Exploring manifestations of curiosity in study abroad as part of intercultural communicative competence

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A R T I C L E   I N F O

Article history:
Received 29 March 2013
Received in revised form 28 December 2013
Accepted 31 December 2013

Keywords:
Curiosity
Foreign language education
Intercultural communicative competence
Study abroad
Information-gap perspective

A B S T R A C T

This paper reports on a study that explores manifestations of curiosity in study abroad emerging in response to teaching materials designed to stimulate interest in it. Having reviewed definitions of curiosity, the rationale for investigating curiosity within the theme of study abroad will be presented before its psychological underpinnings are explored. The development of teaching materials will then be described that were implemented in an English course conducted at a university in Japan. The course aimed to develop intercultural communicative competence (ICC) (Byram, 1997) within the Intercultural Dialogue Model (Houghton, 2012), and the study took the form of case study based on action research. Selected examples of qualitative data will be presented and discussed in relation to Loewenstein’s (1994) information-gap perspective. Teachers are recommended to utilize information gaps to cause students to want to know more by encouraging them to clearly delineate information-gap boundaries and seek further information. Students need to develop meta-cognitive and meta-affective awareness and control to maintain open and inquiring minds as intrinsic aspects of criticality development. By foregrounding curiosity within the Intercultural Dialogue Model, this paper reveals active yet often missed connections between the attitudes, knowledge and critical cultural awareness components of Byram’s model.

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1. Introduction

This paper reports on a study that explores manifestations of Japanese students’ curiosity in study abroad that emerges in response to teaching materials specifically designed to stimulate interest in it. This introductory section will start by reviewing definitions of curiosity within the intercultural competence literature before presenting the rationale for investigating curiosity within the theme of study abroad. The psychological underpinnings of curiosity, and possible implications for education, will then be explored before an overview of the study is presented in Section 2.

1.1. Definitions of curiosity in the intercultural competence literature

In the intercultural competence literature, the concept of curiosity has been clustered with “suspension of judgment, cognitive flexibility, cultural humility and tolerance of ambiguity” (Bennett, 2009: p. 128), and respect (valuing other
cultures), openness (withholding judgement) and discovery (tolerating ambiguity) (Deardorff, 2009), attitudes that form the base and starting point of Deardorff’s (2006) process model of intercultural competence. Although curiosity is not specifically identified as a feature of intercultural awareness in the Common European Framework (Council of Europe, 2001), it is explicitly recognized in the attitudes component of Byram’s (1997) ICC model, an overview of which is presented in Appendix 1 (also see Byram, 2009). While the relativization of self and other are framed in terms of “curiosity and openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one’s own” (p. 91) in this component of Byram’s model, the word ‘curiosity’ is not used in the description of the recommended learning objectives, which are framed instead in terms of willingness, interest and readiness (underlined in Appendix 1), so what does curiosity mean exactly?

Curiosity may be viewed negatively if associated with unwanted risk as the proverb ‘curiosity killed the cat’ suggests, or if it is considered an annoyance associated with inquisitiveness defined by Cambridge Dictionaries Online in terms of “wanting to discover as much as you can about things, sometimes in a way that annoys people” (inquisitiveness, n.d.). However, despite the possible negative nuances highlighted above, both curiosity and inquisitiveness tend to be viewed in positive terms in the academic intercultural arena with one sometimes being defined in terms of the other.

Mendenhall (2001) suggests that inquisitiveness is the critical factor [in intercultural competence], perhaps the keystone in developing intercultural effectiveness, a position supported by Deardorff’s work as well (Bennett, 2009: p. 127). Gregerson, Morrison, and Black (1998) define curiosity as “unbridled inquisitiveness” noting that global leaders “stated repeatedly that inquisitiveness is the fuel for increasing global savvy, enhancing their ability to understand people and maintain integrity, and augmenting their capacity for dealing with uncertainty and managing tension” (p. 23) (Bennett, 2009: pp. 127–128.)

Bennett (2009) suggests that tolerance of ambiguity and the suspension of assumptions and judgements allow curiosity to thrive by opening up the mind to multiple possibilities, noting that levels of tolerance of ambiguity may vary culturally. This is reflected in Hofstede’s concept of uncertainty avoidance defined as “the degree to which the members of a society feel uncomfortable with uncertainty and ambiguity” (The Hofstede Centre, n.d., a) with Japan being characterized as “one of the most uncertainty avoiding countries on earth” (The Hofstede Centre, n.d., b).

Bennett (2009) claims that curiosity has been defined as a sense of wonder, defined by Opdal (2001) as “the state of mind that signals we have reached the limits of our present understanding, and that things may be different from how they look” (p. 128). Opdal (2001), however, claims that “curiosity seen as a motive to do exploration within definite and generally accepted frames is to be distinguished from wonder in which doubt about the frames themselves is the underlying factor” (p. 331), suggesting that both should be fostered through education.

Overall, then, there remains a lack of conceptual clarity surrounding the definition of the word curiosity, which potentially makes it difficult for teachers to identify expressions of it in student work, and to see how it functions in practice as an active component of ICC, which is problematic in itself. It has been over fifteen years since Byram’s ICC model was first published in 1997, yet there is a dearth of published teaching materials prioritizing the development of ICC, which also undermines the development of ICC assessment. While ICC assessment is not the focus of this article, one of its priorities is to make the development of materials and methods should be aiming to make aspect(s) of the ICC construct visible to serve the development of the ICC field more generally, and this includes curiosity.

1.2. Contextual background: study abroad in the Japanese context

Study abroad is a suitable theme within which to investigate curiosity, and particularly in Japan where there has been a “precipitous decline” (Tanikawa, 2013) in the number of Japanese students studying abroad in recent years. Although “(g)lobalizing forces have accelerated the pace of internationalization in institutions of higher education both at home and on foreign soil” (Jackson, 2010: p. 21), which increases the need for global competency, effective intercultural communication skills, and linguistic ability in English, “(i)n 2010, only 58,000 Japanese students studied outside the country, a large decrease from the record high 83,000 during the 2004 academic year” (Torres, 2013).

Speculators comment that a lack of international experience and fluency in English language skills may harm Japanese students’ employment prospects as English is introduced as the/an official language of the Japanese workplace in companies like Rakuten and Uniqlo (Matsutani, 2010; Tanikawa, 2013). Further, companies like Panasonic, Sony, Lawson, Yamato Transport and Fast Retailing, which operates the Uniqlo brand clothing stores, have actively been increasing the number of their foreign employees. While Uniqlo stepped up its hiring of non-Japanese to 30–80 percent of all new hires, Panasonic said that of 1390 new employees it planned to recruit in the forthcoming year, 1100 would not be Japanese (Tanikawa, 2011).

