Analyzing Learning Effect of Using Intercultural Communication Training Methodology in Foreign Language Class

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This paper analyzes the learning effect of using intercultural communication training (hereafter ICT) methodology in the college level English class whose focus was on intercultural communication education. Critical incident in the form of role play was used as a teaching method in the author's English class.   The analysis of the students' responses to the discussion questions in the worksheets revealed that they acquired a certain level of cultural awareness and cultural self-awareness through this class.   The final section of the paper analyzes the present class based on Kolb's experiential learning cycle.

Key Word: foreign language education, intercultural communication education, intercultural communication training

Ⅰ．Foreign Language Education and Intercultural Communication Education

"Globalization" has become a buzzword that draws people's attention in various fields throughout the world, and the field of education is not an exception.   Nowadays, cultivating foreign language competence and intercultural communication competence are the mottoes of the professionals who have been engaging in foreign language teaching.   In the English education in Japan, especially, this tendency has strengthened since the methodology of the English teaching shifted from audio-lingual approach to communicative approach that regards foreign language learning as one of the communication activities. Kramsch [1] points out that it is important to teach culture in foreign language classes in order to avoid miscommunication.   Seelye [2] states, "Knowledge of linguistic structure alone does not carry with it any special insight into the political, social, religious, or economic system.   Or even insight into when you should talk and when you should keep your mouth shut."   Furthermore, Martinez-Gibson [3] argues that if cultural information is not taught as a part of communicative competence, complete communication may not happen. The above statements all suggest a close connection between foreign language education and intercultural communication education.

There are four communicative competences that are closely related to language education, namely, "grammatical competence," "discourse competence," "sociolinguistic competence," and "strategic

competence." [4]   These are communicative competences that need to be acquired in both native language education and foreign language education.   Among them, the author considers that sociolinguistic competence and strategic competence are especially important in the foreign language course whose focus was on intercultural communication education.   Sociolinguistic competence is related to the knowledge and skill that enable people engaging in communication to behave appropriately.   Here, being able to adjust their own behavior to the social context where they are is the key issue.   On the other hand, strategic competence is the ability to maintain or change tracks of communication for reducing the possibility of miscommunication.   These competences are important in both native language education and foreign language education.   However, in intercultural context, because of the difficulty in making a solid decision about the way we behave, it becomes necessary to expand our psychological framework and make a judgment by considering the other person's perspective before taking any action.   Under these circumstances, the ability to show empathy to the other person is required.   By introducing the expression, "English for intercultural communication," Baxter [5] argues that ICT methodology is useful for fostering strategic competence.

About 25 years ago, Damen [6] mentioned that as the target of the English education expanded to the people who were culturally diverse, the concept of intercultural communication became indispensable to the English education in the U.S.   Nowadays, foreigners come to Japan from all over the world and the number of those people who wish to settle down in the country has been increasing.   When we think about teaching them Japanese as the foreign language, we need to take Damen's message seriously.   Considering the fact that living within diversity has become the significant issue which people in any place in the world need to face, foreign language teachers will need to renew their thought about the relationship between foreign language education and intercultural communication education.

Ⅱ. ICT Methodology and Its Application to the English language Class

1. Typology of ICT Methodology

In general, ICT methodology is based on the three elements of learning, namely, "cognitive (knowledge)", "affective" and "behavioral" aspects [7][8].   According to Bennett, [9] about the design of a training model, each of the above elements is related to "training purpose," about the process of a training, the focus is either on "knowledge" or "experience", and about the contents of a training, there are "culture general" and "culture specific" approaches.   Table 1 shows "Typology of Intercultural Training." [10]   In "culture general" approach, trainees in the training learn that there are cultural variations in people's perspectives and behavioral practices, and these differences affect their behavior and way of interaction with others.   On the other hand, in "culture specific" approach, a specific culture becomes the focus of

study, and the trainees learn appropriate patterns of behavior and perspectives proper to the target culture.

