

Title: The Relationship Between Cross-Culture Communication Activities And Student Motivation in Studying Second Language

Author's name: Hussein Zanaty Mohammed Youssef

Affiliation: English Instructor, Kitami Institute of Technology, Hokkaido, Japan
iccegypan@yahoo.com

Publication Date: Aug. 15. 2009

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the positive impact of second language learners' cross-cultural awareness in the target language. More specifically, the pedagogical desired outcomes include: 1) exploring how students can increase their motivation in learning a foreign language by engaging in the cross-cultural activity "Sister School Project", 2) enhancing their learning motivation through a better understanding of the world in which students live and the opportunity to see that they can be a positive influence in it. The study involved 31 fifth grade Japanese elementary students. In addition to the fifth grade students who evaluated their experience both before and after the program, another 10 randomly selected sixth grade Japanese elementary students at the same school evaluated their experience with the program, which they had completed a year before. The study took place at an integrated classroom at an Elementary School. Forty-eight lessons were planned, with the help of the Japanese Homeroom Teacher (JHT) and the author of this study, over a four-month period, according to the school curriculum. Japanese students participated in a sister school project with Egyptian students of the same grade level. Data were collected through a close-end before and after questionnaire and an interview that quantified learners' level of interest and motivation in participating in this learning program. Results indicate the first outcome about increasing students' motivation in learning a foreign language, the students' use of different strategies appeared to assist them in creating a good learning environment and improving their interest in studying that language. The students' use of self-evaluation and their positive attitude in learning appeared to assist them in understanding the global situation in a positive way. Results show that the students were better able to participate and express their ability and knowledge in the target language and had improved motivation. Educators need to increase their knowledge of the cognitive and effective impact of cross-cultural activity on students' ability to use a second language. Additional data includes 2 figures, 4 tables, 4 questionnaires and copy of original Sister School Contract.

CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	i
CONTENTS	ii
LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES	iii
I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
Purpose of the study	3
Problem statement	4
II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE	5
Intercultural learning and communication.....	6
Cross-cultural awareness	7
Cross- Culture as a bridge	7
Cross- Culture and international understanding.....	9
Cross- Culture and school curriculum	10
Cross- Culture and Motivation	12
III. OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS	13
IV. RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS	14
V. METHODOLOGY	15
Participants	15
Instruments	18
Procedure	20
Applied Strategies	26
VI. RESULTS	28
VII. DISCUSSION	33
VIII. CONCLUSION	34
IX. RECOMMENDATIONS	35
X. REFERENCES	37
XI. APPENDIX	40
Questionnaire	40
Copy of Sister School Contract	42

List of Tables and Figures

- Figure 1: 6th grade weighted average rating in which they had completed a year before.
- Figure 2 : 5th grade Male and Female average motivation.
- Table 1 & 2: Strategies applied in this study.
- Table 3: 5th grade Total scoring *Before* and *After*.
- Table 4: Students' Reflection *Before* and *After*

Introduction

Today, because of the great effort of international education communities in increasing second language learners' motivation and their global understanding, a great number of scholars argue the development of an integrated learning style elementary study. While little research has been done in cross-culture awareness in Japan, this study was conducted during the integrated social classes at a Japanese elementary school in order to arouse students' motivation and help them become familiar with the second language and culture. This study also examines the positive impact of the second language learners' cross- cultural awareness in the target language.

It has been proposed that learners of a second language (L2) have two kinds of language proficiency: basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS) and cognitive-academic language proficiency (CALP) (Cummins, 1984). These two forms of language were later referred to as "social language" and "academic language" (Cummins, 1991). In order to apply them effectively in the academic curriculum, L2 learners need to

make use of different intercultural learning activities that will expose them to foreign language and help them get familiar with foreign life and culture in the “Period for Integrated Study”.

According to wide understanding of different development psychologists theories concerning human development, Piaget (1929) in his third stage, “ Concrete Operations aged 7- 11” ,pictures the demonstrating conversation and mature understanding of a cause and effect relationship. Erikson (1963) also in his fourth stage “ Industry Versus aged 6 – 12” describes developing skills. He concludes that learners seek to become industrious in all areas of life. Both theories seek to quantify the development stages humans pass through. Therefore, teachers and parents should provide great encouragement to the elementary stage to avoid slowing down their thoughts and even retarding their creativity

Today, because of the great effort of international education communities in highlighting the big role of developing internationalization knowledge and cross-culture communication among L2 learners, L2 learners’ ability is increasing worldwide. And to

communicate internationally inevitably involves communicating inter-culturally, which probably leads students to encounter factors of cultural differences.

This study therefore intends to provide a means to improve the social, cultural and academic enlightenment of Japanese EFL "English as a Foreign Language" learners through a sister school activity. The study emphasizes the critical role of introducing different culture norms into the EFL class to create good EFL learners through a variety of practical strategies.

It also re-affirms how language is a part of culture and culture is a part of language. The study describes how EFL learners in Japan learn some unique ways of increasing their motivation to learn English through exchanging cultural communication with a different country. The author believes that teaching English in the shape of "Cross-Culture Communication" can get a better understanding of the world.

