

A Hands-off Approach: A Survey of Intercultural Communication Textbooks Published in Japan by Nan'un-do

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Introduction

This paper presents a survey of textbooks designed for use in English-taught courses at Japanese universities which explore the issues involved in intercultural communication. The six textbooks analyzed in this survey were all published in Japan by Nan'un-do, and were all commercially available in 2018. First, the paper will make a distinction between the study of intercultural communication as an academic discipline and the type of intercultural communication courses for which the textbooks under discussion are suitable. Next, the paper will describe the similarities and differences evident from a survey of the six textbooks, and an analysis of the topics most frequently covered by them. Finally, there is a discussion of how the textbooks could more effectively develop the intercultural communication skills of the students who use them.

1. Dual Existence of Intercultural Communication Studies in Japan

This chapter will briefly describe the two kinds of intercultural communication studied in Japan in order to establish the market positioning of the intercultural communication textbooks analyzed in this survey.

Intercultural communication begins the moment that people from two different cultures come into contact. In terms of the modern history of Japan, this can be said to have started in earnest following the arrival of Commodore Matthew Perry and his black ships off Yokohama in 1853. However, the adoption of intercultural communication as an academic discipline did not start until a century later and, in the Western world, is usually traced to the publication in 1959 of Edward T. Hall's book *The Silent Language*. Rogers et al.^[1] write that "in Japan, scholarly attention to

intercultural communication began in 1966 with publication of Hall's *The Silent Language* in Japanese". Rogers et al.[1] also comment that prior to the mid-1960s the Japanese public believed that "once an individual learned *eikaiwa*, that person would be an effective international communicator". This second comment is evidence of a mindset which remains not uncommon in the twenty-first century, and partly helps to explain why intercultural communication is frequently linked to English ability. It is also an indication of the dual existence that intercultural communication has in Japan. On the one hand, intercultural communication is the theoretical and academic study of how people from different cultures communicate. On the other hand, intercultural communication courses based on the English language provide opportunities for Japanese students to learn more about the rest of the world, and more about how the rest of the world sees Japan and the Japanese, while developing their communicative English skills.

In terms of intercultural communication as an academic field for theoretical study, Kawakami^[2] provides a list of the first series of intercultural communication textbooks to be published in Japanese. Kawakami's list begins with the publication in 1987 of *Ibunka Komyunikeishon: Shin Kokusaijin e no Jōken* [Intercultural Communication: Conditions for an Internationally-Minded Person] by Satoshi Ishii, and includes six other publications up to 2007. However, despite the publication of these six textbooks in Japanese over a period of 20 years, O'Connell^[3] in his outline of the development of intercultural communication studies in tertiary education in Japan, writes that, as of 2015, there were only four universities in Japan which had "dedicated faculty and/or graduate programs in the field of intercultural communication".

In contrast to the rather limited growth in Japan of intercultural communication as a field for theoretical, academic study, the topic of intercultural communication has been widely adopted as a topic for university courses taught in English. All the main Japanese publishers of textbooks for such courses publish textbooks based on the theme of intercultural communication and the textbooks in this survey all fall into this category, with the earliest having been published in 1995. It is probably no coincidence that this textbook dates from the mid-1990s since Kawakami[2] maintains that “the 1990s was the period of growth and consolidation of the intercultural communication field in Japan, just as the 1970s had been in the United States”. Although Kawakami is referring specifically to the academic field of intercultural communication it seems likely that the effects of this “growth and consolidation” spread to the publication of textbooks on intercultural communication designed for English classes.

The six textbooks analyzed in this survey were all written for the exploration of the topic of intercultural communication through the medium of the English language. The next chapter introduces the six textbooks under discussion and shows how they have developed over time, from simply providing English reading material about the subject, to becoming the foundation for activity-based courses for cross-cultural awareness.