The reasons for the downturn in the number of Japanese students studying abroad are not clear, although there is speculation on this point. It may result from economic hardship (Tanikawa, 2011; Torres, 2013) or students’ prioritization of job-hunting while at university. Professor of education at Hosei University in Tokyo, Naoki Ogi, suggests that students’ lack of interest in study abroad may have deeper psychological roots as growing unease with the unknown causes young Japanese to become increasingly “introverted and risk-averse” and “unwilling and ill-prepared to take on new challenges” (Tanikawa, 2011).

And although the downturn may currently be reversing, partly because of demands by major employers seeking to globalize by demanding solid foreign language skills and international experience of their employees, “it is not yet clear...
whether the inward-looking mind-set prevalent among young Japanese—partly a result of growing complacency in an affluent society—will be reversed for real” (Tanikawa, 2013).

It should be the task of higher education to prepare students to meet the “challenges of life in an increasingly interdependent world where national borders are permeable and communities are increasingly diverse” (Jackson, 2010: p. 213), and study abroad, in particular, is one way in which this can be achieved. To this end, the Japanese Education Ministry reportedly plans to double its study scholarships for the 2014 academic year to encourage more college students to pursue studies abroad so that more workers and employees in Japan will gain international experience while at university (Torres, 2013).

However, study abroad does not necessarily enhance ICC development, and the lack of curiosity in other cultures implied by students’ lack of interest in it can be considered a barrier to it. As such, it needs also to be addressed by teachers through ICC education that aims to stimulate students’ curiosity not only in study abroad, but also in value difference and cultural difference more generally. But what psychological underpinnings need to be taken into consideration, and what are the implications for education? And how can expressions of curiosity in student work be recognized by teachers who are trying to stimulate curiosity in students who may lack the “readiness to experience the different stages of adaptation to and interaction with another culture during a period of residence” (Byram, 1997: p. 93)?

1.3. The psychology of curiosity and implications for education

Reviewing the psychology of curiosity, Loewenstein (1994) identified the two main phases in which research on curiosity flourished as taking place first in the 1960s, and then in the 1970s and 1980s. Drive theories, the incongruity perspective and the competence approach were the three main theoretical perspectives that highlighted facets of curiosity, although “none of these theories offer[ed] a comprehensive account of curiosity that can explain the wide range of circumstances in which it arises” (Loewenstein, 1994: p. 84). Further, although the importance of curiosity in childhood cognitive development was explored by both Piaget and Vgotsky, their theories are “of less use in understanding adult curiosity for academic information, such as may be evoked by university study” (Pluck & Johnson, 2011: p. 24).

In response to weaknesses in existing theories, Loewenstein offered a new account interpreting curiosity as “a form of cognitively induced deprivation that arises from the perception of a gap in knowledge or understanding” (Loewenstein, 1994: p. 75). In essence, curiosity arises when “an individuals’ informational reference point becomes elevated in a certain domain, drawing attention to an information gap. Curiosity is the feeling of deprivation that results from an awareness of the gap” (Loewenstein, 1994: p. 93). The desire to fill the gap is what causes the individual to want to know more, and Loewenstein suggests that the information-gap perspective carries three main implications for education aimed at stimulating curiosity in students.

Firstly, information acquisition needs to be stimulated in the initial absence of curiosity because curiosity requires a pre-existing knowledge base, and the mere asking of questions to students is insufficient. Further, people are likely to become more curious about topics they already know about because perceived gaps in their knowledge become smaller relative to what they already know as knowledge is acquired.

Secondly, students need to be made aware of manageable gaps in their knowledge, an approach that characterizes the Socratic method which systematically exposes “incompleteness, inconsistencies, and unparsimoniousness in the learner’s knowledge structures” (Malone, 1981: p. 364, cited in Loewenstein, 1994: p. 94). Here, the manageability of information gaps is key as “there is no point presenting problems that are very difficult or involve large amounts of new learning. To ensure the gaps are not too large, it may be necessary to regularly assess the students’ current understanding” (Pluck & Johnson, 2011: p. 29). Further, the provision of regular feedback can help stimulate curiosity as “it allows students to identify gaps in their knowledge” (Pluck & Johnson, 2011: p. 29).

Thirdly, students may make predictions (e.g. about people and places) based on their social stereotypes, which may be held unconsciously. For this reason, students awareness of their social stereotypes, and of the predictions they make based upon them, need to be raised. To this end, teachers need to stimulate students’ curiosity into whether or not their predictions are correct. While the definition and nature of stereotypes, and ways they can be addressed in intercultural education have been explored in detail elsewhere (Houghton, Furumura, Lebedko, & Song, 2013), Allport’s (1954) definition of a stereotype as “an exaggerated belief associated with a category” (p. 191) highlights the potential inaccuracy between information held in the mind as a belief about other social groups and the reality, necessitating the need for critical awareness of stereotypes. Indeed, “[l]ack of curiosity about others as a result of the failure to recognize information gaps may be a contributing factor to the well-documented resistance of stereotypes to change” (Loewenstein, 1994: p. 94). And “curiosity about a topic will not be invoked when either there are no information gaps identified or the individual feels that they already know the information” (Pluck & Johnson, 2011: p. 26) (i.e. because they are filling in the gaps with pre-existing stereotypes).

A prime example of the use of the information-gap perspective in the classroom would be “when a student knows the basic structure of a theory or a concept, but lacks specific details. Loewenstein’s theory suggests that the student would then be curious about the missing information and be motivated to fill in the gap” (Pluck & Johnson, 2011: p. 26). Information-gap activities are commonly used in foreign language education for this reason. Also, task based learning and problem based learning can evoke curiosity in language learners in similar ways if, for example, communicative tasks centre upon a problem that needs to be solved, such as a culture conflict in the real world. Thus, it seems that “[f]indings from the psychology of curiosity can be profitably employed to guide teaching practice, in a range of education contexts, to motivate students to seek information” (Pluck & Johnson, 2011: p. 29). But how does curiosity manifest itself in student work?
Considering the research challenges outlined above, the following research question was investigated in this study:

RQ: How does curiosity in study abroad seem to manifest itself in students' written work when an attempt is made to stimulate it through materials design?

