

An exploration of intercultural competence among Japanese: towards a more balanced understanding of emic and etic perspectives

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Willem de Goei

School of Environment, Education and Development

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ABSTRACT

In an increasingly globalised world, the development of intercultural competence (IC) among Japanese English as a foreign language (EFL) students has gained great importance. However, an adherence to native speaker norms, essentialist views of culture, and an inability of the English education system in Japan to promote the use of English as a tool for intercultural communication pose major challenges to the development of IC in Japan. In order to raise awareness about the way IC may be developed among Japanese EFL students in Japan, this study aims to gain a more balanced understanding of emic and etic perspectives of IC in a Japanese context. After reviewing relevant literature on IC and its development, two narrative interviews with experienced Japanese intercultural communicators were conducted in order to gain a better understanding of what IC means from a Japanese perspective. Through an integrative (inductive and deductive) approach to thematic analysis, the following three main themes were identified as important components of IC revealed in both participants' narratives: 1) willingness to engage with otherness and ability to see from others' perspectives; 2) knowledge/awareness of one's own and other culture(s) and communication style(s) and ability to adjust; and 3) ability to use English actively and confidently as a tool for intercultural communication. Based on a contextualised discussion of the themes; the participants' restoried narratives; relevant IC literature; and the researcher's own experience, this dissertation offers some insights into what IC means from a Japanese point of view, as well as presenting tentative suggestions as how to go about developing IC among Japanese EFL students in Japan.

DECLARATION

No portion of the work referred to in the dissertation has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning.

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1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

In this chapter, after a brief discussion of the importance of IC, I will outline my personal and professional background and present the aim and research questions of this dissertation.

1.1. Introduction

In today's globalised world, most intercultural communication takes place through the medium of English. This does not mean, however, that linguistic competence in either English as a native language (ENL) or English as a foreign language (EFL) guarantees successful communication between people from different cultures. As English is used by a growing number of non-native English speakers and has become the prevailing lingua franca (ELF) or international language (EIL) of choice (Crystal, 1997), there is an increased need for both native and non-native speakers of English to develop intercultural competence (henceforth, IC), i.e. 'the ability to communicate with people of other cultures by minimizing the potential for conflict and misunderstanding' (Shibata, 1998:106). In the wake of the paradigm shift from EFL to EIL, the Japanese Ministry of Education (MOE or MEXT), in an effort to promote internationalisation and improve its population's English ability, has devoted itself to 'the development of Japanese citizens who can live in the international community' (MOE, 1995 in Aspinall, 2013:1). If such an ambitious scheme is to be successful, however, Japanese EFL students in Japan, besides linguistic and communicative competence in English, need to develop IC.

1.2. Personal and professional background

In his discussion of international education policy in Japan, Aspinall (2013:187) observes that 'the existing English language education system is one that spreads

misery and failure equally throughout the land'. Reflecting on the six years I spent teaching English at a national university and a private vocational college in Japan, my experiences and conversations with Japanese students, educators and policy makers confirm Aspinall's grim conclusion. Although upon entering tertiary educational institutions most Japanese students will have had six years of formal secondary English education, in my observation, the majority of them generally demonstrate very poor English communication skills. This observation is supported by the fact that Japan has one of the lowest average scores on the TOEFL test (Test of English as a Foreign Language) (ETS, 2013).

In Japan, there is a commonly held belief that, through the study of English, Japanese students will naturally acquire an ability to interact with non-Japanese people (Koike and Tanaka, 1995). In reality, however, as illustrated by Yoshino (2002:138), the study of English at the pre-tertiary level 'is a domestic affair and has little to do with communication with non-Japanese speakers'. It is not surprising, then, that many of my Japanese students are unaccustomed to intercultural encounters and often lack IC. Nevertheless, as most of my students at the vocational college, for instance, will find employment in the service industry either in Japan or in other Asian countries, they will increasingly find themselves in intercultural situations in which a certain level of IC is highly desirable.

Despite the fact that foreign language teachers are in a great position to develop students' IC through the teaching of English, they often lack the necessary skills to do so (Sercu, 2006; Young and Sachdev, 2011), and may hold biased or ill-informed views of what it means to be interculturally competent. This prompted me to scrutinise my own perceptions and understanding of IC and its relation to the Japanese context.

To me, as a Dutch native speaker and a Western non-native English teacher proficient in English (the target language) and Japanese (my students' mother tongue), the meaning of IC may best be illustrated by the concept of the 'intercultural speaker', who, as opposed to a monolingual native speaker, has foreign language competence and an ability to establish relationships, manage dysfunctions and mediate between people from different cultural backgrounds (Byram, 1997:31).

Although I am of the opinion that, in theory, my Japanese students should aim to become intercultural speakers, the Japanese Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) context may not be accommodative of such an ambitious goal. First, according to Rivers (2011a:115), an emphasis on unrealistic native speaker norms has contributed to Japanese 'perceptions of language failure and inferiority'. Also, the notion that Japanese internationalisation, rather than embracing globalisation, seeks to promote the uniqueness of the Japanese and, as such, covertly rejects anti-essentialist views of culture, has received an increased amount of support (Hashimoto, 2000; Kubota, 1998; Liddicoat, 2007). Based on my experience in Japan and engagement with the literature, I have become more conscious that in my role as an English teacher 'ELT [English Language Teaching] practices cannot be reduced to a set of disconnected techniques but rather must be seen as part of larger cultural, discursive or ideological order' (Pennycook, 1994:167). As such, I have become increasingly aware of the notion that the Japanese adherence to idealised native (North American) English speaker norms and prevailing essentialist views of culture pose some of the major barriers to the development of IC in Japan.

Paradoxically, these barriers also constitute the framework of most intercultural communication research in Japan in that it is mostly cross-cultural in nature (i.e.

comparing two distinct cultures or countries) and tends to focus on assumed differences between Japan and the United States (Martin, Nakayama and Carbaugh, 2012). Many studies, however, as demonstrated by Takai (2003), have not been able to confirm these taken for granted overgeneralisations portraying Americans, for example, as individualistic and independent, and the Japanese as collectivistic and interdependent. Takai (2003:242) further maintains that we can no longer explain differences in intercultural communication behaviour by considering culture as an independent variable, and calls for an approach which takes into account variables that operate at the individual level. To me, it seems that any credible investigation of intercultural communication (i.e. social interaction between two or more individuals from different cultural backgrounds) takes as its starting point an anti-essentialist view of culture which 'allows social behaviour to speak for itself ... and does not impose pre-definitions of the essential characteristics of specific national cultures' (Holliday, 2000:3).

Besides the emphasis on national differences, there is also a dearth of studies into Japanese intercultural communication which take an emic (insider) approach to qualitative research (Martin, Nakayama and Carbaugh, 2012; Takai, 2003). Although intercultural experts have attempted to gain consensus on how IC may be defined, the majority of these studies are informed by Western (mostly North American) perspectives (Deardorff, 2006:245). While an increasing number of Japanese studies have investigated the field of intercultural communication, most of these works, as concluded by Takai (2003:247) in his review of intercultural communication research in Japan:

... are usually structured upon existing theories which had been conceived in foreign [non-Japanese] countries, and may not fully account for the particularities of Japanese

intercultural interactants. Such forced etic approaches may be lacking in conceptual validity, and may give a false view of the communication performance of Japanese.

Despite the fact that in the above quote, by referring to ‘the particularities of Japanese intercultural interactants’, it may be argued that Takai contributes to the national reification of the Japanese, his implicit call for emic studies in the field of Japanese intercultural communication is highly compelling.

1.3. Research aim and questions

The fact that most intercultural communication research in relation to Japan is biased towards etic comparative studies between Japan and North America leaves a gap to be filled. Clearly, there is a lack of understanding of what intercultural (not cross-cultural) competence may mean from an emic (Japanese) perspective.

As a Western English teacher in Japan, I believe that, in order to guide my Japanese EFL students to IC, I need not only to become more knowledgeable about the main challenges to the development of IC in Japan, but must also move beyond my own (Western-biased) understanding of this highly subjective concept.

In an attempt to move towards a more balanced understanding of emic (Japanese insider) and etic (Japanese and Western received knowledge) perspectives of IC, this study aims to give experienced Japanese intercultural communicators a more prominent voice by listening to their narratives of their intercultural encounters; and by doing so seeks to gain insights into what it means to be interculturally competent from an experienced Japanese intercultural communicator’s point of view. By integrating both insider and outsider perspectives of IC, I hope this study will contribute to the understanding of IC in the Japanese context, as well as the way we approach its development among EFL students in Japan.

The following research questions have been chosen:

1. *According to experienced Japanese intercultural communicators, what does it mean to be interculturally competent?*
2. *How can intercultural competence be developed among Japanese students of English in Japan?*

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

First, I will discuss how the paradigm shift from EFL to EIL has increased the importance of IC and necessitated a reconsideration of native speaker norms, as well as the role of culture in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL). Second, I will review the theoretical underpinnings of IC including its main dimensions, proposed definitions and relevant developmental models. Last, I will consider interculturality in the Japanese context and discuss the challenges of developing IC in Japan.

2.1. Paradigm shift

Brought to our attention by Baxter (1983) over thirty years ago and succinctly reiterated by Alptekin (2002), the discussion on the need for a more intercultural approach to TESOL set into motion by a paradigm shift from EFL to EIL (ELF) seems more relevant than ever (Baker, 2012; Cetinavci, 2012; Horibe, 2008; Sung, 2013; Tanaka, 2010). From an increased emphasis on intercultural communication within the context of EIL arises the need to thoroughly consider the concept of IC and its relation to TESOL.

2.1.1. From native speaker to successful bilingual

Traditionally, EFL refers to the English used and taught in expanding circle countries such as Japan, Brazil and the Netherlands (Kachru, 1992). Kachru (1992) maintains that, unlike outer circle countries like the Philippines, India and Singapore, which are developing their own varieties of English, expanding circle countries are dependent on inner circle countries' native speaker norms, for instance, North American, British or Australian varieties of English. In the Netherlands, for example, although

linguistically native speaker norms are being adhered to, the commonly held view that English is not owned by a specific country (Booij, 2001:2) has greatly contributed to the Dutch population's high level of English proficiency. In the Netherlands, English (as a lingua franca) is generally considered a practical tool of empowerment because it is 'defined *functionally* by its use in intercultural communication rather than *formally* by its reference to native speaker norms' (Hülmbauer, Böhringer and Seidlhofer, 2008:27). This stands in sharp contrast to the situation in Japan, where, according to Matsuda (2003:721), the reliance on 'inner-circle English' has failed to empower Japanese EFL students with a sense of ownership of the English language, rendering them incapable of communicating across cultures. This shows that an emphasis on native speaker norms can be highly problematic.

The dependence on native speaker norms in expanding circle countries like Japan has been strengthened by the implementation and popularity of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), an approach highly influenced by Canale and Swain's model of communicative competence (Canale, 1983 in Alptekin, 2002). Although the notion of communicative competence has allowed foreign language teachers to focus on language behaviour as it actually takes place, in an EIL context, the communicative competence model has some major deficiencies (Baxter, 1983:300). According to Alptekin (2002:63), this model:

... with its strict adherence to native speaker norms within the target language culture, would appear to be invalid in accounting for learning and using an international language in cross-cultural settings. A new pedagogical model is urgently needed to accommodate the case of English as a means of international and intercultural communication.

The first and single most important criteria of a new pedagogical model of intercultural communicative competence, as suggested by Alptekin (2002:57), is the

replacement of the monolingual native speaker with ‘successful bilinguals with intercultural insights and knowledge’ as pedagogical models in EIL. By moving away from unattainable and undesirable native speaker models (Wang and Hill, 2011:208), learners of English, especially in Asian expanding circle countries like Japan, may gain an increased sense of ownership of the language and, as a result, be better positioned to use English for intercultural communication.

2.1.2. From culture to interculturality

If successful bilinguals serve as pedagogical models in EIL, ‘a correlation between the English language and a particular culture and nation is clearly problematic’ (Baker, 2012:62). This view is supported by Horibe (2008:241), who argues that since in an EIL context English is used as a functional ‘means of communication among people from various linguistic and cultural backgrounds, the traditional view of culture must be thoroughly reconsidered’.

