

Exposure to Representations of Cultures in English Syllabus Content and its Motivational Influence on University EFL Students in Japan

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ABSTRACT

The culture associated with any given second or foreign language has almost always had some kind of role in the teaching of that language. In the case of English, for example, EFL and ESL lessons around the world have often involved some introduction of Anglo-American culture. However, with the evolving status of English as a global lingua franca, such a simple choice of cultural content has been increasingly questioned, and more varied cultures reflecting the range of current users of English have been introduced. This has potential implications for the cultural and social aspects of the roles of affective variables in the acquisition of English as a second language. This study investigated the relationships between cultural content of lesson, in terms of input from the teacher and materials and students' presentations, and changes in affective variables among four classes of first-year students on an English communication course at a Japanese university. The findings showed that the cultural content factors influenced the students' social contextual beliefs, intrinsic motivation and interest in the wider world, and tentatively suggested relevant changes in several other variables.

KEY WORDS

affect, culture, EFL, motivation, university, Japan.

1. Introduction

Culture is rarely far away from any discussion about the features of a given language, meaning that language learning is virtually inseparable from culture in some form. Language textbooks contain references to meanings, characters, themes and places that are necessarily associated with some aspect of culture somewhere (Prodromou, 1992). Language teachers often try to inspire and motivate their students by making their lessons more attractive through the use of relevant cultural themes or the inclusion of cultural audio-visual stimuli. Needless to say, the role of motivation in second language acquisition, along with other affective variables such as orientations and anxiety, has been widely and intensively researched for over thirty years (e.g., Gardner & Lambert, 1972), sometimes with an individualistic focus, but also sometimes from social and cultural perspectives (e.g., Clément, 1980; Giles & Byrne, 1982; Dörnyei, 2001; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009). Interestingly, there seems to have been relatively little interventionist research on the specific relationship between cultural content in lessons and students' affective dispositions toward second language learning. This issue is all the more interesting in the context of EFL in Japan, considering the growing role of English as a global lingua franca with its ensuing cultural diversification, and Japan's strong tradition of associating English with British and American culture, modernity and affluence (Horibe, 2008; Matsuda, 2002). This paper, therefore, reports on such an investigation which involved four classes of first-year undergraduates on a compulsory English communication course at a Japanese university.

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1.1 Culture in language teaching

The precise meaning of the word 'culture' is notoriously difficult to define, and as mentioned above, there are numerous possible definitions. In relation to language teaching, Adaskou, Britten and Fahsi (1990) developed a decision framework for the integration of cultural content in teaching materials, which posited four meanings of the word: 1) the aesthetic sense (art, literature, music and media, etc.); 2) the sociological sense ('life and institutions', the nature of family life, work, leisure and customs, etc.); 3) the semantic sense (the conceptual system embodied in the language); and 4) the sociolinguistic sense (politeness conventions, language and status, age, gender, formal and informal styles in genres). In the case of a language like English, however, used by so many different peoples, the question arises of which culture, or cultures, the presentation of the English language should be embedded in. As Horibe (2008, p.245) cogently argues, "EIL [English as an international language] teachers must be sensitive and flexible to learners' needs and interests, and they must be careful about imbuing the English language with a national culture which may not be central to learners' purposes for learning the language."

In the socio-cultural context of EFL in Japan, Gottlieb (2005) reviews some of the 'soul-searching' that has recently taken place in this country in light of the difficulties in achieving satisfactory proficiency in English among its citizens. This has involved discussions of national linguistic identity, linguistic sovereignty and orientations for learning English. The Prime Minister's Commission on Japan's Goals in the 21st Century (2000) issued a report which called for the development of global literacy, which should include mastery of IT and the Internet, and English as a global lingua franca, thereby encouraging Japanese people to communicate with the wider world about their own people and country. This suggests that the Japanese tendency to equate learning English with absorbing Anglo-American culture may be abating somewhat. In that case, which cultures should be represented in EFL course in Japan? Textbooks undoubtedly play an important role. Yamanaka (2006) evaluated English textbooks used in junior and senior high schools in Japan from the viewpoint of Kachru's (1985) three concentric circles of English users; namely, the Inner (i.e., 'L1' countries such as the UK, USA, etc.), Outer (i.e., 'ESL' countries such as India, Singapore, Hong Kong, etc.), and Expanding Circles (i.e., 'EFL' countries such as Japan, China, Brazil, etc.) and found a strong bias towards Inner Circle countries. Kachru's concentric circles framework is pertinent, given the fact that worldwide L2 users of English now outnumber the L1 users, and the growing feeling that "English is property of its users, both native and non-native... [and] ...non-native speakers do not have to use English the same way as native speakers do" (Horibe, 2008, p.242). As Yamanaka (2006) points out, although MEXT (2003) guidelines encourage the teaching of cultural elements of 'countries that use English' according to levels of students' mental and physical development, they are ambiguous with respect to which 'countries that use English' should be included.

