Fostering Intercultural Competence: A Case of an Asynchronous Online Japanese Language and Culture Course

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Analyzing cultural characteristics is a cognitively challenging task that allows learners to increase their open-mindedness and deepen their understanding of both local and global communities by utilizing online resources, especially when in-person interaction in classroom settings was impeded, resulting in an asynchronous online course. The purpose of this paper is to examine how intercultural competence, which can foster learners' attitudes, could be encouraged in an asynchronous online environment for a Japanese foreign language course from empirical perspectives. The population was learners who possessed Intermediate and Advanced-level proficiency of Japanese. Learners' outcomes were compared between an online asynchronous course using Deardorff's (2006) Process Model of Intercultural Competence in the curriculum and a face-to-face class without using Deardorff's model. The result of using Deardorff's process model of Intercultural Competence in the curriculum, constructed based on "Understanding by Design," which is comprised of 3 stages: (1) identifying desired results, (2) determining acceptable evidence, and (3) planning learning experiences and instruction (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005), suggested that learners could deepen their insights toward a target culture and society through multiple opportunities for learners to investigate the relationships among perspectives, practices and products.

Keywords: asynchronous online course, backward design approach, intercultural competence, process model, world-readiness standards for learning languages

INTRODUCTION

Intercultural competence that supports effective and appropriate interaction in a variety of cultural contexts is imperative to enable learners to obtain 21st-century skills and to provide a foundation for becoming a global citizen. Furthermore, as the goal areas of the World-Readiness Standards for Learning languages in the United States of America

(American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, 2015) consist of not only communication but also cultures, connections, comparisons, and communities, teaching foreign and second languages should provide opportunities for learners to develop their competencies in more than one language and culture through experience, comparison, analysis, reflection, and action. As such, it is necessary to facilitate learners through educational curricula including experience, comparison, analysis, reflection, and cooperative action, which are principles of pedagogical planning, in order to develop learning processes (Barrett, et al., 2013). This article discusses developing the curriculum of a culture unit to enable learners to identify, examine, and analyze cultural products and patterns of practices, understanding the relationship with perspectives of culture studied in cognitively demanding and continuous learning processes, that transforms attitudes, including self-awareness and openness to new values and beliefs. In addition, this article reports that learners' outcomes using the Deardorff's (2006) Process Model of Intercultural Competence, which deepens learners' insights toward a target culture and society in an asynchronous online environment, exceeded those of a face-to-face class, despite the fact that learning in an online class could have potential disadvantages or limitations which have often been identified.

Literature Review

Self-Directed and Self-Regulated Learning in Online Class Settings

From the cognitive constructivism perspective, the individual construction of knowledge occurs through interaction. This interaction could take place in the environment, such as in a process of negotiation among peers; however, meaningful learning is also conducted through personalized self-regulated and self-directed learning skills and strategies. Personalized learning allows students to feel that they are progressing successfully and to realize that they are unable to skip learning certain items that they need to acquire. Through this learning method, learners can continue to cycle around and meet their different needs. Thus, SDL (self-directed learning), which is a mental process identifying and seeking information, including information from digital media, is one of the important skills that can enable learners to take the initiative to be responsible for learning materials and content in a media-based learning environment. Learners who possess higher SDL skills achieve better digital literacy skills and leading to successful learning in online courses. Moreover, SRL (self-regulated learning) is essential for academic achievement (Bahri et al., 2021) and plays an important role in overcoming challenges of online learning in isolated situations, because learners in the process of SRL are metacognitively active and motivated in their learning processes (Zimet et al., 1998; Zimmerman & Martinez-Pons, 1990; Zimmerman & Pons, 1986). Furthermore,

SRL is one of the elements of developing lifelong learning skills because learners can actively manage their cognition and behavior and may attain their goals more easily.

