

Clues to nurture Japanese students' communicative competence: A Case Study on an Overseas Homestay Program

Chiaki Hayashi

Abstract

This article reports on a study that investigated the process and effects of pre- and post-assignments of an overseas homestay program. These assignments were designed to promote the Japanese students' collaborative competence which enables them to be more proactive and successful when engaging with their host families. The analysis of the assignments that were set before and after the trip, and a careful observation of the participants' experiences while abroad, unveil what Japanese language learners need in order to acquire and develop their communicative competence within a global context.

Keywords: communicative competence, homestay, cross-cultural communication

Introduction

This article reports on a study that investigated the process and effects of an overseas homestay program hosted by Asia Pacific Children's Congress in Fukuoka (hereby APCC), which has been running for more than 30 consecutive years as an international exchange program targeting the young citizens of Fukuoka who are over eleven years old. Raising the communicative competence of students who have an aversion to studying English as a foreign language at school is a matter of urgent concern.

It is however the responsibility of those involved in education to look for a way to better the students' skills of using English as a practical tool for communication. Because this overseas homestay program requires students to use English to communicate with their host families, it can serve as a case study to research the practical use of English.

Under the program hosted by APCC, the author was appointed to be a head leader for the 2019 Challenge trip to the Maldives. From the pre- and post-assignments that were administered in workshops to the actual field

trip in the Maldives, this article will analyse the effects the assignments and their personal experiences had on the participants. As will be demonstrated, the program offered meaningful opportunities to engage in cross-cultural communication and daily English lessons.

APCC Challenge Trip

In any APCC event and meeting, all members are expected to shout 'Vision of the APCC' which is the following: 'We, as members of APCC, will become global citizens with an "OMOIYARI" spirit and create a more peaceful world abound with the smiles of our children'. According to APCC (2018), exchange visits constitute the main activity it promotes:

Established in 1989 as one of the "Yokotopia" projects commemorating the centenary of Fukuoka City's incorporation as a municipality, the APCC is a grassroots international exchange project focused on preparing young people to take on the 21st century. Every year, exchange visits are arranged between Fukuoka and a number of countries and regions in the Asia-Pacific. In spring and summer, children from Fukuoka fan out across the Asia-Pacific. Then each summer, children from nearly 40 countries and regions gather in Fukuoka for an exchange camp, homestay, school visit and other programs. Through these activities, they are able to experience differences in language and customs, deepen their understanding of each other, and develop OMOIYARI spirit (Respect & Understanding).

The APCC Challenge Trip is for Japanese children in Fukuoka to visit other countries and regions in the Asia-Pacific area. The main challenge for them is the homestay experience.

Urabe's Assignment

Serving as a leader for Japanese higher educational institutions, Urabe (2020) who is one of the founders of this program, claimed that the primary objective of the APCC challenge trip was not fun and entertainment but to learn. It was to build the participants' self-esteem, which, he believed, was a prerequisite to raise them to be global citizens. He proposed three ways to help build self-esteem:

1. To gain knowledge about taboos of where you visit
2. To be well-behaved as representatives of Japan
3. To study your country's culture and the culture you visit

As taboos vary depending on the culture and religion, it is essential to recognize them so as to show respect to those who believe and follow these conventions and mores. The same point applies to the second factor. He insisted that, regardless of the culture, basic manners were universal, followed by almost everyone. He encouraged the participants to be confident with and trust their manners as Japanese, and advised them to behave properly. And he added that proper manners could compensate for their poor language skills and would facilitate communication with people.

For the final factor, he provided a pre-trip assignment to the participants. He proposed a slogan 'Know the difference' and 15 topics to choose from, such as history, industry, food, religion and climate. He asked the participants to study the topic they chose and write a report describing the difference between Japan and the country and region they were going to visit. The purpose of this assignment was to further their understanding of the area they were visiting and of their own country. Knowledge of foreign culture deepens self-awareness.

Participants: *Dan-in*

Young residents in Fukuoka prefecture, age ranging from 10 to 18, can apply to any APCC program to participate. In the challenge trip, each group consisted of 15 participants. Each group is called a *Dan*, and the members of the group are called *Dan-in*. In the Maldives *Dan*, as there were a total of 4 high-school students, we made 4 small groups each consisting of 3 or 4 members. As Figure 1 shows, each small group had 1 or 2 junior high-school students, and 1 elementary school pupil. To ensure variety, each group included one male student. There were only 4 members who were boys, 2 junior high-school students and 2 elementary school pupils. There were four small groups and the high-school students, who were older than the other students, were encouraged to work as leaders of each small group. To help promote the participants' independence and the importance of collaboration, they were divided into groups which had a designated leader.