2. Textbooks Included in this Survey

This survey focuses on six textbooks relating to intercultural communication, all of which are published by Nan'un-do Publishing. All of the textbooks were available for purchase on the Nan'un-do website^[4] in the section for “Comparative Culture/Intercultural Communication” in 2018. In order of publication, the six textbooks are: *An Introduction to Intercultural Communication*^[5], *Different Realities*^[6], *Culture in Action*^[7], *This is Culture*^[8], *Intercultural Communication for English Learners in Japan*^[9], and *Speaking of Intercultural Communication*^[10]. The books selected for this survey all specifically reference culture or intercultural communication in their main title or secondary title. Although there is a strong tendency, in the earlier books in particular, to focus on cultural differences between Japan and the United States of America, other cultural comparisons are mentioned in all the books and none of the textbooks focuses solely on

Japan plus one other country.

2.1 Progressive Development of the Six Textbooks

A developmental trajectory can be traced in the textbooks analyzed in this survey. The first to appear, *An Introduction to Intercultural Communication*, was published in 1995, and is simply a reader containing essays on the subject of intercultural communication. It has a firm bias towards comparing the cultural communication styles of Japan and the US, but does also use other examples from around the world. As stated above, *An Introduction to Intercultural Communication* is simply a reader, and although it poses rhetorical questions, and asks students to consider their reaction to some intercultural situations, it provides no activities for classwork, no questions for homework or further discussion, and no English language instruction or comprehension questions. In summary, it could be described as a primer, or an introductory text in English, on the subject of intercultural communication within the context of Japan and the US.

While also focusing on Japan and the US, and also using long (approximately 1,400 words) readings in each chapter, *Different Realities*, published in 1997, adds a comprehension quiz based on the reading in each chapter, and a multiple-choice culture quiz. Each chapter also ends with some suggested activities for development of the topic under discussion. However, like *An Introduction to Intercultural Communication*, *Different Realities*, also contains no explicit English language instruction or exercises.

The next step in textbook development was the appearance of a workbook full of activities for pair-work or group-work in the classroom. The subtitle for *Culture in Action*, published in 1998, is “Classroom Activities for Cultural Awareness” and the textbook contains activities only, with no readings, and no English language instruction. Two of the four authors of *Culture in Action* were also the authors of *Different Realities*, and the foreword in *Culture in Action* suggests that it can be used as a supplementary resource for students using *Different Realities*. If *Different Realities* were used in partnership with *Culture in Action* then the total experience for the student would satisfy the needs for English reading materials plus classroom activities, albeit with no specific guidance on grammar or vocabulary.

This is Culture (2005) combines the elements of

“reading + activities” in a single volume with limited but specific English language training and therefore moves towards a combinative approach, while *Intercultural Communication for English Language Learners in Japan* (2017) is the first of the textbooks to incorporate a vocabulary exercise in each unit, along with comprehension questions based on the reading. It also asks students to write their opinions for homework. Finally, *Speaking of Intercultural Communication* (2017) combines elements of all the other textbooks. It has readings, activities, and tasks designed to improve English language ability, including active listening exercises.

The six textbooks therefore demonstrate a series of steps in the evolution of an intercultural communication textbook from readings only, to readings with a selection of other activities as well.

3. Differences between the Four “Reading + Activities” Textbooks

This chapter will discuss the main differences between the four textbooks (*Different Realities*, *This is Culture*, *Intercultural Communication for English Language Learners in Japan*, and *Speaking of Intercultural Communication*), which adopt a style which can be described as “reading + activities”. The primer-style textbook, *An Introduction to Intercultural Communication*, and the workbook-style textbook, *Culture in Action*, are omitted from this section of the discussion because they are sufficiently distinctive without further explanation being necessary.

3.1 *Different Realities*

The four “reading + activities” textbooks will be examined in the order in which they were published. The earliest of the textbooks, *Different Realities*, was published in 1997. Its distinguishing feature is the length of the readings which introduce each topic. The reading is always approximately 1,400 words, with each reading occupying four pages of the textbook. Each reading is followed by an additional paragraph of facts providing extra information relating to the topic and this further increases the reading content of the textbook. A CD audio reading is provided offering the potential to listen to the reading in class, but no listening activities are included or suggested. The section of each chapter which follows the reading is called “Focus on Content” and contains five multiple-choice questions designed to

check understanding. That is followed by a “Culture Quiz” covering a greater diversity of cultures than those which are the subjects of the readings. Multiple-choice answers are provided for the questions in the “Culture Quiz” but the questions are of such a nature that Japanese university students would probably only be capable of answering them by guessing unless they have had extensive exposure to the relevant culture. Each chapter finishes with two or more activities to provide an opportunity for pair work. No answers are provided for the activities and each chapter has no summary or conclusion at the end.