Intercultural Competence

Intercultural competence is a combination of attitudes, knowledge, understanding, and skills applied through action, which enable learners to (a) understand and respect people who have different cultural affiliations from oneself, (b) respond appropriately, effectively, and respectfully when interacting and communicating, (c) establish positive and constructive relationships, and (d) understand oneself and one's own multiple cultural affiliations through encounters with cultural difference (Huber & Reynolds, 2014). The cultural dimensions of language acquisition are profound and occur through theoretical discussions of intercultural communication (e.g., Byrnes, 2010; Kramsch, 2006). Byram (1997/2008) assumes that the development of a conscious awareness of oneself is fostered through the development of our learners' competence in certain areas: attitudes, knowledge, skills of interpreting and relating, and skills of discovery and interaction, as well as the most important component of intercultural competence— critical cultural awareness—which is defined as the ability to "evaluate critically and based on explicit criteria perspectives, practices and products in one's own and other cultures and countries" (1997, p. 53). It is not easy to plan lessons in which learners can develop meaningful linguistic and intercultural competence simultaneously. However, it is important to effectively facilitate learners so that they can be good intercultural citizens who are proficient in languages and can understand different cultures and societies through carefully developed learner-centered learning processes.

METHOD

Participants

To indicate the effectiveness of Deardorff's (2006) Process Model of Intercultural Competence, we compare outcomes of students enrolled in courses that offer opportunities to improve Japanese language skills by learning about Japanese culture in different instruction modes. In a face-to-face instruction model, the reading of passages and activities in a textbook regarding Japanese dance and performing arts was used to develop intercultural competence. In another instruction model, materials, tasks, and assessments were delivered asynchronously. In addition to the materials and tasks in the textbook, which was the same as the one used in the face-to-face instruction mode, tasks and activities developed based on Deardorff's Process Model were integrated into the curriculum.

Assessment Tools

The rubric was made based on the VALUE Rubrics, which is an-intercultural knowledge and competence scale that AAC&U (n.d.) developed; it was used as a pre-assessment tool to select the learner who received highest score from each instruction model respectively. This 4-point-Likert-scale rubric consists of the following three criteria:

   o Knowledge: culture self-awareness, knowledge of culture worldview frameworks

   o Skills: empathy, verbal and nonverbal communication

   o Attitudes: curiosity, openness

Using these criteria, multiple instructors independently rated videos created as final products. Afterwards, the three components (practices, products, and perspectives) of the Cultures Framework of the World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages-Culture Standards (ACTFL, 2015) were used to qualitatively evaluate learners' outcomes, as stated in the subsection "Assessment of Learners' Intercultural Competence" below. Furthermore, to strengthen the study design through the combination of methodologies, follow-up interviews of the selected learners were conducted.

Curriculum Planning

Unit for Teaching Culture

This section describes how the learning activities are designed using the OSEE (Observe, State, Explore, Evaluate) tool based on Deardorff's (2006) Process Model of Intercultural Competence in the curriculum constructed in the backward design approach unit, with the goal of developing a global citizen with strong intercultural competence, especially for an asynchronous course.

Unit Curriculum—Understanding by Design Framework

Wiggins and McTighe's *Understanding by Design* (UbD) (2005), which describes how to develop and deepen learners' understanding of cultural products and various patterns of practices, consists of a backward-design with three stages: (1) identifying desired results, (2) determining acceptable evidence, and (3) planning learning experiences and instruction. In Stage 1, curriculum designers identify what learners will understand, know, and will be able to do and establish the goals of learning on the basis of educational standards and learners' proficiency levels. In Stage 2, assessments are decided upon what demonstrates evidence of learners' understanding and achievement

using various forms (e.g., papers, discussions, presentations, and projects). In Stage 3, plans of learning tasks and the sequence of activities are finalized, considering identified results and appropriate evidence of learners' understanding.

The curriculum in the UbD framework is designed for the course entitled "Japanese Culture and Society" in which Japanese language proficiency and intercultural competence for students whose proficiency in Japanese as a foreign language is Intermediate to Advanced. The topic of this curriculum discussed in this article is *Tanabata matsuri* (Star Festival) in Sendai, Japan, targeting post-novice level learners.

Stage-1 – Desired outcome

The goals of this curriculum are established based on the cultural standards of the World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages (ACTFL, 2015) as described below:

1. Learners will relate cultural practices (human behavior and customs) during festivals to perspectives using authentic materials and by preparing oral and written presentations with attention to the cultural background of the audience.

2. Learners will relate cultural products used during festivals to perspectives by conducting research, questionnaire surveys, and interviews.