Exchanging communicative activity is an effective method in teaching foreign language at elementary level. Children can increase their English output and widen their

international learning experience. It is hoped that the activity presented here can be spread to reach more schools in Japan to assist EFL learners in understanding and appreciating cultures and people different from themselves.

Problem Statement

Is there a relationship between cross-culture communication activities and student motivation in studying English as a foreign language?

In order to answer the above question, this study investigates another two sub-questions. First, is cross- culture a useful tool to conquer ignorance, bridge cultural gaps, and assist to create international friendship?”. Second, “what are the students' reactions to a different culture in order to improve their global understanding?”. To measure both questions, learners, teachers and school principals' feedback and comments were collected *before* and *after* the study was conducted.

Literature Review

Today, because of the great effort of international education communities in highlighting the big role of developing internationalization knowledge and cross-cultural communication among L2 learners, a L2 learners' ability is increasing rapidly worldwide. To communicate internationally inevitably involves communicating inter-culturally, which leads students to encounter cultural differences, many of the learning devices applied during the integrated social classes at the Japanese elementary schools in order to arouse students' motivation and encourage them to be familiar with the second language and culture.

School –to-school contact is one of the effective teaching methods that determine the enhancement of the second language learners' cross- cultural awareness in the target language. While little research has been done in cross-culture awareness in Japan, the author believes that the activities detailed in this study should be of useful experience to second language learners.

Intercultural learning and communication

Foreign language learning is comprised of several components, including grammatical competence, communicative competence, language proficiency, as well as a change in attitudes towards one's own or another culture (Dimitrios 2001). Dimitrios concluded that effective communication is more than a matter of language proficiency and that, apart from enhancing and enriching communicative competence, cultural competence can also lead to empathy and respect toward different cultures as well as promote objectivity and cultural perspicacity. Many scholars proved the effective impact of intercultural learning and awareness in improving the learning process for better language learning. Byram, (1994) states that the recognition that cultural learning is an integral part of foreign language learning is quickly taking hold among language teachers. Hadley (2001, p.345) asserts the concept of culture and languages are inherently interconnected and should be taught together. He claims "two widely-held beliefs among foreign language professionals [are]: 1) that language study is an essential component in the curriculum, in

part because it can lead to greater cross-cultural understanding, and 2) that language and culture are inseparably intertwined”, recited in Williams (2006).

Cross-cultural awareness

Cross- cultural awareness helps L2 learners to develop their thought and learning sensitivity. Milton Bennett’s (1993) six-step Development Model of Intercultural Sensitivity contains four steps whose application to the classroom has been explored by Janet Bennett (1993). *In denial*, learners believe that there are no real differences in cultures. *In defense*, learners believe that their culture is exalted and second culture is denigrated. *In minimization*, the learners accept that differences exist. At the stage of *acceptance*, the learners recognize the logic of another culture. By focusing on the learner’s development of intercultural sensitivity, students will improve their self-awareness and teachers can observe students’ intercultural enhancement.

Cross- Culture as a bridge

Cross- cultural awareness links target language with learners’ own cultural views.

Through the study of other languages, students gain a knowledge and understanding of the cultures that use that language. In fact, students cannot truly master the language until they have also mastered the cultural context in which the language occurs – Standards for Foreign Language Learning (National Standards, 1999). Brown (2000, p. 200) points out that while some aspects of language do seem to provide us with potential cognitive mindsets, there are still numerous universal properties of language. So the good news is that although learning to think in another language may require a considerable degree of mastery of that language, it does not mean having to learn how to think all over again!

Brown also indicates that the challenge that second language learners have is to identify what can be retained from their native language and culture as valid in speaking the second language and functioning within that culture, as well as what needs to be learned. Byram & Flemming, (1998), pointed out that given the direct link between language and culture, both teachers and learners need to be mindful of those culture-specific meanings reflected by the language, as well as being attuned to the culture of a social group in a particular time and

space. In addition to that, Morgan & Cain, (2000, pp. 5-7) described three possible relationships and a link between language and culture as; (1) language donates culture, (2) language creates cultural categories, and (3) culture shapes language.

Cross- Culture and international understanding

Cross-culture connects learners' integrated study with qualities and abilities of international understanding. In the report of the 5th Central Council for Education of Japan (July 1996) specifically point number one which cites, "open-mindedness and understanding regarding other cultures, and the development of an attitude that is respectful of these cultures and qualities, and the development of the abilities necessary for living together with other different cultures". Bagley, Carol, & Hunter, Barbara. (1992) claimed that students have much more knowledgeable of international events. There is increased student awareness of the emergence of a global society. We would say that international understanding through cross-cultural activities help students develop the ability to express themselves

and also deepen their interest in, and understanding of, cultures and life in other countries.