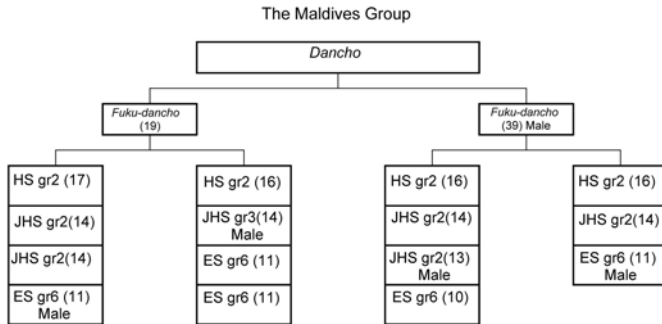


Figure 1: Group structure

*HS=high-school, JHS=junior high-school, ES=elementary school, gr=grade, ()=age

Concerning the participants, some had psychological problems. A member with ADHD needed daily medication. There was a member diagnosed as autism spectrum as well. There were also a few members on a scholarship that enables him or her to join this trip, where the cost doesn't exceed ten thousand yen (less than a hundred US dollars). There were 3 members who joined the challenge trip once or a few times before. The members' background varied in terms of age, sex, family and previous experience of cultural exchange. However, the one thing everyone had in common was that this challenge trip was their first visit to Maldives. And everyone was determined to make this one of the most memorable trips.

Leaders: *Dancho and Fuku-dancho*

As the mayor of Fukuoka city and Honorary President of APCC, Takashima explained that APCC began as part of the Asia-Pacific EXPO in 1989 which commemorated the merging of Fukuoka city 100 years earlier by inviting children from other countries and regions in the Asia-Pacific area, and it is now one of the city's major international exchange projects (APCC 2019). Originally, the EXPO was organized by the local Chamber of Commerce and Industry. A lot of self-employed people from the private sector volunteered and served in many important positions for APCC. Besides public servants working for the city or prefecture, APCC volunteers cover a broad spectrum of professions, such as lawyer, web-designer, nurse, police and teacher. Senior citizen, college and high school student, and house-wife are also volunteering even as leaders. The age restriction for serving as the leader of the challenge trip is from 18 to 65.

Most student volunteers have previously joined the challenge trip once or more than once. A lot of volunteers also have experience sending their children to the APCC challenge trip in the past. They returned a favour by working as volunteers. This is also one of the reasons why the volunteers have different backgrounds. There have been cases where the father visited a country as a leader while his daughter went to another destination. It might be said that the APCC program can interest members of the same family, serving as a way of enhancing communication between parents and their children.

The leaders, participants, and other volunteers cannot choose the destination by themselves. Participants can only request where they wish to go. The challenge trips are usually organized during the summer and/or spring vacation. Where the participants go will depend on the countries' political situation, economic stability or climate. Participants won't be able to visit countries experiencing political turmoil. In 2019, the summer tour dispatched 8 groups to Korea, Singapore, Thailand, Sri Lanka, Tonga, Cambodia, Ipoh City in Malaysia and Atlanta City in USA, and the spring tour sent out 4 groups to Hong Kong, Papua New Guinea, Maldives and Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam. A total of 177 children participated in the APCC challenge trip.

The *Dan-ins* were selected by application documents and they were also interviewed. The leaders of the challenge trip had to undergo the same procedures but they also had a group interview. Each *Dan* has three leaders: head leader is called *Dancho* (leader of *Dan*) and other support-leaders are called *Fuku-dancho* (vice leader of *Dan*). *Dancho* is in charge of making decisions and also have close contact with organizers and the participants' parents, whereas *Fuku-danchos* are in charge of monitoring group leaders who take care of other younger *Dan-ins*.

As for the Maldives group, the author was appointed to be *Dancho*. One *Fuku-dancho* was a middle aged male who ran a construction company, and the other was a female second-year college student who majored in child education and hoped to be an elementary school teacher. Both *Fuku-danchos* had a lot of experience traveling abroad, especially countries in Asia, and were comfortable using English for communicative purposes. They were kind and helpful especially when handling IT devices for saving and transmitting photographic data. All collaborated with each other, making use of their individual strength to run the Maldives *Dan*.

Bridge Club

Since 1989, for over 30 years, APCC has brought nearly 9600 Junior Ambassadors (hereby JAs) from 55 countries and regions to Fukuoka, and has sent nearly 3,300 children from Fukuoka to 38 countries and regions. Comprised of JA alumni, each Bridge Club (hereby BC) serves as an APCC hub and contact point for a particular country and region (APCC 2018).

At the airport in Maldives, even though it was nearly 11 in the evening, a lot of BC members welcomed us. BC took great care of our whole itinerary. Including the Liaison Officer (hereby LO), main members of BC, whose ages ranged from 20s to 40s, mostly worked for the Ministry of Education (hereby MOE) or worked as public service personnel. A few college students who also belonged to BC were helping them by accompanying us (*Dancho* and *Fuku-dancho*) everywhere we went and assisted us at all hours while *Dan-ins* were experiencing homestay. They even invited us to have home-made dinner at their family house. In addition, besides the pre-arranged location, we were invited to a museum, where a member's father worked for as the president. He took us on a tour before the opening hours and showed us some confidential exhibitions towards the end of the tour. Some photos that were taken at the museum were immediately posted on the Museum Home Page Twitter that day. We found about it the next day while shopping for souvenirs. Some staffs working at shops informed us about these pictures and were eager to offer us discount. The APCC regulation about SNS and photographs were apparently ignored because the people involved in the program were forbidden to share pictures on social media. We visited Male, the capital of the Maldives. It is an island and is one of the world's most densely populated places. People seemed very close and connected and seemed to be welcoming and supportive of the Japanese.