To reach these goals, essential questions are formulated that give purpose to learning. In this curriculum, the essential questions are: (1) How are products, practices, and perspectives at yearly events (such as festivals) influenced by the cultural aspects of each region/country? and (2) In what ways are festivals comprised of historical and social aspects? The learners will know the following information:

• When and where are yearly events (Japanese festivals) held?

• What are the yearly events like?

• What do people perform and use during the events?

• Are ways of celebrating the events in the U.S. different from in Japan? If so, how?

As a result, the learners will be able to (1) identify, examine, and analyze cultural products and various patterns of practices during festivals using authentic materials and by conducting research, observations, and interviews; and (2) discuss products and human behaviors at festivals with native speakers of Japanese with culturally appropriate manners.

Stage-2 – Assessment evidence

The UbD framework is constructed with a backward design approach; therefore, valid, reliable, and sufficient assessments of the desired results are sought before learning activities are planned in Stage 3. The performance tasks in this curriculum consist of formative and summative assessments. The first formative assessment is the oral presentation. In this task, learners report their findings through students' conceptualizations based on data obtained from research using online and paper resources, a questionnaire survey, and follow-up interviews of classmates. The second formative assessment is writing a formal paper. The learners write narrations that can be included in a video, which is the final product and summative assessment of the project. The learners introduce the *Tanabata* Festival, including each learner's insights about Japanese cultural aspects, and publish it to a public audience using SNS. After completing the project, the learners receive comments about their videos that introduce the *Tanabata* Festival from a public audience at SNS and reflect upon their learning experiences.

Stage-3 – Learning Plan

After the goals and assessments are determined, the learning activities can be structured. In the curriculum discussed in this article, launching the project takes place before the tasks that learners engage in by completing the project. The project the learners are assigned prior to the main tasks has two parts. In the first, Japanese traditional dance and performing arts with historical backgrounds are addressed, as well as vocabulary related to festivals and sentence structures using passages and activities in Chapter 8 "*Odori-to Geino* (Traditional Dance and Performing Art)" in the textbook *Pop-Culture New & Old* (Hanai, 2018). In the second, learners answer the questions below at the discussion board of the learning management system after watching videos of the male version of *Awa Odori* (Dance) and the female version.

Question 1. What are the differences between the male version and the female version of *Awa Odori?*

Question 2. Why do you think the male version is different from the female version?

Question 3. What are similar yearly events (e.g., parades, fireworks, and festivals) in your country?

Question 4. What do you do at yearly events? Do you dance? If yes, what kinds of dances do you perform, and how?

The main tasks of the project curriculum, where Deardorff's (2006) Process Model of Intercultural Competence is integrated into the UbD framework, are described in the following section.

Process Model of Intercultural Competence

There is an understanding of culture as highly complex and multilayered; thereby, various models of intercultural competence have been discussed. Moeller & Nugent (2014) identified four major theories and factors related to fostering intercultural competence regarding the impact of the cultural components of a foreign language curriculum. Bennet's (1993) Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) displays the internal evolution through intercultural interactions from ethnocentrism to the ethnorelativism viewpoint. Bennett (2004) assumes as a fact that a person's worldview needs to change from avoiding cultural difference to seeking it in order to navigate intercultural situations. The second theory that Moeller & Nugent point out is Gudykunst's (1998) Anxiety/Uncertainty Management (AUM) Model, which explains that adjusting to new cultural situations requires managing learners' anxiety in new cultural environments. Gudykunst (1993) explains that when anxiety in intercultural situations is too high, learners less accurately interpret the target language speakers' responses. Conversely, when anxiety is low, learners can engage in conversation with trust and properly understand the target culture. The third theory is Byram's (1997) Multidimensional Model of Intercultural Competence, which explains that it is imperative that an individual learner remains open to learning about new beliefs, values, and worldviews in relationships of equality. Byram, Gribkova, and Starkey (2002) suggested that learners consider their own perspectives by collectively recording their preconceived thoughts in relation to the target culture before they proceed with their discovery. Afterwards, the importance of self-awareness and internal transformation in the pursuit of intercultural competence is stressed (Furstenberg, 2010; Green, 1995; Kramsch, 2004). One example is Deardorff's (2006) Process Model of Intercultural Competence, in which learners create a continuous process of working on attitudes, knowledge, intercultural outcomes, and external outcomes related to intercultural competence. In Deardorff's model, the process toward intercultural competence is continuous, and the learning process is never-ending, as the learner continues to learn, change, evolve, and become transformed over time. The tasks and assessments in a sequence designed using the OSEE (Observe, State, Explore, Evaluate) tool based on Deardorff's Process Model of Intercultural Competence are explained in the next section.