Cross- Culture and school curriculum

For a better understanding of the value of culture in school curriculums, teachers can seriously help learners develop their global language awareness by analyzing the relationship between language and culture in the target language. Coleman (1998) points out: "In today's classrooms it has been noted repeatedly that students fail to assimilate even the most carefully structured and presented information provided in preparation for the year abroad. To change deeply rooted attitudes and behavior on a deeper level of the personality than the cognitive, one involving feelings, must be brought into play." In another aspect, Clouston, (1997) notes the dynamic aspects of culture as ;

[the] need to develop knowledge of and about the L2 of FL,

culture, but this receptive aspect of cultural competence is not sufficient.

Learners will also need to master some skills in culturally appropriate communication and behavior for the target culture...Cultural awareness is necessary

if students are to develop an understanding of the dynamic nature of the target culture, as well as their own culture.

Hanvey, (1976, p. 15) raises a critical question, which is "does cross-culture awareness matter?" His reply is "yes, cross-culture awareness does matter". Hanvey's viewpoint is based on cultural differences between nations. Hanvey also describes four levels of cross-cultural awareness:

- * awareness of superficial or visible cultural traits: stereotypes;
- * awareness of significant and subtle cultural traits that contrast markedly with one's own; you are frustrated and confused;
- * awareness of significant and subtle cultural traits that contrast markedly with one's own; you think about it and start to ask questions and understand;
- * awareness of how another culture feels from the standpoint of the insider: cultural immersion.

Robert Kohls' descriptors of culture are an entry point for students to learn about the world and other cultures. Conflict can arise when different cultures with different points of view meet to solve common problems. An awareness of such differences is the key to cross-cultural understanding. For a listing of what some cultures believe in and what most cultures believe in, see Kohls and Knight, *Developing Intercultural Awareness*, p. 42.

Cross- Culture and Motivation

There is no doubt that intercultural learning functions as an effective learning device in raising learners' motivation. Developing intercultural learning within the context of the foreign language learning experience can help students acquire the ability to understand and adapt to the difference as well as the ability to be flexible and open when facing new experiences. According to Gardner (1985), a highly motivated individual will; (1) enjoy learning the language, and (2) want to learn the language, (3) strive to learn the language.

And in order to foster motivation among L2 learners, Bransford, et al. (1990) suggested that learners must be able to practice language in multiple contexts in order to bridge domains and foster active abstractions of concepts learned. This definitely will help learners recognize the relevance of different learning skills or knowledge. Again Gardner states that an integrative oriented learner would likely have a stronger desire to learn the language, have a more positive attitude towards the learning situation, and be more likely to expend more effort in learning the language.

The aim of these activities is always to increase students' awareness and to develop their curiosity towards the target language and culture and their own, helping them to make comparisons among cultures. By all means, the goal here should be to enrich students' experience and to make them aware of the global society of which they are a part. This leads us to the fact that cross-cultural communication is a useful tool to conquer ignorance, bridge cultural gaps, and assist in creating international friendship.

The study also highlights the effective relationship between cross-cultural communication

activities and student motivation in studying English as a foreign language.

Operational Definitions

Beginning in April 2000, elementary schools in Japan were allowed to introduce a new "Period of Integrated Studies " (Sougou in Japanese) into their curriculum. Then, in April 2002, with the introduction of the new course of study, all elementary schools in Japan were required to do so. *The Period of Integrated Studies* is a period that has been allocated for cross-curricula study. Some of the suggested areas that can be covered in this period are: international understanding (kokusai rikai), the environment, welfare, and information technologies.

Research hypothesis

The author noticed that there is little probability of elementary students acquiring satisfactory cross-cultural awareness and communicative ability under the traditional integrated teaching styles used in Japan. It is hypothesized that students who are exposed to the cross-cultural communicative activity used in this study will have higher

academic achievement and a more positive attitude toward English and global understanding.

Methodology

Participants

The participants in this study were divided into 2 categories;

- 30 fifth-grade Japanese students acted as the main participants of this study
- 10 six-grade Japanese students were selected who had a yearlong experience in this activity

The main participants in this study were 30 fifth-grade Japanese elementary students in an integrated full study classroom in a school in a rural area of Kitami city of Hokkaido prefecture, Japan. There is only one-fifth grade class, and students had the same Japanese Homeroom Teacher (JHT) for all their classes and also met with the author once or twice a month. The students ranged in age from 10 to 11 years of age. There were 15 males and 15 females in the class. None of participants had any previous formal experience

in cross-cultural communicative activities before taking part in this Sister School Project. The study was conducted over a four-month period, according to the school curriculum. During the lessons the JHT and AET “the author” encouraged students to utilize a variety of language learning strategies that helped them to improve their motivation in studying the second language. Japanese students participated in a sister school project with Egyptian students of the same grade level. Data were collected through a close-end *before* and *after* questionnaire that seeks to quantify the learners’ level of interest and motivation over the course of the study.

In addition to the fifth grade students who evaluated their experience both *before* and *after*, another 10 six-grade Japanese elementary students at the same school evaluated their experience with the program, which they had completed a year before. They ranged in age from 11 to 12 years. Five males and five females were randomly selected to be interviewed by the author.

