Intercultural Training in Foreign Language Education: Using Video to Develop Cultural Awareness and Cultural Self-awareness of the Japanese College Students

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Abstract

A long time has passed since the trend of the English education in Japan shifted from grammar translation method for acquiring English knowledge to using a communicative approach regarding foreign language learning as one of the communication activities.

English education and intercultural communication education share important commonalties in their purposes. The current English education at high school and university in Japan has seen not only the method whose base is on applied linguistics and/or TESL, but also the field of intercultural communication (referred as IC hereafter) and intercultural communication training (referred as ICT hereafter).

This paper introduces the author's practice of the college level English class whose focus was on IC education. A video material which describes cross-cultural interaction between Japanese and Americans was created by the author and used in her English class in order to develop cultural awareness and cultural self-awareness of the students.

First of all, this paper discusses the relationship between language education, including both native language and foreign language, and IC education with an emphasis on ICT. After introducing the detail of the author's practiced class, learning effects of using this video material are examined by reporting the students' responses to the questions in the worksheets and the results of the feedback sheet. Finally, the introduced class is applied to the model called "Class Design with the Use of Visual Media Material in Intercultural Education" developed by Murata (in press), and a further effective use of the video in the future English class which focuses IC education will be explored.

1. Language Education and IC Education

Nowadays, "globalization" has become a buzz word throughout the world, and the field of education is not the exception, either. The importance of cultivating foreign language competency and IC competency has become the motto of the professionals who have engaged in language teaching for long years. Especially, in the English education in Japan, this tendency has strengthened since the methodology of the English teaching in Japan shifted to the communicative approach which emphasizes interaction between language and communication. For example, Kramsch (1988) points out the importance of teaching culture in foreign language classes for avoiding miscommunication. Seelye (1993) states: "Knowledge of linguistic structure alone does not carry with it any special insight into the political, social, religious, or economic system. Or even insight into when you should talk and when you should keep your mouth, er, shut." Moreover, Martinez-Gibson (1998) argues that if cultural information is not taught as part of communicative competence, complete communication may not happen.

There are four kinds of communicative competence concerning language education, namely, grammatical competence, discourse competence, sociolinguistic competence and strategic competence (Canale, 1983), and these are considered to be the communicative competence that need to be taught in both foreign language education and native language education. Here, it should be noted that sociolinguistic competence and strategic competence are especially important for foreign language class which emphasizes IC education. Sociolinguistic competence is related to the knowledge and skills in order to behave appropriately based on the social context which the speaker is in. On the other hand, strategic competence indicates the ability to maintain or change tracks of communication for reducing the possibility of miscommunication. Under the intercultural context, since making an accurate judgment concerning appropriate behavior is difficult; expanding individual's psychological framework and making a judgment from the other person's perspective before taking one's own action becomes necessary. In other words, the ability to show empathy to the other person is required. For example, from the view point of "English for intercultural communication", Baxter (1983) argues that the methodology of ICT is useful for fostering strategic competence.

2. Methodology of ICT and Its Application to the English Class

2-1. Methodology of ICT

In general, the methodology of ICT is based on the three elements of learning, namely, "cognitive (knowledge)", "affective" and "behavioral" aspects (Brislin, Landis & Brandt, 1983; Brislin, 1989). According to Bennett (1986), concerning the design of a training model, these three elements are related to a training purpose, and concerning a training approach there are two kinds of approach called "culture general" and "culture specific" approach.

2-2. Methodology of the Author's English Class

The 90-minute class which is introduced in this paper is one of the classes offered in the English course entitled "Intercultural Communication," and the course goal was "to deepen cultural awareness and cultural self-awareness of the students, and to foster a positive attitude toward cultural diversity." After the extensive literature review of the ICT methodology, Mizuta (1990) introduces 3 types of approach in ICT methodology (Fig. 1). Here, "context-analysis training" in "cognitive approach" and "culture-focused training" in" cognitive-affective approach" were the methods which were used in the author's class to meet the course goal.