Tasks and Activities

Cultural activities utilizing the OSEE tool, which helps learners analyze the target culture, is comprised of four steps: (1) observe what is happening in visual aids (e.g., pictures); (2) state objectively what is happening to the visual aids using descriptive language; (3) explore different explanations for what is happening while practicing interpersonal and interpretative skills; and (4) evaluate which explanation is the most likely one about the visual aids. These exploration activities enable learners to consider their preconceived ideas regarding people from other cultures so that negative beliefs can be transformed during exercises focusing on objective observation, research, and evaluation. The activities and assessment in the curriculum for "*Tanabata matsuri* (Star Festival) in Sendai, Japan," integrating the OSEE tool, are as follows.

Activity 1: Fukinagashi (Paper windsock)

The objectives of the activity are: (1) analyze the meanings of the artifact *Fukinagashi* (Figure 1) displayed at the Sendai *Tanabata* Festival, and (2) understand the cultural backgrounds of people living in the region. In the first task of the interpretive communicative mode, learners observe the picture of *Fukinagashi* and learn the meanings of seven decorations which are essential to the Sendai *Tanabata* Festival using authentic materials such as web articles and videos. After reading the articles and watching the videos, learners understand the perspectives of the product and practice below:

Figure 1
Fukinagashi (Paper windsock)

1. Learn the origin of this decoration, the shape of which is like an old weaving yarn that *Orihime* (Vega) wove in the story of *Tanabata* (Star Festival). *Fukinagashi* is decorated on the evening of the sixth day of the seventh month of the lunar calendar. The decorations flow through the river, and the people in Sendai wish for progress in academics or the arts.

2. Deeply understand *Bon* (a nationwide yearly event when Buddhists honor the spirits of the ancestors at altars for three days) and the *Bon* Festival in Sendai.

The learners consider the purposes of creating *Fukinagashi* and express their impressions of the target culture and community based on their assumptions.

Activity 2: Take-akari (Bamboo light)

In this step, the activities about *Take-akari* (Bamboo light) (Figure 2) on basis of the OSEE (Observe, State, Explore, Evaluate) tool are conducted.

The objectives of Activity 2 are to associate *Fukinagashi,:* which is explored in Activity 1, with *Take-akari.* The bamboos of the ornaments used for the *Tanabata* Festival on August 6-8 are recycled to make lanterns for the Welcome Fire on August 13 as a beginning event of *Bon*. Learners will deeply understand *Bon* and the *Bon* Festival in Sendai.

[OSEE Tool-Observe] Task 1 of Activity 2 involves the interpretive communicative mode. Learners observe four photos and think about what they are (Photos 1-3 show *Take-akari* during *Bon* Festival, and Photo 4 reveals that *Fukinagashi* is made of bamboo) (Figure 2).

Figure 2
Take-akari (Bamboo light)

[OSEE Tool-State] In Task 2, which is a continuation of the interpretive communicative mode, learners independently write down what these pictures depict and what they indicate so that they can brainstorm about their ideas with peers in the next step.

[OSEE Tool-Explore] In Task 3, as an interpersonal communicative mode activity, learners share their ideas about the photos in small groups using the target language and conceptualize aspects of the target culture and society.

During Task 3, scaffolding, utilizing photos in Figure 2 plays an important role in enabling learners to understand the profound cultural and social phenomena that they are investigating. Photo 4 shows the process of making "*Fukinagashi*," which is one of the seven decorations at the *Tanabata* Festival in Sendai. In addition, Photo 2 includes the

sign "仙台 (Sendai) 8 月 13 日(August 13) 竹 (bamboo) 灯り(light/fire)." Therefore, some learners would notice that these photos are related to the *Tanabata* Festival in Sendai. However, the teacher asks what materials are used in the product(s) if learners are off-track.