BC took us everywhere by taxi and they paid the fare, telling us that the expenses were all covered by the MOE budget. It seemed that MOE had a separate budget for supporting the APCC project. The BC organized the whole schedule. Not only did they organise the participants' homestay, but they also organised an island tour, school visits, and visits to MOE and the Japanese Embassy (see Appendix A).

At MOE, we had a formal meeting with the Minister of Education, Dr. Ali, who was accompanied with an interpreter, and each of us received a souvenir from her in front of the flags of Maldives and Japan. A photographer shot those moments. It was as if we were attending an

important ceremony. Meeting with Ms. Yanai, Ambassador of Japan, was more casual. After a short lecture about her job, she asked us a lot of questions about the members' homestay situations. She looked very curious about how they were treated and how they understood the differences between the two countries through the homestay. *Dan-ins* also asked many questions about ecological issues in Maldives. The exchange lasted for over an hour.

As the itinerary (Appendix A) shows, BC's arrangements were very meticulous and helpful. All BC members got along well with each other. They were extremely close and resembled a family. As we were always together with BC members or the LO, we probably met more than 30 members. They were always kind and friendly to us, and treated us with respect. In turn, each came and talked to us about their experiences in Fukuoka and how useful they were for their future careers and how they saw the world. They told us it was a life changing experience. We felt a strong bond among BC members through APCC. One of the values of APCC – the value of establishing a bond between people with differences – was apparent from the ways in which BC members interacted with one another.

APCC Challenge Trip Assignments

APCC requires each group of participants to complete a total of 19 assignments within three months. A sample schedule to complete each assignment was provided as Table 1 below. Each group spent time on the assignments only during the workshops. They spent a total of 888 minutes (14.75 hours). Besides Urabe's assignments, there were a variety of other assignments to enhance cross-cultural communication. The main assignments that students had to prepare or create can be categorized into two groups: pre-trip assignments and post-trip assignments.

Pre-trip assignments

During three months prior to departure, there are four opportunities for members of a *Dan* to get together and work on assignments. The number inside the brackets indicates the amount of time the students spent on their assignments. They spent a total of about 10 hours and 30 minutes on their pre-trip assignments.

1. Workshop 1: orientation, lecture and the first group activity (140 min)
2. Workshop 2: homework collection and 2nd group activity (150 min)
3. Workshop 3: overnight preparatory camping and 3rd group activity (210 min)
4. Workshop 4: 4th group activity (120 min) and the final meeting before departure

《各項目の実施期間の目安》

		全体研修会	国別研修	宿泊研修	宿泊研修	結団式	国別研修	報告会
		June 23	July 7	July 27	July 28	August 4	September 1	September 15
【実施事項】		140min	150min	80+80+80min	70+40min	120min	150min	
1	子ども達に向けての話（挨拶・諸連絡等）	→						
2	自己紹介	→						
3	団の目標決め	→						
4	移動の練習	→						
5	ゲーム・レクリエーション等	→						
6	保護者に向けての話（懇談等）	→				→		
7	ソーラン節（現地で披露するものの練習）	→				→		
8	We are the BRIDGEの練習	→				→		
9	団としてのお土産の作成	→						
10	子ども達で個別にさせることについて（課題・各種スピーチ等）	→						
11	出国入国時の練習	→						
12	現地の勉強（生活習慣・食文化・危機管理等）	→						
13	言語の勉強（現地語・英語の挨拶等）	→						
14	日本の勉強	→				→		
15	個人アルバムについて（ホストフレンドやファミリー向け）	→				→		
16	個人のお土産について（ホストフレンドやファミリー向け）	→				→		
17	現地で配る名刺・折り紙等について（子ども達が現地で話すきっかけに）	→				→		
18	報告会用 ポスター作成	→				→		
19	報告会用 ステージプレゼンの練習	→				→		

Table 1: Assignment schedule

Each *Dan* had the freedom to decide the contents of each assignment: what to do or make for the performance, what gifts to choose, and what topic is appropriate for the group assignment. However, the Maldives *Dan*, as *Dancho* and *Fuku-danchos* had no prior experience, found it easier to follow the program that was mandated without change. To the author, it was a good opportunity to monitor how those assignments worked.

The following assignments were set to enhance cross-cultural communication at each visiting country and region. In addition, they sought to establish good relationships and cultivate team-work among the *Dan-ins*.

- Song: We are the bridge (APCC's original song in English)
- Performance: *Souran-bushi* (a traditional fishermen's song and dance)
- Gift: hand-made calendar
- Personal Gift: Name Card (with picture, name, e-mails and so on)
- Self-introduction Album
- Group Assignment Topic

The lyrics of APCC's original song 'We are the bridge' expresses its underlying philosophy and it is used in every APCC event where participants are encouraged to sing. It is a song that attempts to bring everyone, regardless of country or region, together. However, because the song itself was long, the *Dan-ins* had problems memorizing it in English. Because the song required everyone to sing in a loud voice, it was an effective means of speaking loudly in front of the audience.

Singing and dancing practice were good ways to express physical movement, articulate in a loud voice, and to establish coordination. *Souran-bushi* is commonly performed during Sports Day in Japanese public elementary schools. The *Dan-in*'s familiarity with it saved everyone a lot of time in terms of display. The young female *Fuku-dancho* was also of great help because she had a lot of ideas regarding optimal performance.