The data used to evaluate the program was derived from the use of a

short questionnaire administered both *before* and *after* the project was conducted. Other data was derived from the use of an interview with 6th grade students. More comments and feedback were collected from the teacher and the school principal through a questionnaire .A pre-test questionnaire form was checked by the teacher and the school principal before being delivered to participants. The *Before* questionnaire was distributed to the 5th grade students just prior to beginning the activity. The *After* questionnaire was distributed to both 5th and 6th grade students at the same school at the end of project. Both the researcher and the participants knew each other for over a year from working together inside the school.

The participants were first given the *Before* questionnaire before exposure to the cross-cultural activity. After a four month period, they were given the *After* questionnaire after they had already experienced and finished their task. Our hypothesis was that after participating in this activity the participants would become more motivated and culturally

aware of their own culture and others'. Scoring the questionnaire and interview (using a Likert scale format) we derived an average scale for the students' motivation subdivided by male and female, and a weighted average of both. Then we compared the average motivation *Before* and *After* for both male and female (in Excel) to see if there is a significant difference in their responses.

Instruments

Questionnaire;

The questionnaire used in this study is designed by the author, and divided into four categories; (1) questionnaire A/5 is for 5th grade participants *Before*, (2) questionnaire B/5 is for 5th grade same participants *After*, (3) Interview questions are for 6th grade participants who had a previous experience in this activity a year before, and (4) questionnaire C/T is an *After/Before* questionnaire for the teacher and the school principal.

(1) Questionnaire A/5 "*Before Process*" Includes two sections. Section (I)

presents participants' background. Section (2) is divided into two parts; A & B. Part A presents participants' interest in this activity. It contains a question (Why did you join this project?) with 6 possible responses. Participants were free to select as many responses as they chose. The rationale behind this question is to see the purpose of joining this project and to understand their knowledge and attitude before participating in this task. Part B consisted of 7 rating statements arranged in a 5-point Likert scale format (None – Little – Average – More – A lot) (See Appendix 1). The statement items were based on Hanvey's (1979) four levels scheme for measuring cross-cultural awareness. The Questionnaire also evaluates participants' attitudes toward their own culture, Egyptian culture, cross-cultural awareness and improvement in general knowledge.

(2) Questionnaire B/5 "*After Process*" includes two sections. Section (I) presents participants' background. Section (2) is divided into two parts; A & B. Part A presents participants' rating interest after finishing their tasks. It consisted of 7 rating statements arranged in a 5-point Likert scale format (None – Little – Average – More – A lot). The

rational behind this part is to observe if there is significant change in participants attitude and learning awareness after completing their tasks. Part B consisted of 3 questions rating statements arranged in a 5-point Likert scale format, ranging in (None – Little – Average – More – A lot). The rational of this part is to measure the impact of this study on the participants' awareness and motivation. (See Appendix 1)

(3) This interview is for 6th grade participants who had previous experience in this activity from a year before. 10 random 6th grade participants, five males and five females, had taken the interview with the author. The rational behind this interview is to see the significant impact of this study after a year passed.

Project Agreement and goals; (See Appendix 2)

The author designed the project agreement used in this study. It consists of three sections; (1) the goals of the program, (2) the ideas to fulfill these goals; (3) the conditions of the agreement.

Procedure

The study took place at an integrated full study classroom in Higashi Aionai elementary school. Forty-eight lessons were planned by the author of this study, in conjunction with the Japanese Homeroom Teacher (JHT), over a four-month period according to the school curriculum. During the lessons the JHT and the author encouraged students to utilize a variety of language learning strategies that helped them to improve their motivation in studying the second language. Japanese students participated in a sister school project with Egyptian students of the same grade level. The program was divided into the following eight steps;

Step one: "History of the project"

In 2004, the author introduced the outline of the cross-cultural program to both schools in Japan and Egypt. Both school administration members appreciated the newborn idea. They expressed a strong desire to support the program. Later

the author designed the project agreement and prepared both English and Japanese versions. There was no need for an Arabic version since the Egyptian school had been participating in cross-cultural activity with an American school. A Draft of the project agreement was sent to both school principals to add their final comments. They both agreed to participate.

In Egypt

In February 2005, the author visited the Egyptian school in Egypt to get the final approval. The author had a strong relationship with education business in Egypt as he used to teach at Egyptian schools before coming to Japan. The Egyptian school participating in this project was selected because of its long experience with cross-cultural activities. This school has been engaged in a similar program with an American elementary school since 2000. The Egyptian school had arranged official approval from the Egyptian Board of Education. Finally they signed on both English and Japanese versions.

In Japan

In March 2005, the author visited the Japanese school to get the final approval and sign. Since this was the first experience to the Japanese elementary schools in that area to be engaged in a cross-cultural activity with an international school, some routine processes had to be taken before the final approval was given. Both English and Japanese versions of the program outlines and project agreement were submitted to school administration members. They presented the program to the teachers and students' parents. Then they took the matter to the local Board of Education in order to get the final approval.

Step two: "Introduction stage"

The author and Japanese homeroom teacher (JHT) set the plan within the expected period of time. Four months were divided into 48 regular classes. 3 classes a week as following:

In October, the project was first introduced to the 5th grade participants. The *before* questionnaire “Japanese version” was distributed to them in a full 45 min. class. Previous work of the 6th grade was also introduced to the 5th grade participants. Students were able to understand the task and they were excited to start the program.