Another concern is that Japanese students should not be led by a multicultural language curriculum into associating the wider world only with the English language. This would fail to foster awareness of the diversity of languages in the world, as well as diminishing the importance of maintaining their own 'linguistic sovereignty' and the awareness of additive bilingualism. Jenkins (2003) includes a chapter titled 'Language killer or language promoter?' in which 'English-knowing bilingualism' (i.e., additive bilingualism) is contrasted with 'English monolingualism' (i.e., subtractive second language acquisition, where a second language is acquired at the expense of the first). In the process of exposing students to English users of various cultural and linguistic backgrounds, the highlighting of the simultaneous existence of these speakers' other languages may raise awareness of

the fact that bilinguals and multilinguals together outnumber monolinguals in the world, and encourage Japanese students to consider the possibility of additive bilingualism, thereby reducing the risk of fear of assimilation (MacIntyre, Clément, Dörnyei & Noels, 1998) involved in learning English. This leads to discussion of the role of affective variables in second language acquisition.

1.2 Motivation and other affective variables in second language acquisition

One taxonomy of the multitude of constructs that have been associated with L2 motivation (Dörnyei, 1998) synthesized 13 common constructs by tabulation of constituents, revealing the following seven areas: 1) the affective/integrative dimension, 2) the instrumental/pragmatic dimension, 3) the macrocontext-related dimension (societal and sociocultural factors, etc.), 4) the self-concept-related dimension (self-confidence, anxiety and need for achievement), 5) the goal-related dimension, 6) the educational context-related dimension, and 7) the significant others-related dimension (influence of parents, family and friends). 'Integrative' traditionally refers to a learner's interest in the culture associated with the target language, including attitudes to the speakers and interest in making friends with them. On the other hand, 'instrumental' refers to one's desire to learn the language for purposes unrelated to the language or culture itself, such as gaining qualifications and furthering one's career. While Gardner's (1985) original notion of integrativeness involved a specific culture and society associated with the L2, more recent models acknowledge the cultural diversification of contemporary English, especially in the EFL context, and have redefined it. Yashima (2002), for example, working in the Japanese EFL context, posited the construct of international posture, which includes interest in foreign or international affairs, willingness to go overseas to stay or work, readiness to interact with intercultural partners, and openness or a non-ethnocentric attitude toward different cultures. A further construct that is not explicitly mentioned among these dimensions is intrinsic motivation in L2 learning, which has been extensively researched by Douglas Brown (e.g., 1994). Intrinsic motivation usually refers to the enjoyment of the language in its own right, regardless of any external pressures and the willingness to expend effort learning the language out of personal pleasure.

The macrocontext-related dimension would include constructs such as ethnolinguistic vitality, which refers to perceptions of demographic strength, status and institutional support for all language groups relevant to a given situation. Ethnolinguistic vitality may affect opportunities for interethnic contact (Clément, Dörnyei and Noels, 1994), which may, in turn, lead to increased linguistic self-confidence (*ibid*), which would come under Dörnyei's (1998) fourth dimension, which also includes anxiety and need for achievement. The goal-related dimension may include linguistic or specific communicative goals, as well as non-linguistic goals. The educational context-related dimension may include feelings about the classroom situation, and may incorporate past educational experiences.