According to the personal profiles of the *Dan-ins*, there were many who were good at traditional Japanese calligraphy. The young *Fuku-dancho* decided to enrich the dance and display performance. She decided to buy costumes in three different colours (red, yellow and blue), and made each *Dan-in* to write one favourite Chinese character on the back of the costume. For the final display, two *Dan-ins* came to the front and wrote 'Reiwa' (the new imperial era name) in calligraphy. Because Japan has just entered a new imperial era, this unique and traditional dance was appropriate.

During the welcome party and farewell party in the Maldives, the local students and the participants had the opportunity to perform in front of each other. The local students gave a beautiful performance, and the *Dan-ins* danced in front of the BC, teachers, and host families. During the farewell party, each host family made the participants wear their beautiful local costume. The group leader didn't want the girls to dance because the skirt was tight and they had to wear high-heel shoes. However, the LO pressed them to dance. The participants also wanted to show their appreciation to their host family by dancing. They danced on their bare-

feet and smiled at the audience. At the end of the party, everyone sang the APPC song, holding hands and making one big circle. Everyone became a member of the same family through APCC.

Each small group made one hand-made calendar as a gift to those they met at places they visited: local school, BC office, MOE and the Japanese embassy. The pictures on the calendars were all created and designed by the students. While some drew pictures of origami and a manga character called Totoro, others portrayed Kanji characters. Four sets of unique hand-made calendars were made. This work could have been done as homework, saving workshop hours. This gift was warmly accepted by each representative of the institution. As Photograph 1 shows, Japanese ambassador was very glad and inspected its content in front of us.



Photograph 1. A shot with Japanese ambassador

The name cards were also made by each *Dan-in*. The names cards were made so that they could be distributed as small memorable gifts during school visits. Some of the participants said that these cards helped them make friends. A self-introduction album for their host-family was also assigned as homework. The *Dan-ins* were encouraged to think what they liked to do in Japan – hobby, school, club activity, family, pet – and describe their interests using photographs and English.

Because the *Fuku-dancho* was in charge of managing small homework assignments, it allowed the *Dancho* to focus on the main group assignment.

She conceived it to be a form of project based learning (PBL), where the participants cultivated their communicative competence. Therefore, through the project, the *Dancho* hoped that each *Dan-in* would take an active role in communicating with the Japanese and people from abroad. This hope and intention became the foundation for the assignments that were set. The group assignment will be described in detail below.

Group Assignment Topic

The homestay experience, which requires participants to engage successfully in cross-cultural communication with their host-families and people of the host country, is the most important aspect of the challenge trip. A group assignment topic and a group slogan need to be introduced. The group assignment provides topics to talk about. A group slogan helps to raise the members' motivation to work together to overcome obstacles.

During one of the workshops, Professor Urabe gave a lecture on the garbage collection system in the Maldives and the problems this system entails. He also introduced the wave wall Japan made as an ODA, which served as an example of an internationally recognized Japanese contribution for saving lives in the world. Under the influence of his lecture and through a group discussion, the group assignment topic was decided: awareness research on ecology, with a particular emphasis on the garbage problem. To summarise the topics under discussion, the *Dancho* made the slogan, 'Be a family! Be green!', hoping not only that the participants would establish a good relationship with their host-families but also that a life sensitive to ecological issues could spread in the Maldives.

The *Dancho* also decided upon a guideline for the group she was in charge. It encouraged everyone involved to speak up, smile, and use English as much as possible without worrying too much about their ability. It was thought that these points were crucial for communicating effectively with the host-family, despite the fact they are points Japanese students must work hard to accomplish. Nowadays students seem to find face to face communication challenging (Hayashi, 2017). The younger generation tends to avoid direct contact with people and are more comfortable communicating indirectly by sending text messages using their smartphones. During this trip, the participants were not allowed to bring their smartphones. Not being able to use smartphones, it created the opportunity to acquire essential communicative skills that are hard to acquire in Japan.

In an orientation for a US homestay programme, an organizer for Minami Nihon Culture Center (hereby MNCC) - an organization that has been promoting academic homestay programs for more than 45 years - introduced an episode about Japanese students (MNCC 2019). Some American host-families broke off the homestay because they couldn't understand the Japanese participants they had at home. They told an MNCC organizer that 'Not responding to anything, Japanese participants look like *Zombies*'. While explaining the difficulties of cross-cultural communication, he claimed that while western styles of communication rely a lot on linguistic and physical expression, the Japanese mode of communication values immediate, telepathic, communication. He also claimed that age was also a factor hampering communication, as pubescent children tend to have problems communicating, even with their own parents.