Step three: “Discussion and grouping stage” from October to November

Participants had a discussion and divided their tasks. Participants were divided into five groups; A, B, C, D, E. Group A was to prepare information related to their school such as; school location and school events. Group B was to prepare information related to the map of Japan. Group C was to prepare information related to the climate and the structures of Japanese housing. Group D was to prepare information related to students’ handmade artwork and school photos. Group E was to prepare a video of how to make Japanese traditional paper craft.

Step four; “Doing tasks individually” from November to December

Each group distributed tasks to each member. Participants worked individually to collect much information. They used school tools such as the internet, books from the school library as well as interviews with school teachers. Students decided to have a regular meeting with JHT and the author at the end of a month to review their progress.

Step five; “Doing tasks in groups” December

Participants gathered the target information. They sat in groups and selected together the best information to represent to the whole class. JHT and the author continually followed and observed the students’ work and their level of motivation. JHT and the author talked with all groups and gave some feedback.

Step six; “Presentation and evaluation” January

Through 3 integrated study (Sougou) classes (45 min. for each), 25 min. was given to each group to present their ideas and information. While a group was presenting,

other groups took notes and evaluated those ideas. At the end of three classes and after all groups had got feedback from each other, each group selected their final data to submit to their teacher.

Step seven; January

Each group studied the other groups' feedback and put their final touches to their tasks. A final meeting was arranged with JHT and the author to check all ideas. JHT and the author gave them positive comments and feedback on their process and way of handling their tasks.

Step eight; Beginning of February

JHT received all students' work and did the entire official mailing process.

Applying Learning Strategies;

The participants had applied some strategies while they were processing their tasks. The following tables will explain the strategies used in this study. Table 1 is a demonstration for the Metacognitive Learning strategies. Table 2 is a demonstration for

Task-Based strategies. These tables provide names of the strategies and description of strategies applied.

Table 1

Metacognitive Strategies	
Strategy	Description
<i>Organize/ Plan</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>What do participants do before they start?</i> -Participants planned the task. -Participants set goals. -Participants planned how to accomplish the task.
<i>Manage Your Own Learning</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>What do participants do while they are working on the task?</i> -Participants focused their attention on the task.
<i>Monitor</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -<i>How do participants make sure they are doing the task correctly?</i> -Participants checked their progress on the task.
<i>Evaluate</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -<i>What do participants do after they have finished the task?</i> -Participants had self-evaluations. -Participants had group evaluations.

Table 2

Task-Based Strategies	
Strategy	Description
<i>Access Information Sources</i>	-Participants used the internet and interviewed teachers
<i>Cooperate</i>	-Participants worked with others to complete tasks. - Participants gave and received feedback.

Results

The researcher selected three of seven statements asked in the before questionnaire A/5 and after questionnaire B/5 that were regarded as pertinent to this study.

First the questionnaire A/5 statements were:

Statement # 1: My interest in joining Sister School Project

Statement # 2: My information on the Egyptian culture and lifestyle

Statement # 4: My interest in improving my English

The questionnaire results *after/before* and the results from question number 1

below supported our prediction that L2 Japanese elementary learners' motivation in this program has increased. In *Before* a large number of respondents 27 out of 30 or 90% a mid-level rating *Average* rating and 3 out of 30 or 10% chose the "*Little*" rating. In *After* 16 out of 30 or 53.3% chose the "*More*" rating and 14 out of 30 or 46.7% chose the "*A lot*" rating. The results therefore support the hypothesis that cross-cultural communication is an effective tool in learning L2 and highlight the significant role of this study in arousing students' motivation in learning L2. (See Table 3).

The results of question number 2 in *Before*, showed that 12 out of 30 or 40% rated in "*Average*" and 18 out of 30 or 60% rated in "*Little*". In *After*, 2 out of 30 or 6.7% rated in "*Average*", 26 out of 30 or 86.6% rated in "*More*" and 2 out of 30 or 6.7% rated in "*A lot*". The results here show participants gained more cultural knowledge through this program and helped them to fill the information gap in their curriculum. The results of question number 4 in *Before* revealed that the majority 29 out of 30 or 96.7% chose the "*Average*" rating and in after revealed that all students (100%) chose the "*More*" rating.

The results here indicate the attitude of L2 learners toward improving their English. In summary, it would appear that, in these three questions, this study improved Japanese L2 learners motivation culturally and educationally.

