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CASE STUDY OF AN INTERNATIONAL JOINT CLASS WITH INTERNATIONAL AND JAPANESE STUDENTS: LEARNING EFFECTS AND APPROACHES TAKEN REGARDING LANGUAGE

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Abstract

This paper is based on a framework for creating mutual coexistence between Japanese and International students by overcoming the language barrier between them, which is described in a previous study by the author. This framework is based on Allport's theory, which was established through examining an environment where black and white employees worked together. Allport suggested 3 conditions (equivalent level, common purpose, institutional support) are necessary to make them work in harmony and establish friendly relationships. By applying this theory in the International Joint Class, a new perspective, namely "dialogue" between students, with each other and with teachers, is added as necessary. Also, a universal study theme is needed for students to start a discussion regardless of their backgrounds, and "human rights" could be one effective study theme.

The purpose of this study is to analyze the study outcome of one Project-Based-Learning (PBL) class based on the above theory. However, this practice is different in that introduce a different study theme, "Museums." Also, this class is particularly unique, since there are more than 90 students in one class, and 90% of the students are Japanese. The remaining 10 students are from China, Malaysia, Bangladesh, Korea and Singapore. It is not easy to conduct PBL with such a large number of students and with an unbalanced mixture of Japanese and International students, thus it is worth examining the problems faced in this practice.

In analyzing the implementation, this study discusses whether the theme is effective or not, the language barrier between the students, and the learning outcome. Exhibitions in museums have the potential for students to discuss their own interpretations no matter where they are from, since they are already interpreted in a certain way, but there is still the possibility of different interpretations is contained in each exhibition. In conclusion, the potential of museums could be utilized for students to

successfully complete their projects even if the class size is massive, the student backgrounds are different, and group projects could not smoothly proceed.

Key words: international joint class, international students, Japanese students, language barrier, Project-Based-Learning, museums

1. Introduction

This paper deals with the International Joint Class given by the author as an example in 20XX at a university using the Japanese language in order for international students and Japanese students to tackle projects together. This case, however, was fraught with two difficulties. The first issue was that over 90 students showed up to participate in the lecture hall despite it being Project-Based-Learning (PBL), and the second was the uneven ratio between the international students and Japanese students who showed up. Only one international student showed up for every eight or nine Japanese students. Moreover, a language barrier was anticipated in this situation. However, these difficulties and issues helped the study obtain some important pointers for when thinking about how International Joint Classes should be held in the future. This paper will proceed with an analysis of this case using the following three research questions.

(1) How did students overcome the language barrier?
(2) What did students learn?
(3) Are there effective conditions or themes for building close relationships between them?

International Joint Classes started out by accepting Japanese students into a Japanese language course targeting international students in the 1990s. Later, these courses shifted to mean students with diverse backgrounds learning together in a classroom among a variety of cultures based on the question, "Isn't it more important to study various themes together with Japanese students than to offer the courses separately to international students as their primary target?" And in recent years, in addition to courses focusing on understanding languages or cultures, the themes and activities which have been adopted creatively transformed toward paying attention to lessons through two-way communication and interactions. Oshitani (2006) defined "Multicultural Classes," whose concepts share the meaning of International Joint Class, as "Classes for international students and Japanese students to learn together, and Japanese native students are not there to support the international students," and adds that these courses have a significant meaning in the way that they break the framework of "international students vs. Japanese students." He also explains that this structure of joint learning would work in courses with only Japanese students or only international students (Oshitani, 2006, p. 6).

In this paper, the discussion will take place within the framework that the course in which international students and Japanese students learn together is defined as an International Joint Class. Despite some objections to the use of the words "international students" and "Japanese students," in this paper, for the purpose of clarifying the cases, "international students" refers to (1) exchange students from overseas partner schools who have been studying for 6 to 12 months and (2) students from overseas who have been enrolled in universities or graduate schools as regular students, and "Japanese students" refers to regular students who have been living in Japan prior to enrolling universities.