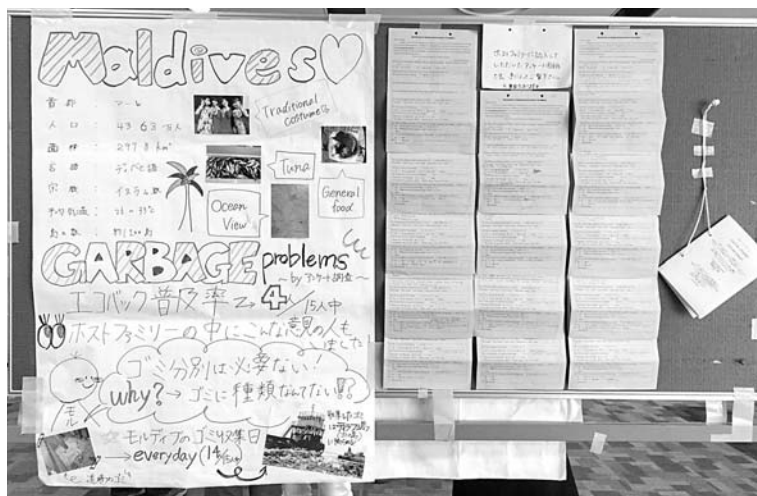
When introducing the guideline, the *Dancho* shared the so-called 'Zombie episode' and encouraged everyone involved to become aware of their manner of communication and make changes, if necessary. When living with their host families, the participants were encouraged to speak loudly, smile, show gratitude by giving thanks, and to convey the willingness to communicate by using English and gestures as much as possible. The *Dancho* underscored the importance of daily bearing these points in mind and told the participants that, 'Something you cannot do in Japan, never happens in Maldives'. Interestingly, some of *Dan-in*'s parents subsequently said that their children talked to them more effectively in English, not Japanese. Using a foreign language helped remove some of the barriers that impede communication between parents and children.

As a way to complete the group assignment and enhance communication with the host family, the *Dancho* decided to create a questionnaire survey, using information based on report papers the *Dan-ins* submitted. Regarding the report papers, the *Dan-ins* each investigated their local garbage system in Japan before they left for the Maldives and wrote a report based on their investigation. They were also encouraged to take photographs of the local facilities and to attach them on their reports because pictures aid comprehension when reading a text. They were also required to create some questions to help illuminate the differences between Maldives and Japan.

Questionnaire 1

At the third workshop, the report papers concerning the garbage system were collected. *Dancho* organized the original questions *Dan-ins* made in their report papers, and turned them into a questionnaire with an English translation as shown in Appendix B. The questionnaire was printed in pink so that the *Dan-in* wouldn't forget to give it to the host-family.

During homestay, none of the *Dan-ins* forgot to give the questionnaire to their host families. Because the students' report papers contained many pictures, it helped explain the garbage systems in Japan. Most of the host families gave detailed descriptions when completing the questionnaire. There were very interesting comments, revealing differences of perspectives across cultures. Their comments were very useful when making a poster presentation at the end. The poster was made by the four student leaders by themselves. Their sense of surprise when studying the comments was effectively expressed by their drawing of a big eye blinking (see Photograph 2). They worked hard drawing and writing and completed their work efficiently on time.



Photograph 2. Poster presentation

Concerning the questionnaire results, 3 out of 15 families responded

'No' to the question, 'Do you think it is necessary to separate garbage?' Two wrote comments that were surprising. They were, 'No, I guess it's because all garbage is the same' and 'No, because it is garbage'. Most families, however, knew where all the garbage went after being collected. They were taken to an island called 'Thilafushi'. When we visited the Japanese Embassy, group members asked some questions about Thilafushi. The Japanese ambassador kindly explained that, 'In response to a request from The Maldives government, the Japanese government launched a joint project of solving the garbage problem by introducing the most recent and efficient Japanese incinerator to burn litter on Thilafushi Island'. We were amazed to learn that Japan cooperated with the government to sustain the beautiful nature of the Maldives.

It can be said that this research assignment concerning the garbage problem worked well for deepening the members' understanding about how people have different perspectives. To help their host-families complete the questionnaire, they had to communicate with them effectively. Some experienced difficulty in explaining, and used gestures and referred to the pictures that appeared in the report papers. Arguably, the questionnaire raised the awareness of ecological problems in the Maldives among those who completed it. The questionnaire made the participants aware of the problem of garbage in Japan. Many were unaware of the fact that only 30% of litter were actually recycled in Japan. The rest was exported abroad. We didn't know where the garbage went after they left Japan.

Post-trip assignments

There were two post-session assignments: stage and poster presentation. After they came back to Japan, the participants had the chance to meet only once before giving their presentation at the *houkoku-kai*, a debriefing session. At the session, as Photograph 3 shows, the participants had to present on stage by showing videos and pictures, and by presenting their findings using a poster at a lobby (Photograph 2). The stage presentation required the participants to make a power-point file which included videos and photographs to be presented on a screen. The questionnaire results also had to be analysed for the poster presentation.

As the time was very limited, preparations had to be done during the trip. The *Dan-ins* were encouraged to take notes when they found anything different or interesting, and to take as many photos as possible

during their stay in Maldives. Due to security reason, there was a strict regulation concerning the sharing of photographic data. Therefore, upon arrival, after obtaining the consent of the *Dan-ins* and their parents, pictures that featured them on emails were gathered from the internet.

In the airplane on the way back to Japan, four group leaders started analysing the results of the questionnaire (Questionnaire 1), which they completed with the help from their host-family. The results showed some differences between the Maldives and Japan and they used their findings when giving the poster presentation. They divided the poster into four spaces, and they worked separately on the allocated spaces, drawing and writing on their assigned theme. They downloaded some photographs of the garbage island Thilafushi for the display.