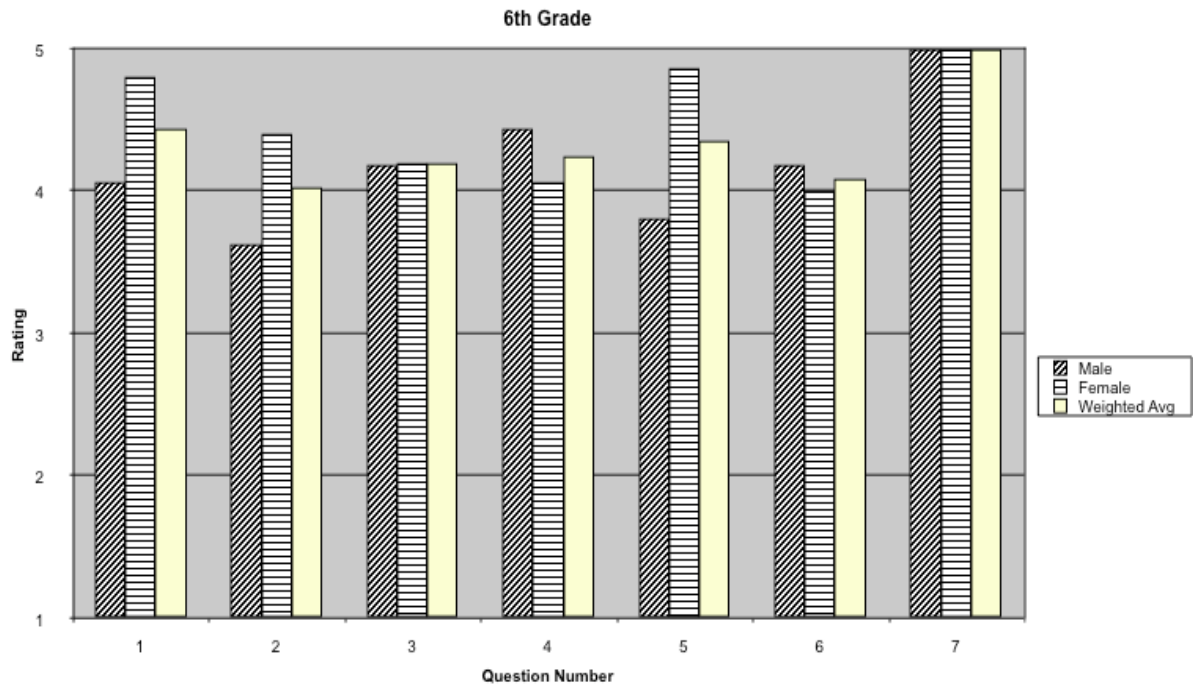
Table 3

Table 3 (Total scoring)

Before Rating(1-2-3-4-5)					(Total 30 Students)	After four month				
None	Little	Aver.	More	A lot	How do you rate the following statements?	None	Little	Aver.	More	A lot
	3	27			My interest in joining Sister school project				16	14
	18	12			My information on the Egyptian culture and lifestyle			2	26	2
		29	1		My information on the Japanese culture				28	2
		29	1		My interest in improving my English				30	
	24	6			My interest in talking to foreigners				26	4
			30		My interest in English class					30
	16	14			My interest in international news				25	5
Before %					(Total 30 Students)	After Four Month%				
None	Little	Aver.	More	A lot	How do you rate the following statements?	None	Little	Aver.	More	A lot
	10	90			My interest in joining Sister school project				53.3	46.7
	60	40			My information on the Egyptian culture and lifestyle			6.7	86.6	6.7
		96.7	3.3		My information on the Japanese culture				93.3	6.7
		96.7	3.3		My interest in improving my English				100	
	80	20			My interest in talking to foreigners				86.7	13.3
			100		My interest in English class					100
	53.3	46.7			My interest in international news				83.3	16.7

In addition, a random 10 six-grade Japanese elementary students at the same school evaluated their experience with the program, which they had completed a year before. The 6th grade weighted average rating was taken as the results of interview questions responses. As in Figure 2, it appears that there is a huge motivation after a year of this program. The results of the interview question number 4 in *Before* “My motivation to study English at Junior H.S “revealed that this study had an impact on the learning motivation helped in bridging between elementary stage and Junior High stage.