In "context-analysis training" participants watch an audio visual material, such as video, and analyze the context described in it. After that, through group discussion the participants learn that an individual's cognitive process is culture bound and people's perception of the event is culturally influenced. This training method is also used for the following purposes: (1) To analyze a training material, such as critical incident, case study or video, which deals with misunderstandings in intercultural context; (2) To consider possible solutions to those misunderstandings. In the author's class the students watched the interaction between Japanese and Americans presented in the video, analyzed the issue of IC described in it, and explored possible solutions by group discussion.
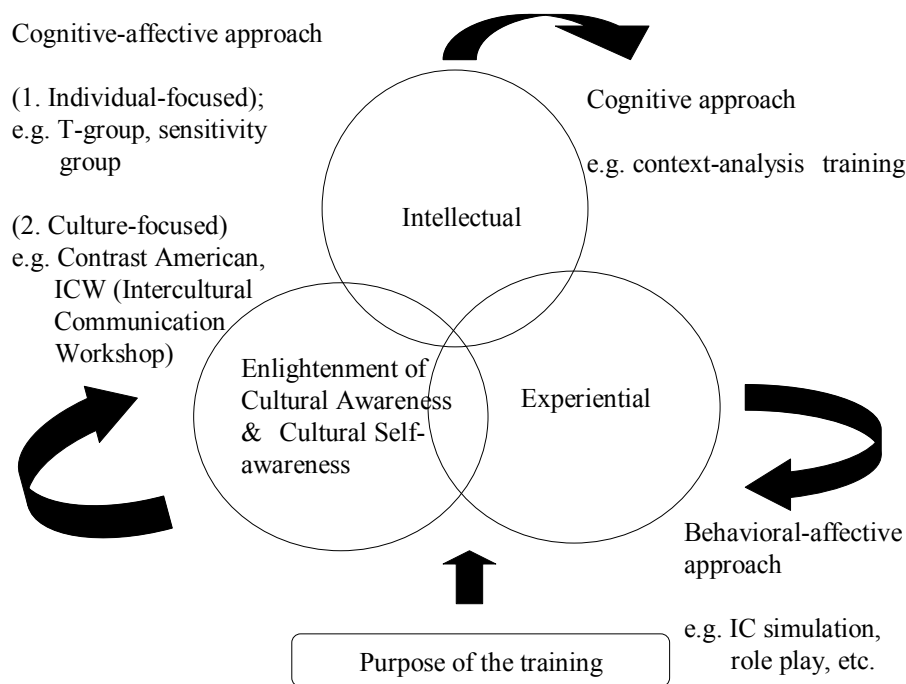
Cognitive-affective approach

(1. Individual-focused);
e.g. T-group, sensitivity
    group

(2. Culture-focused)
e.g. Contrast American,
    ICW (Intercultural
    Communication
    Workshop)

Cognitive approach

e.g. context-analysis   training

Intellectual

Enlightenment of
Cultural Awareness
&   Cultural Self-
awareness

Experiential

Behavioral-affective
approach

Purpose of the training

e.g. IC simulation,
    role play, etc.

Fig. 1 Category of Intercultural Communication Training
(*The figure was created by the author based on Mizuta, 1990)

On the other hand, "culture-focused training" is used to deepen the participants'
awareness of their own culture, which is difficult to be done if they have never
been exposed to a different culture. "Contrast American Method" created by
Stewart (1966) is an example of "culture-focused training", where the trainees
of ICT are Americans. In this training, by observing a role play or a video
where the interaction between a reference person who holds a cultural
assumption of average Americans and a contrast person who has a cultural
assumption contrasting to Americans, the participants become aware that people
tend to take actions based on their own cultural values and assumptions.   There
is a similar training technique called "Contrast Culture Method (CCM)".   In
this training one of the role players or the characters in a video indicates a
"reference person" who belongs to the same culture with the participants' and
the other person is a "contrast person" who has a contrasting characteristic to the
participants' culture.   In Japan, too, the video materials which used CCM were
developed as a teaching material of IC, and their learning effects are reported
(Hasegawa, 1994; Kume, 2000).   Concerning the video material for ICT in
foreign language class, the material which used cultural assimilator technique
was developed for Japanese language learners (Misumi, 1997).   However, this
is still a rare case, and there is a paucity of the video material which is
developed for ICT in the context of English class.

3. Introduction of the Author's English Class

The English class which will be introduced here is one 90-minute class in the 15-week course entitled "Intercultural Communication" (number of the students = 41).   The video material used in this class is one of the four video materials for the workshop conducted by the author for the university staffs in the U.S in the past.   The role play entitled "Is silence worth gold?" was videotaped at the university studio after the workshop, and was developed for a teaching material for her English class later.