Table 1 Typology of Intercultural Training
(Fowler and Blohm, p. 40, 2004)

	Didactic	Experiential
Culture-general	Didactic culture-general	Experiential culture-general
Culture-specific	Didactic culture-specific	Experiential culture-specific

2. Methodology Used in the Author's English Class

The author conducted a ninety-minute class in the English course entitled "Intercultural Communication."   The goal of this course was "to deepen cultural awareness and cultural self-awareness of the students, and to nurture their positive attitude toward cultural diversity."   In the conducted class the students watched the videotaped role play which described the interaction between a Japanese international student and her American classmates, analyzed the conflict of intercultural communication in it, and explored possible solutions through group discussions in the class.

Table 2 shows intercultural training activities presented by Paige and Martin [11].   Here, learning activities used in intercultural training are listed in order of such elements as behavioral requirements and familiarity to the trainees, risk level of use, and culture learning emphasis of the activity.   Originally, role

Table 2   Sequencing Intercultural Training Activities
(Paige and Martin, p. 55, 1996)

Sequencing Order of Learning Activities	Behavioral Requirements of Learning Activities	Familiarity and Risk Levels Associated with Learning Activities	Culture Learning Emphasis
1. Lectures	Passive	Low risk of failure, self-disclosure, embarrassment, etc; familiar activity for most learners	Cognitive
2. Discussions	Active	Low risk; familiar activity for most learners	Cognitive
3. Group problem solving	Active	Medium risk: familiar activity for some learners	Cognitive
4. Critical incidents, Case studies	Passive (reflection) and active (discussion)	Medium risk: unfamiliar activity for many learners	Cognitive; Affective
5. Role plays	Active	High risk; unfamiliar activity for many learners	Affective; Behavioral
6. Simulations	Active	High risk; unfamiliar activity for most learners	Affective; Behavioral

play is regarded as an affective behavioral approach with high risk.　Since this is an unfamiliar activity for many learners, trainer needs to pay a special attention during the training session.　However, in the author's class, the students watched the role play in the video, and worked on the intercultural issue illustrated in it.　Thus, when this class applies to Paige and Martin's list, we can understand that the learning activity used in this class is "critical incident."　In dealing with critical incident, in general, trainees are required to engage in both passive and active learning activities of medium risk, where a culture learning emphasis is on cognitive and affective aspects.

　　　　After an extensive literature review, Mizuta [12] introduces 3 types of approach of ICT methodology (Fig. 1).　In the present class, "context-analysis training" in "cognitive approach" and "culture-focused training" in "cognitive-affective approach" were used to achieve the course goal.　A general procedure in "context-analysis training" is as follows:　Trainees watch an audiovisual material, such as video and DVD, and analyze the context described in it.　After that, through group discussion trainees learn that individuals' cognitive process and their perception about an event are culture specific.　In addition, this approach can be used in the learning activities, such as critical incidents, case study, and video that deal with misunderstandings in intercultural context.　Here, trainees are asked to come up with solutions for the intercultural issues described or implied in the activity.

Cognitive-affective approach

(1. Individual-focused);
e.g. T-group, sensitivity
group

(2. Culture-focused)
e.g. Contrast American,
ICW (Intercultural
Communication
Workshop)

Cognitive approach

e.g. context-analysis training

Intellectual

Enlightening Cultural
Awareness & Cultural Self-
awareness

Experiential

Behavioral-affective
approach

Purpose of training

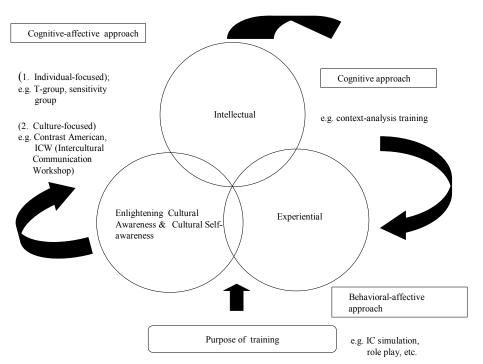e.g. IC simulation,
role play, etc.