These various dimensions illustrate the complexity of the relationship between an individual's L2 motivation and the social and cultural contexts. As Dörnyei (2001, following McGroarty, 1998) argued, "Foreign/second languages are learned in such diverse contexts that a lack of accounting for the contextual differences might render any motivation theory useless. Studying English for example, will have considerably different motivational overtones in, say, a post-colonial environment such as Hong Kong, in a second language acquisition context such as Canada, or in a monolingual and monocultural foreign language-learning context such as Hungary" (p.66). Inclusion of subject matter related to the wider world in the curriculum could, as well as provide pleasant and interesting stimulation, arguably influence the learners' macro-contextual beliefs, in turn influencing their integrativeness, orientations to learn and possibly even reduce anxiety-related issues such as fear of assimilation. However, as the

discussion shows, the nature of potential interactions between such culture-related interventions in curricular content and the multitude of affective constructs as in Dörnyei (1998) is not clear. In the absence of previous empirical data relevant to the present social context, no specific hypotheses were formed in this study; rather, a predominantly open-ended exploratory approach was taken to investigate the relationships between curricular cultural content and changes in learners' affective variables. In terms of cultural factors, cultural references projected from the teacher and materials, as well as cultural presented by students was investigated. As far as affective variables are concerned, certain aspects of the first six of Dörnyei's (1998) seven dimensions, which seem to be pertinent in the present context, were investigated.

2. Method

2.1 *The participants and their treatment conditions*

The participants were 85 first-year undergraduate students on a compulsory English communication course at a Japanese educational university. There were four intact classes, IC-Jpn, IC-WW, WW-Jpn and WW-WW (pseudonyms given according to treatment condition), into which the students were randomly distributed by the university's system. The four treatment conditions were created according to two factors; each factor having two possible conditions, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: The treatment conditions (and the classes' pseudonyms derived from them)

Class pseudonym	Teacher / materials	Student presentations
"Class IC-Jpn"	emphasize the <i>Inner Circle</i>	focus on <i>Japan</i> only
"Class IC-WW"	emphasize the <i>Inner Circle</i>	emphasize the <i>wider world</i>
"Class WW-Jpn"	emphasize the <i>wider world</i> (minimize Inner Circle bias)	focus on <i>Japan</i> only
"Class WW-WW"	emphasize the <i>wider world</i> (minimize Inner Circle bias)	emphasize the <i>wider world</i>

2.2 *The course and the learning materials*

In order to minimize variations in language content, such as level of vocabulary and grammar, the same textbook, WorldView 4A (Rost, 2005) was used for all groups. This textbook contains 14 units, each of which contains relevant vocabulary and pictures, warm-up conversations, reading comprehension and listening exercises, relevant grammar exercises, and extended speaking activities. Also included are two lessons based on English songs. To acquire the credit for the course, all students were required to do weekly homework, in-class speaking activities, prepare and deliver presentations related to the topic of the week in pairs or small groups, and sit a final multiple choice test on the language material they had covered, all derived from the relevant units of the textbook.

2.3 *The treatment conditions*

As shown in Table 1 and Appendix A, the teacher-and-materials-led introductions to the topic of each unit were differentiated in order to emphasize either the Inner-Circle countries or "wider world" (Outer and Expanding Circles) cultural references. This was done through selection of units and introduction of the topic of each unit with appropriate extra talk and visual materials. As for the other cultural emphasis factor, small groups of students in classes IC-Jpn and WW-Jpn were required to give

short (1 minute/person) presentations focusing only on Japan, in relation to the topic of the unit. In contrast, students in classes IC-WW and WW-WW were required to combine the unit's topic with a specific geographical region of the world in their presentations. Appendix A contains the outlines of the courses, how the two teacher-material conditions were differentiated, and the geographical regions for the wider-world condition of student presentations (Classes IC-WW and WW-WW).

2.4 Measurement instruments: the pre- and post-questionnaires

A questionnaire was compiled in order to be administered at the beginning of the course (pre-questionnaire) and the end of the course (post-questionnaire). Most of the items pertained to Dörnyei's (1998) dimensions 1 to 6, that is, the affective/integrative, instrumental, macrocontext-related, self-concept-related, goal-related and education-related dimensions. The questionnaire was first compiled in English (see Appendix B), then translated into a Japanese version for use in the study. Items involved responses on 5-point Likert scales. Specifically, Items 1-5 concerned macro-contextual beliefs about international communication and multilingualism; Items 6-10 concerned macro-contextual perceptions about the general attractiveness and status of Japan and its culture, language and finance (or 'Japanese vitality'); Items 11-12 related to intrinsic motivation; Items 13-14 related to instrumental orientation; Items 15-17 related to interest in other countries worldwide; Items 18-21 related to self-concept and self-confidence; Items 22-35 related to authentic communicative aspects of the goal-related dimension, organized in terms of the four main skills (reading, writing, listening and reading) and also with respect to Inner Circle or non-Inner Circle countries; Items 36-38 related to interethnic and English contact; Items 39-41 related to previous enjoyment-related aspects of the educational dimension; Items 42-43 related to classroom anxiety; and Items 46-47 related to foreigner-communication anxiety. Items 44 and 45 were included because they seemed to be particularly relevant to Japanese learners of English, but might be associated either with anxiety or enjoyment. The post-questionnaire included additional items (48-55) to elicit the students' perceptions of the course, the extent to which they noticed the different conditions, the extent to which they were conscious of changes in attitudes and their attributions of these changes.