The video describes the interaction between a Japanese college student, Hideko, who is studying at a university in the U.S. and her classmates, Nancy and Mike in the cafeteria on campus (Appendix).   The themes which were dealt in this video are "differences between Japanese and Americans in cultural value and communication style."   The IC method used in this class was "context-analysis training" and "culture-focused training" which were indicated in Fig. 1.

The procedure of the class is as follows.

(1) In the class which is prior to the week of the practiced class, the students were given the transcript of the video and worksheet 1 which consisted of comprehension questions about the story and discussion questions.   (2) In the practiced class the students were divided into groups of 5 or 6 people and watched the video once.   And then, they checked their answers for the comprehensive questions within the group.   After the group work, explanations about the English expressions were given by the teacher.   (3) The students watched the video again, and within the group they shared their responses to the discussion questions in worksheet 1.   After that, they shared the findings of the group discussion in the whole class discussion. (4) A short lecture on "cultural value" and "communication style" was given by the teacher based on IC theory.   The lecture was given in English with the supplementary explanations in Japanese.   (5) Then, the students were told to write their responses to the question in worksheet 2.   They shared their responses within their groups, and then shared the group findings in the whole class discussion.   (6) The students filled in the feedback sheet, and the class ended.

The reason why "culture specific" approach which dealt with Japanese and Americans   was used in this class is that originally the video material was created for the workshop whose focus was the difference between Japanese

culture and the U.S. culture.   Moreover, because the students in this class had never experienced ICT in the past, and the cases of IC related to Japanese and American culture often appeared as examples in the textbook used in this course, it was thought that using a learning material which dealt with Japanese and the U.S. culture would give the students a smooth entry to ICT.   No students in this class had a living experience in the U.S., and before this class was conducted, "cultural value" and "communication style" had not been dealt with as the topics in the class.

4. Learning Effects by the Use of the Video in the English Class Focusing on ICT

First of all, by analyzing the students' responses to the discussion questions in worksheet 1, the author will discuss what kind of learning effects the English class in which ICT technique was used were brought to the students. And then, she will discuss the advantages of using the video material by analyzing the students' responses to the feedback sheet and a pitfall which the language teachers should keep in mind when dealing with culture in foreign language class.

4-1. Result of Worksheet 1

[Q1. What kind of intercultural issues did you find in the video?]

About 49 percent (48.8 %) of the response was related to "comparison between Japanese and American characteristics in interpersonal communication."   For example, the following key words appeared in the students' responses: "indirect vs. direct," "passive vs. active," "poor at expressing one's own feeling vs. good at expressing one's own feeling," "shy vs. friendly," "being polite (*tatemae*) vs. being honest (*honne*)."   Another 40 percent (39.5 %) was related to "Japanese characteristics in interpersonal communication."   For example, "Japanese people do not assert themselves." "Japanese people prefer to comply with other people's opinions," etc.   Finally, about 5 percent of the response (4.7 %) was related to "American characteristics in interpersonal communication." For example, "Americans assert themselves strongly," "Americans are decisive," etc. The other responses were not categorized into any of the above (7.0 %).

[Q2. What do you think Hideko may have felt about Nancy and Mike's behavior?]

About 68 percent (67.6 %) of the response was categorized as "affective response (Hideko's feeling about Mike and Nancy)."   The following are the

examples: "She was confused," "She was embarrassed," "She felt isolated," "She felt overwhelmed," "She was surprised," "She felt uncomfortable," "She felt strange," etc. Thirty-three percent (32.4 %) was related to "cognitive response (characteristics of Americans)." For example, "They are assertive." "They are super energetic." "They are friendly," and "They are casual," etc.

[Q3. What do you think Nancy and Mike may have felt about Hideko's behavior?]

About 64 percent (64.4 %) of the response was categorized as "cognitive response (their understanding of Hideko's behavior)." The following are the examples: "She is indecisive," "She doesn't express her thoughts," "In fact, she doesn't want to go with Nancy and Mike," "They can't understand Hideko," "She is irresponsible," etc. The rest of the response (35.6 %) was related to "affective response (their feelings about Hideko)," e.g., "They felt uncomfortable," "They felt irritated," etc. What need to be noted here is that more "affective" responses were found when the students were asked about Hideko's feelings while more "cognitive" responses were found when they were asked about Nancy and Mike's feelings. These results appear to show that the students tried to project themselves onto Hideko's experience and empathize her.