Within an EFL paradigm, instilling in students a cultural awareness (i.e. knowledge) of the foreign culture under examination has traditionally been considered an integral part of foreign language teaching (Byram, 1997). However, as argued by Baker (2012:65), within an EIL paradigm, the concept of cultural awareness, i.e. the ‘conscious understanding of the role culture plays in language learning and communication (in both first and foreign languages)’, is no longer sufficient since it is often associated with cross-cultural communication between clearly defined cultural groups, usually at the national level. Although valuable in theory, in my experience, the teaching of cultural awareness, in practice, often leads to reified images of certain groups of people, cultures or countries which may lead to prejudice or stereotypes.

The concept of cultural awareness as described by Baker (2012) tends to view culture as a product, or as something static that a person has; this is referred to by Elsen and St. John (2007:26) as an '[e]ssentialist and generalized conception of culture'. In TESOL, an essentialist view of culture, also called 'objective culture' (Bennett, 2001:1), tends to translate into the teaching of a certain culture's artefacts, customs and institutions. This view stands in contrast to an anti-essentialist conception of culture which regards culture as a collaborative and dynamic process of meaning making (Elsen and St. John, 2007:25). Bennett (2001:1) defines such a view of culture as 'the pattern of beliefs, behaviors, and values maintained by groups of interacting people', and refers to this as 'subjective culture'.

In regard to intercultural communication, the main difference between these two contradictory views of culture seems to be a matter of context and expectations (Lustig and Koester, 2003); whereas in an EFL context, intercultural communication is often viewed as communication between an expert native English speaker and a novice non-native speaker who is expected to adopt the native interlocutor's linguistic and cultural repertoires, and whose own cultural background is considered an obstacle rather than a resource (Byram, 1997). In an EIL context, intercultural communication is no longer seen as a 'one-way imposition' of a certain variety of English and/or culture, but rather as 'two-way accommodation' (Wang and Hill, 2011: 222) in which both interlocutors, regardless of their mother tongue and nationality are equally responsible for bringing about effective and appropriate intercultural communication. In such an environment, the concept of interculturality, as described by Alfred et al. (2006 in Jackson, 2010:25) is paramount:

[Interculturality] challenges us to be willing to become involved with Otherness, to take up others' perspectives by reconstructing their perspectives for ourselves, and

understanding them from within ... it does not imply abandoning our own perspectives but rather becoming more conscious of them.

In sum, the paradigm shift from EFL to EIL has problematised both the native speaker model as well as the teaching of a specific target language culture. It becomes more evident, then, that in order for successful intercultural communication in an EIL context to take place, IC, with a bilingual speaker and a contextual, dynamic and anti-essentialist view of culture at its core, is of great importance. Before discussing in section 2.3, how, in Japan, paradoxically, these two core elements of IC pose some of the main challenges to its development, I will first review in more detail what is commonly considered to constitute IC.

2.2. Intercultural competence

Although essential in moving towards a more intercultural approach to TESOL, replacing the native speaker model with that of a competent bilingual does not automatically translate into people becoming competent intercultural communicators. In other words, a person with linguistic ability in more than one language is not, by definition, interculturally competent. In this section, after describing some characteristics of an interculturally competent speaker, I will review the IC literature by discussing its main dimensions, definitions and relevant developmental models.

2.2.1. The intercultural speaker and third space

An interculturally competent speaker, referred to by Byram (1997), Kramsch (1998) and Wilkinson (2012) as an intercultural speaker, is, besides linguistically, also interculturally competent, and 'unlike the learner who is taught specific linguistic and cultural knowledge in preparation for encounters with a specific new or foreign culture, the intercultural speaker or mediator is able to thrive in multiple situations: he/she is globally competent' (Wilkinson, 2012:298). The intercultural speaker ideally

occupies a 'third space' (Bhabha, 1994) or 'third culture' (Kramsch, 1993) which should be seen not just as a space between one's own and the other's culture, but rather as an additional dimension which enables individual change through contact with the unfamiliar; this third space also challenges essential views of culture and polarised perceptions of the relationship between, for instance, Western and Eastern cultures (Feng, 2009:75).

In order to identify how one may successfully occupy such a third space, i.e. what it means to be interculturally competent, I will review the three generally agreed upon holistic dimensions of IC.

2.2.2. Dimensions of intercultural competence

Most descriptions of IC include three holistic dimensions (Baxter, 1983; Bennett, 2008; Byram, 1997; Deardorff, 2006; Nguyen, 2007; O'Sullivan, 1994; Spitzberg and Changon, 2009), which, as aptly formulated by Bennett (2008), include: 1) ***the mindset*** (cognitive competencies); 2) ***the skillset*** (behavioural competencies); and 3) ***the heartset*** (affective competencies). I will briefly elaborate on each intercultural set/dimension.

The mindset (cognitive competencies)

Shibata (1998:106) points out that the most important component of an intercultural mindset is cultural self-awareness, and states that '[c]ulturally self-aware people learn to recognize the effects that culture has on their perceptions and values'. Two additional elements deemed vital to an intercultural mindset include: culture general knowledge (e.g. an awareness of the differences between high and low context cultures); and an awareness of differences in verbal and non-verbal communication patterns and styles (e.g. levels of politeness, use of silence, and eye contact)

(Shibata, 1998:110-111). Becoming culturally self-aware, however, may require an attitude of 'readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one's own culture' (Byram, 1997:50), which implies that an intercultural mindset cannot do without an intercultural heartset, in that suspending disbelief or belief about culture may be experienced by many as a highly affective matter.

The skillset (behavioural competencies)

In order to meet the aims of intercultural communication, which, according to O'Sullivan (1994:99) include an ability to, 'avoid miscommunication which is due to cultural factors; recognise when miscommunication could be due to cultural factors; [and] repair miscommunication which may be due to cultural factors', he proposes that an intercultural skillset consist of the following: 1) externalisation skills; 2) analytical skills; 3) monitoring skills; 4) communication skills; 5) anxiety management skills; 6) tactical skills; and 7) investigative skills. Just as levels of cultural self-awareness as part of the mindset are highly dependent on the state of the heartset, the extent to which externalisation skills – i.e. empathy and a willingness to look from the other's perspective – are effectively put into practice is equally contingent on attitudinal levels as part of the heartset.

The heartset (affective/attitudinal competencies)

Closely interrelated to the mind- and skillset, then, the heartset is considered the most important dimension of IC (Baxter, 1983; Byram, 1997; Bennett, 2001). Bennett (2008:20) argues that, besides 'initiative, risk taking, suspension of judgement, cognitive flexibility, tolerance of ambiguity, cultural humility, and resourcefulness', the foundation of IC is curiosity. With curiosity often comes a willingness to look for opportunities to enter into unexplored fields and step out of one's comfort zone

(Byram, 1997). A sustained level of curiosity also seems vital if one is to maintain or build on acquired positive attitudes towards otherness.

2.2.3. Intercultural competence defined

Lustig and Koester (2003:64) emphasise that IC – similar to the concept of culture, which is not something someone has, but is collaboratively created within a dynamic space – is always contextual and, therefore, rather than an individual attribute, should be considered a characteristic of the interrelation between individuals:

An impression or judgement that a person is interculturally competent is made with respect to both a specific relational context and a particular situational context. Competence is not independent of the relationships and situations within which [intercultural] communication occurs (Lustig and Koester, 2003:64).

The context in which an intercultural encounter takes place also determines to what extent intercultural communication is appropriate and effective. In relation to intercultural competent behaviour, Deardorff (2006:256), paraphrasing Spitzberg (1998), states that, 'appropriateness is the avoidance of violating valued rules and effectiveness is the achievement of valued objectives'. The fact that conceptualisations such as culture, competence, context, appropriateness and effectiveness are not only highly sensitive to individual perceptions and interpretations, but also in a constant state of flux, renders the definition of IC challenging to say the least.

Similar to Lustig and Koester (2003), Chen and Starosta (1996: 358-359) stress the importance of interpersonal communicative behaviour as it takes place in context, by defining IC as: 'the ability to negotiate cultural meanings and to execute

appropriately effective communication behaviors that recognize the interactants' multiple identities in a specific environment'.

In her unpublished dissertation (2004), Deardorff set out to document consensus among American higher education administrators and intercultural experts on the concept of IC. Based on the intercultural experts' output, the following broad definition of IC was formulated: "[T]he ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations based on one's intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes" (Deardorff, 2004, p.194)' (Deardorff, 2006:247-248). The study's findings are potentially seminal, in that with an acceptance rate of 80% or higher by the intercultural experts on all the intercultural components, as shown in appendix 1, Deardorff (2006:248) seems to have documented consensus on what may constitute IC for the first time.

2.2.4. The development of intercultural competence

Despite an increased agreement on how IC may be defined, Holmes and O'Neill (2012:707) remind us that, 'the processes through which individuals acquire, or can help others acquire, intercultural competence remain elusive'. In order to explore students' perceptions of their development of IC during a semester abroad, Covert (2013) adopted two theoretical models. Both of these models emphasise the importance of attitude in the development of IC and, considering the aim of this study, they require closer examination.

The Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS)

The DMIS (appendix 2), conceived by Bennett (1998), was designed to 'explain the observed and reported experiences of individuals in intercultural encounters'

(Jackson, 2010:39) and 'provides an understanding of how people develop in their ability to construe, and thus to experience, cultural difference' (Bennett, 2001:9).

The model describes how individuals develop their intercultural sensitivity (heartset) as they move along a continuum of six developmental stages from *ethnocentrism* (stages 1-3), where one judges others based on one's own beliefs and customs, to *ethnorelativism* (stages 4-6), where one is able to adapt one's judgement and behaviour to various intercultural settings (Bennett, 1998:26). Rather than seeing it as something stable and absolute, the DMIS holds a poststructuralist view of the notion of identity which recognises its fluidity and contradictory nature, as well as allowing for new hybrid identities to evolve through intercultural communication (Jackson, 2010:41). Although it remains questionable to what extent the DMIS is transferrable across cultures, especially in non-native English speaking cultures like Japan (Greenholtz, 2005 paraphrased in Perry and Southwell, 2012:461), this research-based model, which has been in use for over twenty years, provides a useful instrument to investigate the development of intercultural sensitivity (heartset) as an integral part of IC.

Process Model of Intercultural Competence (PMIC)

The significance of intercultural sensitivity (heartset) in acquiring IC (Bennett, 2001; Byram, 1997) is affirmed in Deardorff's PMIC (2006; appendix 3), in that the model takes intercultural sensitivity as its attitudinal/affective point of departure (Covert, 2013:3). Starting with attitude (respect, openness, curiosity and discovery), the PMIC depicts the development of IC as an ongoing process of improvement which may be never-ending; thereby implying that ultimate IC may never be achieved (Deardorff,

2006:257). This notion is supported by Baker (2012:68) in his discussion of intercultural awareness (ICA), in that:

... the knowledge, awareness, and skills associated with ICA will be constantly under revision and change based on each new intercultural encounter and as such are never a fully formed complete entity but always in progress toward a goal that is constantly changing.

The PMIC makes a useful – albeit abstract – distinction between the development of attitude, knowledge/comprehension and skills at the *individual* level, and the development of internal and external outcomes at the *interactional* level. Note that, in *interaction*, an ethnorelative view, as part of the internal outcome, is depicted as facilitative of effective and appropriate intercultural communication, as part of the external outcome. In line with Lustig and Koester's (2003:64) emphasis on contextual interaction and Chen and Starosta's (1996:358-359) focus on interactants' multiple identities as part of IC, the PMIC, shares similarity to the DMIS in emphasising the importance of an ethnorelative view, which at its highest stage i.e. integration (appendix 2) 'recognize[s] that worldviews are collective constructs and that identity is itself a construction of consciousness' (Bennett, 1998:29).

Despite its limitations, e.g. its Western bias and lack of reference to the role of language, the PMIC, organising the IC components agreed upon in Deardorff's study (2006; appendix 1), offers a comprehensive and accessible tool to better understand the complexities involved in the development of IC.