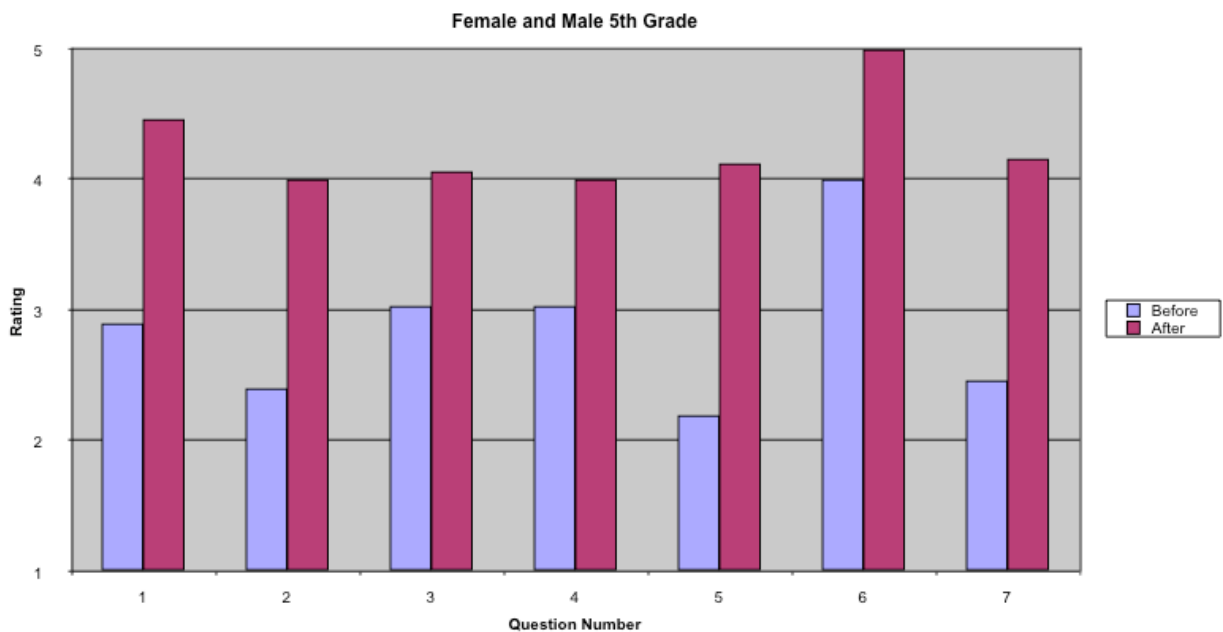
Figure 1



A comparison between Male and Female

In a brief comparison between the average responses of the male and female, this study revealed the significant difference between the responses as to gender. (See Figure 2).

Figure 2



Reflection

The *Before* and *After* periods, some clear differences in students questions and knowledge revealed a significant difference through their conversation with the author. See

Table 4.

Table 4

Before	After
-Is there T.V in Egypt? -Do students go to school on camels? -Is there winter season in Egypt?	-Wow! Egypt is just like Japan. -Many international car brands in Egypt. -Winter is cold in Egypt..that's interesting!

Discussion

This study sought to develop learners' intercultural dimension and social dimension. The intercultural learners need some awareness and motivation that there is more to be known and understood through the learning process. Promotion of skills, attitudes and values lead to a significant learning environment. M. Byram, B. Gribkova and H. Starkey, (1997) claimed that "developing the intercultural dimension in language teaching involves recognizing that the aims are: to give learners intercultural competence as well as linguistic competence; to prepare them for interaction with people of other cultures; to enable them to understand and accept people from the other cultures as individuals with other distinctive perspectives, values and behaviors; and to help them to see that such interaction is an enriching experience".

Conclusion

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between the cross-cultural communication and learners' motivation in studying L2. The researcher was also interested in whether or not Japanese elementary L2 learners' motivation and awareness of foreign cultures could be increased by cross-cultural activity. This study did enrich the skills, attitudes and values of some Japanese L2 learners towards learning L2 and culture. As a result of this study, the researcher has come to the following conclusions;

First the researcher was able to support a strong relationship between the cross-cultural communication and studying L2. Additionally, the researcher was able to show a significant shift in cultural awareness and increasing sensitivity among the participants in this study. Second, this study has suggested that the Japanese L2 learners feel more at ease with other cultures. The *before* and *after* questionnaires showed the significant change in information about culture. *Before*, they saw the foreign culture in the Egyptian culture as bizarre. *After* completing this study, participants came to see the culture

as insiders. Additionally, the reflection mentioned in this study showed the information gap of the participants and how they are in need of more cross-cultural communication. Finally the study supported the participants in developing different strategies to achieve their goal, such as developing self-awareness, developing learning attitude, developing learning behavior and self-evaluation. To conclude the above, the author believes that the classroom experiences in this project help students become more comfortable interacting with people from different cultures.

Recommendations

The researcher makes the following recommendations to L2 educators who desire to enhance their students' cultural awareness and learning motivation in the L2 classroom:

- 1- Whenever possible, try to have your students to experience a cross-cultural communication activity and associate with other international societies.
- 2- Try to create an interesting learning environment for your students that they can enjoy it more and keep their positive attitude alive.

- 3- Whenever possible, encourage students to use a variety of strategies to achieve their goals.
- 4- Help students to value the good learner and develop self-thinkers.
- 5- Continue to teach and conduct action research projects as a means of self-improvement and professional development.

Reference

Bagley, Carol, & Hunter, Barbara. (1992, July). Restructuring, constructivism, and technology: forging a new relationship. *Educational Technology*, 32, 22-27.

Bennett, J.M. (1993). Cultural marginality: Identity issues in intercultural training. In M.R. Paige (Ed.), *Education for the intercultural experience*. Yarmouth, ME: *Intercultural Press*.

Bransford, J. D., Sherwood, R. D., Hasselbring, T. S., Kinzer, C. K., & Williams, S. M. (1990). Anchored instruction: Why we need it and how technology can help. In Nix, D., and Spiro, R. (Eds.), *Cognition, education, and multimedia*. Hillsdale, NY: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Brown, H. D. (2000). *Principles of language learning and teaching*. Longman.

Byram, M. and Flemming M. (1998) *Language Learning in Intercultural Perspective*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Byram, M., Morgan, C. and Colleagues. (1994). *Teaching and Learning Language and Culture*. Great Britain: WBC.