3. Results

3.1 Evaluations of the course

Before reporting the results of the main analyses, some noteworthy findings with important implications should be considered. Items 48-54 of the post-questionnaire were entered into an ANOVA with two between-subjects factors, namely, the cultural emphasis of the teacher/materials, and cultural content of students' presentations. The four most important items were 50-53, concerning the students' perceptions of the cultural bias of their lessons. Regrettably, no significant effect was found relating the teacher/materials factor and students' perceptions of this aspect of their lessons (Items 50 and 51). It seems that, in spite of pilot work which seemed to show that students would notice this bias, there was insufficient cultural differentiation in the teacher's introductions and use of materials. In contrast, there were significant main effects for the student presentations factor and the students' perceptions of this bias; for agreement that the students' presentations had focused on Japan (Item 52), $F(1,81) = 17.61$, $p < .001$ (the means were 3.7 and 2.7 in accordance with the treatment conditions); and for agreement that students' presentations had focused on wider-world countries (Item 53); $F(1,81) = 12.23$, $p < .001$ (means: 3.8 and 3.0). Interestingly, there was also an interaction effect between the two treatment factors for perception of Japanese cultural bias in students' presentations (Item 52); F

(1,81) = 4.40, $p < .05$. It seems that when the teacher and materials emphasized the wider world, the contrast between the two classes' perceptions of the Japanese bias in students' presentations was stronger (Class WW-Jpn: $m=4.0$; Class WW-WW: $m=2.6$) than when the teacher and materials emphasized Inner Circle cultures (Class IC-Jpn: $m=3.3$; Class IC-WW: $m=2.8$). This suggests that although the participants did not tend to consciously notice the differentiated cultural bias in the teacher-led input, this does not necessarily mean that the factor had no effect on them at all.

A significant main effect for the teacher/materials factor was revealed for students' perceptions of the difficulty of the course; $F(1,81) = 5.75$, $p < .05$. Classes in the Inner Circle condition perceived the lessons as relatively more difficult ($m=2.8$) than those in the wider world condition ($m=2.3$). As for changes in attitudes towards English, generally positive ratings were reported for Item 54, but no significant effect for treatment was revealed, though the interaction between the two factors for this item approached the 5% significance level; $F(1,81) = 3.93$, $p = 0.051$ (NS), and the means suggested that Class WW-Jpn ($m=3.9$) and Class IC-WW ($m=4.0$) may have felt more change than Class IC-Jpn ($m=3.6$) and Class WW-WW ($m=3.6$) with a noticeable increase for classes which experience one, but no more than one, medium of wider world input, either from the teacher/materials or student presentations. There did not seem to be noteworthy inter-class differences in attributions for change. Most (46) of the 77 students who answered Item 55 selected 'This course' and only 6 seemed to think it was unrelated to this course.

3.2 *Aggregation of variables*

Aggregate variables were created in accordance with the constructs described in the method section, with the exception of Items 1–5, which failed to load consistently in an initial series of factor analyses. Since Items 3 and 4 were near opposites, Item 4 was inverted and they were combined into a 'Japanese only need English for international communication' variable.