The participants had only 150 minutes during the fifth and final workshop to work on the presentation. Four group leaders focused on completing the poster while the other *Dan-ins* made a power-point file. The *Dan-ins* added many beautiful and interesting pictures they took, making changes to those compiled by the *Dancho*. They also discussed who would talk about which topic on stage. There was a rule specifying that everyone had to talk at least once. Therefore, each participant needed a topic to talk about besides showing pictures. To collect authentic, interesting comments to present, another questionnaire (Questionnaire 2) was made. The details concerning this questionnaire and its result will be discussed in the next section.



Photograph 3. Stage presentation

Questionnaire 2

The second questionnaire which asked about what the *Dan-ins* did, saw, felt, struggled with and learned through the trip, was distributed to all the participants at the airport before breakup. After a week, they were collected during the fifth workshop, two weeks prior to the final debriefing session. The data obtained from the questionnaires were shared, and the data for power point presentation was improved by adding more ideas and pictures.

The questionnaire results were very useful for deciding which topic each participant was to talk about during the presentation. A *dan-in* who wrote about the traffic system became in charge of giving a presentation on it. The presentation on stage was to last a total of 10 minutes per *Dan* and 15 members had to talk. Each *Dan-in* was to talk for about 40 seconds. Therefore, their talk had to be cogent and precise. In order to maintain good posture and have eye-contact during the presentation, they had to memorize their own lines. Though the attempt was made to preserve the originality of each talk, it was revised to make it shorter and simpler.

The *Dan-ins* were successful in establishing a number of differences between the Maldives and Japan. As for schools, students used pens, not pencils. The thick and heavy textbooks were not owned by the students but shared in class. As for transportation, the number of motorbikes far exceeded the number of cars. Motorcyclists didn't wear helmets. There was only one traffic light on the whole island. As there was no post delivery service, people had to go to a specially designated place to pick up their postal mails. People were very sensitive to smell and wore the same fragrance. Concerning things the participants found inconvenient or didn't like, 6 members wrote problems related to water. 4 host-families only used cold water and there was a short supply of water when taking a shower. Another reported that the water in the tub was not clean. 3 members successfully asked their host family to take them to the wave wall and took pictures there.

The *Dan-ins* were very busy preparing for the presentations. However, through these post-trip assignments, everyone was able to recall what they experienced and deepened their understanding of what they learned from their trip. On stage, each *Dan-in* wore Maldivian costumes and spoke loudly and clearly and never forgot to smile to the audience. On the screen, videos and photographs, many of which were beautiful, were effectively presented (see Photograph 3). It was a very successful

presentation. The poster presentation also received positive evaluation. Besides the posters which reflected what surprised the group leaders – the difference in perspective among host families – all the hand-written responses to the questionnaires filled out by the host families were also displayed and drew the visitors' attention (see Photograph 2).

Discussion

Competence-based learning is the current educational trend. The Council of Europe (2017) announced a new Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture (RFCDC) which contains the model of 20 competences that all citizens need to have in order to participate actively in modern democratic societies. Those competences are set out in four interconnected areas: values, attitudes, skills and knowledge and critical understanding. While explaining and discussing recent Japanese educational reforms, Maemura et al (2017) introduce the trend of competence-based approach in language teaching. They contend that the 3 Cs – critical thinking, creativity and collaboration – will become paramount as we enter the world of global interdependence and communication. Language teaching is now not only about promoting communicative competence, but it also has to deal with issues concerning communication across different cultures. In the future, more and more courses will predictably be offered to accommodate this new trend and need of society.

Students' needs and motivations must be taken account of. Based on a motivational research conducted on college students, Matsubayashi (2017) claims that many learners preferred experiential learning to analytical study. As noted before, the guideline for the APCC trip forbid the use of mobile phones among participants to encourage communication with people, especially with the host-family. Separated from computers and games, participants were able to focus deeply on what they were experiencing during the trip.

The effects of experiential learning, or what they experienced personally and concretely in the Maldives, became apparent from the results obtained from a post-project open questionnaire offered by APCC. 13 out of 15 (86%) members who went to the Maldives wrote very positive comments to the question, 'If you have learned anything important through this challenge trip, please let us know'. While many stated that their

English and non-verbal communicative competence improved, others maintained that they learned to fulfil leadership roles. Some described their change and transition in the following ways: 'I am less resistant when presenting my opinion and communicating with people', 'I used to say "No" when I faced something difficult to do or when I had to eat something I didn't like, but now I have changed and am willing to try anything', and 'This is my second homestay experience. So, I can tell the difference. This homestay improved my ability to communicate with people'.

Concerning what the participants felt and thought about the trip, 13 responded, 'I got interested in foreign countries', 7 responded, 'I became confident', another 7 answered, 'I want to study English and other foreign languages', 6 answered 'I have more things I can do on my own', 5 answered 'I can present my opinion' and 2 replied 'I have my future dream now'.