2. Logical frame in this paper

The three conditions for making different cultures interact amicably with each other (equivalent level, common purpose, institutional support), promoted by the psychologist Allport (1961) from the author's past research, were tested as conditions for the learning environment in the International Joint Class when the author tried to build close relationships between the international students and Japanese students in the International Joint Class. Allport's attention was on community-based human relationships such as in workplaces or in living environments, but what is different here is the diversity or variability of classrooms and teachers' involvements in addition to dynamic elements that differ from what communities have. When examining the International Joint Class cases within the framework of Allport's three conditions, the 3rd condition, institutional support, is identified as support from primarily teachers, but it turns out that attempts not to supply one-way support from teachers to students are needed, and that mutual support or help between students is effective (Miyamoto 2012a). Moreover, achieving goals is a requirement in learning activities, which are different from community-based activities. In these types of environments, it is necessary to consider educational methodology as well. Regarding this point, Miyamoto (2012a) emphasized the importance of dialogue as an educational methodology (Miyamoto 2012a, p. 13).

This aforementioned "dialogue" is also mentioned in prior research. Paulo Freire, a theoretician on literacy education makes the case that joint participation between oneself and others makes one able to think, and that "dialogue" is inevitable in living as a "human being" (Freire translation 1979, p. 97). Adds to that he uses the phrase, "interactivity in education," to explain that dialogue is where individuals meet and is the most important condition to humanize individuals in a true sense (Freire translation 2011, p. 222). The word "humanize" is defined in the commentary section of Freire's newly translated version book *Pedagogy of the oppressed* as the "process itself of keeping themselves more human" by its translator, Ms. Misago (Freire translation 2011, p. 317), and says that dialogue is indispensable to be human beings.

Kurachi (2006) explains that dialogue is "talking based on your life" (Kurachi 2006, p. 161). Kurachi goes on to add that fusion among all participants at the same level will help enrich life

in the sense that individuals try to subjectively interact with other diverse cultures, and become able to obtain the willingness and capability to take an active part in the cultural creating or shifting of processes together with others from different cultures. While supporting Bakhtin [Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin] 's expertise, Kurachi explains that "dialogic activeness" is generated when an individual interacts with others at the same level, with internal relationships based on the assumption of change, and that when teachers only teach the truth or their own knowledge, there is no true "dialogue" (Kurachi 2006, pp. 57–58). In other words, dialogue is not like daily conversations or superficial dialogue, or one-way talking. Rather it is two-way interaction with deeper contents than daily conversations. Such dialogues are needed in educational practices between teachers and students as well as among students.

Now, at what stage in educational practices are dialogues needed? What is their goal in educational practices? Here we will introduce the expertise of the psychologist, Ms. Sannomiya. According to Sannomiya (2008), it would be desirable to perform metacognitive activities at any stage of learning such as the pre-activity stage, executing stage and post-activity stage (Sannomiya 2008, p. 10). Sannomiya (2008) defines metacognition as "recognition against cognition and recognizing cognition by objectifying it" (Sannomiya 2008, p. 1) based on Flawell's concept. She continues her explanation saying that "metacognition is a state in which a much higher level cognition than regular cognition is working" (Sannomiya 2008, p. 4) and where our learning activities are aimed at. Plus she is quoted as saying that "thorough exchanging ideas with those who have a completely different perspective on a theme leads to a reflection of one's own ideas from the other person's perspective. Then from there, activities in exploring the other's ideas emerge. Then, the metacognitive activities will finally be accelerated."(Sannomiya 2008, p. 34) She adds that "in order to enhance learning efficiency and to urge metacognition, it is important not only to give general and abstract knowledge, but also to link specific cases there." (Sannomiya 2008, p. 34) Sannomiya (2008) stresses that a presentation is an effective method for getting results from that way of learning, and that setting goals for the presentation on your own beforehand, and then make a plan toward the goal is important. During the execution stage, monitoring yourself to check your orientation and see if your preparations are proceeding as set in the plan are also important. After the case is closed, you need to reflect to see how well you could accomplish your goal. Hence, what she emphasizes is to take the following actions. Based on your knowledge at the preliminary stage, start from making a decision and plan for yourself about what and how you are going to give a presentation. Then dig up knowledge at deeper levels in line with collecting new information according to your plan. Prepare for your presentation to make it effective by monitoring. Find issues on your own to improve before the next presentation by reflecting on your performance afterword, and deepen your own metacognition through the activities of planning, monitoring and reflecting while asking the opinions and advice of your teacher and peers. Making these efforts in connection is crucial, she says.