The main goal of the study was to observe changes in the variables between the pre- and post-questionnaire. However, before doing this, it was considered desirable to explore the consistency with which the variables interacted with each other over time, and if possible extract more fundamental factors in which to observe change. During a further series of factor analyses (principal components extraction with varimax rotation) based in turn on 1) the pre-questionnaires only, 2) both questionnaires combined, and 3) post-questionnaires only, factors with Eigen values below 1 or that lay in the 'scree' part of the scree plots were eliminated and outlying variables were also removed. Eventually, a relatively coherent five-factor solution emerged (see Table 2), based on data from both the pre-questionnaire and post-questionnaire, explaining 62.1% of the total variance. Interestingly, specific communicative goals emerged separately in Factor 1. However, the affective, integrative, contact-related, self-concept-related and instrumental dimensions all emerged in Factor 2, which seems to represent the learner's overall self-concept with regard to enjoying English. Factor 3 also seemed to be related to the self, but was more focused on lack of anxiety, and also perhaps tolerance of minor setbacks, linguistic ambiguities, and the otherness of foreigners' communication styles. Factor 4 seemed to focus more on societal conditions, and perhaps a particular kind of belief in the potential for the Japanese nation to exert influence on the world, including influence on the establishment of a standard world English, through means of its status, cultural attractiveness and its potentiality for 'English-knowing bilingualism'. Factor 5 could be interpreted as the learner's confidence about the favorability of conditions for Japanese people to communicate internationally through English.

Table 2: Factor analysis of the data from both questionnaires combined

Factor	% variance explained	Significant contributors	Loading
Factor 1 - Specific communicative goals	17.90%	Goal for authentic English listening	.89
		Goal for authentic English speaking	.82
		Goal for authentic English writing	.80
		Goal for authentic English reading	.65
Factor 2 - Overall self-concept with regard to English	15.71%	Value of English for self-concept	.72
		Belief in necessity of correct English as a condition for communication	.68
		Intrinsic motivation	.57
		Interest in other countries worldwide	.57
		Previous enjoyment of English at school	.55
		Experience of interethnic and English contact	.54
Factor 3 - Tolerance and lack of anxiety	13.12%	Instrumental orientation	.51
		Foreigner-communication anxiety	-.79
		Enjoy English communication even when making mistakes	.70
Factor 4 - Belief in potential international influence of Japan	8.4%	Classroom anxiety	-.65
		Japanese vitality	.75
		Belief in the need for a standard global English which is not necessarily based on an Inner Circle model	.69
Factor 5 - Favorable conditions for Japanese to communicate in English	6.9%	Belief in additive bilingualism	.51
		Acceptability of English with a Japanese accent	.79
		Japanese people need only English for international communication	.49

3.3 Changes in the affective variables between the pre- and post-questionnaires

3.3.1 Comparisons of pre- and post-questionnaire factor scores

In the final factor solution reported above, factor scores (by regression) were saved into the data, so that each participant had two sets of factor scores, one set for the pre-questionnaire and one set for the post-questionnaire. For each factor, a pair of pre- and post-scores were entered into a mixed model ANOVA as repeated measures, also specifying the two between-subjects factors, teacher-materials and student presentations. An interactive effect found between 'time' (i.e., difference between pre- and post-scores) and either of the treatment factors would indicate that the said treatment factor had an influence on the dependent variable in question.

For Factors 1, 2 and 3, no significant effects were found at all. However, for Factor 4 (belief in potential international influence of Japan), a main effect for time ($F(1,71) = 15.06$, $p < .001$), and a three-way interactive effect for time, teacher/materials and student presentations ($F(1,71) = 5.00$, $p < .05$) were revealed. While the class with the highest mean score at the end of the course was IC-WW ($m = .67$), Class WW-Jpn showed the largest change over the whole course (from $-.41$ to $.41$). For Factor 5 (Favorable conditions for Japanese to communicate in English), only a main effect was found for time; $F(1,71) = 8.91$, $p < .01$ (pre-mean = $-.22$, post-mean = $.19$), indicating that this factor score increased for participants across all classes.

3.3.2 Comparisons of pre- and post-questionnaire means for variables

Considering the complex and ambiguous nature of some of the extracted factors, especially Factor 2, it was decided that similar mixed ANOVAs should also be run for some of the constituent variables. In these analyses, main effects for time were revealed for two variables not included in Factor 4: experience of interethnic and English contact ($F(1,75) = 18.55$; $p < .001$; change: 2.6 to 3.0); and class anxiety ($F(1,76) = 5.83$; $p < .05$; change: 3.3 to 3.0). An interactive effect between time and student presentations was revealed for enjoyment of English communication regardless of mistakes ($F(1,75) = 6.45$; $p < .05$); Classes IC-Jpn and WW-Jpn decreased from 3.4 to 3.2, whereas Classes IC-WW and WW-WW increased from 3.1 to 3.5. Finally, three-way interactive effects were revealed for intrinsic motivation ($F(1,77) = 10.04$, $p < .01$) and interest in other countries worldwide ($F(1,75) = 4.10$, $p < .05$). In Class IC-Jpn, average intrinsic motivation increased from 2.7 to 3.1, whereas average interest in other countries worldwide remained unchanged at 3.3. In Class IC-WW, intrinsic motivation decreased marginally from 3.1 to 3.0, whereas interest in other countries worldwide increased from 3.6 to 3.9. In Class WW-Jpn, intrinsic motivation decreased from 2.7 to 2.5, whereas interest in other countries worldwide increased marginally from 3.5 to 3.6. In Class WW-WW, intrinsic motivation increased from 2.8 to 3.2, whereas interest in other countries worldwide decreased from 3.7 to 3.5.