Byram, M., Gribkova, B., Starkey, H. (2002) *Developing the Intercultural Dimension in Language Teaching: A Practical Introduction for Teachers* (Strasbourg: Council of Europe)

Central Council for Education. 1996. *The model for Japanese education in the perspective of the 21th Century*, First report.

Coleman, H.L. (1998). General and multicultural counseling competency: Apples and oranges? *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development*, 26, 147 - 156.

Cummins, J. (1984) *Bilingualism and special education: Issues in assessment and pedagogy*. Clevedon, England: Multilingual Matters.

Cummins, J. (1991) *Language Development and Academic Learning* Cummins, J in Malave, L. and Duquette, G. *Language, Culture and Cognition* Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Erikson E. H. *Childhood and society* (2nd ed.), New York: Norton., 1963.

Gardner, Howard. 1985. *Frames of mind: The theory of multiple intelligences*. New York: Basic Books.

Hadley, A. O. (2001). *Teaching language in context* (3rd ed.). Boston: Heinle & Heinle

Hanvey, R. G. (1976). Cross-cultural awareness. In E. C. Smith & L. F. Luce (Eds.), *Toward internationalism: Readings in cross-cultural communication* (pp.44-56). Rowley, MA: Newbury House Publishers.

Kohls, L.R., & Knight, J.M. (1994). *Developing intercultural awareness*. Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press.

Lessard-Clouston, M. 1997. *Towards an Understanding of Culture in L2/FL Education*. In Ronko, K.G. *Studies in English*, 25, 131-150 Japan: Kwansei Gakuin University Press.

Morgan, C and Cain, A 2000 *Foreign Language and Culture Learning from a Dialogic Perspective*. Multilingual Matters.

Piaget, Jean. 1929. *The Child's Conception of the World*. New York: Harcourt, Brace.

Standards for Foreign Language Learning (National Standards, 1999)

Thanasoulas, Dimitrios. "The Important of Teaching Culture in the Foreign Language Classroom." *Radical Pedagogy*. 200. 24 Nov. 2007

<http://radicalpedagogy.icaap.org/content/issu3_3/7-thanasoulas.html>

Williams, C.C. (2006). The epistemology of cultural competence. *Families in Society*, 87(2),209-220

Appendix 1
Sister School Project (J1)
Student Survey “Before/ After”

I would like express my deepest gratitude to those who spent their valuable time in completing this survey. This survey is for measuring students’ interest, understanding, motivation, awareness and improving studying a second language through the cross-cultural communication activity “Sister School Project”. Your great support is highly considered as a useful resource for my practicum.

This survey is divided into two stages. Stage one is an introduction part, which indicates students’ personal & background information. Stage two shows students’ interest *Before /After* joining Sister School Project. Stage two includes part A & B.

I. Personal & Background information

Gender: Male Female

Age: _____

Nationality: _____

Grader: _____

II. Before process; “ 5th grade *Before Only*”

(This section shows students’ interest before joining Sister School Project)

A- Why did you join this project? (You can mark one or more)

- 1- It is a required project at my school.
- 2- To study more about other cultures.
- 3- To improve my English writing.
- 4- To have international friends.
- 5- To introduce my culture to others.
- 6- To enjoy studying with my classmates.

5th grade Before and

6th grade After only After

B- How do you rate the following statements? (Please circle one rate out of five)

(1 = None 2 = Little 3 = Average 4 = More 5 = A lot)

1- My interest in joining Sister School Project;

1 2 3 4 5

2- My information of the Egyptian culture and lifestyle;

1 2 3 4 5

3- My information of the Japanese culture;

1 2 3 4 5

4- My interest in improving my English;

1 2 3 4 5

5- My interest in talking to foreigners;

1 2 3 4 5

6- My interest in English class;

1 2 3 4 5

7- My interest in international news;

1 2 3 4 5

Appendix 2

Sister School Agreement “Sample”

This “Sister School” cross- cultural program was initiated in 2005 in order to promote friendship and international understanding between Japanese and Egyptian schools.

The Goal of The Program

- 1- Let both sides of the students feel the other culture close through their direct contacts.
- 2- Stimulate the students’ curiosity to study English.
- 3- Strengthen the students’ wish for world peace by sharing knowledge.

The Idea to fulfill these goals

- 1- A pen pal program supported by both schools.
- 2- Regular exchanges (once or twice a year) of students’ produced materials.
- 3- E-mail communication under the control of both school administrations.

The conditions of the agreement

- 1- The fifth grade elementary students are designated as the target stage of this program.
- 2- Each school shall be responsible for the cost of sending students’ materials.
- 3- This program starts from the month both schools sign this agreement.
- 4- This agreement shall remain in force until terminated by either party by giving a written notice to the other party or informing the coordinator of this program directly at least 30 days in advance.

Hereby _____ (Japanese school) and _____(Egyptian school) do proclaim themselves Sister Schools, and declare their intent to abide by these guidelines indefinitely under the supervision of the coordinator and the founder of this program.

Principal ”Egypt” _____ Principal “Japan” _____
Coordinator “The author of this study”