2. The study

2.1. Research methodology

The philosophical foundations of this study lie in Schön’s (1983) concepts of reflection in action and the reflective practitioner, both of which provide principled foundations for teacher-initiated research that can have an impact upon theory and practice (McDonough & McDonough, 1997). Viewing knowledge as personal, subjective and unique, hermeneutic insight (von Wright, 1971) into classroom processes can be developed through data gathering from a small number of participants, an approach that characterizes action research, which "combines a substantive act with a research procedure; it is action disciplined by enquiry, a personal attempt at understanding while engaged in a process of improvement and reform" (Hopkins, 2002: p. 42).

Action research models bring educational theory and teaching practice to bear upon each other (Hopkins, 2002), and their compatibility with case study research is well-established (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000; McDonough & McDonough, 1997) as teachers are well-placed to study their own bounded teaching context from the inside as natural participants. Primarily associated with qualitative data collection because they take a holistic approach to the study of context, they take an emic approach by uncovering insider perspectives over a sustained period of time allowing research themes to arise (Creswell, 2003; McDonough & McDonough, 1997).

The research question was investigated in a case study based on action research. The Overall Plan is described in the next section. The Action phase of the study involved the implementation of original teaching materials within a structured syllabus in an upper-intermediate/advanced English course in a thirteen-week English course that aimed to develop students' communicative competence. The Action phase of the study involved the implementation of original teaching materials within a structured syllabus in an upper-intermediate/advanced English course in a thirteen-week English course that aimed to develop students' communicative competence.

The group included four female and three male students, five of whom were Japanese, and two of whom were from China and Taiwan studying abroad in Japan. The composition of the group was out of the control of the teacher-researcher as students could register freely for the course without permission. Only the data generated by the Japanese students is drawn upon in this paper, however, in an attempt to address the problem identified in Section 1.2, although data often refer to in-class discussion with the non-Japanese students who often served as study abroad informants and more generally, sources of different values and viewpoints. The size of the data set amounted to 17,259 words in total. Ethical issues related to informed consent, participant anonymity and the safe storage of data, for example, were duly considered (Cohen et al., 2000; Creswell, 2003; McDonough & McDonough, 1997).

The Reflective Analysis stage of the study involved analytical reflection upon student-generated data, and consideration of practical implications that could potentially be used to modify the Overall Plan. Qualitative data were categorized and coded using Atlas.ti software. Qualitative data analysis was conducted initially through reading to obtain a general sense of the information before it was analyzed in detail and organized into coded segments bearing the theoretical background to the study in mind. The coding process was used to generate and describe emerging themes that were then interpreted. These stages are generic to qualitative data analysis regardless of research design (Creswell, 2003; Hopkins, 2002), and detailed explanation of data analysis procedures is presented in Section 2.3 below.

2.2. Materials design

The general approach taken to materials design has been presented in detail elsewhere (Houghton, 2013b). The course broadly draws upon Houghton’s (2012) Intercultural Dialogue Model (also see Houghton, 2013a; Houghton & Yamada, 2012) insofar as it systematically engages students in cycles of self-reflection within a theme, and with reference to an overarching value system, in a process that spirals forward through ongoing cycles of interaction between self and other, critical analysis and evaluation, and culminates in a task that invites critical reflection upon whether or not change in response to this experience of otherness. The learning process was viewed as being both cyclical and dialogical as each value was first learned in context, and students were exposed to different points of view expressed by other students, before they reflected upon their values related to study abroad in written paragraphs set as homework that served as the basis for further reflection later in the course prior to the final task. While gaps between student knowledge/experience etc. cannot be anticipated precisely by any teacher, gaps were expected to open up when students explored the views of others both through the materials and in class.

An overview of the Intercultural Dialogue Model, which is essentially an operationalized version of Byram’s (1997) ICC model, is presented in Appendix 2 where links with Byram’s ICC model are also highlighted. Although both models emphasize the need for criticality development, their value orientation distinguishes them. While Byram’s (1997) ICC model has come to be located within a value framework explicitly supportive of democracy and human rights as part of citizenship education...
(see, for example, Byram, 2008, 2011), the Houghton’s (2012) Intercultural Dialogue Model prioritizes instead the development of student autonomy, and this does not preclude consideration of any particular value framework. This is what allows a teacher to promote certain values by actively drawing student attention to a theme (e.g. study abroad) while ultimately working to enhance students’ autonomous decision-making processes so that in the end, students are empowered to make decisions independently of the teacher from a range of options that they may not otherwise have considered before the course. This also explains why the students were not encouraged to express a particular viewpoint, either positive or negative, about study abroad as mentioned above.

All stages of the Intercultural Dialogue Model involve the development of awareness conceptualized in terms of self-awareness, meta-cognitive and meta-affective awareness and control as intrinsic aspects of criticality development, recognizing the widely-held view that students’ knowledge about their own cognition and control of their cognition both play an important role in learning by “facilitating students’ thinking about their own thinking” (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001: p. 43). The same holds true for students’ knowledge about their own emotions and control of their affective states in the development of meta-affective awareness and control (Goleman, 2004; Houghton, 2012).

Understandings of the psychology of curiosity were also kept in mind. As noted earlier, there are three main implications of Lowenstein’s claim that curiosity arises when “an individuals’ informational reference point becomes elevated in a certain domain, drawing attention to an information gap. Curiosity is the feeling of deprivation that results from an awareness of the gap” (Loewenstein, 1994: p. 93).

1. information acquisition needs to be stimulated in the initial absence of curiosity because curiosity requires a pre-existing knowledge base
2. students need to be made aware of manageable gaps in their knowledge
3. students need to be made aware of their social stereotypes and of the predictions they make based upon them to stimulate curiosity into whether or not their predictions are correct.

In the Overall Plan, original teaching materials were developed by the teacher-researcher (the author) to stimulate inter-student dialogue about study abroad. The teaching materials incorporated data gathered in summer 2012 from two different student populations in the university at which the study was conducted. This allowed the teacher to provide research participants with new information about study abroad generated by other students (i.e., their peers) that could be expected to be close to their existing knowledge base, rendering manageable any information gaps that emerged in the process.