In this section, I have reviewed relevant work by intercultural experts on some of the characteristics of an intercultural speaker; the three dimensions of IC (mindset, skillset and heartset); a commonly agreed upon working definition of IC; and two models which contribute to our understanding of the development of IC. What has

become especially apparent is the importance that is being attributed to the component of attitude as part of IC.

2.3. Challenges for developing intercultural competence in Japan

In the last section of this chapter, I will return to the two main elements (as discussed in section 2.1) which lie at the heart of IC in an EIL context: a move away from native English speaker norms and recognition of anti-essentialist views of culture. Relevant literature identifies these two fundamental constituents of IC as posing some of the main challenges to its development in Japan.

2.3.1. Native English speaking norms in Japan

I have already problematised the native English speaker norm in Japan, in that it does not promote ownership of English among the Japanese. In my own experience, a sense of ownership of a foreign language greatly helps in the development of IC in that it allows for positive identity forming and more equal power relations based on mutual respect. Here, I will discuss further ways in which the native English speaker norm challenges the development of IC in Japan.

Intercultural awareness is believed to develop alongside the study of foreign languages (Byram, 1997). Since, in Japan, the study of foreign languages is almost synonymous with the study of English (Aspinall, 2013), the most evident way for the Japanese to develop IC is through the study of English. Whereas the 'school-English industry' teaches English as an academic subject to pass university entrance exams, the 'English conversation industry' teaches English to people who are interested in

using EIL for intercultural communication (Yoshino, 2002:138). The majority of tertiary English educational institutions in Japan belong to the latter category.

In Japan, English for communicative and intercultural purposes has mainly been associated with native English speaker norms – most of my colleagues in Japan are American, British or Australian and the majority of English textbooks follow American English spelling rules. Already in the early 1900s, English was not only a means to import knowledge both linguistically and culturally from the West, it was also considered ‘clearly property of the “other”’. That “other” was white and Western’ (Rudolph, 2012:53). This notion of “othering” as applied to TEFL in Japan was strengthened by:

... a traditional orientation towards English language education rooted in dichotomous ‘us’ versus ‘them’ dynamics in which ‘native speakers’ of English who are considered the norm, the owners of the English language and its naturally endowed teaching experts, in contrast to ‘non-native speakers’ of English who are generally deficient, an ideology otherwise termed cultural disbelief (Holliday, 2013 in Houghton and Rivers, 2013:1).

This strong dichotomous “us” (Japan) versus “them” (the West) attitude, as argued by Krause-Ono and Ishikawa (2009:18), has resulted among many Japanese in an inferiority complex towards native English speaking cultures from high-income countries and a superiority complex towards non-native English speaking cultures from countries generally less privileged. This notion is affirmed by Rivers and Ross (2013:337), who, in their study into Japanese attitudes towards native and non-native English teachers, conclude that their findings:

... point toward the maintenance of a clear pattern of racial hierarchy and the role of certain intergroup processes supporting the ideological dominance of White race teachers, the perceived inferiority of other Asian races, and the adoption of an attitude of racial denigration against the Black race (sociohistorically learned from White Westerners).

It may be argued that the Japanese superiority complex as proposed by these authors also includes ethnic minority groups in Japan such as the indigenous Ainu, as well as foreign and naturalised residents from, e.g. Chinese, Korean and Brazilian descent. According to Zhang and Steele (2012), these minorities' cultural and linguistic backgrounds have often not been recognised, and rather 'the approach taken to different ethnic groups in Japan has been, essentially, to assimilate them as quickly and thoroughly as possible in order not to cause any cultural clashes' (Zhang, 2006 in Zhang and Steele, 2012:58).

In an environment where the majority of intercultural encounter opportunities are intentionally limited to being with rose-tinted native English speakers, who, as pointed out by Kowner (2003), are often put on a pedestal, the Japanese may find themselves developing less approving attitudes towards non-native English speakers of other national, racial and ethnic backgrounds (Rivers, 2011b:843). As such, it may be very difficult for the Japanese to acquire a sense of intercultural awareness, let alone develop IC. As discussed in the previous section, attitude, as part of the intercultural heartset – which, e.g. encompasses the ability to suspend disbeliefs about other cultures –, is a vital element in the development of IC.

In short, as argued by Phillipson (1992), the native speaker is nothing more than an idealised personification, and with its 'traditional views of identity as fixed, static, and unitary' (Jackson, 2010:41), and inherent essentialist conception of culture, clearly has no place in a context which seeks to cultivate 'Japanese [interculturally competent] citizens who can live in the international community' (MOE, 1995 in Aspinall, 2013:1).

2.3.2. Essentialism in Japan

The native speaker norm, however, constitutes only a small part of prevailing nationalistic discourses which have contributed to creating 'an essentialized Japan, which has then been juxtaposed against the West' (Rudolph, 2012:57). The emphasis on the comparison of cultural differences mainly between Japan and North America has resulted in 'reinforcement of the "Japanese-as-unique" syndrome, which is said to be an indigenous barrier to Japanese communication across cultures' (Rogers, Hart and Miike, 2002:18). Befu (1983) goes as far as to suggest that the development of both English and IC in Japan is covertly dissuaded with the intention of convincing the Japanese population of their distinctiveness from foreigners.

Despite the seemingly positive relationship between Japan's internationalisation efforts through English on the one hand, and the development of Japanese IC on the other, critical examination of Japanese language policy documents has problematised the concept of interculturality in Japan (Hashimoto, 2000; Liddicoat, 2007; Phan, 2013). The Japanese government's policy of internationalisation through English is, as argued by Hashimoto (2000:49), in fact aimed at 'Japanization'. Succinctly summarising the implications of the way interculturality is perceived and portrayed by the Japanese government, Liddicoat (2007:41) states that:

[i]nterculturality in Japan is not conceived as developing abilities among the Japanese to adapt and accommodate to others, nor is it an attempt to explore questions of Japanese identity in intercultural contexts. Instead Japanese interculturality focuses on the inculcation, maintenance and entrenchment of a particular conception of Japanese identity, associated with the discourses of *Nihonjinron*, and its communication to others.

In an attempt to make up for a sense of identity loss spurred by globalisation, the highly influential *Nihonjinron* (theories of the Japanese) seeks to portray Japanese culture and language as distinctly unique from Western cultures and languages,

mainly English (Kubota, 1998:299). By ignoring indigenous minorities and immigrants in Japan, Nihonjinron contributes to Japan's perceived homogeneity as 'an ideologically constructed worldview' (Liddicoat, 2007:34). Although nationalistic discourses underpinned by Nihonjinron are being challenged by an increased awareness of diversity in Japan, both linguistically and culturally (Liddicoat, 2007:42), research by Morita (2013:31) into Japanese undergraduates' attitudes towards interculturality, globalisation, and English shows the deep societal entrenchment of the Japanese government's inward-looking and essentialist perception of interculturality and internationalisation, in that the majority of Morita's participants echo the Japanese government's rhetoric.

Japanese cultural essentialism is also clearly visible in the field of intercultural communication research and training. Comparing Japanese, German and American intercultural communication professors' conceptualisations of intercultural communication, Krause-Ono and Ishikawa (2009:6) conclude that the Japanese term for intercultural (*ibunka*), literally meaning 'different cultures', is perceived by half of the Japanese professors as meaning 'groups other than the groups to which one belongs, or bluntly as foreign countries'. Most Japanese professors also mentioned that many of their students have static views of culture and expect to learn about cultures at the national level. While most German professors associated interculturality with a new, or third space/culture, many of the Japanese professors did not hold such views and were not satisfied with the Japanese term *ibunka*:

The everyday connotation of the term *ibunka*, which stresses the distinct otherness, sometimes mingles with strangeness, of different cultures, as it was even pointed out by some of the professors, might be too strong as to be used in the title of an ICC [intercultural communication] course. However, three forth [sic] of the courses had the term *ibunka* in their title (Krause-Ono and Ishikawa, 2009:8).

Based on the above, rather than promoting a willingness to engage with otherness (Jackson, 2010:25), interculturality in Japan seems to be permeated with cultural essentialism and thus creates an environment highly unaccommodating to the development of IC.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I will outline and describe the research methodology, including: narrative inquiry; participants; narrative interviewing; transcription; and analysis.

Inevitably, limiting the scope of this dissertation to a “Japanese” focus may be considered essentialist in that it takes as its point of departure a clear national demarcation; however, as an appropriate theorisation of one’s practice requires a situated and contextualised approach (Kumaravadivelu, 2001), it seems impossible not to make any reference to objective understanding of culture throughout this study. By adopting a constructivist theoretical approach to qualitative research, which recognises that ‘meaning and experience are socially produced and reproduced, rather than inhering within individuals’ (Burr, 1995 in Braun and Clarke, 2006:14), valuable insights may be gained into perceptions of IC situated in the ‘psychological and cultural “*reality*” of Japanese individuals (Bruner, 1986:43; inverted commas

added). For purposes of clarity, the research questions for the current study are reiterated here:

1. *According to experienced Japanese intercultural communicators, what does it mean to be interculturally competent?*
2. *How can intercultural competence be developed among Japanese students of English in Japan?*

In order to identify what IC is, and how it is acquired, close examination of intercultural encounters is essential (Holmes and O'Neill, 2012:708). However, any interpretation or definition of IC is subjective to the researchers' cultural background and, as such, as pointed out by Arasaratnam and Doerfel (2005:143): '[a] better understanding of ICC [intercultural communication competence] in day-to-day interactions can be arrived at by exploring how the people who are involved in those interactions describe and understand ICC.'

3.1. Narrative inquiry

Narrative inquiry is an introspective research method which allows the researcher to get an insider perspective of individuals' experiences through storytelling, both orally and in written form. Through a collaborative effort involving both narrator and researcher, narrative inquiry facilitates the understanding of 'the stories of the experiences that make up people's lives, both individual and social' (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000:20). Because of its collaborative nature and reliance on individuals' retelling of perceived experiences, however, inquiry into narratives is highly subjective and, as a result, necessitates a high level of reflexivity (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach and Zilber, 1998). As such, throughout this dissertation, I attempt to be as

transparent as possible about my decisions, as well as my personal and professional stance in regard to the current study's topic.

Recent narrative studies which have investigated intercultural communication have confirmed my initial suspicions of the compatibility of interculturality and narrative inquiry (Covert, 2013; Dillon, 2008; Gertsen and Soderberg, 2010, 2011; O'Neill, 2013). Gertsen and Soderberg's argument (2010:250) that cultural encounters are likely to give rise to storytelling is echoed by Covert (2013:5, citing Adams, 2008) in that 'making sense of ones' interactions and experiences in a new cultural context lends itself to the production of narratives'. To me, narrative inquiry, in which the narrator and the researcher construct meaning in an equal and collaborative manner (Riessman, 2008), shows great similarity to the process of partaking in intercultural communication, in that the latter, as argued throughout this dissertation, entails an anti-essentialist conceptualisation of culture which accommodates unbiased engagement with otherness and joint construction of new and dynamic meaning. Exploring experienced Japanese intercultural communicators' intercultural encounters through narrative inquiry, therefore, is expected to shed light on the way they make sense of their experiences (Riessman, 1993) with interculturality in general, and IC in specific.

3.2. Participants

As I was seeking to gain a better understanding of a key phenomenon (i.e. Japanese perceptions of IC), I selected the participants purposefully (Creswell, 2008). I chose two Japanese postgraduate students whom I had met on several occasions and invited them to take part in my research.

The participants were chosen for the following two main reasons. First, the fact that the participants were studying at the same university as the researcher made it possible to conduct face-to-face narrative interviews, while being able to meet with my participants in person allowed me to elicit narratives through a process of collaborative meaning-making (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). Second, as mature Japanese postgraduate students, both participants (aged 28 and 35) had developed high levels of English proficiency and could be described as experienced Japanese intercultural communicators in that they frequently engaged in intercultural encounters and, before coming to the UK, had either studied or worked outside Japan for extensive periods of time. Arasaratnam and Doerfel (2005:141) report that a major shortcoming in past studies into IC is that they often involve participants with little experience in intercultural situations. Although the fact that I knew the participants quite well made it easier for them to share their stories, I was also conscious of the impact this familiarity would have on the research data.