[Q4. Find the expressions in the video transcript which, you think, illustrate Japanese or American communication style.]

Here, the phrases, such as "Oh, yes, anytime (37.5 %)," "No, nothing special (17.5 %)," "Friday… (12.5 %)," "Oh, yes (7.5 %)" were selected as the examples of Japanese communication style while "You said, 'anytime', so I just said, 'Friday' (20.0 %)," "Sounds good (5.0 %)" were selected as the examples of American communication style.

4-2. Result of Worksheet 2

[Q1. What do we need to keep in mind in order to tackle a similar intercultural issue illustrated in the video?]

Thirty-seven percent of the response (36.8 %) was categorized as "solutions for IC issue in general." The following are the sample answers: "Learn about one's own culture and the other's culture," "Learn about nonverbal communication," "Do not stick to one's own cultural assumptions and social customs," "Be conscious of the usage of verbal expressions in one's own culture and consider

their meanings in different cultures," "Be prepared for misunderstandings which can happen in intercultural contexts." Thirty percent (30.1 %) was related to "advice for Japanese students who are going to study abroad in the U.S." Here, "Communicate one's own thoughts and opinions clearly" was the typical answer. Another 30 percent (30.1 %) was related to "advice for Americans who receive international students from Japan." For instance, "Show concern for the students," "Interact with them patiently," were the answers here.

[Q2. What do you think about the Japanese proverb, "Silence is golden?"]
"Is silence worth gold?" is the title of the video used in this class. Q2 was asked to seek for the students' attitude toward this Japanese traditional proverb.

Over fifty percent of the response (52.2 %) was categorized as "Keeping silent in public is good and bad depending on circumstances," which showed the students' neutral attitude toward the message implied in the proverb. One student stated, "If our communication partner is from the same culture, keeping silent can bring a good result. But when we are from different cultures, we cannot communicate successfully without words." Another student stated as follows:

> "As the proverb, 'Least said, soonest mended' goes, in Japan silence has been treasured from the past, and it has been considered good. I think this proverb is wonderful because silence is also the means of communication. But in foreign countries we can convey our thoughts only by verbal communication. We should know that this proverb is not universal. Both of us are just trying to be polite in our own way."

About thirty-eight percent (37.5 %) was related to "importance of communicating one's own thoughts verbally." One student stated, "This proverb might be correct, but I think this kind of mindset created the Japanese characteristics which tend to refrain from telling one's own thoughts in public." Another student stated, "We will not feel comfortable in silence. We will not care about silence only among the people we feel comfortable with, so, I can't support this proverb." Lastly, about 10 percent of the response supported the message in this proverb.

4-3. Result of the Feedback Sheet
It was found that 90 percent of the response showed a positive feedback about using video as teaching material. Sixty-six percent indicated that using video

helps the students' understanding of the contents. The following are the sample answers: "Rather than use only the written scenario, we can grasp the atmosphere and context of the story better, "With the video we can have the image about the context described in the role play more clearly," "Because the video describes the context more clearly, we can analyze the case from the view points of the characters in the scenario," "Visual images we receive from the video can remain in our memory longer," Using a video is useful for understanding the context and the contents of the story better because we can observe the characters' facial expression, gesture and tone of voice.

The other responses were "Using the video is important in reading the mind of the characters in the role play," "We can feel sympathy with the characters," and "We can improve our listening ability." Here, the advantage of improving listening ability by using the video was consistent with the findings of the research conducted by Secules (Secules, Herron, & Tomasello, 1992).

A pitfall to be noticed here is that by using a video students may have a stereotype about the cultures described in it. Therefore, when giving the lecture of the IC theory in the middle of the class, the teacher need to point out that the themes dealt with in the video will be a possible cause of misunderstanding in intercultural context. In addition, it is necessary for the teacher to emphasize the importance of considering the issue from a more holistic point of view rather than just look at it as the miscommunication which can happen between Japanese and Americans.