[OSEE Tool-Evaluate] Task 4 provides learners with opportunities to agree on the most possible and reasonable explanation and to share their justification as a presentation communicative mode activity. A representative from each group explains the photos in Figure 2 to other groups, after all group members agree on the findings. The cultural perspectives that learners should take away from this is that the bamboos of the lanterns are a part of the *Tanabata* Festival's ornaments (*Fukinagashi*), which represent people's wish for improvement in weaving and art. In the Sendai region, weaving skills helped the community when a historic famine occurred. Therefore, using the bamboos of *Fukinagashi* also implicates a desire for improving harvests and securing income.

Assessment of Intercultural Competence

Tasks to Produce Final Product-Video

After completing the learning activities using the OSEE tool, learners work to produce a video as a final project. The tasks where learners have an opportunity to discuss their insights about Japanese culture and society based on their findings regarding the *Tanabata* Festival are as follows:

1. Interpretive Communicative Mode Task—Conduct research on one aspect based on an individual student's interest regarding the *Tanabata* Festival in Sendai, Japan, using various resources (websites, videos, paper/electronic documents, etc.).

2. Interpersonal Communicative Mode Task—Create and conduct a questionnaire survey and follow-up interview with people in Japan to deepen their understanding about Japanese festivals and solve or answer students' problems/questions.

3. Interpretive Communicative Mode Task—Analyze how various products (e.g., decorations, portable shrines, floats in the procession following one another in succession) and practices (e.g., dance, entertainment) are related to perspectives.

4. Presentational Communicative Mode Task—Conduct an oral presentation about their findings through students' conceptualizations based on data obtained from a questionnaire survey and follow-up interviews with classmates. This task is evaluated as the first formative assessment.

5. Presentational Communicative Mode Task—Write a paper (which will be narrated in a video). This task takes place as the second formative assessment.

6. Presentational Communicative Mode Task—Revise a paper (after receiving feedback about its content, the accuracy of sentence structures, and the appropriateness of vocabulary use from the teacher). This is a continuation of the second formative assessment.

7. Presentational Communicative Mode Task—Create a video which introduces the *Tanabata* Festival, including each learner's insights of Japanese cultural aspects in Japanese with English subtitles. This task is evaluated as the summative assessment.

Assessment of Learners' Intercultural Competence

This curriculum is designed using the UbD framework in the backward approach, which first clarifies the desired learning results aligned with the World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages-Culture Standards (ACTFL, 2015). Thereby, learning outcomes are categorized into three components (practices, products, and perspectives) of the Cultures Framework of the Standards (see Figure 3). The World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages cover five goal areas (Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities) which establish an inextricable link between communication and culture, making connections and comparisons and using this competence to be a part of communities. In the "Cultures" component, the products and practices are derived from the perspectives that form the worldview of a cultural group. The study of target language provides multiple opportunities for learners to investigate the relationships between the perspectives, practices, and products of a culture where the target language is spoken, because language is the primary vehicle for expressing cultural perspectives and participating in social practices.

Cultures Framework

PERSPECTIVES
(Meanings, attitudes, values, ideas)

PRACTICES
(Patterns of social interactions)

PRODUCTS
(Books, tools, foods, laws, music, games)
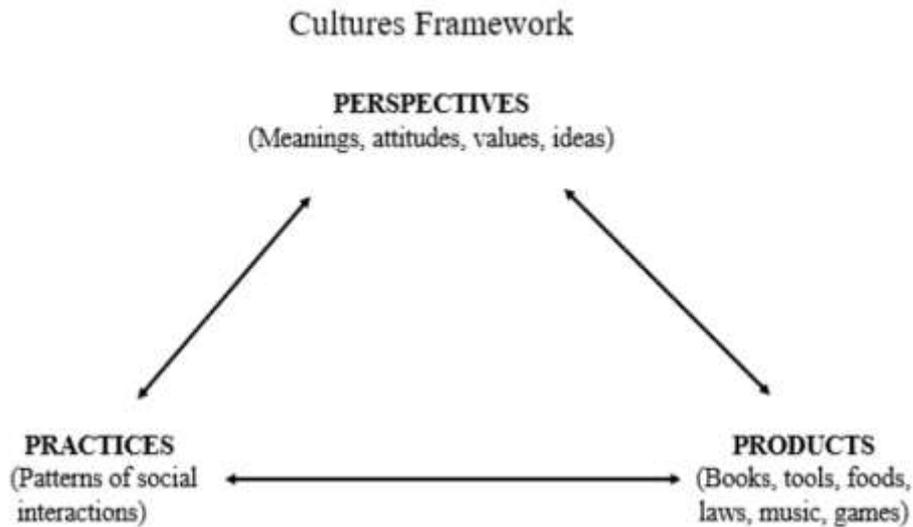
Figure 3
Interplay of three components of Cultures in the World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages

FINDINGS

Learners' Outcomes

Table 1 shows the elements of the video produced by Student A in the online asynchronous Japanese language course. To assess the achievement through learning and analyzing cultural aspects of a Japanese festival in the curriculum developed using the OSEE tool based on Deardorff's (2006) Process Model of Intercultural Competence, the content of the video as the final product was categorized into practices, products, and perspectives. The category of practices indicates that the learner's basic knowledge is related to the *Tanabata* (Star) Festival regarding its customs, history, date, and location. In the category of products, knowledge is obtained in the previous course and expanded through the activities experienced in the OSEE tool. The story of *Tanabata* is taught at the end of the first-year Japanese course, and the significance of *Fukinagashi* (Paper Windstock) was initially learned in Activity 1 before Activity 2 that the OSEE tool is integrated into. During Activity 2, the bamboo, which is the material of *Fukinagashi* recycled to make the lanterns and the stick when searching for lost items after the *Tanabata* Festival. In addition, the *Bon* dance, which is performed during

Tanabata Odori (dance), is also considered as relating to Japanese cultural perspectives. The contents of the video classified in the category of perspectives indicate that the learner who produced the video especially demonstrates an understanding of the relationship between the products and the perspectives of the products, as the cultures goal includes two standards which are both related to cultural perspectives emphasizing practices and products. Further, Student A found significant relationships among *Sasa* (broadleaf bamboo) and God and *Taiko* (Japanese drams) during *Tanabata Odori*, which is held immediately after the *Tanabata* Festival.

Table 1
Student A's products using the OSEE tool in the categories of practices, products, and perspectives

Practices	Products	Perspectives
Writing wishes on *Tanzaku* (paper cut into strips)	Story of *Tanabata* (Star Festival)	Roles of *Fukinagashi* (paper windstock, which is a charm for improvement in the arts), which represents the wish for improvement in weaving and art in society
History about the *Sendai Tanabata* Festival	*Fukinagashi* (paper windstock)	Significance of *Take* (bamboo) and *Sasa* (broadleaf bamboo) for the festival
Date and place of the *Sendai Tanabata* Festival	Bamboo, which is used to make *Fukinagashi* and recycled for making the lanterns and to search for lost items after the *Tanabata* Festival	Relationships between *Sasa* and God, and between *Taiko* (Japanese drams) and God
	Dance at *Tanabata Odori* (dance)	

To demonstrate the effectiveness of Deardorff's (2006) Process Model of Intercultural Competence in the curriculum, the content of the video that Student B created is shown in Table 2; this student studied the passages regarding Japanese dance and performing arts in a face-to-face class using the same textbook as Student A's course. After reading a chapter of the textbook and finding other festivals in Japan through this reading activity, Student B conducted further research by gathering information about the *Sendai Tanabata* Festival online and discussing this information with the goal of developing further insights about Japanese culture with people who live in Japan without utilizing the OSEE tool.

Student B and Student A made the same observations in the category of practices; specifically, custom, which is writing about people's wishes, and the history, date, and location of the festival was the same as Student A. In addition, Student B includes people's observations of *Nanatsu Kazari* (seven ornaments), which are displayed around shops during the festival. The category of products is comprised of the basic knowledge about *Tanabata* and concrete objects such as food and fireworks.

Table 2
Student B's products without using the OSEE tool in the categories of practices, products, and perspectives

Practices	Products	Perspectives
Location and date of the *Sendai Tanabata* Festival	Story and Origin of *Tanabata*	
Writing wishes on *Tanzaku* (strips of paper)	Song of *Tanabata*	
History about *Aoba* Castle built by *Masamune Date* (a regional ruler of Japan; 1567-1636) in *Sendai*	Food such as beef tongue and *Zunda mochi* (rice cake covered in sweetened mashed green soybeans) eaten at the festival	No Content in this category
Appreciation of *Nanatsu Kazari* (seven ornaments), which decorate shopping arcades during the festival	Fireworks held the previous evening of the festival	

The follow-up interviews of Student A, B, and Student B's mother, who closely helped her daughter, were conducted to support the use of multiple perspectives in the findings of this study and to investigate their opinions regarding the course curricula. Student A stated that taking this course with the detailed guidance was an experience that changed his life and was also a great accomplishment.