As was explained before, each *Dan-in* went through a lot of work completing the assignment, devoting a lot of time thinking and planning carefully. This project set tasks that required a lot of time and energy from the participants. The following indicates what valuable lessons the participants learned from their homestay, and what can be made use of in English language teaching:

- ask questions when communicating with people
- take notes
- be independent, or self-directed
- have some aim to accomplish
- share experiences with others

They learned many things through completing the pro-and post-trip assignments. The assignments were successful in raising communicative competence, nurturing global competence and enhancing meta-knowledge to glow as global citizens.

Concluding Remarks

This study showed that Japanese students need to be exposed to tactical training and that experiential learning is effective in raising communicative competence. The author was surprised to find how difficult it was for the participants to express themselves clearly. Despite the

difficulty, it is vital for students to connect with others. Though studying overseas and staying at another person's home is important, it is not enough. We need to prepare before we communicate with people. To achieve this purpose, it is necessary for those involved to have a positive attitude and a mutual topic or issue that can be discussed. To help find the topic, the participants need to study the cultural differences that exist between Japan and the country they will visit. This understanding is essential for communication and to build their self-esteem.

This project has brought to light a number of dimensions which have implications on the learning and teaching of English. Regardless of the level of competence of the students, in every class time must be devoted to highlighting how important it is for students to speak up and make eye contact. It also highlights the necessity of including some exercises and activities which aim to enhance awareness of the differences between cultures. Such tasks can enable students to appreciate the differences between those growing up in a different cultural context and themselves. Getting to know others is an important part of the process of getting to know oneself and therefore an important part of the process of improving oneself, and language learning is no exception to this rule. Therefore, language teaching that gives importance to and focuses on cultural differences may help Japanese students improve themselves in an inward sense by giving them an opportunity to work on and rectify their shortcomings. In addition, teaching may help them improve themselves in an outward sense by giving them insight and better knowledge of the world out there which leads to the improvement of their communicative competence.

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BRIDGE Challenge Trip 2019 -Summer-
(FIXED) Itinerary for Maldives

(As for August 14, 2019)

Place	Local Time	Schedule	Transportation	Accommodation
August 18, Sunday Fukuoka, Japan	7:30 10:00	Gather at the Fukuoka Airport SQ655 Depart Fukuoka for Singapore Flight Time --- 6:45	APCC (Airplane)	[In-Flight Meals] SQ655 --- Lunch SQ654 --- Dinner
Singapore	15:20 20:45	Arrive in Singapore SQ452 Depart Singapore for Male	(Transfer)	[Accommodation] All --- Hotel
Maldives, Male	22:10	Arrive in Male Meet with Head to the hotel *by vehicles, bus or car, arranged by the LO Check in the hotel & go to bed *LO arranges Transportation, LO Officials, BCM members, school students and HF go to the airport to receive the delegation.	Airport ↓ Hotel (Arranged by LO)	
August 19, Monday Male	AM 8:30 9:00 to 11:00	(Students & Chaperon) Breakfast (at hotel) Check out the Hotel The delegatee meet the LO staff at the hotel head to Hiriyu School - Welcome item & handover to HF @Hiriyu School - Breakfast will be provided to all - Welcome speech will be given by Education official and BCM members. - Speech by chaperons or delegates - Orientation program for leaders by BCM - Performance by Japanese delegates *LO & BCM members with them until to HF attach. JAs & Chaperons will not alone.) (After the welcome item) Go to Money Exchange Chaperons and one or two from LO or BCM	Hotel →School (LO)	[Meals] Student --- Breakfast Lunch & Dinner --- w/HF --- by themselves [Accommodation] Student --- Homestay Chaperon --- Hotel

Appendix A. Itinerary

Place	Local Time	Schedule	Transportation	Accommodation
August 20, Tuesday Male	7:00 to 12:00 13:00 to 18:00	(Students) Stay with host family Go to school with HF All HF may have some plan to go outside.		[Meals] Student ---w/HF Chaperon BF --- Hotel Lunch --- by themselves Dinner --- by LO [Accommodation] Chaperon --- Hotel
August 21, Wednesday Male	8:45 9:00	(Students & Chaperons) Gather at the Meeting Place* (*Meeting Place --- in front of Japan Embassy *A member from LO or BC is always with Chaperons Island visit		[Meals] Student --- Breakfast & Dinner w/HF Lunch --- *Hotel Chaperon

	to 16:00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Trip to Hura Island - Cultural item, swimming activities - Children can visit to historical available places. (HF & 1 parents, 3 BCM members and 2 LO staff join) *Lunch will be provided by school. (APCC) Student –Homestay Chaperon –Hotel <p>Please tell the Chaperons about lunch on this day.</p>	BF ... Hotel Lunch ... LO Dinner ... by LO [Accommodation] Student –Homestay Chaperon –Hotel
	17:00	(Students) Go home with HFs & parents	
	17:00 to 20:00	(Chaperons) Dinner for office by LO & BCM, LO arranges dinner	
August 22, Thursday			
Male			
	7:45	(Students & Chaperons) Gather at the Meeting Point (**Meeting Point ... Sultan Park) - Chaperons go there with LO members - Japanese students go with HF & families.	[Meals] Student Breakfast & Lunch Dinner ... w/HF ??? Dinner ... w/HF ???
	8:00 to 13:00	Visit historical places of Male' city Visit to Hulhumale	Chaperon BF ... Hotel Lunch ... by LO Dinner ... by themselves
	13:00 to 14:00	Courtesy Call (at MOE Office) See the Minister of Education, Dr. Aishath Ali and Ms. Koiko YANAI , Ambassador of Japan and Ms. Nooko YUZAWA , Secretary	[Accommodation] Student –Homestay Chaperon –Hotel
	17:00 to 18:00	Farewell party *As it is the evening time, all participants are provided refreshment like short eats and drinks. *Thank you & farewell speech by a Chaperon or delegates -Performance by Japanese delegates -All necessary equipment will be provided and allocated time for the delegation events. -LO, BCM members, Former JAs and available families and some staff from Hirya School *This time is too earlier to serve dinner so in the party it will be served local foods mainly and dinner will be taken around 20:30 separately	
August 23, Friday			