In learning activities, considering points to convey about your own opinions to others and listening to the opinions of others are important. Through dialogues like this, you will become aware that your opinion gets clearer and more specific, and is not the only one. These activities help expand your point of view, and it is thought that one's metacognitive perspective is expanded through listening to other's opinions. Moreover, in order to accelerate metacognition, continuous dialogue at each stage of before learning activity, during its execution, and post activity is likewise effective.

Summarizing what was discussed up to this point, preparing the learning environment and conducting practical training incorporating successive dialogues is necessary for mutually close relationship development. Furthermore, it seems necessary to review what to select as a topic or learning theme. The author, regarding this point, has pursued through research regarding what would be good as a theme for both international and Japanese students, with an assumption that a universal topic would be an important starting point for their discussions. In the end, the author concluded that choosing a theme connected directly to each student is more effective, and I picked human rights as an example in the International Joint Class and I discussed its learning effectiveness (Miyamoto, 2012b, 2013, 2014).

These discussions can be illustrated as the following diagram.

Diagram 1 shows that in a class consisted of students with diverse backgrounds in language and culture, if the learning environment is designed to be full of equivalent levels, common
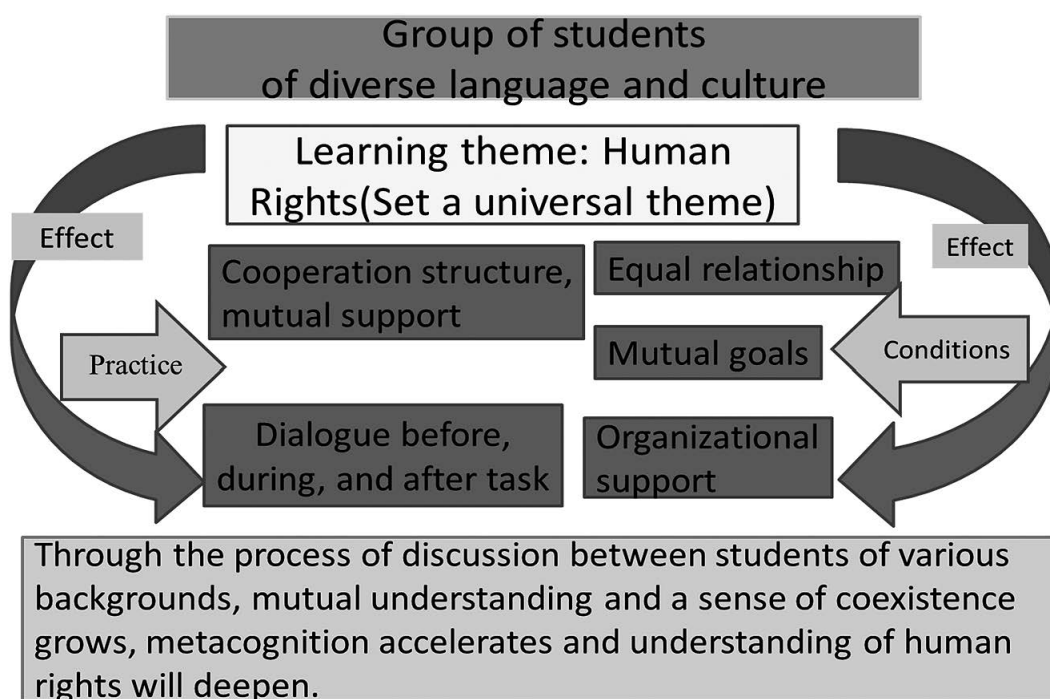

DIAGRAM 1. The learning environment and theme of the International Joint Class

purposes, and institutional support, and if students help each other with enough dialogue, building close relationship between students is possible. Add to that it explains that if the class adopts a universal theme, human rights, it will be a good opportunity to look back on their own history, and it leads to everybody's proactive participation. Moreover sharing opinions and experiences with each other helps student deeply understand what human rights are. This diagram seems to fit for any educational practice and is not limited to the International Joint Classes.