Data gathering for materials design purposes was conducted in two phases. In Phase 1, a simple questionnaire was given to twenty-four Japanese students to find out whether they had ever studied abroad, whether they wanted to, and whether or not they considered it important for university students to study abroad, and why. In Phase 2, email interviews were conducted in English with four students who had studied abroad in Taiwan, Canada, Sri Lanka and South Korea for over six months. The six interview questions used in this study focused on the period before, while, and after the students studied abroad, and focused on both positive and negative aspects of their experience. Further, to sensitize students to the cultural values emerging naturally in interview-generated data and stereotypes of the countries and cultures described, the syllabus was explicitly structured around a taxonomy of differences in cultural values focussing specifically on power distance, individualism and collectivism, masculinity and femininity and uncertainty avoidance as four of the available six values currently included in the taxonomy (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010). In this way, students would be presented with opportunities to reflect on their social stereotypes in response to the course. An overview of the syllabus is presented in Appendix 3 and a sample of the kind of teaching materials used is presented in Appendix 4.

2.3. Data analysis procedures

Qualitative data analysis was conducted initially through reading to obtain a general sense of the information before it was analyzed in detail and organized into coded segments considering the theoretical background. Coding took place in three stages. Firstly, the code ‘SB’ was used to capture student statements on study abroad. Secondly, the codes ‘IG1’ and ‘IG2’ were used to capture the two types of information gap listed below.

- **Information-gap type 1 (IG1):** Apparent gap between pre-existing information in the mind of a student (information type A) and information acquired by the student during the course (information type B) (i.e. statements indicative of existing gaps and what had been learned as a result of filling prior gaps were both included)
- **Information-gap type 2 (IG2):** Apparent gap between information in the mind of a student (information type A) and information not acquired, but wanted, by the student during the course causing them to look beyond the course for information (information type C) (i.e. statements indicative of existing gaps between what a student didn’t know, but wanted to learn from sources outside the course, were included)

Thirdly, the codes ‘RIG1’ and ‘RIG2’ were used to capture any apparent student responses to information-gap types 1 and 2 respectively, even if the information gap itself was not visible enough in the data to code. Sample sentences for the IG1, IG2,
Table 1
Sample sentences for the IG1, IG2, RIG1 and RIG2 codes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>IG1</th>
<th>RIG1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I think that more students had gone study abroad, but to my surprise, it’s only 1.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I didn’t know that a student of this University went to study abroad in developing country. I could learn some part of the way of Sri Lankan’s communication and culture, and find differences of communication between two collective cultures. It was really interesting that Ryoma went to Sri Lanka to study English because they use three different languages there and English is used only in the University. I wonder how much his English and other languages improved.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>It was really interesting that Ryoma went to Sri Lanka to study English because they use three different languages there and English is used only in the University. I wonder how much his English and other languages improved.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2
Number of examples of information gaps and responses to them related to study abroad found across the course per student.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>S1</th>
<th>S2</th>
<th>S3</th>
<th>S4</th>
<th>S5</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IG 1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RIG 1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IG 2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RIG 2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

RIG1 and RIG2 codes are presented in Table 1, where examples 3 and 4 illustrate responses to information gaps that were not themselves visible in the data.

3. Data presentation

3.1. Quantitative data

Sixty-five quotations were found for the ‘SB’ code amounting to a total of 8256 words. Students 1–5 (S1–S5) each generated a total of 1496, 1546, 2027, 1874 and 1313 words respectively averaging out at 1651 words per student. Ninety-four quotations were found for the codes ‘IG1’, ‘IG2’, ‘RIG1’ and ‘RIG2’ taken collectively. The number of quotations generated by each of the five students is presented in Table 2, where it can also be seen that the total number of quotations for RIG1 and RIG2 outnumbered IG1 and RIG2 respectively as responses to apparent information gaps were coded even if the information gap itself was not visible in the data as explained above. Table 3 shows that the range of ‘RIG1’ and ‘RIG2’ responses fell into the categories of wanting (26), learning (23), interest (14), questioning/wondering (6) and surprise (4). While S2 generated the highest total number of responses overall, S1 generated the lowest.

3.2. Qualitative data

Examples of student responses to information gaps are presented and discussed below, although they often emerged in different combinations and seemed connected. As S2 generated the highest total number of responses overall, her complete data set is presented in Appendix 5, and selected extracts are presented in Data 1–6 below with reference to data generated by other students to highlight patterns between them with contrasting examples.

Across the database, twenty-three entries were coded with ‘learning’ but in many cases, and as with other codes, the information gap preceding it was not stated explicitly and can only be inferred from the student’s response. In Data 1, for example, we can assume that an information gap had been filled when Student 2 claims to have learned something about Taiwan. Similarly, an expression of interest was considered indicative of an underlying information gap, even if it was not visible in the data, taking the view that this is implied by the Cambridge Dictionaries Online definition of interest as “the feeling of wanting to give your attention to something or of wanting to be involved with and to discover more about something, an eager wish to know or learn about something” (interest, n.d.). Across the database, fourteen entries were coded with ‘interest’ while four entries were coded with ‘surprise’. In Data 1, Data 1a and Data 1b, the information gaps underlying the interest or surprise are all stated explicitly. For example, in the first sentence of Data 1, Student 2 claims that she hardly knew anything about Taiwan before reading the teaching materials, but expresses an interest in Taiwan as a result of the class.
Data 1: Student 2
I hardly knew about Taiwan before I read the materials, but through last class, I got interested in Taiwan. It’s courageous to study in strange country, but also a good chance to know its culture without wrong background knowledge. Although I can’t judge whether Taiwanese are really assertive or not, I think I can learn their style of communication. Probably, I can get some hints why Yuusuke think Taiwanese are assertive from it. I felt Taiwanese culture is lower power distance than Japanese from the material, but Taiwanese Student 7’s idea was different. So, I’d like to go into Taiwanese culture and find out by myself.

Data 1a: Student 1
Who is the subject of this questionnaire on study abroad? I think that more students had gone study abroad, but to my surprise, it’s only 1.

Data 1b: Student 4
I am interested in how much he improve his language skills because I have no experience to go abroad without any knowledge of the language. I want to ask him how much he improve and how he keeps the ability right now.

Across the database, six entries were coded with “questioning/wondering”. In general, students sometimes seemed to be wondering about a particular point, perhaps posing a question, or wondering how to generalize about a group because of obviously conflicting information about it. The latter arose, for example, when information contained in the interview data about Taiwan in the reading materials conflicted with information provided directly by Student 7, the Taiwanese student also attending the class. For example, the underlined part of Data 1 shows how Student 2 claims to want to go to Taiwan to resolve a discrepancy arising between information provided in the teaching materials and by Student 7.