3.3. Leading up to the narrative interview

The decision to elicit the narratives in face-to-face meetings was based on my pilot study in which I conducted a single narrative interview (henceforth, NI) with another participant. At first, in my pilot study I had considered eliciting the participant's narratives through written accounts. However, through engagement with the literature and my experience participating in my tutor's NI, I came to the conclusion that conducting face-to-face narrative interviews would be the most appropriate research tool in order to address my research aim.

The main purpose of the NI is 'to reconstruct social events from the perspective of informants [narrators] as directly as possible' (Jovchelovitch and Bauer, 2000:59).

The chief difference between a more traditional question-and-answer interview and an NI is that while the former gives total control to the researcher, in the latter 'the interviewee [narrator] is a story-teller rather than a respondent ... [and] ... the agenda is open to development and change, depending on the narrator's experiences' (Holloway and Jefferson, 2000:31). While the flexible nature of an NI provides its narrators with a lot of freedom in the way they construct their stories, inexperienced and/or reticent narrators may be unaccustomed to, and uncomfortable with such high levels of ambiguity in a formal research setting. In my experience, for example, many Japanese people prefer to work in a highly organised manner and tend to avoid uncertain and/or unpredictable situations. Indeed, as pointed out by Pavlenko (2002:214), because of the interactional and flexible nature of narratives elicited in a face-to-face meeting, they are greatly influenced by the cultural and historical background and conventions of the narrator and researcher, as well as the context in which they are constructed. It was therefore of great importance that (a lack of) shared knowledge, as well as linguistic and cultural differences between myself (the Dutch researcher) and the participants (the Japanese narrators) were taken into account not only in the design of the NI, but also in what would lead up to the NI.

Several days prior to the interviews, I sent participants an email in which I explained my expectations in regard to the NI and gave them a prompt (appendix 4) in order to open up the topic, activate the story schema and guide the participants to recollect and mentally map out instances of intercultural communication meaningful to them (Riessman, 2008). As the participant in my pilot study had told me about her initial concerns and anxiety going into the NI, and expressed that she had found the prompt to be very useful, for the current study, I was able to fine-tune the way I

prepared the participants for the NI as well as to streamline the proceedings of the actual NI.

3.4. The narrative interview

The proceedings of the narrative interviews were loosely informed by Jovchelovitch and Bauer's (2000:62) four-phase basic concept of NI (appendix 5) consisting of: 1) initiation; 2) main narration; 3) questioning phase; and 4) concluding talk. Each phase offers a set of rules, which, as stressed by Jovchelovitch and Bauer (2000:62), should not be adhered to blindly, but rather be seen as a general guide to 'elicit rich narration' on the topic of investigation and 'avoid the pitfalls of the question-and-answer schema of interviewing'.

1) Initiation

As discussed above, my email to the participants was both part of the preparation and an initiation of the NI. I met individually with each participant in a study room on the University campus. In line with research ethics, I had participants read and sign forms of consent and informed them that they could choose to withdraw from participation at any time. I also made sure that they did not object to and were comfortable with being audio-recorded. All the interviews were conducted in English.

Since my research questions were aimed at exploring emic perceptions of IC as well as its development, I needed to elicit from my participants narratives about their involvement in successful and less successful intercultural communication. In order

to 'trigger the process of narration' (Jovchelovitch and Bauer, 2000:63), I first asked the participants to tell me a little bit about their background and briefly summarise their international experience. From this, I drew up a list of countries, dates and occupations. In order to move onto the next phase of main narration, I asked them, while showing them their timeline, to tell me about a specific experience they considered meaningful; thereby adhering to a line of questioning highly facilitative of the initiation/elicitation of narration (Holloway and Jefferson, 2000; Jovchelovitch and Bauer, 2000; Riessman, 1993, 2008; Wengraf, 2000).

2) Main narration

Throughout the NI, I used an interview guide (Riessman, 1993; appendix 6) with some general questions roughly designed to address my research questions, as well as some prompts and follow-up questions to prevent me from steering away from eliciting narratives only. In this phase of the NI, I tried not to interfere with the narration and limited myself to guiding the narrators in a non-directional manner by adopting 'return to narrative questioning' and 'active listening principles' (Wengraf, 2000:127-128).

It was during this phase that my experience of communicating with Japanese people proved instrumental, in that certain Japanese styles of communication show great resemblance to Wengraf's notion of non-directional support. For example, allowing for long moments of silence and the mirroring of words – two important 'active listening principles' as suggested by Wengraf – are considered virtues in Japanese communication. First, being aware of the notion that in Japan '[a] person who speaks little is trusted more than a person who speaks a lot' (Gudykunst and Nishida, 1994:52), made it easier for me to tolerate moments of silence during this phase of

the interview; as by doing so, I would not only gain the narrators' trust, but also prompt him/her to continue speaking. Second, the '[e]mpathetic and un-intrusive "mirroring"' (Wengraf, 2000:128) of the narrator's words as to show that their utterances have been heard and are meaningful to the researcher, is similar to the Japanese way of backchannelling (aizuchi), e.g. words like hai (yes) and naruhodo (indeed), in that '[g]iving aizuchi does not mean that the listener agrees with the speaker, but rather that the listener is paying attention and urging the speaker to continue talking' (Gudykunst and Nishida, 1994:49). The fact that the participants knew that I had lived in Japan for many years and that I was aware of these Japanese communication styles proved to be highly conducive to providing non-directional support in the elicitation of their stories.

3) Questioning phase

During this phase I followed up on the narrator's stories and tried to elicit narratives which would help me to address research question 2 (RQ2). In my questioning, as much as possible I tried to use the narrator's words which allowed me to directly attend to RQ2 – albeit in an indirect manner. My initial concern of not being able to clearly distinguish between the main narration and questioning phase was lessened by the realisation that:

[i]n practice, the NI often requires a compromise between narrative and questioning ... [and] ... an interview may go through several sequences of narration and subsequent questioning. The iteration of narration and questioning may occasionally blur the boundaries between the NI and the semi-structured interview (Jovchelovitch and Bauer, 2000:67).

4) Concluding talk

In the last phase, after the audio-recorder was switched off, I engaged in some small talk with the participants and asked them, e.g. how they had experienced the NI, and

discussed the efficiency of its proceedings. This contextual information allowed me to make improvements to the design of the second participant's NI.

3.5. Transcribing data

The first step to a thorough and adequate analysis and interpretation of qualitative interview data is transcription (Richards, 2003). Although at first sight, research tool design, data generation, transcription, analysis, interpretation and representation may present themselves as separate stages of qualitative research, they are in fact processes that happen simultaneously (Creswell, 2008) and, as such, are constantly subject to our biased interpretation. As a result, transcription is not just a matter of objectively presenting the narrator's utterances (Riessman, 2008), but rather 'opens up a flow of ideas for interpreting the text' (Jovchelovitch and Bauer, 2000:69).

As one of my main research goals was to find out what IC means to my participants, reoccurring themes representing instances of both intercultural competence and incompetence needed to be identified. As 'the identification of themes provides complexity to a story and adds depth to the insight about understanding individual experience' (Creswell, 2008:521), I chose to analyse the data using thematic analysis.

Taking into consideration that transcription needs to 'achieve maximum readability' (Richards, 2003:81), and its conventions should be suited to the chosen method of analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006:17), I started with producing a rough transcription of each entire interview verbatim so as to familiarise myself with the data (Riessman, 1993).

After several days, I listened to the audio-recorded interviews once more and checked the accuracy of my first transcription drafts, all the while making small

adjustments, identifying potential narrative passages, and noting down initial ideas that related directly or indirectly to my research questions. As thematic analysis concentrates on what is said, rather than on how utterances are produced (Riessman, 2008:54), I also “cleaned up” ungrammatical utterances that interfered with understanding; thereby transforming “‘messy” spoken language’ into material which could be read and further analysed more easily (Riessman, 2008:58).

Thus, transcription did not only allow me to get an initial feel for the data, it was also the first step towards reconstructing the raw data (i.e. field text) into a more organised and presentable research text (Clandinin and Connely, 2000). Furthermore, transcribing the data in this way also resulted in highlighted passages and scribbles in the margins of the data printouts which opened up the way to subsequent coding and theming.

3.6. Thematic analysis

Through my engagement with the literature on IC, and my own personal and professional experience with intercultural communication in both Western and Japanese settings, I have become more conscious of the notion that the way we perceive our own and others’ social “realities” is shaped by linguistic, cultural, historical and socio-political factors which, more often than not, lie beyond our control. As such, the way I conducted the thematic analysis of the data may be regarded as a ‘contextualist’ method positioned between the two extremes of essentialism and constructivism in that, respectively, it ‘works both to reflect reality, and to unpick or unravel the surface of ‘reality” (Braun and Clarke, 2006:9).

By referring to themes as simply emerging from the data and describing thematic analysis as ‘an inductive process of narrowing data into a few themes’, Creswell (2008:243) does not seem to fully recognise the complexity involved in thematic analysis, in that this highly interpretative process is not a passive endeavour in which the researcher’s subjectivity is excluded (Braun and Clarke, 2006:7). Such a view may give the impression that:

... themes ‘reside’ in the data, and if we just look hard enough they will ‘emerge’ like Venus on the half shell. If themes ‘reside’ anywhere, they reside in our heads from our thinking about our data and creating links as we understand them (Ely, Vinz, Downing and Anzul, 1997 in Braun and Clarke, 2006:7).

Thus, before I proceeded with coding the data, I needed to make clear to myself what exactly resided in my own head in that the design of my study, prior engagement with interculturality, as well as my personal and professional perceptions and understanding of IC would render my thematic analysis and interpretation of the participants’ narratives highly subjective; and for better or worse, biased by acquired knowledge based on theoretical underpinnings (Kvale, 1996), e.g. as discussed in the literature review of this dissertation.

As an English teacher I cannot detach myself from my own beliefs about the state of IC and challenges of its development in Japan. In other words, as a socio-culturally aware TESOL practitioner, in order to be able ‘to link the micro aspects of English language teaching with the macro context’ (Dogancay-Aktuna, 2006:290), and, as a result, become better positioned to guide my students towards IC, I am not only critically engaging with literature about the role of e.g. politics, power and ideologies in relation to TESOL and IC; but also, equally, and perhaps more importantly, I believe that people who find themselves at the centre of IC in a Japanese context (i.e. my participants) need to be given a more prominent voice.

Based on these beliefs, then, in the coding of the data I had to strike a balance between identifying “emerging” inductive codes, on the one hand, and deductive codes connected to existing theoretical frameworks and models on the other. I expected that such a flexible approach to thematic analysis would contribute to gaining a more balanced understanding of both emic and etic perspectives of IC. As a result, although I approached the coding of the data with a mind as open as possible, I remained fully aware of how my own engagement with the current study would affect my analysis, interpretation and representation of the data.

After not having engaged with the initial transcriptions for several days, I read through both interviews and decided that I needed to code each interview one at the time: I wanted to let each individual interview speak for itself before I would move on to compare and contrast both participants’ interviews. The following procedures were taken to code and identify themes for each individual interview data set (henceforth, text). First, I read the entire text and highlighted utterances (appendix 7) that referred to intercultural communication in general and IC in specific. In another column I wrote initial codes by paraphrasing, conceptualising, summarising or copying the participant’s utterances. During the initial coding I was mainly guided by my first research question (RQ1), but soon found out that the data also shed light on RQ2. I decided to first focus on RQ1, and that after I had identified, compared and contrasted themes among both texts, I would tend to RQ2 in more detail.