This paper will take museums instead of human rights as a learning topic in order to develop and discuss the universality of the topic, and examine the learning environment conditions, the universality of the educational method, and effectiveness of using museums as a learning theme. The reason why museums could be hypothesized as a universal theme is because point of views and understandings of exhibits differ for each person, and exhibits in museums seem to have the potential to draw out a sense of participation from students. Therefore, we expected to hear many opinions, experiences and views from the students in the classroom, and those students will broaden their perspectives through doing them.

3. Class overview

This chapter will begin by introducing some cases in order to examine the effectiveness of the composition of Diagram 1 in the previous chapter in specific educational practices. The subject name was: Joint project between international and Japanese students-museum version. In this course, both the international and Japanese students visited Sendai City Museum, and each student took notes on whatever exhibits drew their attention or interested them. After the individual presentations in the sessions, students formed groups with those who had the same interests or attractions and worked on the PBL through the processes of researching, studying and compiling it. In the end, the students made a single presentation with the same group members.

The capacity of this course was predetermined as 25 students, but the first session of the course gathered over 90 participants because some of the departments required this course as a compulsory course. As the reason for participation, most of them responded that they were interested in interaction between international and Japanese students. Then, considering that Japanese students will account for a huge portion of the course, instead of putting a cap on the course capacity, students were told to enroll in the course with the understanding that the group might be large, and the international student rate in a group would be small. At the same time, students heard that those who have interests in different cultures or diversity would make various revelations or discoveries even in groups of the same nationality through projects because of their different backgrounds. The final enrollment for this course wound up with 92 people. Of those students, ten were international students (nine undergraduate regular international student

and one exchange student who was capable of communication in Japanese). All international students were from Asian countries consisting of China, South Korea, Bangladesh, Malaysia and Indonesia, and are junior or senior students or graduate students. Japanese students were all freshmen.

There were 3 goals for this course. The first goal was for students to acquire a deeper understanding of the history behind the exhibits by visiting museums, social educational facilities, and by strengthening their interest in them. The second was for international and Japanese students to create one presentation together cooperating and coping with the differences between languages, cultures and sense of values. The third was for students to enhance their presentation skills. Throughout the 15 sessions, students visited museums twice, and the first visit was in the 3rd session. At that time, students individually took notes on the museum exhibits after an orientation on the museum given by the museum attendants. In the 4th session, students made presentations based on their notes. The author divided the students into groups based on which exhibits attracted student's interests and adjusted the themes so as not to overlap theme between groups (see Table 1 for each group's theme).

The themes were assigned to groups so that all the museum exhibits could be covered through the presentations.

Moreover, I gave students a large frame work for the theme and had students narrow it down through group discussions. We had 10 groups. Each group had eight to nine members including one international student respectively.

The group project tasks were to research and study about each theme, to discuss it considering things in common and different from the history of the international student's country, and to integrate the information in a 30-minute presentation. In the 5th session, students visited the museum with their group and listened to the attendant's explanation to focus their presentation contents. After that, students incorporated information from guest lecturers to finalize their presentation. Their presentations were given over five sessions, two groups each session. While listening to the presentation, students were asked to complete evaluation sheets and to give constructive comments to other groups.

After every session, students were given reflection sheets and asked to complete their thoughts and their requests for the session. In the section for requests, some students left it empty and some wrote "Nothing particular." On the other hand, there were some comments like "I want

TABLE 1.

Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Group 5	Group 6	Group 7	Group 8	Group 9	Group 10
The history of Sendai castle	Sendai, the castle town	Date Masamune and his vassals' armor	The daily life of Date Masamune	The Sendai clan	Items brought back by the Keicho Delegate to Europe	Hasekura Tsunenaga and the Keicho Delegate to Europe	The life of Hasekura Tsunenaga	Crafts from Sendai	Crafts from Tohoku region

to interact more with international students," or "I want to interact with other groups too," so I proceeded with the other sessions taking these comments into consideration. However, after the project launched, because exchanging the group members would not have been easy, I responded to the request by setting aside 15–30 minutes of time toward the end of the session for interacting with the international students. Furthermore, when the group presentations finished early, I used the remaining time for cultural exchanging experiences by welcoming exchange students from outside of the course.

Grading in this course was based on a ratio consisting of 40% contribution and attendance in the project, 30% presentation, and 30% reports. In this course, 88 out of 92 students who enrolled in the course had almost no absences from their sessions (some missed 2 or so sessions) and received the credits. Since this was a group work oriented course, students were asked to be strongly aware of the additional condition that if they had missed 3 sessions, they would lose their credits, and in case of absence, letting the other members know you will be absent was a must.

4. Tackling the language barrier

The language issue was brought as a common issue in the prior cases of International Joint Classes, (Matsumoto 1999, Tazaki 2002, Tsunematsu 2006a). The fact that this course was held in Japanese and 90% of the attendants were Japanese students gave Japanese students an advantage language-wise.

In order to level out this language unevenness, a questionnaire was distributed in the first session that asked, "If there is a student who has a language disadvantage, what would you do?" to get students thoughts. Responses were selected from the following four options.

(1) Nothing
(2) Sit close to the student during the session, and try helping them by giving supplementary explanations
(3) Take the initiative during breaks to talk to them and ask if they have any questions
(4) Other (Describe in details)

There were a total of 83 responses (including the nine international students), and the nationalities of the international students were all Asian (China, South Korea, Bangladesh and Malaysia). The response results were as follows, in Table 2.

Judging from the Table 2, there was one student (Japanese) who chose option 1. The reason for the selection was "I am not confident I could help them through a foreign language like English." Option 2 polled the majority of the students. Reasons for choosing option 4 were comments like, "I do not have the courage to talk to them alone. I would do it as a group."

Table 2.   The mindset toward language assistance
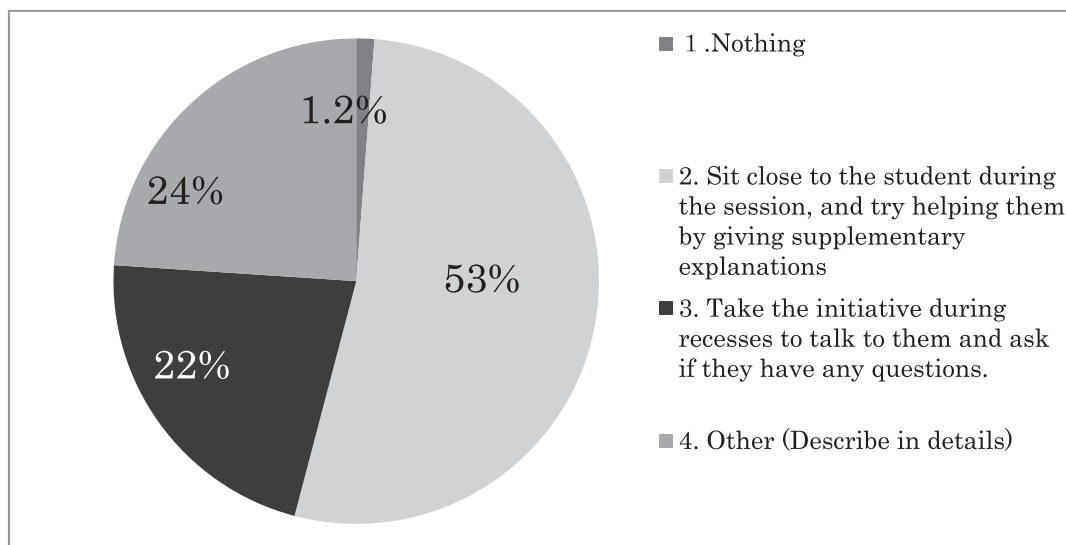
"I will ask their opinion." "I will start talking to them after finding out their favorite topics."

