

# A Virtual Exchange Between Japan and Denmark

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# Computer-mediated Communication (CMC)

- Email (Asynchronous)
- Videoconferencing (Synchronous)
- Synchronous chat
- Asynchronous chat
- Discussion forums
- Wikis
- Blogs
- Virtual learning environment (e.g. Moodle)

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- Develops L2 proficiency
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- Promotes learner autonomy
- Strengthens digital literacy
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# Second Language Learning

- Authentic opportunity for L2 usage
- Negotiation of meaning
- Focus on form through text analysis and reflection
- Peer feedback

O'Dowd & Lewis (2016)

# Intercultural Communicative Competence

- Exchange of cultural information
- Deconstruct “foreignness”
- Break down stereotypes
- Overcome cultural differences / Develop pragmatic competence

O’Dowd & Lewis (2016)

# Japanese EFL Learners

## Traditional Japanese Education

- Teacher centered
- Projects such as this one are rare
- Grammar translation - get it right in the beginning (Lightbown & Spada, 2013)

Donnellan (2017)



# Format of the exchange

English as a lingua franca

Conducted three times

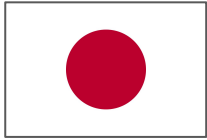
- AY2016 fall
- AY 2017 fall
- AY 2018 fall

Asynchronous - Email and Google Forms for scheduling and self-introductions

Synchronous - A Skype session in groups of 3-5 students. Students were assigned a set task and an open ended task (30 mins - 2 hours)

Survey administered on completion of the exchange

# Survey Respondents



90 Japanese students

Kwansei Gakuin University

All Intensive English students

Lower level classes



61 Danish students

Aarhus University

Taking an Intercultural Communication Class

Mixed nationalities

Advanced/Native speakers of English

# Survey - Section 1

## Nine Items

Background information to establish:

- Age
- Previous travel
- Intercultural experience
- Knowledge of the other culture
- Preparedness for the project

# Survey - Section 2

Thirteen Items

Four point Likert scale

Divided into 4 subsections:

- Opinions about the exchange as a whole (including technical and logistical aspects)
- Opinions about the emailing component
- Opinions about the spoken component
- Opinions about cultural exchange

# Survey - Section 3

## Four Items

- One yes/no question about future participation
- Two open ended questions to allow participants to talk about what they learned and future iterations of the project
- Optional comments

# Results

The students from Aarhus University had significantly more intercultural experience/exposure than the KGU students

Positive response to the format of the exchange and to the level of teacher support

Some tech issues

Change in the perception of the cultural differences before and after (statistical analysis needed)

130 out of 151 respondents would like to participate in a future exchange

# Positive student comments

This is very good chance for me to talk with foreigner. Thank you so much.

This communication was much more difficult for me than I thought. But, I want to do communicate with foreigner with English.

This task was precious experience for me.

This was so difficult for me but if there is a chance, I want to participate.

We actually decided to continue the contact with Aoi and Arisa - which I am so excited about. It would be so much fun doing this Skype meeting again, and keep learning from each other in the future. I am always the kind of person, who loves to learn more about other cultures, and especially one like Japan!

It was such a nice task, and I hope our Japanese friends enjoyed it too. We solved the task quickly and efficiently together.

It was really good chance to know other culture directly, so I am satisfied very much. But I felt sorry for them because my computer was too slow.

# Negative student comments

Don't use Skype. Make sure everyone is equally prepared and understands the task. The other people should not be sitting together

There were a few technical difficulties - the connection was a bit glitchy, but that's to be expected. The Japanese students were sitting in a place that was loud and there were many other people around them so we couldn't hear a lot of what was said. I think I would have preferred it if the call had been done from a quieter place

I would like the other part to have a higher level of English

Find time to get to know each other in the call

Better way of communicating, more structured

Please ask the participants to check their electronics beforehand, ensuring that we don't have to spend a lot of time waiting for it to work

It was an obstacle that the Japanese spoke poorer English - it held us back and made our conversation more simple and shorter. Would have loved to learn more about their culture.

Better organization and clearer instructions + make sure that the other participants have a minimum level of English/ target language



# Some observations on the survivor task

Students may benefit from a more structured approach in both the pre-task introductions and chat and the task itself

Japanese students were less likely to expand on their answers or elicit further information from their counterparts

Incorporating culturally relevant scenarios/tasks would likely promote deeper engagement

Recording the calls allows for self-analysis and follow-up questions

# Improvements for Spain 2020 and beyond

Tech issues (headphones, cameras, mics)

Improved scheduling and structure

Similar levels

More tasks and repeated Skype sessions

Trials and testing with classmates

Different types of exchange (e.g., culture in addition to/instead of language)

# References

Donnellan, M. (2017). Task-based Language Teaching in the Japanese University EFL Context. *World Congress on Education 2017 Proceedings*, pp. 62-66.

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# Thank you for listening

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