

*Effects on Japanese Students Who Had No Overseas Experiences by Japanese Students Who Had Overseas Experiences in Intercultural Co-learning Classes*

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**Abstract**

Recently the number of international students at Japanese universities has been increasing rapidly and many of Japanese universities have introduced intercultural co-learning classes, where Japanese students and international students learn from each other in the same curriculum. In this study, we examined and analyzed how Japanese students who had different overseas experiences interacted with each other in intercultural co-learning classes, whereas it is natural that Japanese students and international students interact with each other. After finishing group work of intercultural co-learning classes, we divided Japanese students who had no overseas experiences into two groups, one was the students with Japanese students who had experienced studying abroad (Group A), and the other the students with Japanese students who had not (Group B). According to the answers of questionnaires which consisted of skill and ability students could obtain through international co-learning classes, the students who had no overseas experiences in Group A obtained much sense of self-efficiency in the items of “You were able to have an open mind and behave”, “You were able to join group work with good teamwork”, and so on compared to the students who had no overseas experiences in Group B. In addition, we had interviews with the students who had no overseas experiences in Group A, and clarified the process of how they were influenced from leadership, personality, and behavior of the Japanese students who had overseas experiences, and of how they obtained the sense of self-efficiency mentioned above.

Keywords: Intercultural Co-learning, Overseas Experiences, and Self-efficiency

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## **Introduction**

The number of international students studying in Japan has been increasing after Japanese Government launched the policy called “300,000 International Student Program” in 2008. The goal was almost accomplished in 2018 and the policy resulted in internationalization in educational institutions in Japan. Meanwhile, according to the progression of globalization, the inclination to study overseas among Japanese students has not been declining and about 115,000 Japanese students studied abroad as of 2018.

With that kind of background, many Japanese universities have introduced intercultural co-learning classes for both international students and Japanese students to learn from each other in the same curriculum. Whereas it is natural that international students and Japanese students interact with each other, it is not apparent how Japanese students who have different attributes, those are overseas experiences, interact with each other in intercultural co-learning classes. We divided them according to their attributes and let them answer questionnaires to confirm their sense of self-efficiency in intercultural co-learning classes in addition to interviewing them to clarify how they were influenced and obtained the sense of self-efficiency.

Our paper consists of five segments, the first overview and Shinshu University’s case of intercultural co-learning classes, the second questionnaires we implemented, the third interviews of Japanese students, the fourth analysis of the questionnaires and interview, and the fifth conclusion and future work.

## **Intercultural Co-learning Class**

Intercultural co-learning class is defined as below by Suematsu (2019, pp. 1 - 12).

“...provides both international and Japanese students with opportunities to learn from each other through "meaningful interactions." Thematic discussions and collaborative projects by students with diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds are built into the learner-centered lessons where different ways of thinking, values, and working-styles are respected...”

It seems that the number of intercultural co-learning class has been increasing in Japan since 2010 because the number of papers concerning intercultural co-learning has been increasing rapidly since 2010 (Suematsu 2019, pp. 1 - 12). According to Takahashi (2019, pp. 1 - 13), 56 out of 84 national universities in Japan had intercultural co-learning classes in their universities, and 136 private universities in Japan held intercultural co-learning classes among 352 private universities in Japan which disclosed their syllabuses to the public as of 2018.

Shinshu University, one of the national universities in Japan and we authors belong to, also started intercultural co-learning classes experimentally from 2018. The title of the program of intercultural co-learning class in Shinshu University from 2018 to 2019 was “Program that transmits the attraction of Matsumoto in Intercultural Co-learning Class”. The goals of the program were: 1. perspectives of Japanese students and international students to be incorporated in movie in cooperation with both of them, 2. they create movies which spread the attraction in Matsumoto. All the

students were divided into groups, consisting of 3 Japanese students and 1 international student. Each group had to make 3 minutes movie after collecting data in Matsumoto together and each movie had to adopt “Clean Water” and “Miso”, which were tourist attractions in Matsumoto. Figure 1 shows flyer of the program.



Figure 1. Flyer of Intercultural Co-learning Program in Shinshu University

## Questionnaires

Various research has done about positive effects on intercultural co-learning classes. All the students who joined intercultural co-learning classes were able to enhance intention of intercultural exchanges, tolerance of different cultures, self-control of emotion, and so on (Suematsu, 2014, pp. 11 - 22) because intercultural co-learning classes were designed for Japanese students and international students to interact effectively with each other. It is apparent that Japanese students and international students give favorable effects on each other in intercultural co-learning classes, but it is not apparent that how Japanese students who join intercultural co-learning classes interact with each other. Sengoku (2019) showed that overseas experiences in advance had positive impacts to oneself in intercultural co-learning classes. According to the research, there is a possibility that overseas experiences are key to enhance effects of intercultural co-learning, but the result was limited to only oneself.