Fig. 1 Category of Intercultural Communication Training
(*The figure was created by the author based on Mizuta, 1990)

Next, "culture-focused training" is used for the purpose of deepening trainees' cultural self-awareness.   "Contrast American Method" developed by Stewart [13] is an example of this training method.   In Contrast American Method, the target of a training is set for the U.S. Americans.   In the training session, trainees observe a role play played by the other trainees, or watch a video that illustrates an interaction between an American character, who holds a cultural assumption of the average U.S. Americans and the other character, who is from a different culture and holds the contrastive cultural assumption to the U.S. culture.   Then, through a reflective activity, such as group discussion, the trainees become aware that people take actions consciously and unconsciously based on their own cultural framework and assumptions.   There is a similar training technique to Contrast American Method called "Contrast Culture Method (hereafter CCM)."   In CCM, one of the role players or one of the characters in the video is called "reference person" who belongs to the same culture with the trainees.   On the other hand, the other role player or the other character in the video is called "contrast person" who presents a contrastive communication practices to the reference person. In the past, video materials with the technique of CCM were developed for IC course and their learning effects were also reported [14][15].   Moreover, concerning the IC video material for foreign language course, a material that used "cultural assimilator" was developed for Japanese language learners [16].   However, there is a paucity of the material that applies ICT methodology to English courses.

Ⅲ．Detail of the Author's English Class

The English class introduced in this paper is one 90-minute class in the 14-week course.   The goal of this course was "to deepen cultural awareness and cultural self-awareness of the students, and to nurture their positive attitude toward cultural diversity."   This class was conducted at K university, and a total number of forty-one students attended the class.   The IC material used in this class is the critical incident entitled "Is silence worth gold?"   This material was developed based on the role play that was created by the present author when she conducted an IC workshop for the staff at P university in the U.S.   Originally, the author created four different critical incidents, and the critical incident introduced here is one of them.   After the workshop, four role plays were videotaped at the studio of P university, and later on, the author developed the teaching material for her English class by using this video.

The following are the ICT methodology relevant to the critical incident used in this class and the class procedure.   First of all, one Japanese international student and two American students at P university participated in the workshop as role players.   The critical incident illustrated an interaction between a Japanese college student, Hideko, who has been studying at an American university for three months, and her classmates, Nancy and Mike (Appendix).   A cultural theme dealt with in the critical incident is

"difference in communication style and cultural value between Japanese and Americans," and ICT methodology used here is a combination of "context-analysis training" and "culture-focused training" shown in Fig. 1.

The procedure of the class is as follows.
(1) One week before the class was conducted, the students were given the script of the role play, i.e., critical incident, and Worksheet 1 that included comprehension questions about the critical incident and discussion questions.   (2) In the conducted class, the students were divided into groups of 5 or 6 people, and watched the videotaped role play once.   After the teacher-trainer's [17] explanation about the English expressions in the script, the students checked the answers for the comprehensive questions in their own group, first, and then, the answers were checked in the whole class.   (3) The students watched the video again, and shared their responses to the discussion questions in Worksheet 1 in their group.   After that, they reported the findings of the group discussion to the class.   (4) The teacher-trainer debriefed the activity so far by giving a short lecture about "communication style" and "cultural value" based on IC theory.   The lecture was given in English with supplementary explanations by Japanese.   (5) Next, the students were instructed to write their responses to the questions in Worksheet 2.   After they shared their responses in the group, they reported the findings to the class.   (6) Finally, the students filled in the feedback sheet of the class, and the class ended.

Here, there are two major reasons why "culture specific" approach which focused on the cultural difference between Japanese and U.S. Americans was used for the present class.   One of the reasons is that the material used in the class was based on the role play developed for the workshop whose focus was on the cultural difference between Japanese and U.S. Americans.   For another reason, since this class was the first opportunity for the students to experience ICT, the present author considered that focusing on the culture which seems to be familiar to the students, that is, u.s. culture, would give them a smooth entry to their new experience of ICT.   No students in the class had a living experience in the U.S., and the themes of "communication style" and "cultural value" had not been dealt with in this course before this class was conducted.