In the 2nd session, I gave the students feedback on these results to let them know that people have different opinions about helping each other depending on their cultural background, and adopted Mutual Language Assistance as a goal of the course. I also stressed the importance of mutual assistance including understanding the fact that language in the real world is related to various factors that can't be lumped together such as cultural background differences. In relation to this point, Kitade (2013) says that "As a premise, no mutual rule between speakers should exist nor should native language speakers become the standard. Such rules will be built or rebuilt on both sides through communication" (p. 120).

Students were asked to reflect on their own attitudes and actions toward the course goal on their reflection sheet at the end of every session. Also in their reports, which is one of this course tasks, students were asked to reflect on their own responses in the 1st session and to put together how they tackled the language issues in the course, whether or not their awareness developed by such efforts, and finally put together what they learned in the course. This chapter will particularly introduce how they overcame language barriers based on what Japanese students described. The reason why only Japanese students' response were shared here is because this course took place in Japanese and because it was thought to be clarified how the course effected to assisting party, which were the Japanese people in this course by examining how they conquered the dilemma in terms of language. Additionally, regarding quoting opinions of students, confirmation from all students by written agreements has been completed.

4.1. Opinion of students whose mindset toward assisting others changed over the course of the session

Japanese student 1

After the first session, I chose the option that I would help them during recesses because I was not accustomed to being surrounded by so many international students at that time as I had just started university life, and I was not sure what the correct course of action is. But through this course, I gained a little bit of courage and the willingness to be proactive, and I learned how some people from overseas think. So now I would choose that I will help them during the session. The reason why my thoughts shifted is because I became less stressed about taking the initiative to talk to them compared to before, and because they reminded me to reconsider how I see international exchanges.

This response confirms that this Japanese student's thoughts shifted. This Japanese student had first selected the option of helping during recesses, but as this student interacted with an international student in the same group, they later changed to helping the international student when help was needed. On the other hand, there was also a response as follows.

Japanese student 2

After the first session, I chose the option that I would help them during recesses. But I realized that this was not always the best choice because the help needed varies throughout the course. Also I think the international students' language barriers are not built simply on language itself. They may be caused by differences in customs or practices as well as the fact that Japanese students' assumptions are not always true. Thus, in order to overcome language barriers, it is important to help them understand what they don't understand due to language issues, and to explain in detail about what is taken for granted between Japanese people.

According to this report, this student learned the necessity of explaining the culture which lies behind the language when needed, in addition to the meaning of help, which should not be limited language-wise. Let's move onto the next report.

Japanese student 3

After the first session, I chose the option that I would help them during class. But now I would choose that I will help during the recesses. That is because I now think that it's not good for that person if I helped them just because of the language disadvantages. When facing a problem, if you don't try to break through by yourself, you don't learn anything. Needless to say, I will help without hesitation those who come to me to ask for help.

This report implies that this student reached the conclusion that it is necessary to think on

one's own first before getting help. This mindset seems to have developed in the situation with international students where the student has an advantage as a Japanese native speaker. Here is another comment with a similar point of view.

Japanese student 4

After the first session, I chose the option that I would do nothing about it. I thought, even in a predicament, it is necessary to overcome it on your own. But as this course went on, I realized that there is another way of thinking about it. I think I would pick that I will help during recesses. The basic idea that you should overcome barriers by yourself remains the same. I was not helping an international student who was in trouble at all, and then I saw another Japanese student try to help them. I thought that would hinder the development of both sides. However, that might be wrong. I am not sure if it was because of the help, but that international student seemed gradually to get accustomed to their life and now that they are talking to other students actively or even too much I feel. In other words, I realized that it would be the most important thing to face the wall and strive to break through it after being given a lead.