Across the database, twenty-six entries were coded with “wanting”. A particular information gap was sometimes specified and was sometimes also accompanied by a claim to either want to know more as the underlined part of Data 1b shows, or to want to actually go to a particular place to find out more information as the underlined part of Data 1 shows. While Data 1 suggests that Student 2 claims to actually want to go to Taiwan as a result of her interest, Data 2 and 3 show that the same cannot be said for Sri Lanka as she expresses an interest in it, but does not claim to want to go.

In other cases, students claimed to want to go to a particular place to gather information, which often seemed connected to the desire to experience something new. This illustrates how students may respond not only to an information gap but also a gap in their own experience as shown in the underlined parts of Data 1c and Data 1d in which students claimed to want to experience the silent period and a different kind of uncertainty avoidance culture respectively. Wanting often seemed connected to planning ahead to gather information or experience new things, although this may be more hypothetical than real, as illustrated in Data 1e. However, while Student 2 claims to have learned about Sri Lanka by reading the teaching materials, she does not claim to want to go and reflects instead upon her concerns in the underlined part of Data 2.

Data 1c: Student 4
I am interested in studying in Taiwan because I studies Chinese for 2 years in university. I don’t think I can speak Chinese well because I forgot most of them but I really interested in studying there. At the same time, I do want to have experience to go to other countries without enough language skills. Some people who went to non-English speaking countries say that after few months, they suddenly started to speak the language fluently. I really interested in that effect.

Data 1d: Student 5
I think Canada is the country low in uncertainty avoidance. So I can act more freely in Canada than Japan. The first few months I leave for Canada, I can’t communicate with around people. But I think maybe studying Canada give me positive communication skills. I really would like to study abroad in Canada now.

Data 1e: Student 5
If I go to Taiwan, I would like to talk to Taiwanese of the same age. And I will have discussions about each other culture.

Data 2: Student 2
I enjoyed reading interviews with students who studied abroad. Stories of their personal experience are interesting. I didn’t know that a student of this University went to study abroad in developing country. I could learn some part of
the way of Sri Lankan’s communication and culture, and find differences of communication between two collective cultures. I found that my worry about studying abroad come from not only dangerous situation of the country but also anxiety about entering the place that I don’t know.

Student 2’s reasons for not wanting to study abroad in Sri Lanka become clear in the underlined part of Data 3 where she recognizes that her interest in developing countries is outweighed by fear rooted in stereotypes and prejudice against developing countries, which she perceives as being dangerous, although she does go on to summarize what she has learned and claims to want to learn more about cultural differences of various sorts. A similar pattern is visible in Data 5 where Student 2 states explicitly that she is not so interested in studying in South Korea for the reasons stated, although she does claim to want to learn more about it.

Data 3: Student 2
I’m interested in visiting developing countries and English spoken by non-native speakers. But to tell the truth, fear is bigger than interest. It’s bad to have stereotype and prejudice, but I have image that they are dangerous, comparing developed countries like Japan. I’m leading a secure life in Japan, but probably it’s hard to live peacefully in developed countries.

Regarding the entries coded with ‘wondering/questioning’ and ‘wanting’, the former is illustrated in the underlined parts of Data 4a and 4b, and in the first sentence of Data 4 in which Student 2 specifies two separate questions and expresses an interest in their answers. The latter is illustrated in the underlined part of Data 4 where it can be seen that the desire to want to learn new things through English seems to have been triggered not by a total information gap, but by having forgotten something from the past that had been remembered after a long time. In this case, Student 2 explicitly claims to want to study abroad in Canada for various reasons and specifies what she wants to learn in the process.

Data 4: Student 2
I’m very interested in the reason why she wanted to study abroad, and why she chose Canada. There’re two reasons to say so. First, when I was listening her story, I remembered the start of my interest on English. When I was in junior high school, it’s very attractive for me to get new knowledge through English texts, and I came to like studying English. I found that these days I paid attention to progress of my English skill and almost forgot a pleasure or excited feeling of learning new things by means of English. So, after this, I want to use English to learn new things and as a tool of my life. Secondly, I’d like to study about ESL teaching in Canada, where the ESL teaching system is developed. I’m going to be a teacher, and my major is English education, so I want to broaden my knowledge and improve my teaching skill.

Data 4a: Student 4
It was really interesting that Ryoma went to Sri Lanka to study English because they use three different languages there and English is used only in the University. I wonder how much his English and other languages improved.

Data 4b: Student 1
Ryoma said that ‘when in Sri Lanka, do as the Sri Lanka do’, however, he didn’t always act as he said. Because I think that he had his identity as Japanese. He judged something right or wrong in his mind from a point of Japanese during staying in Sri Lanka. If I were him, I would have behaviour as him?

Data 5: Student 2
Frankly speaking, I’m not so interested in studying abroad in Korea. However, I think it’s important for me to know more about Korea. There’re deep and complex relations between Korea and Japan for a long time, and Korea is the nearest country... As to studying in Korea, I think I’m a person who is in high uncertainty avoidance culture group. So, it’s difficult for me to live alone in the country where I have no idea about its language and culture. I’d like to pay attention to the future relations with Korea, and visit Korea and other Asian countries someday.

Student 2 reflected widely in her final essay on how her impressions of study abroad had developed in the course in ways that led not only to deeper understanding of its intrinsic value and potential, as shown in the italicized part of Data 6, but also to greater critical self-awareness. Notably, she claimed to have realized through learning about value dimensions that her hesitation to study abroad was rooted in her high level of uncertainty avoidance, as illustrated in Data 3, Data 5 and the underlined part of Data 6, which also indicates that her stereotypes about foreign countries being more dangerous about Japan had also been broken. Further, despite Student 2’s recognition of the value of study abroad, she does not claim to want to actually do it, in contrast with Student 5’s statement in Data 6a that he wants to study abroad in Taiwan very much for the reasons stated. Indeed, in the final essays, Student 5 was the only one to explicitly state that he wanted to study abroad, with other students focussing more on describing what they had learned during the course, although Student 4 had already studied abroad before.

Data 6: Student 2
I could observe my negative attitude toward studying abroad analytically, and think over my interest on studying abroad. I thought about myself that I was interested in studying abroad and I knew it’ll be a precious experience for me, but I didn’t
have enough courage to decide to study abroad. Through this course, however, I found something. First, we couldn’t declare that foreign countries are more dangerous than Japan and there are a lot of risks in Japan, too. So, the factor of my anxiety is not physical risks but worry about strange things, in other words, it comes from “Uncertainty Avoidance”.