Student B is a heritage learner, who can easily obtain assistance in learning the Japanese language as well as culture and society in Japan from family members and relatives. She was able to obtain more information about *Sendai Tanabata* festivals and cultural aspects related to it than others in the traditional class without using the OSEE tool based on Deardorff's (2006) Process Model of Intercultural Competence. However, no content was classified in the category of perspectives; therefore, Student B could not develop the intercultural competence of relating between the practices and perspectives and between the products and perspectives of the culture being studied, unlike Student A.

One of the strengths of the course is the excellent opportunities to learn Japanese language and culture through learning about Japanese festivities, according to Student A and Student B. Student B's mother expressed her gratitude for this valuable experience, which resulted in Student B's high level of Japanese language proficiency, which her mother had never expected before taking this course. However, the data obtained from the interviews indicated that Student B was unable to deepen her perspectives of Japanese culture and profoundly analyze and discuss cultural aspects like Student A even though Student B was able to use exceedingly high-level vocabulary and sentence structures.

DISCUSSION

Two pedagogical implications are derived from these learning outcomes. First, it is important to articulate information across the courses in the program. The cultural contents that appear in both videos produced by Students A and B are the story of *Tanabata,* which is part of the *Obon* Festival, and wishes during *Tanabata*, suggesting that what is learned in the first-year Japanese class is retained and could be integrated into the project a few years later. Second, tasks and activities developed based on Deardorff's (2006) Process Model of Intercultural Competence are effective for fostering intercultural competencies. Student A, who was provided an opportunity to engage in learning activities designed to transform attitudes, including self-awareness and openness to new values and beliefs in a continuous process, successfully gained knowledge of bamboo ornaments, which are indispensable for the celebration, as well as profound insights into Japanese culture and society.

Generally, intercultural competence can be fostered through a combination of attitudes, knowledge, understanding, and skills, so that learners can understand and respect people who are perceived to have different cultural affiliations from themselves and respond appropriately, effectively, and respectfully when interacting and communicating with such people, as well as establish positive and constructive relationships and understand themselves and their own multiple cultural affiliations through encounters with cultural differences (Barrett et. al., 2013, p. 16-17).

LIMITATIONS

Some problems are drawn regarding models of intercultural competence. The first is that the model tends to have an ethnocentric bias, as most models have been developed within western European and North American societies (Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009). Thus, the model likely lacks cross-cultural generalizability. The pedagogical investigation in this article deals with an Asian culture; hence, this problem would not be paid much attention. The second problem is an operationalization and validity issue.

Despite Deardorff's (2006) Process Model of Intercultural Competence being formed based on the large number of data collected from scholars of intercultural competence, this model might not sufficiently provide opportunities for taking action and engagement with others through interaction and for cooperation in making improvements within a target culture and society. Another concern is the assessment challenges for intercultural competence as a component of 21st-century skills. Coherence of agreement on the definition of 21st-century skills and their component knowledge and techniques is necessary (Scardamalia et al., 2012). Thus, further investigation considering the improvement curriculum planning, including assessment tools, would be suggested.

CONCLUSION

As shown in this article, the Process Model of Intercultural Competence (Deardorff, 2006), which is a continual process of improvement, is useful to enable a deepening of learner's insights toward a target culture and society through multiple opportunities to investigate the relationships between perspectives, practices, and products. Additionally, it should be noted that personal abilities, such as self-regulated learning to comprehend and control learners' learning environment (Al Mulhim, 2021) and digital literacy skills on self-directed learning, which acquires useful knowledge to support learning, are significant in developing individual knowledge of learning materials by encouraging creativity and curiosity (Hague & Payton, 2010) to succeed in asynchronous online classes. Many learners suffer from post-COVID-19 symptoms that have caused memory and concentration problems; however, educators should have them take advantage of skills that they developed through overcoming the online learning challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic and further foster those skills so as to expand their learning opportunities and lead them to successful careers and lives in the future.

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