Here this comment implies that this student recognized different views on helping among group members and admitted their bright side. Then the student reflected on their own thoughts regarding help and saw them from a different angle.

4.2. Students with no change throughout the course
Japanese student 5

On the questionnaire after the first session, I chose the option that I would help them during class, and this hasn't changed throughout the course. First, I was so nervous about talking because I was thinking, "what if I can't make myself understand," and so I actually couldn't communicate well. But once I tried to tell them what I really wanted to say, they responded to my zeal, and I could hear what they wanted to say too. So what I thought after talked to several international students was that enthusiasm in conveying your ideas is more important than thinking about language barriers.

This student had a positive attitude about helping from the beginning. And in the session, the student moved to action, and from there, reconfirmed the importance of the willingness to make an effort to communicate with them.

Japanese student 6

After the first session, I chose the option that I would do nothing about it. The reason why I chose this was that I wasn't confident at first about my language ability, and was not good at communicating with others, and secondly I would end up being embarrassed when others saw

my incompetency in language and communication skills when I'm not well prepared. This mindset hasn't changed even now. However, I think that working on the project and discussion with other group members has made a slight change in me.

This student participated in this course despite an awareness of the hardship in communication and actively worked on the course. Consequently, the student became aware of the importance of helping and succeeded in increasing their eagerness to help others.

4.3. Students who reconfirmed their own mindset through the course
Japanese student 7

After participating in the course, I concluded that I won't take the initiative in helping others. I can't agree with the idea that we must help those who have language problems. I think both sides need to strive to make themselves understood. And when we misunderstand others due to cultural differences, it is essential to admit the existence of the differences and discuss it together.

This student learned the importance of being aware of differences in cultural background instead of language and the importance of being willing to try to understand others from there.

4.4. What they learned from the language barrier.
These reports from students on their changes throughout the course show that students could be categorized into the two groups of active helpers and self-solution attitude believers. Those students who did not change their way of thinking were very affirmative about assisting others at the beginning and did not change that way of thinking throughout the course. Also these reports show, as student 6 says, that some students need language ability to help others, or as student 7 says, that some students became aware of the importance of understanding cultural background more than the necessity of language ability.

Regarding the course goal of Language Assistance, students reflected on their own mindsets, their actual actions and what other members did for such assistance, and they readjusted their own ideas and gained a new point of view through this course. In that process, their metacognitive perspectives deepened in that their mindset at the time of joining this course was specified. Moreover, a common observation in these reports is that the Japanese students feel a one-sided sense of responsibility to help the international students because the course is taught in Japanese. These students' thoughts might change by experiencing the language barrier overseas. On the other hand, the students' concept of languages might stay as is if they don't go overseas for studying. Of course, it is necessary to make sure through continuous monitoring because it is possible this may change through interaction with international students on campus.

5. Study Outcome

What did the international students learn from this? I would now like to share the reports from the international students regarding what they learned throughout the course.

International student 1:

I realized that although there were differences in language and culture, we, as human beings, have an instinct to communicate with others by any means necessary. Also I learned what is important in working on allocated tasks. A group with nine members is a big family, but we divided ourselves by roles into three teams and collected information using different tools. My team's task was collecting information from books. It was difficult to research things in books in Japanese, but the Japanese students helped me. My experience tells me now that helping each other is important. Working on a project in a group is different than working alone in that many ideas get tossed around. And the discussion becomes multilateral. An advantage to working alone is freedom in time keeping, but I wouldn't have obtained so many different perspectives as a single person.

International student 2:

Group work is much more fun than working on an assignment alone. After allocating tasks to each member, if you are to share the content later on, you are more serious about your own task. International students like me tend to look up only about their country, but I could learn many things from the information gathered by Japanese students. The form of presentation becomes diverse. If people with diverse background pitch their own ideas to the table, they can make a more creative outcome. However, finding the time to do group activities was difficult for us. Likewise when correcting our work, it was hard to achieve mutual consent after collecting everyone's thoughts.