4. Discussion and conclusion

As the ANOVA tests showed, the students did not, unfortunately, seem to be consciously affected by the cultural differentiation in teacher/materials-related content; however, it may still have had an unconscious effect. For example, it seems that the different assessments by Classes WW-Jpn and IC-Jpn of the Japanese bias in their presentations, despite the fact that both classes had exactly the same number of presentations focused on Japan, could be attributed to the difference in teacher/material-related differentiation, especially given that some of the textbook's 'wider world' topics included Japan. The independent factor of cultural content of student presentations was clearly noticed, perhaps because of the active student involvement in preparing and delivering these presentations. The perceptions that the courses involving a teacher/materials bias toward the Inner Circle were slightly more difficult could be attributed to a number of things, including the slightly different grammar syllabus resulting from different units, or a mismatch in difficulty between the extra materials, such as the extremely fast and informal speech of Jamie Oliver on his cooking DVD.

An interesting and somewhat unexpected factor solution was revealed, where many dimensions which are often considered separately (e.g., Dörnyei, 1998) all loaded together on Factor 2, whereas the set of specific but closely related communicative goals emerged as a separate factor by itself. It should be noted that factor analysis is notoriously sensitive to the precise combination of variables entered and unusual factor solutions should be interpreted cautiously (e.g., Tabachnik & Fidell, 2007), especially in this case, where the sample size is far from ideal for factor analysis. Nevertheless, the factors are not particularly inconsistent with theory and at least make intuitive sense in the context of EFL in Japan. For example, it is well known that despite numerous government initiatives, communicative competence is somewhat neglected here, compared to interest in the wider world and the intensive studying of English as a subject; therefore, it may not be surprising that the communicative goals loaded separately from the various affective and societal dimensions. Factor 4 was particularly significant. Firstly, it combined belief in the possibility of additive bilingualism (or 'English-knowing bilingualism'; the possibility of attaining advance fluency in English without compromising one's native

command of Japanese), Japanese vitality (the perceived attractiveness of Japan to foreigners) and the support for a standard world English that is not necessarily dominated by the Inner Circle. Secondly, participants' scores on this factor changed significantly during the course according to the interaction between the two cultural content factors. While there were no decreases, the scores in Class WW-Jpn, for whom the teacher and materials emphasized the wider world and student presentations focused on Japan, increased the most. The other class whose Factor 4 scores increased noticeably was IC-WW, who were in the opposite condition; teacher/materials emphasis on the Inner Circle and student presentations focused on the wider world. Incidentally, the same two classes reported slightly stronger conscious changes in attitudes over the course. It is difficult to arrive at a precise explanation for this, though it may be tentatively speculated that a balance of Japan-focused and wider world cultural content may be the most effective in promoting this disposition, whereas a somewhat crudely contrived 'dual' between an Inner circle native speaker's culture and the students' own culture (e.g., Class IC-Jpn) may foster a sense of opposition, or confrontation, and may be counter-productive.

All the classes, regardless of treatment condition, registered a strong increase in their sense of having experienced inter-ethnic or English contact, suggesting that having a foreign teacher lead their classes is a strong effect dominating over issues of curriculum content. Similarly, the common reduction in class anxiety seemed to be related to general lesson style, rather than differences in cultural content. The cultural content of student presentations seemed to have an interesting effect on students' propensity to enjoy communicating in English regardless of mistakes. While this decreased slightly for classes whose student presentations focused on Japan, it increased significantly among classes whose student presentations involved the wider world. It could be hypothesized that while preparing presentations about one's own country is interesting, making mistakes in English while doing it could threaten one's face in terms of being evaluated by one's compatriots.