Having coded the entire text, I compared the codes with my initial ideas I had written on the first drafts of my transcriptions. This allowed me to either add, omit, adjust or collapse some of the codes I had come up with. After I had copied all the codes from the text into a new document (appendix 8), I examined each code in detail and wrote keywords next to the codes, describing them as succinctly as possible. I then

highlighted each keyword with different colours and counted each group of keywords (i.e. collapsed codes). Next, I ranked each group of collapsed codes according to their quantity. For the first participant, e.g. I came up with 19 initial collapsed codes (appendix 9), from which the most frequently mentioned code (8 times) was the “ability to understand/be aware of differences between communication styles”. This initial code went on to merge with other codes and form one of the main themes (Braun and Clarke, 2006:20), which will be discussed in subsequent sections. Although, as pointed out by Braun and Clarke (2006:10), the quantity of a code or theme does not necessarily make it more important, ranking the codes in this way helped me to narrow them down into more general themes (appendix 10).

After leaving the data and preliminary themes for several days, I looked at them afresh and checked whether the themes could be grouped under relevant extracts of data that I had coded in their relation (Braun and Clarke, 2006:20; appendix 11). This enabled me to scrutinise the plausibility of my analysis, and at the same time confirm whether or not I had reached saturation (Creswell, 2008). Although I experienced the analysis of the data as highly chaotic and time consuming, it finally allowed me to decide on the main themes of each participant’s text. From this, I considered the similarities/contrasts/interrelations between the reoccurring themes identified across both individual texts (appendix 12), and came up with three main broad themes which represent both texts in light of my research questions.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter I will use my research questions as a framework to present and discuss the findings (three themes) of my analysis. First, I will attempt to show how the three interrelated themes address RQ1 by retelling the participants' stories and discussing them in relation to relevant literature. Building on the insights gained from addressing RQ1, I will then move on to attend to RQ2 and offer some suggestions.

4.1. Research question one

RQ1: According to experienced Japanese intercultural communicators, what does it mean to be interculturally competent?

The three interrelated themes as depicted in Figure 1 emerged as the most important components in relation to the participants' perceptions of IC, as expressed

throughout their narratives. Thus, closer examination of each individual theme and their interrelatedness may contribute to addressing RQ1.

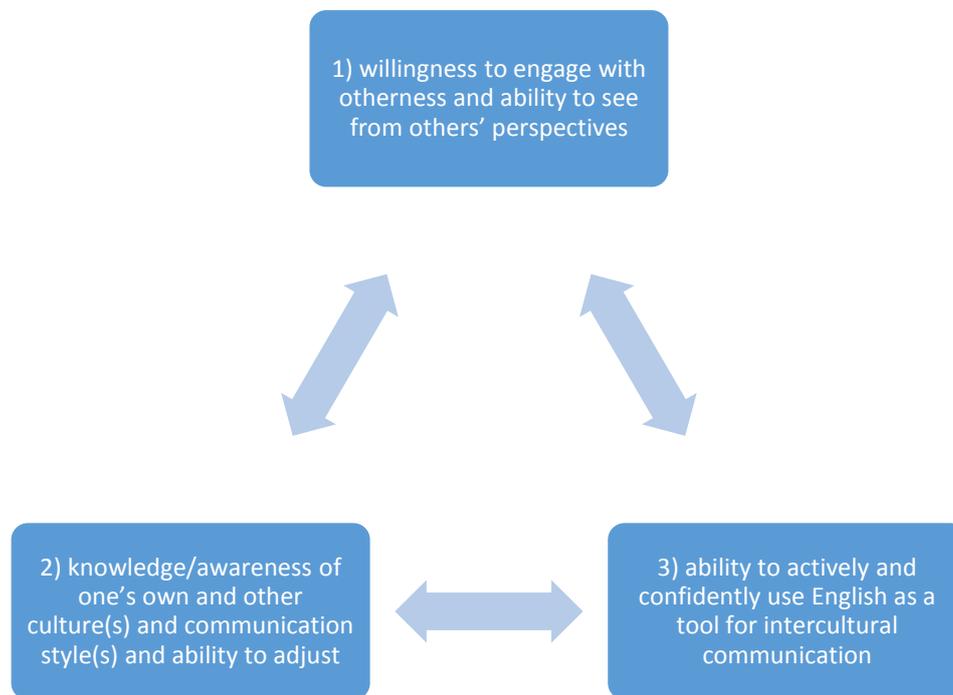


Figure 1: Three main themes perceived by participants as essential components of IC

4.1.1. Theme 1: Otherness

Willingness to engage with otherness and ability to see from others' perspectives (henceforth, theme 1) presented itself as an important theme expressed in both participants' narratives.

Talking about her time as an international student at a US university, Mayu (pseudonym for the first participant) clearly shows the importance she attributes to theme 1 in that she made a conscious effort to immerse herself in otherness:

"I was living in a dormitory, during my first year in the US; I didn't live in an international dormitory, but a regular dorm so most of the students were American including my roommate."

"Some Japanese people [other international students] in the US, they only interact with Japanese people from their own community, and they kind of looked down on me ... all

Japanese people were working at the same sushi place and I applied at the sushi place where no Japanese people were working, except the chef.”

Through distancing herself from the other Japanese international students who did not seem to show the same level of interest in, and openness towards non-Japanese people, Mayu displayed a strong willingness and determination to expose herself to the world of the linguistically and culturally other.

Although, according to Mayu, the majority of the Japanese international students at the US university seemed generally unwilling to make non-Japanese friends, she does emphasise that they do know how to speak English – albeit from a singular Japanese state of mind:

“For many Japanese, they just think in Japanese and simply translate everything into English language, but for me and some of my friends, there are two quite separate things going on in our brains, you know ... I have two boxes ... an English and a Japanese box ... I guess I have a third box as well, that is the mode I am in right now. But more towards the English side.”

By referring to herself as having “two boxes”, Mayu stresses the importance of her ability to see not only from the Japanese, but also from the English (American) point of view; implying that an inability to do so may be caused by unwillingness to interact with people other than Japanese.

Her mention of “a third box” may refer to the dynamic third space (Bhaba, 1994) occupied by the intercultural speaker (Byram, 1997) and indicate that she is positioned in the *integration stage* (appendix 2), in which ‘[o]ne begins to see one’s self as “moving around in cultures”, no longer completely at the center of any one or combination of cultures’ (Bennett, 2001:13).

Narrating about her time in Kuwait as an international student, Mayu seems to attribute some of the more traditional Arab girls’ unwillingness to engage with

otherness to possible ethnocentric views (i.e. inability to see from others' perspectives); and by doing so demonstrates her own ethnorelative stance (ability to see from others' perspectives) (appendix 2):

"[Some of the Arab girls were] ... always protected by parents, and they have no freedom whatsoever, that's the way WE think or WE see them, but probably for them, we, because we are girls we have too much freedom, and we are not really righteous people, because we just go with our freedom and what we want to do, and some people didn't like it or couldn't appreciate, or didn't know how to appreciate it, so there was always some tension between the girls."

Similar to Mayu's stories, the narratives told by Jun (pseudonym for the second participant) also showed the importance of theme 1. In the following account, Jun talks about the time when he was working as a computer instructor in Namibia for a period of two years:

"Sometimes when I used some expression in English, they could understand English, but they couldn't understand MY meaning, MY expression. Sometimes I used very specific Japanese expressions, for example, a proverb in Japan or something like that. I thought that it was common in the world, but in Namibia of course it is not."

Here, Jun is being self-critical in that he, in retrospect, passes judgement on his own initial tendency to see from a Japanese perspective during this particular instance in Namibia. At the same time, the above account suggests how this experience may have contributed to him moving to higher levels of ethnorelativism and subsequent IC in that 'disequilibrium need not lead to dissatisfaction' (Bennett, 2008:17); meaning that moments of uneasiness and imbalance due to the disarrangement of one's perception of the world may, in fact, afford the development of IC in that it becomes a moment of cultural learning.

Jun emphasises the importance of his willingness to engage with the Namibian people, language and culture in that, to him, it seemed to have made intercultural communication possible:

"I had a strong motivation to communicate with them, and I like that country so I had to express my motivation for Namibia, firstly, so after I better understood their history and cultural background, their attitude changed a bit. I showed them that I knew their culture, history and language, so after that they allowed me to have communication, much ... better than before."

As the above quote suggests, Jun's willingness to engage with otherness and ability to see from others' perspectives (theme 1) is closely interrelated to his developing knowledge and awareness of Namibian culture, history and language and his ability to adjust to them (i.e. theme 2). This interrelation between the themes is depicted in Figure 1.

4.1.2. Theme 2: Culture and communication style

Theme 2 is described as **knowledge/awareness of one's own and other culture(s) and communication style(s) and ability to adjust.**

Jun's developing knowledge and awareness of the cultural and historical background of Namibia played a vital part in his ability to communicate with the local population. Jun describes how one of his close Namibian friends was beaten up by other Namibians simply because of being friends with him. According to Jun, in Namibia Japanese people are considered to belong to the white race and because of the country's history with Apartheid, racial issues are still very much permeated in everyday life:

“... Everyone had prejudice towards me ... and after hearing that story [about his friend getting beaten up] I realised more, everyone was saying to me it was not good, because of the nationality [race], that kind of barrier, not only cultural barrier but historical barrier makes it difficult to communicate, that’s my opinion.”

This incident may be described as another cultural learning moment for Jun in that it allowed him – albeit in a very confronting manner – to become more knowledgeable of, and raise his awareness about the close interrelation between a country’s history and culture, and how this may impact on intercultural communication.

During his one year sojourn in the UK as an international postgraduate student, dealing with different communication styles posed one of the main challenges for Jun in his communication with non-Japanese people:

“When I speak in English, the most important thing is, I have to speak English immediately, and in my experience sometimes silence is gold, so I try to be quiet to express myself, but when I speak in English, people do not think so. Silence to them means that I don’t have any opinion about the topic of discussion, when I talk to Japanese in English, they understand what I mean, of course because they know our culture.”

The above quote indicates that although Jun demonstrates great awareness of the different styles of communication across cultures, he hints at the struggle that seems to be going on in his mind in which he is trying to find a balance between, on the one hand, adhering to a more direct “English” style of communication in which interlocutors do not tend to wait in making their opinions explicit, and on the other, his own more indirect “Japanese” communication style which favours careful listening and considers silence to carry clear communicative functions (Lebra, 2007). When Jun reaches the end of this particular narrative, he takes a metacognitive stance by evaluating how his awareness (intercultural mindset) of different communication styles may have impacted on his behaviour (intercultural skillset) to adjust to them:

"I sometimes wait so long [to speak], it is not good for English conversation. That is what I want to say, but it is very difficult because of the Japanese style, especially for me because I tend to wait. Not to wait is very difficult for me ... but I have to, maybe all Japanese have to adjust, it is better to adjust ... to English style and structure."

Mayu's narratives also show great awareness of how differences in culture and communication style affect intercultural communication. However, in relation to the differences between direct and indirect communication styles, Mayu's experiences appear different from Jun's in that she implies that, over the years, she seems to have become more comfortable with non-Japanese styles of communication:

"In my [Japanese] culture, people don't really appreciate that I explicitly say what I think, or say things out of the blue. They always want me to consult before I make it public, and also, some people really hate hearing things from me which is against, what they believe, or what they think is right. So, in that case I shouldn't really say those things in front of them, but ask a colleague who is older than me to say that, instead of me saying that to them ... even with [non-Japanese] clients, I could be more honest and I could be more explicit, and I think I can be more efficient, when I am communicating with foreigners in English, compared to the Japanese style."

Mayu's ability to not only be comfortable with, but also adjust to, and perhaps fully integrate into, a non-Japanese style of communication (theme 2) seems to have been facilitated, among many other factors, by theme 1 (Figure 1), in that her openness and curiosity and subsequent ability to see from others' perspectives enabled her to question the universality and appropriacy of Japanese patterns of communication in intercultural encounters.

In the following passage, which is situated in her role as an international postgraduate student in the UK, Mayu also links the ability to adjust to different cultures and styles of communication to her mention of having "two boxes":

"Next week I have a job interview with a Japanese company, so I have to go back to the Japanese box, because, the extent to which I show my ambition, in English or Japanese mode, the level is different, let's say English is 10, Japanese is maybe 7. I have to find the balance."