Male	9:00	HF bring students to airport, LO arrange transport for the Chaperons	Homestay Hotel Airport (by HF & LO)	[Meals] Students ... w/HF Chaperons ... Hotel
	10:50	Check-in the Airport		
	12:50	MU481 Depart Male to Singapore Flight Time ... 4:45	[In Flight-Meal] MU481 ... Lunch Dinner ... at Airport (Covered by APCC)	
Singapore	20:40	Arrive in Singapore (Transit)	APCC (Airplane)	
August 24, Saturday				
Singapore	1:20	SQ656 Departs Singapore to Fukuoka *Flight Time ... 6:00	APCC (Airplane)	[In Flight-Meal] SQ656 ... Breakfast
Fukuoka, Japan	8:35	Arrive in Fukuoka		

Appendix B. Questionnaire 1.

Questionnaire on Garbage disposal System in The Maldives

Dear host-family,

Thank you very much for allowing us to stay with you. As a part of the cross-cultural understanding, we are doing a survey on the environmental problems in the Maldives. We especially want to know about how deal with garbage everyday during the course of your lives. It would be very appreciated if you could answer the following questions. It would be also great if you could help your homestay son/daughter to take photos of the actual trash bins, signs, pictographs and anything related to your garbage disposal system.

Thank you very much, in advance, for your kind cooperation.

Chiaki Hayashi, Leader

<p>Q 1: Do you do practise 3Rs (Reduce / Recycle / Reuse) on garbage? Please check (✓)the box below. 3Rをしていますか?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes ⇒ Go on to Q 2 <input type="checkbox"/> No ⇒ Move to Q3 <input type="checkbox"/> other (その他) _____</p>
<p>Q 2: Please let us know in detail how you practise the 3Rs. Yesの人へ、どんな3Rをしていますか?</p> <p>To reduce the amount of garbage: ゴミの量を減らすためにしていること .</p> <p>To recycle the garbage(how many materials to be separated and so on):リサイクルのためにしていること .</p> <p>To reuse something you don't need anymore (shoes, bags, clothes and so on):再利用のためにしていること .</p>
<p>Q 3: How many garbage collection days do you have? ごみ収集日は週に何回ですか?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/>everyday <input type="checkbox"/>once a week <input type="checkbox"/>twice a week <input type="checkbox"/>three times a week <input type="checkbox"/>other_____</p>
<p>Q 4: Do you separate the garbage? ゴミを分別しますか?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes ⇒ Go on to Q5 and 6 <input type="checkbox"/> No ⇒ Move to Q7 <input type="checkbox"/>Other_____</p>
<p>Q 5: In what way do you separate the garbage? Yesの人へ、どのような方法でゴミを分別しますか?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/>Burnable or Non-Burnable (燃やせるか否か) <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/>According to the materials (素材別) (Plastic / Glass / Paper / Iron / Other_____)</p>
<p>Q 6: When you throw the garbage away, do you use a plastic bag? ゴミ袋を使いますか?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes ⇒ Do you need to buy those bags? (ゴミ袋を買いますか?)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> No ⇒ What do you use to separate them? (何を使って分けますか?)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other _____</p>
<p>Q 7: Do you think it is necessary to separate the garbage? ゴミ分別が必要だと思いますか?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes ⇒ Why ?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> No ⇒ Why not?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other opinion _____</p>
<p>Q 8: Do you want to change the garbage disposal system? ごみ処理システムを変えたいですか?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes ⇒ Why and How ?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> No ⇒ Why not?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other opinion _____</p>
<p>Q 9: After you throw the garbage away, where does it go? ゴミを捨てた後、そのごみはどこに行きますか?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>
<p>Q10: Do you experience any effect from the global warming? 地球温暖化の影響を感じますか?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes ⇒ How? (どのように?)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other _____</p>
<p>Q11: What other environmental issues do you face? ほかにどんな環境問題がありますか?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>
<p>Q12: Do you engage in any environmental protection activities? どんな環境保護活動をしていますか?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes ⇒ Please tell me more. (もっと詳しく教えてください)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> No ⇒ Why not?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other _____</p>
<p>Q13: Is there anything I can do to protect the beautiful nature of the Maldives? 私にできることはありますか?</p> <p>_____</p>

Thank you very much for your kind cooperation!

We are going to share the survey results at the APCC post CT gathering in September.