Second, I couldn’t have image how the experience in studying abroad connects to my future, and I thought I don’t need to study abroad. However, I learned that if I study abroad with aim, I can learn academic things, various cultural values, and so on. I found the important points to study abroad are enthusiasm and what I want to learn there. I realized again that studying abroad is a precious chance to cultivate myself in many aspects.

Data 6a: Student 5

I think that I want to study in Taiwan very much. Taiwanese culture is low [power] distance. In this course, I came across Yuusuke’s report. In his experience, Taiwanese University students answered his questions by themselves. If I go to Taiwan, I would like to talk to Taiwanese of the same age. And I’ll have discussions about each other culture. I don’t take care of only hearing Taiwanese opinions but also telling my opinions. I’m poor at communicating with foreigner, but I think Taiwanese culture, which is low [power] distance, support me.

4. Discussion and conclusion

This paper explores how curiosity in study abroad seems to manifest itself in students’ written work when an attempt is made to stimulate it through materials design. As noted earlier, the desire to fill an information gap is what causes the individual to become curious and want to know more, and Loewenstein’s (1994) information-gap perspective on curiosity carries three main implications for education.

Loewenstein’s first recommendation is that knowledge acquisition needs to be stimulated. The database was replete with examples of students statements of what they had learned. Notably, however, the isolation and foregrounding of curiosity as one component of ICC illuminates hidden connections between parts of the construct. Loewenstein’s information-gap perspective highlights the connection between the often separated knowledge and attitudes dimensions of Byram’s ICC model. In some cases, the information gaps were stated explicitly, but in many cases, they could only be inferred from students’ responses which fell into the categories not only of learning but also of wanting, interest, questioning/wondering and surprise. However, the data show that student responses to information gaps are not necessarily accompanied by an expression of a desire to want to know more, although this may change as Data 2 and 3 suggest.

This connects closely to Loewenstein’s second recommendation that students need to be made aware of manageable gaps in their knowledge. In this course, the teacher provided research participants with new information about study abroad generated by other students (i.e., their peers) that could be expected to be close to their existing knowledge base, rendering manageable any information gaps that emerged in the process. It was found that students need to reflect on what they want to know that they do not already know, consciously delineating the boundaries of their information gaps clearly. To maintain an open and inquiring mind in this way, meta-cognitive and meta-affective awareness and control are needed as intrinsic aspects of criticality development (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001; Gudykunst, 1998; Houghton, 2012; O’Malley & Chamot, 1990).

The clearest expressions of curiosity seem to have been made when students claimed to want to know more as they planned ahead to gather information, or experience new things, responding to gaps in both information and experience. To stimulate students’ curiosity, teachers need to seek effective ways of utilizing information gaps in students’ minds to cause them to want to know more. To this end, task design can focus students’ attention not on making explicit what they know and have already learned, but on what they do not know but want to learn.

Student critical awareness of their own cognitive processes awareness can also be stimulated by using the Socratic method described in Section 1.3. Within this approach, which is based on the work of Piaget and Kohlberg (Crain, 2000) and characterizes the critical thinking movement mentioned above (Paul & Elder, 2002), cognitive conflict is provoked by the teacher to push students to interrogate their thought processes and resolve inconsistencies within them. The start of this process was exemplified in Data 1 by Student 2 who claimed to want to go to Taiwan to resolve a discrepancy arising between information provided in the teaching materials about Taiwan, and by a Taiwanese student in the class.

Student critical awareness of information gaps can also be raised by developing intellectual empathy (Paul & Elder, 2002) in Stage 2 of the Intercultural Dialogue Model (see Appendix 2). In this process, the adoption of non-judgemental stance can help to prevent the distortion of other people’s perspectives caused by the projection of one’s own perspective onto the other. This echoes Byram’s (1989) point that reflexive, comparative cultural awareness can help overcome the problem of foreign language learners encoding their own culture-specific meanings in the foreign language, and Gudykunst’s (1998) claim that mindfulness can encourage openness to information and others’ perspectives by opening the mind to new information, facilitating the accurate perception of subtle differences in behaviours and messages that may otherwise be missed as the mind sees what it expects to see.

Data 3 shows not only how students’ impressions of study abroad rooted in fear may be stereotyped and prejudiced, but also how students can identify and describe their prejudices critically with reference to an external framework of analysis (in this case, Hofstede’s value dimensions). This highlights Loewenstein’s third recommendation that student awareness needs to be raised of their social stereotypes, and their accuracy, which is echoed by Gudykunst (1998), who claims that mindfulness allows us to reflect on how we categorize people and to reconsider those categorizations. This process is evident in Data 1 which shows how students can stop to wonder how to generalize about a group in the face of obviously conflicting
information about it. In this sense also, curiosity can be developed through the development of critical cultural awareness (Byram, 1997; Houghton, 2012; Houghton et al., 2013; Houghton & Yamada, 2012).

Reflection upon study abroad in response to the teaching materials may stimulate student curiosity in actually studying abroad, as Data 6a suggests, but even if not, it can still lead not only to a deeper understanding of its intrinsic value and potential, but also to greater self-awareness, which may include the recognition and breaking of social stereotypes against particular groups, as Data 6 shows.

The ICC construct is complex and often difficult to conceptualize in ways that are reflected visibly in student work, but this paper highlights connections between curiosity, knowledge and critical cultural awareness as three discrete and often separated components of ICC. Curiosity development was found to be a cognitive as well as an affective process as it manifests itself in students’ written work in a variety of responses to information gaps both visible and invisible.