The above account seems to exemplify what the intercultural experts in Deardorff's study (2006:249) have agreed upon to constitute the very essence of IC, in that '[u]nderstanding other's worldviews' and '[a]bility to shift frame of reference appropriately and adapt behaviour to cultural context', are positioned second and first place respectively in Deardorff's Intercultural Competence and Specific Components of Intercultural Competence Table (appendix 1).

Although Figure 1 suggests a clear demarcation to exist between each theme, in reality, as illustrated so far, the themes not only interrelate but also greatly overlap, in that Mayu's notion of "two boxes" is present in all three themes; in fact, Mayu's "two boxes" may be considered a vivid analogy of the way she perceives the overarching concept of IC made possible by a dynamic interrelation of the three themes.

Deardorff's notion, as depicted in her PMIC (2006:257; appendix 3), that the development of IC is a 'continual process of improvement', is also illustrated in Mayu's narratives, in that her ability to move between her "two boxes" (i.e. develop IC) did not come easily:

"This is something I figured out after speaking English for 7 years, or so. That there is this kind of transition, I can switch on and off, or go back and forth, which started to become really comfortable, maybe during the 3rd year of my work probably. Before that, it was not really smooth, but now, it has become really comfortable going back and forth. I guess I have become able to do that by JUST USING IT and training myself."

4.1.3. Theme 3: English

Mayu's mention in the above quote of "just using it" refers to theme 3, which is described as **ability to use English actively and confidently as a tool for intercultural communication.**

By describing her experience of developing her IC as “just using it”, Mayu seems to consider the English language as a mere tool for communication in that, during her time as an international student in the US, it enabled her to go about her daily business:

“For me, in order to have fun I needed to be able to speak English. Anger was also a big incentive to learn English, to express being angry. There were many small annoyances because things are not as organised as in Japan so whenever I had to go and talk or complain to someone, if I didn’t speak English, people wouldn’t take me seriously, so [I used] English to make things more comfortable for myself.”

Besides treating English as a practical instrument to get things done and make herself understood, Mayu also emphasises the importance of actively making use of opportunities to learn English through intercultural encounters:

“When one of my classmates saw me and said, “What’s up”, and I was like, “What is what’s up?”, because I didn’t know what it is. And when I asked the person what it meant I still remember he was so surprised, he gave me a look like “oh my god what is she asking me about?” He was nice at least, he just, told me that “What’s up” is a more casual version of “How are you?”, so I was like, ah, I see, and said “What am I supposed to answer you?” That kind of thing because, I only learned English from textbooks before.”

“I always had people around me who taught me things like that, and that’s probably the reason why I picked up the language quite well. It helped me to express myself better, in the way that, at least, Americans do, or people in the US do. I don’t know how British people communicate, sorry, at least yes, the American way probably.”

By willingly exposing herself to otherness (theme 1) and thereby creating the opportunity to actively use English as a tool for communication (theme 3), Mayu seems to have been able to develop, through a long process of trial and error, not only her linguistic and communicative English competence (theme 3), but also other vital elements of IC including her ability to see from others’ perspectives (theme 1) and adjust to other cultures and communication styles (theme 2). Repeatedly going through this cycle (Figure 1) may have contributed to Mayu’s ability to engage in –

what is referred to as 'external outcome' in Deardorff's PMIC – 'effective and appropriate communication and behaviour in an intercultural situation' (Deardorff, 2006:256; appendix 3).

Jun's narratives suggest a similar pattern to Mayu's in that, also to him, the interrelatedness of the three themes seems to represent both his perception of IC as well as its development. In relation to confidence, the following account narrated by Jun is highly illustrative of theme 3:

"The first month in Namibia, I did not have any confidence so I did not speak English much, but after I got familiar with speaking to other people, just, I had been speaking a lot, I think because of my confidence. [I thought] "I can speak English and they can understand my English", so it didn't happen at once, it is like a stairs. I might accumulate my experience and confidence step-by-step, and then I realised that I was speaking in English ... if I made a mistake or what I said didn't make sense, still I had to try to have conversation. If they don't understand, they will tell me so."

The above account suggests that, as a result of his increased confidence, Jun had started to consider English as a tool for communication, in that he seemed more comfortable with making mistakes and was mainly concerned with getting his point across. His increased confidence, resulting from a higher level of perceived English ability (theme 3) as part of his developing IC, may have prompted Jun to take part in intercultural interactions more actively, thereby expanding his cultural knowledge and ability to adjust to different styles of communication (theme 2). This, in turn, may have contributed to an increased willingness to engage with otherness and ability to see from others' perspectives (theme 1) (Figure 1).

Although the participants' understanding of IC (as illustrated through their narratives and depicted in Figure 1) shows great resemblance to intercultural theories reviewed in chapter 2, what stands out in the participants' perceptions of IC as opposed to what extant literature suggests, is the importance they seem to attribute to the role of

the English language (theme 3) in IC and its development. Although stating that 'language itself becomes a window through which to understand another culture's worldview and thus remains a key knowledge component' (Deardorff, 2008:38), Deardorff fails to include this often overlooked component of IC (i.e. theme 3) in her PMIC (appendix 3). Furthermore, as opposed to Deardorff's notion of language being a part of the intercultural mindset, the way the participants discussed theme 3 suggests that they consider it to be mainly a part of the intercultural skillset, in that they emphasise the ability to "use" English actively and confidently as a tool for intercultural communication.

Thus, while theme 1 and 2 – which may very broadly be categorised under Bennett's (2008) heartset (attitude) and mindset (cognition), respectively (appendix 13) – are commonly agreed upon essential dimensions of IC and its development, theme 3 (skillset; behaviour) is hardly given any weight in the relevant IC literature. However, through their narratives it became apparent that theme 3, like theme 1 and 2, carries equal importance as part of both participants' perceived IC. This implies that when discussing definitions of IC in a Japanese context, or the development of IC among Japanese EFL students in Japan, all three themes should receive an equal amount of attention.

4.2. Research question two

I will now address RQ2 by offering some suggestions based on a synthesised discussion of the three themes; participants' quotes; references to IC literature; and my own experience as an English teacher in Japan.

RQ2: How can intercultural competence be developed among Japanese students of English in Japan?

4.2.1. Cultivate willingness to engage with otherness and ethnorelativism

Both Mayu's mention that many Japanese international students in the US seemed reluctant to make friends with non-Japanese people, and as a result were unable to develop IC (i.e. "move between boxes"), as well as Jun's narrative which illustrates that the Japanese may initially be unaware of their distinct Japanese worldview, suggest that Japanese EFL students in Japan need to develop both the willingness to engage with otherness, as well as ethnorelativism. In other words, positive attitudes need to be cultivated towards the linguistically and culturally other.

As discussed in chapter 2, attitude as part of the intercultural heartset is considered the most important dimension of IC, in that it has a strong impact on the learning that follows (Deardorff, 2008:37; appendix 3). As discussed in section 2.3., the socio-cultural and -political environment in Japan has a great influence on Japanese EFL students' attitudes towards otherness both within and outside the country. Because of Japan's strict assimilation policy towards ethnic minorities and foreign residents (Zhang and Steele, 2012), and its tendency to present otherness as being mainly white, Western and native (American) English speaking (Rudolph, 2012), Japanese attitudes towards otherness may be distorted by superiority and inferiority complexes, as well as discourses on the perceived Japanese uniqueness and homogeneity (Nihonjinron) (Krause-Ono and Ishikawa, 2009).

Against the backdrop of this macro context deeply rooted in cultural essentialism, cultivating willingness to engage with otherness and ethnorelativism among Japanese EFL students becomes a challenging task for the Western English teacher in the micro context of a Japanese university classroom setting.

In her insightful and highly practical article, Shibata (1998:104) discusses the importance of IC as part of foreign language teaching in Japan and argues that 'intercultural training is ultimately transformative and that cognitive training alone is not enough to help students reach the goal of intercultural competence'. This notion is supported by Baxter (1983:311), in that '[i]t is not enough to *know* about intercultural communication in English, and to have the skills to *do* it: one must *feel* that effective communication is worthwhile'. In order to help Japanese EFL students develop willingness to engage with and become more empathic to otherness, English teaching practice may be enriched with experimental intercultural communication training activities (e.g. Lange and Paige, 2003; Kohls and Knight, 1994). Such activities include role-plays, critical incidents or simulation games and may help students to experience how it feels to be in someone else's shoes; thereby enabling them to confront prejudices and stereotypes they might hold (Nguyen, 2007:131). These experimental activities may be supported by a contextualised discussion of Bennett's DMIS (appendix 2); for example, after students study the model, they could discuss their own perceived levels of either ethnocentrism or ethnorelativism (Bennett, Bennett and Allen, 2003).

4.2.2. Develop dynamic understandings of culture and communication styles

The fact that Jun and Mayu's narratives reveal the importance of cultural self-awareness, knowledge of other cultures and an ability to adjust to different styles of communication as valuable components of IC, suggests that both of them, although to various degrees, are moving from essentialist towards anti-essentialist understandings of culture.

Mayu, in mentioning her “third box” seems to have been able to create for herself a third space (Bhabha, 1994) which allows her to adjust to various intercultural contexts and comfortably move between identities. As such, it may be argued that she considers intercultural communication as ‘two-way accommodation’ (Wang and Hill, 2011:222), in that all interlocutors – including the native speaker – within the third space are equally responsible for engaging in appropriate and effective intercultural communication. Although Jun is also in the process of developing his ability to adjust to, and take on different styles of communication appropriate to specific intercultural environments, his struggle to do so (e.g. having to cut into a conversation when he really does not want to, or avoid moments of silence against his true will) hints at the way intercultural communication in Japan is still considered to be a ‘one-way imposition’ (Wang and Hill, 2011:222) in that it requires Japanese people to take on the linguistic and cultural repertoire of the native (American) English speaker while completely discarding their own preferred styles of communication deeply rooted in their native culture.

Since, according to Mayu, developing her “third box” (i.e. IC) took a lot of practice in actively using multiple languages in contextualised settings, we cannot expect Japanese EFL students in Japan to become intercultural speakers like her. However, rather than teaching them ‘how to parrot foreign cultural codes in order to interact seemingly successfully with foreigners’ (Crozet and Liddicoat, 1999:118), English teachers can help Japanese EFL students in Japan to start viewing intercultural communication as ‘two-way accommodation’ (Wang and Hill, 2011:222) by encouraging them to develop a more dynamic understanding of culture and communication styles in intercultural communication.

English teachers may raise students' awareness of the differences between the sociocultural norms that exist between native speakers on the one hand, and non-native speakers on the other; and point out that when Japanese EFL students engage in intercultural communication, they enter an 'intercultural linguistic space' in which, through negotiation between native and non-native speakers, interculturality is created and should be considered largely a process at the interpersonal level (Crozet and Liddicoat, 1999:118), rather than at the cultural level. In this way, Japanese EFL students in Japan may be able to move away from static views of national culture as well as dichotomous "unique Japanese" (us) vs. "native English speaking" (them) conceptions of identity. A more integrated and dynamic understanding of culture and inherent communication styles (i.e. interculturality) based on an equal and collaborative process of meaning making is likely to contribute to the development of Japanese EFL students' IC.

4.2.3. Promote the use of English as a tool for intercultural communication

Besides the significance of the intercultural heartset and mindset (appendix 13) as part of IC and its development, Jun and Mayu's narratives also emphasise the importance of the intercultural skillset, which as perceived by them subsumes the ability to actively and confidently use English as a tool for intercultural communication.

Emphasising the study of decontextualised grammar and vocabulary in preparation for the university entrance examinations, English in the Japanese 'school-English industry' (i.e. pre-tertiary education) (Yoshino, 2002:138) is clearly categorised under the academic (not intercultural) mindset (not skillset). Regarded solely as an academic subject with no practical application, the way English is taught at pre-

tertiary level in Japan – as revealed in the participants’ narratives – seems to be geared towards producing anything but students who are able to actively and confidently use English as a tool for intercultural communication.