Curiously, increases in intrinsic motivation seemed to be most pronounced for Class IC-Jpn, whose lessons focused on the Inner Circle and Japan, and Class WW-WW, whose lessons emphasized a variety of different wider world cultures. This link between a purely affective-linguistic variable and culture-related variables is hard to interpret, and would need to be addressed in future research. A supposedly more obvious link, but with somewhat perplexing results was found for interest in other countries worldwide. While the widest variety of countries in lesson content was surely experienced by Class WW-WW, interest in other countries worldwide actually dropped among this class, yet it increased noticeably among Class IC-WW, for whom the teacher/materials content was limited to the Inner Circle. Either the wider world student presentations in Class IC-WW tended to be more effective than those in Class WW-WW, or the students were more convinced by the teacher presenting his own culture and perceived him as dabbling haphazardly in other cultures with a dubious level of expert knowledge.

Several variables appeared to be unaffected by these cultural treatment factors. None of the communicative goals, value of English for self-concept, instrumental orientation, anxiety factors nor beliefs about communicating in English were affected by these factors. This may simply be due to these phenomena being psychologically unrelated, or it may be due to insufficient differentiation of the treatment conditions in the experiment, or it may be that the psychological processes of change are too slow to be picked up in a four-month semester, especially with only one 90-minute lesson per week. As several L2 motivation researchers (e.g., Williams & Burden, 1997; Dörnyei & Ottó, 1998) have pointed out, second language acquisition itself takes several years, and the temporal aspects of motivation are complex (e.g., Heckhausen, 1991).

To conclude, this study has raised a number of important points about the role of cultural references in the language classroom, specifically in relation to affective variables. It also raises methodological issues about investigating such relationships, especially in an experimental interventionist approach. Since culture is so closely intertwined with language, it is challenging to devise reliable treatment conditions, controlling potentially powerful linguistic variables at the same time as differentiating cultural ones. Future studies may benefit from qualitative approaches in order to tease out the intricate processes from individual students.

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Appendix A – The course outlines

Week	Lesson theme / emphasis: Inner Circle condition – Classes IC-Jpn & IC-WW	Lesson theme / emphasis: Wider world condition – Classes WW-Jpn & WW-WW	Classes IC-WW & WW-WW: Unit theme & world region for student presentations
1	Orientation [pre-questionnaire]	Orientation [pre-questionnaire]	No presentations
2	Unit 1: Changes in lifestyle; (Use of Feng Shui in the UK)	Unit 1: Changes in lifestyle; (Origins and contemporary use of Feng Shui in China)	
3	Unit 2: Australia; travel items	Unit 3: Cooking; (“The Mediterranean Diet”)	
4	Unit 3: Cooking; (extract from DVD: “Jamie Oliver’s Christmas”)	Unit 4: Toys of the future (Korean toys)	
5	Song: Sade— <i>Somebody Already Broke My Heart</i> (Sade’s childhood in the UK)	Song: Sade— <i>Somebody Already Broke My Heart</i> (Sade’s Nigerian origins)	First presentations: Music / Australasia & Oceania
6	Unit 5: Manners & polite customs (manners in the USA/UK)	Unit 5: Manners & polite customs (Quiz/conversation sheet about manners in various non-English (countries))	Manners and customs / South Asia
7	Unit 6: Achievements / inventions (Lance Armstrong, Einstein, Beyonce)	Unit 6: Achievements / inventions (“African IT Achiever: Mirriam Zwane”)	Achievements and inventions / East Asia
8	Unit 8: Travel & airports (Reading: “The Hub” — emphasis on the British author)	Unit 8: Travel & airports (Reading: “The Hub”—more detail about Zurich and Zurich airport)	Travel / Europe
9	Unit 9: Normal & extreme weather (Tornados in USA)	Unit 9: Normal & extreme weather (Typhoon Nargis in Myanmar)	Weather / Coping with weather in Central Asia
10	Unit 11: Job interviews in USA/UK	Unit 10: Tomorrow’s world (International implications of global warming)	Careers, interviews, the future and technology / Latin America
11	Unit 12: Coincidences (listening — American man’s amazing story)	Unit 12: Coincidences (listening — story from Okinawa)	Stories / The Middle East
12	Song: Gloria Estafan — <i>Words Get in the Way</i> (Estafan’s life in Miami, her popularity in US/UK)	Song: Gloria Estafan — <i>Words Get in the Way</i> (Estafan’s Cuban origins)	Music / Africa (End of presentations)
13	Unit 13: being alone — British solo navigator Ellen MacArthur	Unit 14: Time — A day in life of a commuter in Tokyo	
14	Multi-choice test [post-questionnaire]	Multi-choice test [post-questionnaire]	
15	Feedback and evaluation	Feedback and evaluation	