Ⅳ． Learning Effect of Using ICT Methodology in the Foreign Language Class

In this section, by analyzing the students' responses to the discussion questions in the two worksheets, the author will examine the learning effect acquired by the students in this class.

1． Result of Worksheet 1
[Q1.   What kind of intercultural issues did you find in the video?]

The result showed that about 49 percent of the response (48.8 %) was related to "comparison between Japanese and American characteristics in interpersonal communication."　The following key words appeared in the students' responses: "indirect vs. direct," "passive vs. active," "poor at expressing one's own feeling vs. good at expressing one's own feeling," "shy vs. friendly," "being polite (*tatemae*) vs. being honest (*honne*)."　Here, judging from the contents of the students comments, it became clear that the former word indicated Japanese characteristics while the latter indicated American characteristics. Next, about 40 percent of the response (39.5 %) was related to "Japanese characteristics in interpersonal communication."　For example, some students reported, "The Japanese do not assert themselves," "The Japanese prefer to comply with others' opinion," etc.　Finally, about 5 percent of the response (4.7 %) was related to "American characteristics in interpersonal communication." For example, "Americans assert themselves strongly," "Americans are decisive."　The rest of the responses were not categorized into any of the above (7.0 %).

[Q2.　What do you think Hideko may have felt about Nancy and Mike's behavior?]

The result showed that about 68 percent of the response (67.6 %) was related to "affective response." The following are the examples of the students' comments: "She was confused," "She was embarrassed," "She felt isolated," "She felt overwhelmed," "She was surprised," "She felt uncomfortable,"　"She felt strange."　About thirty-three percent of the response (32.4 %) was related to "cognitive response," which showed characteristics of Americans.　For example, some students reported, "They are assertive." "They are super energetic." "They are friendly," and "They are casual."

[Q3.　What do you think Nancy and Mike may have felt about Hideko's behavior?]

About 64 percent (64.4 %) of the response was related to "cognitive response," that is, "their understanding about Hideko's behavior."　For example, "She is indecisive," "She doesn't express her thoughts," "In fact, she doesn't want to go out with Nancy and Mike," "They can't understand Hideko," and "She is irresponsible."　The rest of the response (35.6 %) was related to "affective response," that is, "their feelings about Hideko's behavior."　For example, some students reported, "They felt uncomfortable," and "They felt irritated."　Here, it is notable that more "affective" responses were found when the students reported Hideko's feelings while more "cognitive" responses were found when they reported the feelings of Nancy and Mike.　This result appears to indicate that the students had a quasi-intercultural experience by analyzing the critical incident from Hideko's viewpoint and by showing sympathy to Hideko.

[Q4.   Find the expressions in the role play script, which, you think, illustrate Japanese and/or American communication styles.]

Here, such phrases as "Oh, yes, anytime," "No, nothing special," "Friday…," and   "Oh, yes" were reported as the examples of Japanese communication style.   On the other hand, "You said, 'anytime', so I just said, 'Friday'," and "Sounds good" were reported as the examples of American communication style.

2.   Result of Worksheet 2

[Q1.   What do we need to keep in mind in order to tackle similar intercultural issues illustrated in the video in the future?]

About thirty-seven percent of the response (36.8 %) was related to "Solutions for IC issue in general." The following are the students' sample answers: "Study one's own culture and the other's culture," "Study nonverbal communication," "Do not stick to one's own cultural assumptions and social customs," "Be conscious of the usage of verbal expressions in one's own culture and consider their meanings in different cultures," and "Prepare for the misunderstandings which can happen in the intercultural contexts."   About thirty percent (30.1 %) was related to "Advice for the Japanese students who go to the U.S. for study abroad in the future."   Here, most of the responses were categorized into "Communicate one's own thoughts and opinions clearly."   Another thirty percent (30.1 %) was related to "Advice for Americans who accept international students from Japan."   For instance, "Show concern for the students," "Interact with the students patiently" were typical answers.