Appendix 1

An overview of Byram’s (1997) model of intercultural communicative competence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ICC components</th>
<th>Illustrative learning objectives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Critical cultural awareness/political education:** an ability to evaluate critically and on the basis of explicit criteria perspectives, practices and products in one’s own and other cultures and countries | - Identify and interpret explicit or implicit values in documents and events in one’s own and other cultures
- Make an evaluative analysis of the documents and events, which refer to an explicit perspective and criteria
- Interact and mediate in intercultural exchanges in accordance with explicit criteria, negotiating where necessary a degree of acceptance of them by drawing upon one’s knowledge, skills and attitudes
- **Willingness:** to seek out or take up opportunities to engage with otherness in a relationship of equality
- **Interest:** in discovering other perspectives on interpretation of familiar and unfamiliar phenomena both in one’s own and in other cultures and cultural practices
- **Readiness:** to experience the different stages of adaptation to and interaction with another culture during a period of residence
- Historical and contemporary relationships between one’s own and one’s interlocutor’s countries
- The means of achieving contact with interlocutors from another country (at a distance or in proximity), of travel to and from and the institutions which facilitate contact or help resolve problems
- The types and causes and process of misunderstanding between interlocutors of different cultural origins
- Identify ethnocentric perspectives in a document or event and explain their origins
- Identify areas of misunderstanding and dysfunction in an interaction and explain them in terms of each of the cultural systems present
- Mediate between conflicting interpretations of phenomena
- Elicit from an interlocutor the concepts and values of documents or events and to develop an explanatory system susceptible of application to other phenomena
- Identify significant references within cultures and elicit their significance and connotations
- Identify similar and dissimilar processes of interaction, verbal and non-verbal, and negotiate an appropriate use of them in specific circumstances |
| **Attitudes:** curiosity and openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one’s own | |
| **Knowledge:** of social groups and their products and practices in one’s own and in one’s interlocutor’s country, and of the general processes of societal and individual interaction | |
| **Skills of interpreting and relating:** ability to interpret a document or event from another culture, to explain it and relate it to documents from one’s own | |
| **Skills of discovery and interaction:** ability to acquire new knowledge of a culture and cultural practices and the ability to operate knowledge, attitudes and skills under the constraints of real-time communication and interaction | |

Appendix 2

The intercultural dialogue model (adapted from Houghton, 2012: p. 82)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stages in the course of learning</th>
<th>Meta-levels</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stage 1: analysis of self</strong></td>
<td>Development of awareness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
- Learner descriptive analysis of own value system (VS1) |
- Self-awareness |
- Meta-cognitive awareness |
- Meta-affective awareness |
- **Savoir:** generation of new knowledge about the self |
- **Savoir être:** partial description of own values/associated concepts |
- **Savoir:** generation of new knowledge about the self |
- **Savoir apprendre:** Elicitation of information about interlocutor’s perspective real-time to clarify points & develop detail |

(continued on next page)
The intercultural dialogue model (adapted from Houghton, 2012: p. 82) Links to Byram’s (1997) model of intercultural communicative competence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage 3: critical analysis</th>
<th>Stage 4: critical evaluation</th>
<th>Stage 5: identity-development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Meta-levels</strong></td>
<td><strong>Meta-levels</strong></td>
<td><strong>Meta-levels</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juxtaposition, comparison and contrast of the two value systems (VS1 and VS2) to identify similarities and differences</td>
<td>Learner evaluation of the value systems of self &amp; other (VS1 and VS2) with reference to a standard</td>
<td>Learner orientation of self to others by selecting standards and evaluative tendencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Savoir s’engager:</strong> Comparing &amp; contrasting own values with interlocutor’s…</td>
<td><strong>Savoir comprendre:</strong> …interpreting &amp; relating both in the process</td>
<td><strong>Savoir s’engager/savoir être:</strong> evaluating own values &amp; interlocutor’s by applying a clear standard</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix 3

An overview of syllabus design

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 1</th>
<th>Unit 1</th>
<th>Study abroad</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Define study abroad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Discuss the study abroad questionnaire results</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weeks 2–4</th>
<th>Unit 2</th>
<th>Power distance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Overview of Hofstede’s taxonomy of values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Reading comprehension about relationships with parents and teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Define and identify power distance in the reading materials through critical reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Study abroad (Taiwan)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Answer and discuss six questions about study abroad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Read interview with Interviewee 1 and identify hidden values (power distance)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Homework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weeks 5–7</th>
<th>Unit 3</th>
<th>Individualism and collectivism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Define individualism and collectivism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Conceptual analysis: What does the word ‘neighbour’ mean to you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Analyze and mediate culture conflict dialogue rooted in value difference through critical analysis and critical evaluation, and identify underlying value and concept difference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Discuss the consequences of individualism and collectivism and the role of bias</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Homework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Write a reflective paragraph about your interest in studying in Taiwan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Study abroad (Sri Lanka)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Answer and discuss six questions about study abroad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Read interview with Interviewee 2 and identify hidden values (individualism and collectivism)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Homework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weeks 8–10</th>
<th>Unit 4</th>
<th>Masculinity and femininity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Define masculinity and femininity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Conceptual analysis: What does the word ‘woman’ mean to you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Write an imaginary culture conflict dialogue rooted in value difference related to masculinity and femininity through critical analysis and critical evaluation, and identify underlying value and concept difference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Study abroad (Canada)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Answer and discuss six questions about study abroad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Read interview with Interviewee 3 and identify hidden values (masculinity and femininity)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Homework

|        |        | Write a reflective paragraph about your interest in studying in Canada |
Appendix 4

Task 1

Read the paragraph about study abroad in the box below. Then answer the questions beneath, and discuss them with your group.

1. Why are many higher education institutions encouraging their students to study abroad?
2. How many students were studying abroad in 2004 according to the OECD?
3. How many students did UNESCO estimate will be studying abroad by 2025?
4. For how long might students study abroad?
5. What kind of opportunities does your university/institution offer for study abroad, and for what periods of time?

Task 2

Answer the questions below, and discuss them with your group.

1. Have you ever studied abroad?
   ◆ If so, where did you go? How long did you stay? Why did you go?
   ◆ If not, why not?
2. Would you like to study abroad (again) while you are at university?
   ◆ If so, where would you like to go? How long would you like to stay? Why would you like to go?
   ◆ If not, why not?
3. Generally speaking, do you think it is important for university students to study abroad? Give reasons for your answer.
   ◆ I think it is (extremely/very/quite/not so/not at all) important for university students to study abroad because ....

Task 3

Read the passage about some Japanese students’ experience of studying abroad in the box below. Answer the questions, and discuss them with your group.