Jun considers the English “skills” he studied so hard to acquire in high school to be “meaningless” for intercultural communication and notes that:

“[Japanese EFL students in Japan] should have confidence, they should not mind about their grammar, if their English makes sense it is ok. Most non-Japanese people do not mind incorrect grammar, but Japanese people require perfect English, perfect AMERICAN English ... Japanese think that their English skills are very low, that is why they are not confident, but I don’t think so. Some Japanese people in Japan can speak English very well, but with a foreigner [native speaker] they stop speaking, the reason they stop talking is due to confidence, I think.”

Similar to Jun, Mayu also seems to perceive a relation to exist between, on the one hand, Japanese EFL students’ lack of confidence and fear of making mistakes, and on the other, the adherence to undesirable and unattainable native (American) English speaker norms (Wang and Hill, 2011:208), which, according to Rivers (2011a:115), serves as a constant reminder of the Japanese inability to appropriate such models, both linguistically and culturally; thereby confirming and reifying the Japanese uniqueness vis-à-vis the other:

“Native English speakers are still intimidating for me sometimes, but if there are foreigners from various countries, people who still struggle to speak English, that can give you confirmation that it’s ok to struggle when you speak English. Some people don’t care if they speak right English or wrong English, but we Japanese are so much taught to speak perfect English, and if we can’t do that we hesitate, but having an example just right in front of you that even though someone makes so many mistakes, communication is still somehow working, that will probably make you feel more comfortable with making mistakes ... so, we need to make people truly aware that English is just a tool, and it’s ok to make mistakes as long as you get the point.” (Mayu)

One way, as suggested by Mayu, to create a less intimidating learning environment for Japanese EFL students in Japan may be for them to live in an international

dormitory while enrolled in a Japanese university. This would allow them to live together with people from a variety of cultural and linguistic backgrounds who all use English as a practical tool for intercultural communication. In such a setting, English, rather than being perceived as something that can never be acquired perfectly and is owned by the native speaker, becomes a vehicle highly tolerant of mistakes through which Japanese EFL students can express more confidently both their personal opinions and their national identities (Honna and Takeshita, 1998:126). By creating an environment where English is truly adopted as an international language, the concept of a community of speech (Gumperz, 1964), which is often linked to a particular language variety shared by its members, may be replaced by a community of practice in that such a group of like-minded individuals (i.e. Japanese and non-Japanese students living together) 'is no longer created by a common language variety, but rather the language variety is created by the community' (Hülmbauer, Böhringer and Seidlhofer, 2008:28). By being a part of such a culturally and linguistically diverse community of practice, Japanese EFL students may not only gain confidence in actively using English, they may also realise how it may afford them to create their own communities of practice in the near future.

As Western, native or non-native English teachers in Japan, one way to help students build confidence and view English as a tool of intercultural empowerment is by setting good examples. For me, as a European multilingual non-native English teacher in Japan, I attempt to present myself as someone who '... demonstrates awareness of other culture identities whilst still retaining one's own. It is the process of moving from an ethnocentric perception to a non-dualistic, "metacultural" perception' (Ellis, 1996:217). In doing so, I strive to illustrate to my students that,

they too, provided they make great effort and actively seek out opportunities to learn, can become proficient Japanese (non-native English) intercultural speakers.

5. CONCLUSION

By reviewing relevant literature on IC in general and the challenges of its development in Japan in specific, followed by a narrative inquiry into experienced Japanese intercultural communicators' perceptions of IC, this dissertation has attempted to gain a more balanced understanding of emic and etic perspectives of IC among Japanese, and by doing so become more knowledgeable about the way IC may be developed among Japanese EFL students in Japan.

Although the Japanese (TEFL) context may not be the most accommodating to the development of IC among Japanese, the stories told by Mayu and Jun are testimony that in spite of the challenges (native speaker norms, essentialist views of culture, English education in Japan), both participants have been able to develop

intercultural awareness and competence. I had hoped that because of their extensive intercultural experience and English language ability, their narratives about their intercultural encounters, perceptions of IC and its development may give TESOL practitioners in Japan a situated and unique insight into the way two experienced Japanese intercultural communicators view IC, which, as I have attempted to demonstrate throughout this dissertation, should be considered and treated as an essential part of TEFL both in Japan and the international society at large.

I also hope that my attempt to gain a more balanced understanding of emic and etic perspectives of IC will inspire other TESOL practitioners to take a more integrated approach to qualitative research which allows for meaning making based on a constructivist and dynamic framework inclusive of multiple perspectives, both theoretical and experiential. Just as I likened narrative inquiry to the process of intercultural communication in the introduction of this dissertation, in that both are highly contextual, dynamic and based on a collaborative and equal effort of meaning making, so too, I believe, should a theorisation of one's practice include a balanced exploration of emic and etic insights which may contribute to new meaning making and subsequent enhanced understandings of how one's practice relates to theory as well as the macro context.

A thorough investigation into one's teaching practice, as I hope the current study has demonstrated, may raise TESOL practitioners' awareness of how micro elements, such as the dynamics of one's classroom, students' attitudes towards otherness, and the organisation of the educational institution, are influenced by the overarching macro context (native speaker norm, essentialist views of culture, English education in Japan). It is only through such an in-depth and inclusive exploration of one's

practice that Western English teachers in Japan can start to think about the kinds of attitudes, expectations and levels of awareness their Japanese EFL students may bring to the classroom, and the extent to which subsequent teaching may or may not be effective.

5.1. Limitations

In-depth follow-up interviews with each participant about the themes and their interpretations may have shed additional light on underlying meanings and assumptions. Unfortunately, due to time constraints, only a member check with each participant (in written form) was carried out. Another limitation of this study is that the participants' narratives are highly personal and subjective, which renders the subsequent interpretation and discussion of its findings unsuitable to generalisation. Furthermore, because both participants were experienced intercultural communicators, their experiences and perceptions of IC may not be representative of the majority of Japanese. Finally, although I have attempted throughout this dissertation to be as reflexive as possible about my decisions, the fact that I am a TESOL practitioner born and raised in the Netherlands has inevitably rendered my investigation biased towards Western assumptions and beliefs.

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7. APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Intercultural competence elements with 80% to 100% agreement among top intercultural scholars (adapted from Deardorff, 2006:249)

Intercultural Competence
Ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations based on one's intercultural knowledge, skills and attitudes
Ability to shift frame of reference appropriately and adapt behavior to cultural context: adaptability, expandability, and flexibility of one's frame of reference/filter
Ability to identify behaviours guided by culture and engage in new behaviours in other cultures even when behaviours are unfamiliar give a person's own socialization
Behaving appropriately and effectively in intercultural situations based on one's knowledge, skills and motivation.
Ability to achieve one's goals to some degree through constructive interaction in an intercultural context.
Good interpersonal skills exercised intercultural: the sending and receiving of messages that are accurate and appropriate
Transformational process toward enlightened global citizenship that involves intercultural adroitness (behavioural aspect focusing on communication skills), intercultural awareness

(cognitive aspect of understanding cultural differences) and intercultural sensitivity (focus on positive emotion toward cultural difference)

Specific components of intercultural competence

Understand other's worldview

Culture self-awareness and capacity for self-assessment

Adaptability and adjustment to new cultural environment

Skills to listen and observe

General openness toward intercultural learning and the people from other cultures

Ability to adapt to varying intercultural communication and learning styles

Flexibility

Skills to analyse, interpret and relate

Tolerating and engaging ambiguity

Deep knowledge and understanding of culture (one's own and others')

Respect for other cultures

Cross-cultural empathy

Understanding the value of culture diversity

Understanding of the role and impact of culture and the impact of situational, social and historical contexts involved

Cognitive flexibility-ability to switch frames from etic to emic and back again

Sociolinguistic competence (awareness of relation between language and meaning in societal context)

Mindfulness

Withholding judgment

Curiosity and discovery

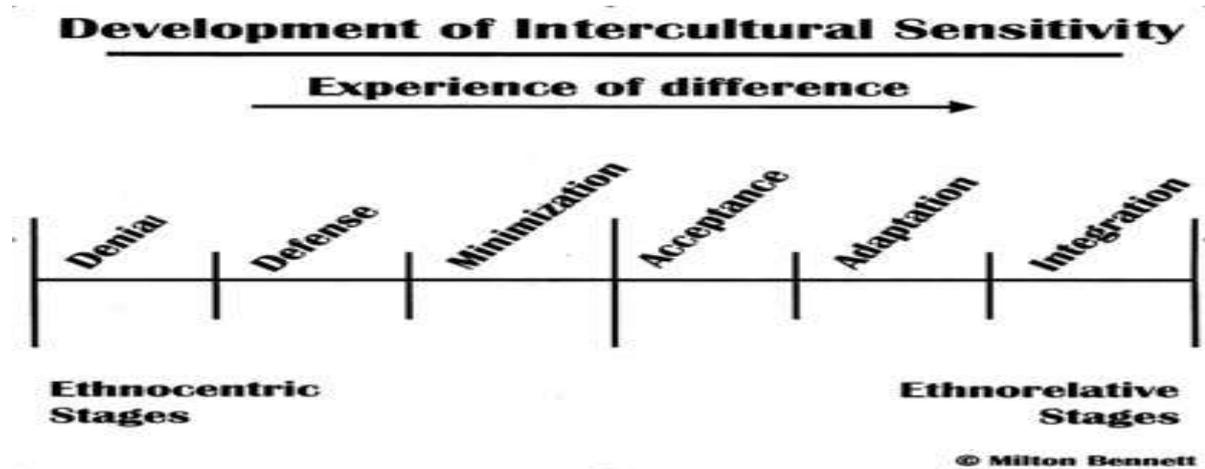
Learning through interaction

Ethnorelative view

Culture specific knowledge and understanding host culture's traditions

Appendix 2

Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) (from Bennett, 1998: 26)



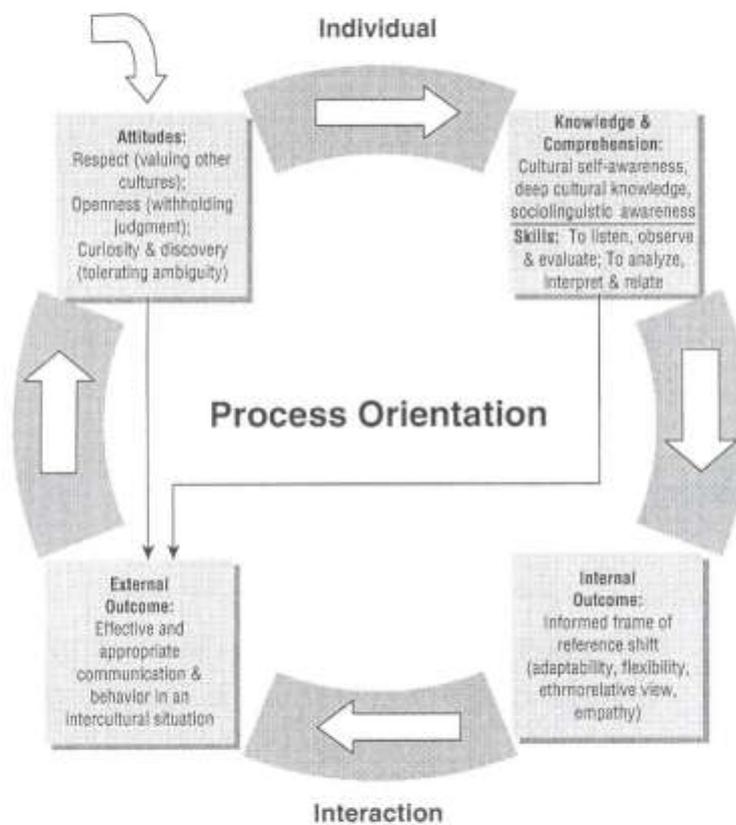
Ethnocentric			Ethnorelative		
Denial	Defense	Minimization	Acceptance	Adaptation	Integration
My cultural experience is the only one that is real and valid. There is little to no thought of "other."	"We" are superior and "they" are inferior. One feels threatened and is highly critical. What is strange may be labeled as stupid.	Other cultures are trivialized or romanticized. One tends to deny differences (e.g., "color blind") and only seek similarities.	I accept but may not agree with other cultures. Generally, I am curious and respectful.	I "see" the world through different eyes and make intentional changes in my own behavior and values.	I easily move in and out of different cultural worldviews.