These report points out some advantages of group work toward assignments such as enriching the presentation, and more opportunities to research your portion of the assignment in detail by dividing the assignment into parts. In other words, despite their own disadvantage with the Japanese language, the Japanese students' research results helped their knowledge expand, and specified and objectified their research results, that is to say that they could deepen their metacognitive perspectives. Besides that, the difficulties of compiling ideas into one presentation and the students' difficult experiences in finding time to work together were included. Actually this point was addressed in the Japanese students' reports as well. This hardship will be referred to in the next chapter's future task section, but a successful and creative presentation by all groups in this situation was evidence of the fact that the students overcame the various difficulties, and it can be thought that a willingness to help each other developed during the process.

This course was conducted in the PBL style with a large number of students, but each and every student who took part in this course successfully came to understand and respect others through the experience of helping others or being helped by others. Being able to learn to cooperate with students from diverse background was a common result among international students and Japanese students.

6. Discussion and summary

In this paper, we mainly examined how to conduct the course, how the students worked on the language issues, and what they learned from it under the challenging conditions of a project based study in a large class of 90 students. Research questions (1) and (2), mentioned in chapter 1, were set for this examination. According to the results, it can be said that Japanese students had a good opportunity to reconsider the significance of acting while considering another's position through the first session questionnaire survey and the assignment. All members of both groups of students learned the importance of collaborative study, although Japanese students were in a situation that must have given them a sense of superiority in terms of language and number. As for the international students, assistance from Japanese students helped them not only overcome language barriers but also learn what's going on in the project more multilaterally and multifacetedly. The previous problem solving study took place with a small group in a workshop style, but what should be stressed here is that problem solving studies are possible with much bigger groups depending on the creativity in the operation.

At the end, in related to research question (3), for the purpose of building closer relationships overcoming the differences between majority and minority groups, we will now examine whether or not the study's environmental conditions and the theme of the International Joint Classes as described in the diagram1 in chapter 1 were effective.

First of all, the three conditions of Allport (equivalent level, common purpose, institutional support) still have issues remaining in the implementation introduced in this paper. As for equivalent level, there were language barriers and differences in cultural background and group size, which put the Japanese students in a somewhat advantaged position.

As for common purpose, although each group completed their presentation according to the group goal, the course goal of mutual language assistance varied by the individual. As for institutional support, because the groups were large, the author, who was a teacher for this course, couldn't interact with every individual who needed support. In terms of dialogue, one-on-one dialogue with every student was not possible, but students' frank opinions were obtained through the reflection sheet that was filled out every after the session.

Now, was Museums as a study theme really universal? Things exhibited in museums have backgrounds related to the local history and they are unique to the area. How did each group deal with aspects like these which are not universal? Museums, as a project theme, seemed to have

potential in the following two areas.

The first area of potential: in a group which shares different cultural perspectives, each student with a different background complemented the exhibits' unknown cultural backgrounds with each other, and they reflected on the other member's assumptions. Then, they integrated their knowledge and ideas to express them in a new way. And finally the group member's metacognition was accelerated through the trials of consolidating them.

The second area of potential: Museums have formalized exhibits and are organized in many languages aiming to show their heritage and to achieve universal understanding among those who are from other cultures (including people belonging to different age brackets but from the same area). This property functioned as a supportive condition for PBL in which a variety of students work together.

These areas of potential in Museums worked well in this course with multicultural students. In other words, these areas of potential seems to have functioned as a theme in that they urged students to start discussions with a feeling of respect toward their own background or culture and think from their own identity.

For the next improvement, it should be remembered that it was difficult to have group discussions while consolidating one presentation and difficult to divide roles among all participants for presentation because the groups were so large. Dividing a course into two and conducting it at different times might be a solution. Also in spite of the group work oriented sessions, stationary type desks and chairs were used and it caused difficulties in discussion. In later practices, ways to conduct PBL need to be examined that take these points into consideration.

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