.39	1.08
5. I always know what to say when interacting with people from different cultures.	2.87	1.09
6. I can be as sociable as I want to be when interacting with people from different cultures.	3.22	1.24
7. I don't like to be with people from different cultures.	3.52	1.16
8. I respect the values of people from different cultures	4.39	0.66
9. I get upset easily when interacting with people from different cultures.	2.96	1.11
10. I feel confident when interacting with people from different cultures.	2.57	1.00
11. I tend to wait before forming an impression of culturally-distinct counterparts.	3.70	1.06
12. I often get discouraged when I am with people from different cultures.	3.39	1.07
13. I am open-minded to people from different cultures.	3.48	1.12
14. I am very observant when interacting with people from different cultures.	3.61	1.08
15. I often feel useless when interacting with people from different cultures.	3.43	1.31
16. I respect the ways people from different cultures behave.	4.26	0.86
17. I try to obtain as much information as I can when interacting with people from different cultures.	4.00	1.09
18. I would not accept the opinions of people from different cultures.	4.57	0.95

19. I am sensitive to my culturally-distinct counterpart's subtle meanings during our interaction.	3.09	1.04
20. I think my culture is better than other cultures.	2.91	1.04
21. I often give positive responses to my culturally different counterpart during our interaction.	4.04	0.82
22. I avoid those situations where I will have to deal with culturally-distinct persons	2.9	1.12
23. I often show my culturally-distinct counterpart my understanding through verbal or nonverbal cues.	3.74	1.01
24. I have a feeling of enjoyment towards differences between my culturally-distinct counterpart and me.	4.26	0.96

Appendix R

Table 12

Intercultural Communication Apprehension Survey Results for IVE Classes

Item	*M*	*SD*
1. I dislike interacting with people from different cultures.	2.09	1.08
2. Generally, I am comfortable interacting with a group of people from different cultures.	2.96	1,02
3. I am tense and nervous while interacting with people from different cultures.	3.13	1.10
4. I like to get involved in group discussions with others who are from different cultures.	3.30	1.10
5. Engaging in a group discussion with people from different cultures makes me tense and nervous.	3.17	1.15
6. I am calm and relaxed with interacting with a group of people who are from different cultures.	2.74	1.32
7. While participating in a conversation with a person from a different culture, I feel very nervous.	2.96	1.30
8. I have no fear of speaking up - in a conversation with a person from a different culture.	2.70	1.11
9. Ordinarily I am very tense and nervous in conversations with a person from a different culture.	3.00	1.31
10. Ordinarily I am very calm and relaxed in conversations with a person from a different culture.	3.00	1.31
11. While conversing with a person from a different culture I feel very relaxed.	3.13	1.18
12. I'm afraid to speak up in conversations with a person from a different culture.	3.21	1.24
13. I face the prospect of interacting with people from different cultures with confidence.	3.21	1.31

14. My thoughts become confused and jumbled when interacting with people from different cultures.	3.61	1.27
15. I enjoy interacting with people from different cultures	4.09	0.95
16. Communicating with people from different cultures makes me feel uncomfortable.	1.78	1.09

Appendix S

Table 13

Ethnocentrism Survey Results for IVE Classes

Item	M	SD
1. Most other cultures are backward compared to my culture.	2.09	1.24
2. My culture should be the role model for other cultures.	2.65	1.26
3. People from other cultures act strange when they come to my culture.	2.35	1.23
4. Lifestyles in other cultures are just as valid as those in my culture.	2.96	1.19
5. Other cultures should try to be more like my culture.	2.39	1.16
6. I am not interested in the values and customs of other cultures.	2.26	1.29
7. People in my culture could learn a lot from people in other cultures.	3.00	1.41
8. Most people from other cultures just don't know what's good for them.	2.70	1.22
9. I respect the values and customs of other cultures.	2.65	1.40
10. Other cultures are smart to look up to our culture.	2.83	1.30
11. Most people would be happier if they lived like people in my culture.	2.74	1.25
12. I have many friends from different cultures.	2.74	1.29
13. People in my culture have just about the best lifestyles of anywhere.	3.61	1.03
14. Lifestyles in other cultures are not as valid as those in my culture.	2.78	1.13
15. I am very interested in the values and customs of other cultures.	4.09	1.04
16. I apply my values when judging people who are different.	3.04	1.11
17. I see people who are similar to me as virtuous.	2.70	1.26
18. I do not cooperate with people who are different.	1.74	0.92