Appendix B - Questionnaire (English)

Please read the statements and circle a number according to how you feel:

1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = No feeling either way 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly agree

1. It is acceptable for Japanese people to speak English with a Japanese accent.
2. For international communication, the world should agree on a kind of English that is not necessarily American, British or from any other of the original English-speaking countries.
3. For international communication, it is enough just to learn English.
4. Japanese people should learn other foreign languages; not just English.
5. It is possible to become highly proficient in a second language without losing proficiency in one's own language.
6. More and more people in other countries are studying the Japanese language.
7. More and more people in other countries are trying to make money by doing business with Japan.
8. More and more people in other countries are becoming interested in things Japanese.
9. There are more and more foreigners living in Japan.
10. Most foreigners in Japan try hard to learn Japanese.
11. The features and patterns of English words, sentences, pronunciation, and styles of communication are interesting to me.
12. I often study English even when there is no test or homework.
13. I want to study English in order to get good grades.
14. I want to do well on Eiken, TOEIC or TOEFL exams, in order to get a good job.
15. I am often interested in things from English speaking countries.
16. I am often interested in things from other countries whose main language is not English.
17. I often think about issues which affect the whole world.
18. I want to be good at English in order to be proud of myself.
19. I want to be good at English in order to gain respect from foreigners.
20. I want to be good at English in order to be admired and respected by other Japanese.
21. I want to be good at English because communicating in English will make me feel differently about myself.
(Questions 22-35) In the future (in class or in my own free time) I would like to be able to...
22. read English texts to get new information about topics that interest me (hobbies, etc).
23. read English texts to learn about the cultures of English-speaking countries.
24. read English texts to learn about the cultures of countries all over the world.
25. write letters/notes/e-mails to foreigners from English-speaking countries.
26. write letters/notes/e-mails to foreigners from countries all over the world.
27. write guidance and advice for foreigners in Japan.
28. understand English language movies, TV, radio, etc., without help from notes or subtitles.
29. understand the English speech of people from countries such as the UK, US, Australia, etc.
30. understand the English speech of people from countries all over the world.
31. make good English conversation with my classmates in English classes.
32. speak English to express my personal opinions and experiences to English speakers.
33. speak English to explain aspects of Japan to foreigners.
34. have lively and active conversations with foreigners, speaking a little, but mostly listening.
35. have lively and active conversations with foreigners, speaking as much quantity as they do.
36. Compared with other people of my age, I think I have had more personal contact with non-Japanese people.
37. Compared with other people of my age, I think I have had more contact with other cultures.
38. Compared with other people of my age, I think I have had more experience of studying or using the English language.

39. I enjoyed English at elementary school.
40. I enjoyed English at junior high school.
41. I enjoyed English at high school.
42. I feel anxious about making mistakes in front of my classmates.
43. I feel anxious about making mistakes in front of my teacher.
44. I usually enjoy communicating in English with foreigners, even if I make mistakes.
45. I only want to communicate in English after studying and practicing so that I know my English will be good.
46. I feel anxious about communicating with foreigners because I am not confident in English.
47. I feel anxious about communicating with foreigners because they have different communication styles to Japanese people.

Please write your student number: _____ Thank you very much.

Extra items in the post-questionnaire

48. The lessons on this course have been too difficult for me.
49. The lessons on this course have been too easy for me.
50. The content provided by the teacher and textbook on this course have focused mainly on the cultures of traditional English speaking countries (UK, USA, Australia, etc.).
51. The content provided by the teacher and textbook on this course has included cultures from various countries other than traditional English speaking countries.
52. The content of students' presentations on this course has focused mainly on Japan.
53. The content of students' presentations on this course has included cultures from a variety of different countries.
54. I think my beliefs about and attitudes towards English have changed during this semester.
55. I think my answer to Question 54 is mostly due to (please check one):
 - ☐ My experiences in this course.
 - ☐ Another English course or activity I have taken recently in this university.
 - ☐ Some influence from outside this university
 - ☐ A combination of various things.
 - ☐ Other: _____