[Q2.   What do you think about the Japanese proverb, "Silence is golden?"]

"Is silence worth gold?" was the title of this critical incident.   Q2 was asked to seek for the students' attitude toward the traditional Japanese proverb, "Silence is golden."

Over fifty percent of the response (52.2 %) indicated that "keeping silent in public is either good or bad depending on the circumstances," which implied that the students had a neutral attitude toward this proverb.   One student stated, "If my communication partner is from the same culture, keeping silent can bring a good result.   But when we are from different cultures, we cannot communicate successfully without words."   Another student stated as follows:

> "As the proverb, 'Least said, soonest mended' goes, silence has been treasured from the past in Japan, moreover, has been considered a good thing.   I think this proverb is wonderful because silence is also the means of communication.   But in foreign countries we can communicate our thoughts to others only through verbal communication.   Therefore, we should know that this proverb is not universal.   I think both of us are just trying to be polite in our own way."

About thirty-eight percent of the response (37.5 %) was related to "Importance of communicating one's own thoughts verbally."   One student stated, "This proverb might be correct, but I think this way of thinking created the Japanese characteristic which tends to refrain from telling one's own thoughts in public."   Another student stated, "We do not feel comfortable in silence.   The only time we feel comfortable in silence is when we are with someone we can feel at ease with.   So, I can't support this proverb."   Lastly, about 10 percent of the response supported the message implied in this proverb.

Ⅴ．Application of Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle to this Class

In this section, by applying the present class to Kolb's [18] experiential learning cycle, the author will give a further analysis of her class.   Kolb developed an experiential learning cycle consisting of a four-part framework (Fig. 2).   This framework addresses the four learning styles, namely, "Concrete Experience," "Reflective Observation," "Abstract Conceptualization," and "Active Experimentation."

The students in the present class began their study by watching the videotaped critical incident. Therefore, we can say that the present class started with "Concrete Experience." Next, the students engaged in "Reflective Observation" by engaging in a variety of activities, such as analyzing the IC issue illustrated in the critical incident, working on Worksheet 1 and sharing their opinions in the group discussion and class discussion.   In "Abstract Conceptualization," based on IC theory on cultural value and communication style, the teacher-trainer debriefed the class by giving the lecture on the cultural patterns about the target cultures, that is, Japanese and U.S. culture in this case,.   Finally, in "Active Experimentation" the students worked on Worksheet 2 and tried to seek for the possible solutions for the IC issue demonstrated in the critical incident by applying the case to their real life situation. Here, it is notable that the class doesn't need to start with a particular learning style, but can start with any element in this model.
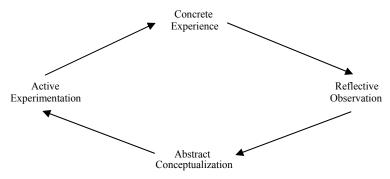

Fig. 2   Kolb's Learning Preference Cycle

Fowler and Blohm point out that certain cultural groups prefer certain learning styles [10]. Considering that generation is one example of subculture in contrast to the mainstream culture, there seems to exist a difference in a preferred learning style between adult learners and college students. In spite of the existence of individual differences, for adult learners, especially, the people who are not familiar with experiential learning, starting the class (training) with "Concrete Experience" may cause resistance to their further learning. On the other hand, in college students' case, by beginning the cycle with "Concrete Experience" and giving them a fun surprise, it will be possible for the teacher-trainer to promote their affective learning, one of the important goals in ICT.