As was mentioned before, "culture specific approach" was used for the video used in this class. It will also be possible to present the same video by using Contrast Culture Method which was introduced in the previous section. More concretely, we can change the context of the video to the one where a Japanese college student interacts with the classmates who are from unknown culture. This technique will be effective to prevent the students from having stereotypes about specific cultures. However, in the present class, it became clear that the students noticed that behavioral patterns and points of view prescribed in one's own culture could affect the communication with the people who have different cultural backgrounds. Thus, we can say that depending on how it is used, a teaching material which adopted a culture specific approach can also bring a similar effect that is found in CCM.

5. Analysis from "Class Design with the Use of Visual Media Material in
   Intercultural

   Education"

In this section the author will analyze the practiced class by applying it into the model called "Class Design with the Use of Visual Media Material in Intercultural Education" created by Murata (in press, Fig. 2), and explore a further use of video material in the English class whose focus was on ICT.
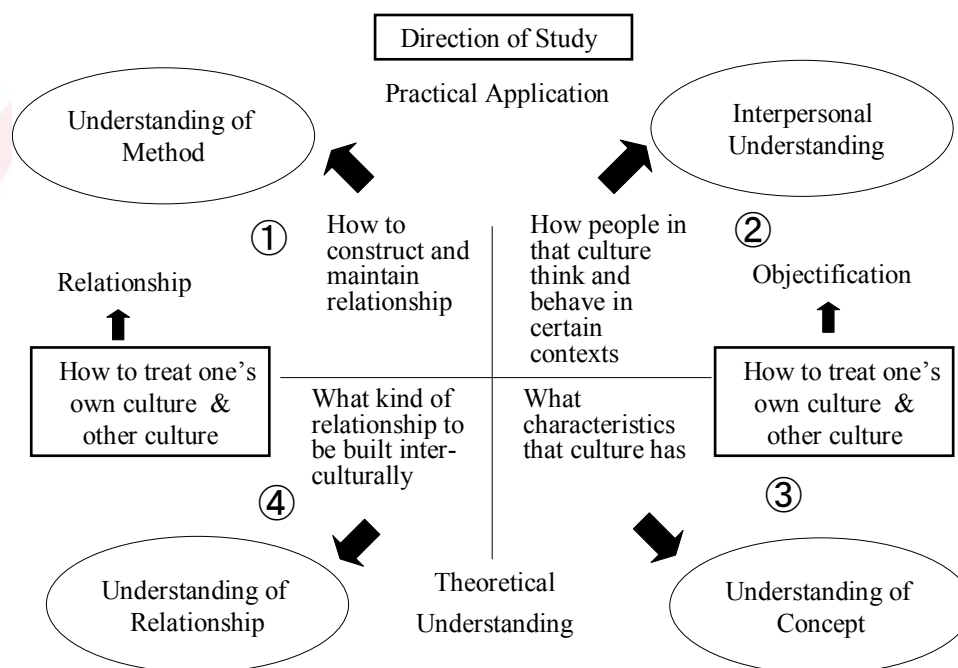
Fig. 2 Class Design with the Use of Visual Media Material in Intercultural
Education
(*This figure was created by the author based on Murata, in press)

In this model four patterns are presented with two axes being crossed. More concretely, the horizontal line is related to "how to treat one's own culture and other culture," which focuses on either "relationship" or "objectification," while the vertical line is related to "direction of study," which focuses on either "practical application" or "theoretical understanding." As Murata (in press) points out, more than one pattern can be applied to one teaching material, and the present class is applied to the patterns 1, 2 and 3. In other words, pattern 2, whose major framework is "interpersonal understanding," is related to "practical application," that is, analyzing behavior and thinking patterns of Hideko, Nancy and Mike, the characters in the video. Pattern 3, whose major framework is "understanding of concept," is related to "theoretical understanding," that is,

analyzing the general characteristics in communication styles and cultural values of Japanese and Americans through the characters' behavioral patterns. As pointed out in the previous section, it is needless to say that through the lecture of the IC theory, the teacher need to take into consideration that the students do not have a stereotype about Japanese and American culture. Lastly, pattern 1 whose major framework is "understanding method," is related to exploring the solutions of the issue of intercultural misunderstanding presented in the video. By considering "how to construct and maintain relationship" with the people from different culture, the students in the present class were able to acquire the ability of not only objectifying the cultural elements presented in the class, but also understanding them in relation to the relationship between their own culture and other culture.