To answer the question “How Japanese students in intercultural co-learning classes interact with each other?”, we reconstructed the question, “How Japanese students who have different overseas experiences interact with each other?” For that, we divided Japanese students in intercultural co-learning classes who had no overseas experiences into two groups, one was the students with Japanese students who had experienced studying abroad (Group A, 14 students), and the other the students with Japanese students who had not (Group B, 9 students), and we implemented questionnaires for them to know their self-efficiency after finishing groupworks in intercultural co-learning classes. Questionnaires were made based on items Horie (2017) showed as the skills, abilities, and attitudes students can acquire in intercultural co-learning classes. Questionnaires consisted of 20 questions. Japanese

students were asked to answer each question in range from 1 (very negative) to 5 (very positive) and we obtained the average scores in each question. Questions are shown in Table 1.

Thought and Behaved Flexibly?	Controlled Your Feelings?
Had an Open Mind?	Cultivated Patience for Uncertainty?
Aware of Teamwork?	Got over Failure?
Dealt through Trial and Error with Curiosity?	Thought in a Multilateral Manner?
Developed an Ability to Observe?	Thought Positively?
Developed an Ability to Gather Information?	Be Conscience of Growth and Confidence?
Developed an Ability to Discover Each Task?	Developed an Understanding of Japanese (Foreign) Culture?
Developed an Ability to Solve Each Task?	Respected Different Cultures and Enjoyed the Difference?
Committed to Creative Activities?	Developed Intercultural Communication Skills?
Committed to Creative Activities?	Want to Continue Intercultural Exchanges?

Table 1. 20 Questions in Questionnaires

Comparing average scores in each question in Group A and B, Group A showed significantly higher average scores in 9 questions below: “Thought and Behaved Flexibly?”, “Had an Open Mind?”, “Aware of Teamwork?”, “Dealt through Trial and Error with Curiosity?”, “Behaved with Humor?”, “Controlled Your Feelings?”, “Cultivated Patience for Uncertainty?”, “Developed Intercultural Communication Skills?”, and “Want to Continue Intercultural Exchanges?”.

### Interview

To know how Japanese students in Group A were influenced and obtained the sense of self-efficiency, we conducted interviews as well as questionnaires. Interviews were conducted for 4 Japanese students in Group A in the manner of semi-structured interviews. They were asked first “How were you affected by the group member who had overseas experiences?” Through the interviews, we wanted to give light on how Japanese students who had overseas experiences had a positive impact on Japanese students who did not have. Tables below shows the overviews of the answers of interviews students A, B, C, and D.

Student A ↔ Overseas Experience Student A’
Student A’: Outspoken, Frank, Full of New Ideas, Calm
“I was affected by her interesting ideas”
“I worked with humor thanks to her”

Table 2. Answers of Student A

After experiencing intercultural co-learning classes, student A joined short visit to Vietnam and Thailand.

Student B ↔ Overseas Experience Student B'
Student B': Leadership, Harmonious, Communicative, Full of New Ideas
"I was encouraged by him and I thought flexibly"
"I was passive, but thanks to him, behaved positively"

Table 3. Answers of Student B

After experiencing intercultural co-learning classes, student B joined short visit to Cambodia and international student tutor.

Student C ↔ Overseas Experience Student C'
Student C': Consensus Builder, Full of New Ideas, Strong-willed
"I behaved flexibly by his plan"
"I behaved with humor because he is interesting"
"I was affected by his thought in multilateral manner"
"I felt my growth thanks to his efforts"

Table 4. Answers of Student C

Student D ↔ Overseas Experience Student D'
Student D': Full of New Ideas, Consensus Builder, Leadership
"She assigned a part appropriately, so I was aware of teamwork and it went well"

Table 5. Answers of Student D

After experiencing intercultural co-learning classes, student D joined English Speaking Society and visit Korea to meet her tutor buddy.

### Analysis

From what the statistical survey and interviews showed, if Japanese students who had overseas experiences joined groups, it seems that it had a positive impact on Japanese students who did not have in some aspects in intercultural co-learning classes. Questionnaires showed Japanese students in Group A felt the sense of self-efficiency in some questions of questionnaires. According to the interviews, possible positive factors "Good Leadership", "Full of New Ideas", "Consensus Building", and so on, which were overseas experiencing students attributes, may have affected learning and studying in intercultural co-learning classes positively and directly.

After conducting a follow-up survey, student A, B, and D devoted themselves to international activities after intercultural co-learning classes though they were no overseas experiences students. It is impossible for us to conclude that intercultural co-learning classes led to their devotion of international activities, but there is a possibility this was positive effects on intercultural co-learning classes.

### Conclusion and Future Work

In this paper, we introduced overview of intercultural co-learning classes in Japan and specific case in Shinshu University. To answer the question "How Japanese students in intercultural co-learning classes interact with each other?", we divided Japanese students who had no overseas experiences into two groups, Group A and B, and conducted questionnaires and interviews. According to the questionnaires, studying with overseas experiences Japanese students had positive impacts in some senses of

self-efficiency in intercultural co-learning classes. The interviews also showed that some positive factors of overseas experiences Japanese students affected their colleagues who did not have overseas experiences, positively. In addition to that, intercultural co-learning classes implied continuous engagement of international activities for Japanese students who had no overseas experiences.

For future work, we would like to continue a follow-up survey for members of Group A and B to investigate how intercultural co-learning classes will affect positively in the length of 3 or 4 years.

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