Ⅵ. Conclusion

In the English class introduced in this paper, "culture specific" approach was used. The pitfall that we, as a teacher trainer, should note is that when we deal with culture in any educational setting, there is always possibility of producing cultural stereotypes among the students. As Fowler and Blohm [10] pointed out, one of the mistakes repeatedly made in intercultural training is the reliance on either didactic or experiential methods, to the exclusion of the other. By using a didactic method, that is, lecturing about the concept of the target study, we will be able to lessen the risk of stereotype. Paige and Martin [11] argue that "the most important facilitation skill is the ability to debrief, which means being able to place learning into a conceptual perspective" (p. 55). In the present case, during the debriefing session of the class, the teacher-trainer should point out that the role play did not necessarily describe Japanese and American people's behaviors, but that it only presented possible causes of misunderstandings in intercultural context. Seelye [2] argues that conflict is present whenever two cultures come into contact because of a clash of values, that is, a cultural difference in the perception of the appropriate way to satisfy basic physical and psychological needs (p. 57). It is necessary for the teacher-trainer to encourage the students to look at the issue from a holistic point of view rather than regard it solely as the miscommunication between Japanese and the U.S. Americans.

For another solution for preventing the students from having stereotypes, it is also possible to present the present critical incident in the form of CCM introduced previously. More concretely, if we plan to remake the present case for CCM, we will be able to change the setting of the critical incident from "Hideko, a Japanese international student interacts with her American classmates" into "Hideko, a Japanese international student interacts with her classmates who are from unknown culture." However, concerning the present class, by analyzing the students' responses to the worksheets and feedback sheet after the class, it became clear that they were aware that culturally prescribed behavioral patterns and values could affect people's communication styles and their interaction with people who had different

cultural backgrounds.   Thus, we will be able to say that "culture specific" approach can also make the effective tool as well in that it can bring a similar learning effect to CCM depending on the teacher-trainer's facilitation skill.

In conclusion, the goal of this English class was to raise the students' cultural awareness and cultural self-awareness by using ICT methodology.   The findings of the analyses of the students' feedback to the class activities demonstrated that the students acquired a variety of awareness, and in this sense, the present class was successful to some extent.   However, in order to promote students' further learning effects, it is mandatory to develop a more thorough teaching plan based on ICT which is applicable to the whole aspect of the course.

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Appendix
(Script of the video)
Is Silence Worth Gold?

Situation of the Skit

The characters are two Americans, Mike and Nancy, and one Japanese girl, Hideko.   They are talking in the cafeteria.

M= Mike, N=Nancy, H=Hideko

M: You know what?   Three of us should do something together.

N: Yeah, why don't we see a movie?

M: Yeah, that sounds good.

N: Do you want to see a movie, Hideko?

H: Oh, yes.

N: O.K. I'd like to see Kurosawa's movie.   It's on at Film Center.

M: What is that?

N: Well, it's a film with a Japanese film director.   So, it should be really good.   It's in Japanese, but there are English subtitles.   For me, I want to see how good my Japanese is, so, I'll see if there are any phrases I could understand.

   (To Hideko) # Would you like to see that, or do you have any film you'd like to see?

H: Oh, no nothing special.   Kurosawa's movies are popular in Japan.

M: O.K.   Let's see it, then.   See, ah, when should we go?
     I'm free tonight.   And I'm free all weekend.

N: Oh, I have something to do on Sunday, but other than that, I'm free.   Uh, what about you, Hideko?

H: Oh, yes, anytime.

M: O.K. How about Friday night after classes?

N: O.K. Good.   The films start at five and seven.   I'd rather go for seven.

M: O.K.

H: Friday…

N: Is something wrong with Friday?

H: Yes.   I'm invited by my host family for dinner on Friday.

N: Sharks.

M: Oh, you said, "Anytime," so I just said "Friday".   Well, ah, how about Saturday?

N: Yeah.

H: Yes, I'm fine.

M: O.K. The movie starts at seven.   So, we should probably meet around six thirty, say, ah, here.

N: O.K. Yeah.   Sounds good to me.   Ah, what about you, Hideko?

H: Yeah, here, Saturday, and six thirty.

M: Right.   Great.

N: That sounds good.   That'll be great.

H: Ah, I have a class, so I have to go now.

N & M: O.K. See you.

H: See you on Sunday.

N & M: No, on Saturday.   See you, bye.

…………………………………

N: (To Mike) You know what?

M: What?

N: I have a feeling like she's not really interested.   I'm not sure if she wants to go with us.

M: Yeah.   I thought so, too.