Appendix T

Table 14

Intercultural Sensitivity Survey Results for non-IVE Classes

Item	M	SD
1. I enjoy interacting with people from different cultures.	4.19	0.91
2. I think people from other cultures are narrow-minded.	4.25	0.93
3. I am pretty sure of myself in interacting with people from different cultures	2.63	1.20
4. I find it very hard to talk in front of people from different cultures.	2.19	1.17
5. I always know what to say when interacting with people from different cultures.	2.63	0.81
6. I can be as sociable as I want to be when interacting with people from different cultures.	2.88	1.02
7. I don't like to be with people from different cultures.	4.00	1.03
8. I respect the values of people from different cultures	4.81	0.40
9. I get upset easily when interacting with people from different cultures.	3.13	1.36
10. I feel confident when interacting with people from different cultures.	2.81	1.22
11. I tend to wait before forming an impression of culturally-distinct counterparts.	3.94	1.24
12. I often get discouraged when I am with people from different cultures.	3.19	1.22
13. I am open-minded to people from different cultures.	3.31	1.14
14. I am very observant when interacting with people from different cultures.	3.63	1.09
15. I often feel useless when interacting with people from different cultures.	3.94	1.12
16. I respect the ways people from different cultures behave.	4.19	0.98
17. I try to obtain as much information as I can when interacting with people from different cultures.	4.50	0.52
18. I would not accept the opinions of people from different cultures.	4.88	0.34

19. I am sensitive to my culturally-distinct counterpart's subtle meanings during our interaction.	2.81	1.17
20. I think my culture is better than other cultures.	2.56	1.26
21. I often give positive responses to my culturally different counterpart during our interaction.	4.13	0.81
22. I avoid those situations where I will have to deal with culturally-distinct persons	3.13	1.31
23. I often show my culturally-distinct counterpart my understanding through verbal or nonverbal cues.	3.88	0.89
24. I have a feeling of enjoyment towards differences between my culturally-distinct counterpart and me.	4.38	0.89

Appendix U

Table 15

Intercultural Communication Apprehension Survey Results for non-IVE Classes

Items	*M*	*SD*
1. I dislike interacting with people from different cultures.	1.75	1.00
2. Generally, I am comfortable interacting with a group of people from different cultures.	2.44	0.96
3. I am tense and nervous while interacting with people from different cultures.	3.06	1.29
4. I like to get involved in group discussions with others who are from different cultures.	2.88	1.15
5. Engaging in a group discussion with people from different cultures makes me tense and nervous.	3.06	1.53
6. I am calm and relaxed with interacting with a group of people who are from different cultures.	2.50	1.03
7. While participating in a conversation with a person from a different culture, I feel very nervous.	2.75	1.48
8. I have no fear of speaking up - in a conversation with a person from a different culture.	3.13	1.33
9. Ordinarily I am very tense and nervous in conversations with a person from a different culture.	2.81	1.33
10. Ordinarily I am very calm and relaxed in conversations with a person from a different culture.	2.94	1.39
11. While conversing with a person from a different culture I feel very relaxed.	2.75	1.34
12. I'm afraid to speak up in conversations with a person from a different culture.	2.81	1.60

13. I face the prospect of interacting with people from different cultures with confidence.	2.94	1.12
14. My thoughts become confused and jumbled when interacting with people from different cultures.	3.00	1.51
15. I enjoy interacting with people from different cultures	4.06	1.06
16. Communicating with people from different cultures makes me feel uncomfortable.	1.25	0.77

Appendix V

Table 16

Ethnocentrism Survey Results for non-IVE Classes

Items	M	SD
1. Most other cultures are backward compared to my culture.	1.44	0.81
2. My culture should be the role model for other cultures.	2.19	1.42
3. People from other cultures act strange when they come to my culture.	1.75	0.86
4. Lifestyles in other cultures are just as valid as those in my culture.	3.81	1.28
5. Other cultures should try to be more like my culture.	1.56	0.63
6. I am not interested in the values and customs of other cultures.	1.875	1.09
7. People in my culture could learn a lot from people in other cultures.	4.25	1.06
8. Most people from other cultures just don't know what's good for them.	2.12	1.08
9. I respect the values and customs of other cultures.	4.56	0.63
10. Other cultures are smart to look up to our culture.	1.88	0.96
11. Most people would be happier if they lived like people in my culture.	2.18	1.17
12. I have many friends from different cultures.	1.69	1.01
13. People in my culture have just about the best lifestyles of anywhere.	3.38	1.15
14. Lifestyles in other cultures are not as valid as those in my culture.	2.15	1.02
15. I am very interested in the values and customs of other cultures.	4.25	1.06
16. I apply my values when judging people who are different.	2.75	1.24
17. I see people who are similar to me as virtuous.	1.88	0.96
18. I do not cooperate with people who are different.	1.38	0.72