1. Does anything interest or surprise you about the results?
2. Do you find the reasons students gave for not studying abroad persuasive? If so, why? If not, why not?
3. How do your answers to Q1 in Task 2 above compare with these results?
In summer 2012, twenty-four Japanese students were asked whether they had studied abroad but of those students, only one person had studied abroad for one month in Australia as an exchange student. The other twenty-three students had never studied abroad for the reasons listed in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons</th>
<th>No. of students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 I didn’t have the chance</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 I don’t have enough money</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 I don’t have the time</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 I have to study to be an elementary school teacher in Japan</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 I never thought of it</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 I could not afford to think about study abroad</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 My English is not good enough</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix 5. Complete data set for Student 2

Data 1: Student 2 (week 4 homework: study abroad in Taiwan)

I hardly knew about Taiwan before I read the materials, but through last class, I got interested in Taiwan. It’s courageous to study in strange country, but also a good chance to know its culture without wrong background knowledge. Although I can’t judge whether Taiwanese are really assertive or not, I think I can learn their style of communication. Probably, I can get some hints why Yuusuke think Taiwanese are assertive from it. I felt Taiwanese culture is lower power distance than Japanese from the material, but Taiwanese Jack’s idea was different. So, I’d like to go into Taiwanese culture and find out by myself. Moreover, I’m sure that I can learn cultures and customs of Taiwan by studying there. Comparing Japanese culture with Taiwanese, we can realize good points of Japan and Japanese culture. I’d like to go various areas in Taiwan and communicate with various people, from children to elderly person. I believe that studying abroad, which gives me a chance to come across unknown things, broaden my outlook.

Data 2: Student 2 (week 7 student diary)

I enjoyed reading interviews with students who studied abroad. Stories of their personal experience are interesting. I didn’t know that a student of this University went to study abroad in developing country. I could learn some part of the way of Sri Lankan’s communication and culture, and find differences of communication between two collective cultures. I found that my worry about studying abroad come from not only dangerous situation of the country but also anxiety about entering the place that I don’t know. And when we were discussing “courage” to go to developing countries, I thought Japanese tend to hesitate to go out of familiar territory.

Data 3: Student 2 (week 7 homework: study abroad in Sri Lanka)

I’m interested in visiting developing countries and English spoken by non-native speakers. But to tell the truth, fear is bigger than interest. It’s bad to have stereotype and prejudice, but I have image that they are dangerous, comparing developed countries like Japan. I’m leading a secure life in Japan, but probably it’s hard to live peacefully in developed countries. However, if I go to Sri Lanka, I’d like to think about the differences of communication style. I had image that many of the developing countries are collective, and I found Sri Lanka is, from the interview. But I also found a difference between Sri Lankan and Japanese thought to be collective. In Japan, people read other people’s minds and behave thoughtfully, but Ryoma said Sri Lankan don’t care about other’s privacy. I guess that in developing countries, cooperation is more important to live and private territory is narrow. I’m interested in finding out whether there’re differences between collectivism cultures in developing country and developed country.

Data 4: Student 2 (week 10 homework: study abroad in Canada)

I’m very interested in the reason why she wanted to study abroad, and why she chose Canada. There’re two reasons to say so. First, when I was listening her story, I remembered the start of my interest on English. When I was in junior high school, it’s very attractive for me to get new knowledge through English texts, and I came to like studying English. I found that these days I paid attention to progress of my English skill and almost forgot a pleasure or excited feeling of learning new things by means of English. So, after this, I want to use English to learn new things and as a tool of my life. Secondly, I’d like to study about ESL teaching in Canada, where the ESL teaching system is developed. I’m going to be a teacher, and my major is English education, so I want to broaden my knowledge and improve my teaching skill. And also, it’s appealing that we can get to know various people from different countries. Probably, there’re some cultural problems, but we must be able to learn many things through
the intercultural communication. If I study abroad in Canada, I'd like to learn ESL teaching and experience intercultural communication, and after go back to Japan, I want to find a way to make use of what I learned.

Data 5: Student 2 (week 13 homework: study abroad in South Korea)

Frankly speaking, I'm not so interested in studying abroad in Korea. However, I think it's important for me to know more about Korea. There're deep and complex relations between Korea and Japan for a long time, and Korea is the nearest country. As the interviewee said, Japanese people have much less interest in the relations than Korean. When we hear the word globalization, we tend to think about English and Western cultures. But there are many other countries, which have something to do with Japan in the world. I think we need to know more about the Asian countries around Japan, and make cooperative relations. As to studying in Korea, I think I'm a person who is in high uncertainty avoidance culture group. So, it's difficult for me to live alone in the country where I have no idea about its language and culture. I'd like to pay attention to the future relations with Korea, and visit Korea and other Asian countries someday.

Data 6: Student 2 (week 13 homework: final essay)

My impressions of study abroad have developed in this course. Main developed points are image of studying abroad, and my sense of values about studying abroad. I had image that people study abroad to improve their language skill, and their destinations are mostly the English-speaking country and Western countries. However, I found that people study abroad with various purposes. They learn communication style, study something by means of English, experience intercultural communication, and so on. Moreover, there are many people who study abroad in some Asian countries which are less developed than Japan.

As to my sense of values, I could develop them well. Firstly, difficulty of communication was the biggest anxiety for me. But through this course, I found that although there are many difficulties in intercultural communication, if we can see our own communication from objective and analytic point of view, we don't have to feel extra anxiety and worry. For that purpose, we should learn various concepts, such as "Individualism and Collectivism", "Masculinity and Femininity", and "Uncertainty Avoidance". I think that it is important to consider about these things concerning not only communication partner's culture but also Japanese and my culture.

When we learned about "Individualism and Collectivism", I found it's important to express clearly my opinion and feeling in some intercultural communication. Expressing our opinion clearly tends to be rude in Japanese culture, so it was a little surprising. I also found that even if Sri Lanka and Japan are considered to be collectivism country, communication style and private territory is different. When we learned about "Masculinity and Femininity", I was surprised to hear that women are considered to have quite less ability than men in some cultures. I thought Japanese culture was, if anything, masculinity, but those were more than I guessed. I learned that gender was an important issue in intercultural communication.

Secondly, I could observe my negative attitude towards studying abroad analytically, and think over my interest on studying abroad. I thought about myself that I was interested in studying abroad and I knew it'll be a precious experience for me, but I didn't have enough courage to decide to study abroad. Through this course, however, I found something. First, we couldn't declare that foreign countries are more dangerous than Japan and there're a lot of risks in Japan, too. So, the factor of my anxiety is not physical risks but worry about strange things, in other words, it comes from "Uncertainty Avoidance". Second, I couldn't have image how the experience in studying abroad connects to my future, and I thought I don't need to study abroad. However, I learned that if I study abroad with aim, I can learn academic things, various cultural values, and so on. I found the important points to study abroad are enthusiasm and what I want to learn there. I realized again that studying abroad is a precious chance to cultivate myself in many aspects.

References