DMIS stages of development (adapted from Bennett, 1986)

<http://www.gpccolorado.com/developmental-model-of-intercultural-sensitivity/>

Appendix 3

Process Model of Intercultural Competence (from Deardorff, 2006: 256)



Note: Begin with attitudes; move from individual level (attitudes) to interaction level (outcomes). Degree of intercultural competence depends on degree of attitudes, knowledge/comprehension, and skills achieved.

Appendix 4
Email prompt

Hi

Thank you for participating in my research. I'd like to tell you a little bit about the interview if that's ok.

If possible, I'd like to hear some of your stories about your experiences with communicating with people from different cultures. Maybe you can think of some specific instance of communication you have had with non-Japanese people that went really well or perhaps not so well.

Most interviews follow a strict question-and-answer pattern and are guided by the interviewer. I'd like to take a different approach: the interview will be a narrative interview (narrative means story telling), so I'm very interested in listening to your stories about international experiences that are meaningful to you. I will give you a lot of freedom to tell me your stories and I will not interrupt you.

I will be on campus pretty much all week, so maybe you can let me know a convenient time and date for you? I expect the interview to last for about 30-45 minutes. Thank you again and I look forward to hearing from you.

Regards,

Willem

Appendix 5

Jovchelovitch and Bauer's (2000:62) four phase basic concept of a narrative interview

Phases	Rules
Preparation	Exploring the field Formulating exmanent questions

1. Initiation	Formulating initial topics for narration Using visual aids
2. Main Narration	No interruptions Only non-verbal encouragement to continue story-telling Wait for the coda
3. Questioning phase	Only 'What happened then?' No opinion and attitude questions No arguing on contradictions Exmanent into immanent questions
4. Concluding talk	Stop recording Why-questions allowed Memory protocol immediately after interview

Appendix 6

Interview guide

-Do not ask: When did x happen?
-Ask: Tell me what happened?

- Tell me about your time here in the UK, how has communicating with people from other cultures been for you?
- Can you tell me about what it is like being a foreigner (Japanese) in the UK and communicating with people from other cultures?
- Could you tell me about what it was like being a foreigner in (country)?
- Could you tell me about a time (specific instance) when you had (less) successful
- Can you go back to that moment and tell me exactly what happened?
- Can you tell me about your time studying English in Japan?

Following up on comments made:

- Can you remember a particular time when...?
- Tell me why that particular moment stands out (is important to you?)
- Can you give me any example of an occasion when ..?
- Can you give me any more examples of similar events, incidents at that time / of that type?
- Was there some particular CRUCIAL incident or situation or time that you can recall?

Adapted from Riessman, 2008 and Wengraf, 2001

Appendix 7

First coding sample

<p>The most difficult place to communicate in English was Namibia, because some of the Namibian people <u>couldn't speak English</u> so well, they can understand some vocabulary,</p>	<p>-Language ability</p>
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<p>I can use English, but if my explanation is a bit long, for example, how to use Excel calculation, they couldn't understand. So, in this case I always had <u>to use body language</u> or I have to <u>show my expression using my face or eye contact or something, with English</u>. If I did that, they could relatively understand what I wanted to say. I <u>was always taking care of not only using English, but</u> using other things, like body language and eye contact.</p> <p><u>Language is one of the biggest barriers to communication, and also cultural background</u> is one of the biggest problems. Sometimes when I used some expression in English, they could understand English, but they couldn't <u>understand MY meaning, MY expression</u>, sometimes I used very specific Japanese expression, for example, a proverb in Japan or something like that, <u>I thought that it was common in the world, but in Namibia of course it is not</u>. So sometimes misunderstandings happened, that was very difficult, so cultural things, cultural misunderstanding. And other things, from another point of view, maybe, when I talked to my Namibian colleagues not students, sometimes they had a kind of barrier to me, because my <u>skin is not black, so it was very, very rejection</u>, but I didn't know how to solve it because I couldn't speak the local language so if I spoke in English <u>they didn't try to understand ME</u>, myself. I think that is one of the historical barriers, because Namibia <u>has the history of Apartheid</u>, which is very terrible discrimination</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Use non-verbal communication -Make effort to be understood -Language ability -Cultural understanding -Self-awareness Jap comm style -SFOP (ability to recognize own ethnocentrism (DMIS)) -Ability to suspend belief about race -WTC to foreigner/ otherness (non-black) -Knowledge of a country's cultural and historical background
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Appendix 8

List of codes

- Appreciate different accents (see English as world language)
- Ability to understand variety of Englishes
- Recognizing that majority of English speakers are not native
- English for everyone/ tool for communication

- Language ability
- Use non-verbal communication
- Make effort to be understood
- Language ability
- Cultural understanding
- Self-awareness Jap comm style
- SFOP (ability to recognize own ethnocentrism (DMIS))
- Ability to suspend belief about race
- WTC to foreigner/ otherness (non-black)
- Knowledge of a country's cultural and historical background
- SFOP
- Ability to deal with emotions
- Awareness that history/culture and Language are closely related
- Ownership of language
- Lack of ownership but still English ability
- Ownership of language
- SFOP
- Manage emotions
- Make effort to understand their culture/history
- Practice language
- Ability/willingness to take initiative to understand otherness
- WTC
- Showing willingness , interest and motivation to otherness
- Making connections and interact (WTC)
- Showing willingness , interest and motivation to otherness
- Understand about the other cultures' history, background
- Awareness of possible barriers to communication (O'Sullivan) due to culture
-

Appendix 9

First collapsed codes

- Ability to understand/be aware of the differences between communication styles (8)
- Willingness to communicate with foreigners /otherness (7)
- Ability to understand other culture /history (7)
- Make effort/takes time (5)
- See from other perspective (5)

Confidence (5)
Manage emotions (affect) (4)
Ability to adjust (3)
Appreciate varieties of English (3)
Ability to use non-verbal communication (2)
Language ability (2)
Ownership language (2)
See one's own weak point (2)
Negotiate/two way accommodation (2)
Attitude (2)
English as tool (2)
Aware of religion (1)
Don't care about grammar (1)
Initiative (1)

Appendix 10

Second collapsed codes

Ability to understand/be aware of the differences between communication styles (8) **AND**
Ability to understand other culture /history (7) **AND** Ability to adjust (3) **AND** Ability to use
non-verbal communication (2) **AND** Aware of religion (1) **AND** Manage emotions (affect)
(4) =

1.Ability to understand and adjust to other cultures and communication styles (25)

Willingness to communicate with foreigners /otherness (7) **AND** Make effort/takes time (5)
AND

Initiative (1)=

2.Willingness to actively engage in communication with foreigners / otherness (13)

Confidence (5) **AND** Language ability (2) **AND** See one's own weak point (2) **AND**
English as tool (2) **AND** Don't care about grammar (1) **AND** Attitude (2)=

3.Actively and confidently using English as a tool for communication (14)

4.See from other perspective (5)

Appreciate varieties of English (3) **AND** Ownership language (2) **AND** Negotiate/two way
accommodation (2)=

5. English is for everyone equally? (7)

[Appendix 11](#)

Checking themes

1. Knowledge about and ability to adjust to other cultures and styles of communication

2. See from other's perspective / Willingness to engage with foreign people / otherness

3. Actively and confidently using language for communication

Others: ownership/world English/stereotypes/race/emotions/initiative

<p>The most difficult place to communicate in English was Namibia, because some of the Namibian people couldn't speak English so well, they can understand some vocabulary, I can use English, but if my explanation is a bit long, for example, how to use Excel calculation, they couldn't understand. So, in this case I always had <u>to use body language or I have to show my expression using my face or eye contact or something, with English.</u> If I did that, they could relatively understand what I wanted to say. I <u>was always taking care of not only using English,</u> but using other things, like body language and eye contact.</p> <p><u>Language is one of the biggest barriers to communication,</u> and also <u>cultural background is one of the biggest problems.</u> Sometimes when I used some expression in English, they could understand English, but they couldn't <u>understand MY meaning, MY expression,</u> sometimes I used very <u>specific Japanese expression,</u> for example, a proverb in Japan or something like that, <u>I thought that it was common in the world, but in Namibia of course it is not.</u> So sometimes misunderstandings happened, that was very difficult, so cultural things, cultural misunderstanding. And other things, from another point of view, maybe, when I talked to my Namibian colleagues not students, sometimes they had a kind of barrier to me, because my skin is not black, <u>so it was very, very rejection,</u> but I didn't know how to solve it because I couldn't speak the local language so if I spoke in English <u>they didn't try to understand ME,</u> myself. I think that is one of the historical barriers, because Namibia has the history of Apartheid, which is very terrible discrimination</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Use non-verbal communication Actively try to communicate (theme 1) -Make effort to be understood (theme 3) -Language ability -Cultural understanding (theme 1) -Self-awareness Jap comm style (theme 1) -SFOP (ability to recognize own ethnocentrism (DMIS) (theme 2) -Ability to suspend belief about race (theme 2) -Willingness to engage otherness (theme 2) -Knowledge of a country's cultural and historical background (theme 1) <u>Very interesting to see how a country's history/culture impacts on a person's WTC</u>
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Appendix 12

Compare/contrast among 2 participants

Mayu	Jun
<u>1.Willingness to communicate with foreign people or otherness (23)</u>	Ability to understand/be aware of the differences between communication styles

<p>Language ability (14) AND Make effort (13) AND English/communication as a tool (3) = <u>2. Actively uses language for communication (30)</u></p> <p>Knowledge/awareness of other cultures and other communication styles (13) AND Ability to adjust to cultural differences and comm styles (6) AND Context/purpose (7) = <u>3. Knowledge and ability to adjust to other cultures and different communication styles (26)</u></p> <p>4. See from other's perspective (13) AND Personality/interest (6) AND Intelligence (3) AND Experience (1)</p> <p>5. Personal, professional and academic background (10)</p> <p>6. Affect (emotions) (8)</p>	<p>(8) AND Ability to understand other culture /history (7) AND Ability to adjust (3) AND Ability to use non-verbal communication (2) AND Aware of religion (1) AND Manage emotions (affect) (4) =</p> <p><u>1. Ability to understand and adjust to other cultures and communication styles (25)</u></p> <p>Willingness to communicate with foreigners /otherness (7) AND Make effort/takes time (5) AND Initiative (1)=</p> <p><u>2. Willingness to actively engage in communication with foreigners / otherness (13)</u></p> <p>Confidence (5) AND Language ability (2) AND See one's own weak point (2) AND English as tool (2) AND Don't care about grammar (1) AND Attitude (2)=</p> <p><u>3. Actively and confidently using English as a tool for communication (14)</u></p> <p>4. See from other perspective (5)</p> <p>Appreciate varieties of English (3) AND Ownership language (2) AND Negotiate/two way accommodation (2)=</p> <p>5. English for everyone? (7)</p>
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Appendix 13

Table to visually support discussion of findings

<p>RQ1: <i>According to experienced Japanese intercultural communicators, what does it</i></p>	<p>RQ2: <i>How can intercultural competence be developed among Japanese students of</i></p>	<p>Bennett's (2008) dimensions of intercultural</p>
-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------------------

<i>mean to be intercultural competent?</i>	<i>English in Japan?</i>	competence
Themes perceived as vital components of intercultural competence	Suggestions to develop IC among Japanese EFL students in Japan	Broad categorization of themes and suggestions
1. Willingness to engage with otherness and ability to see from others' perspectives.	1. Cultivate willingness to engage with otherness and ethnorelativism	Heartset (affective/attitudinal competencies)
2. Knowledge/awareness of one's own and other culture(s) and communication style(s) and ability to adjust	3. Develop dynamic understandings of culture and communication styles	Mindset (cognitive competencies)
4. Ability to actively and confidently use English as a tool for intercultural communication	2. Promote the use of English skills as a tool for intercultural communication	Skillset (behavioural competencies)