Last of all, the author would like to share the idea of a class project where the students can experience intercultural trainer by using a video. The following are the procedure of the project: (1) The students are divided into groups of 4 or 5 people. Each group conducts a research in order to create a critical incident which deals with a misunderstanding of IC. (2) Members of the group role play the critical incident they made and videotape it. (3) In the group presentation each group gives an ICT session by showing the video and giving the other students the worksheet where discussion questions are written. (4) The presenters' group facilitates the other groups and leads the class discussion. (5) Finally, the group gives a lecture about a cultural background and concept which became the base of their critical incident. Here, although it is possible to show a critical incident by role playing in front of the class at the time of the group presentation, by preparing the video in advance, students will be able to present a role play of a better quality in their presentation. Besides, the presenters will be able to concentrate on the other important tasks, such as group facilitation, lecture of the IC concepts after a group discussion, which will eventually enable them to give a more complete presentation.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper introduced the author's practice of the college level English class whose focus was IC education. Through the analyses of the students' responses to the worksheets and the feedback sheet, it became clear that conducting the ICT with the use of the video material in the English class could develop the students' cultural awareness and cultural self-awareness. In the last section, the author applied her class to Murata's "Class Design with the

Use of Visual Media Material in Intercultural Education," and discussed a further use of the video material in the future English class.

As the example of "authentic" material in the language class, Rogers and Medley (1988) argue that using videotaped materials is advantageous in introducing students to the cultures of the people who speak those languages. It is because videotaped materials offer more clues for comprehension to the students, compared with the other teaching materials.   For example, in addition to the sound elements, dynamic visual contexts are provided with a variety of nonverbal cues, such as facial expressions and gestures.   On the other hand, as pointed out in this paper, language teachers should pay a special attention so that the students do not have a stereotype about the target cultures by using videotaped materials.   Last but not least, not limiting their task to helping students to acquire the linguistic knowledge and skills, the foreign language teachers need to create the teaching materials that can contribute to encourage the talent who can live and work actively in this multicultural society.

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Appendix
(The transcript of the video)
Is Silence Worth Gold?

Situation of the Skit

The characters are two Americans, Mike and Nancy, and one Japanese girl, Hideko.   They are talking in the cafeteria.

M= Mike, N=Nancy, H=Hideko

M: You know what?   Three of us should do something together.

N: Yeah, why don't we see a movie?

M: Yeah, that sounds good.

N: Do you want to see a movie, Hideko?

H: Oh, yes.

N: O.K. I'd like to see Kurosawa's movie.   It's on at Film Center.

M: What is that?

N: Well, it's a film with a Japanese film director.   So, it should be really good.   It's in Japanese, but there are English subtitles.   For me, I want to see how good my Japanese is, so, I'll see if there are any phrases I could understand.

   (To Hideko)Would you like to see that, or do you have any film you'd like to see?

H: Oh, no nothing special.   Kurosawa's movies are popular in Japan.

M: O.K.   Let's see it, then.   See, ah, when should we go?
   I'm free tonight.   And I'm free all weekend.

N: Oh, I have something to do on Sunday, but other than that, I'm free.   Uh, what about you, Hideko?

H: Oh, yes, anytime.

M: O.K. How about Friday night after classes?

N: O.K. Good.   The films start at five and seven.   I'd rather go for seven.

M: O.K.

H: Friday…

N: Is something wrong with Friday?

H: Yes.   I'm invited by my host family for dinner on Friday.

N: Sharks.

M: Oh, you said, "Anytime," so I just said "Friday".   Well, ah, how about Saturday?

N: Yeah.

H: Yes, I'm fine.

M: O.K. The movie starts at seven.   So, we should probably meet around six thirty, say, ah, here.

N: O.K. Yeah.   Sounds good to me.   Ah, what about you, Hideko?

H: Yeah, here, Saturday, and six thirty.

M: Right.   Great.

N: That sounds good.   That'll be great.

H: Ah, I have a class, so I have to go now.

N & M: O.K. See you.

H: See you on Sunday.

N & M: No, on Saturday.   See you, bye.

……………………………………

N: (To Mike) You know what?

M: What?

N: I have a feeling like she's not really interested.   I'm not sure if she wants to go with us.

M: Yeah.   I thought so, too.