A teacher’s manual is provided containing Japanese translations of all the readings and an answer key for the multiple choice quizzes, however, no guidance is provided in English, and from the fact that the foreword is written in Japanese only, it seems that the textbook is designed to appeal to teachers who are not native speakers of English.

3.2 *This is Culture*

This is Culture was published in 2005. The preface clearly proclaims that the book was written to meet the needs of Japanese students, although it is interesting that, unlike the other books in this survey, the title of the textbook is not written in Japanese, either on the cover or the spine. This may be an indication that *This is Culture* was designed to be more accommodating to teachers who are native English speakers. For Japanese teachers planning to use *This is Culture* in English classes, a comprehensive teacher’s manual is provided with Japanese translations of the readings.

Each chapter of *This is Culture* contains seven activities with the intention of prompting students to think about and discuss the topic under consideration. The format is similar to a CLIL-style textbook. CLIL stands for Content and Language Integrated Learning and refers to a textbook in which a subject, or parts of subjects, are taught through the medium of a foreign language. The aim of a CLIL textbook is a dual-focus on the learning of content and the simultaneous learning of a foreign language. However, in the case of *This is Culture* the foreign language learning content is limited to one activity per chapter the sole purpose of which is to introduce the challenging vocabulary in the reading, and it therefore should not be considered as a typical CLIL-style textbook.

At approximately 500 words, the reading in each chapter of *This is Culture* is not especially long; each reading is followed by a true or false quiz to check comprehension, and then activities towards the further development of the topic. The focus is firmly on learning about culture, rather than studying the English language. Aside from the activity immediately preceding each reading, the remaining six activities for each chapter are designed to make students discuss culture while using the English language with no explicit additional language instruction. There are, however, two activities in each chapter which are highlighted with a green background indicating that they contain “Useful Language” for expressing opinions. *This is Culture* gives a thorough overview of many aspects of culture but does little more than use culture as a topic for reading and expressing opinions in English. None of the chapters provides a summary or conclusion section offering a reminder of what should have been learned in the chapter.

3.3 *Intercultural Communication for English Language Learners in Japan*

The third textbook to consider is *Intercultural Communication for English Language Learners in Japan*. As its name suggests the textbook is specifically aimed at people living in Japan who wish to improve their English. Once again it is a quasi-CLIL-style textbook using English to introduce students to topics in intercultural communication, but the aim stated in the foreword is to help students “think about the relationships between language and culture”. Each unit opens with a warm-up activity introducing some broad topics for discussion, followed by a reading of approximately 800 words. The reading is followed by a vocabulary search activity providing definitions for vocabulary in the readings, and this is followed by four multiple-choice comprehension questions. After this there are three more discussion questions and a challenge to the student to write two more questions for discussion with classmates. Finally, each unit ends with a space provided to write down an answer to one of the discussion questions.

Intercultural Communication for English Language Learners in Japan is the textbook which is most CLIL-like in style. Each unit follows the pattern: Topic Introduction → Reading → Vocabulary Check → Comprehension → Discussion. The discussion questions are challenging and assume a high degree of willing

participation by the students and also a degree of prior experience of intercultural communication. As with the other textbooks, *Intercultural Communication for English Language Learners in Japan* is successful at presenting the challenges involved in intercultural communication but it does not offer a blueprint to Japanese students for how to become competent in intercultural communication themselves. On the other hand, conscientious use of the textbook would provide a student with the English language vocabulary necessary to discuss the main issues in the field. Each of the readings is brought to a suitable conclusion but each unit does not provide a summary of what should have been learned.

3.4 *Speaking of Intercultural Communication*

The final textbook of the four “Reading + Activities” textbooks is *Speaking of Intercultural Communication*. This can be differentiated from the other textbooks by its having shorter readings (approximately 450 words) and many more activities. In each unit there is a pre-reading activity to introduce the topic and following the reading there is a variety of activities to help students experience the issues involved and discuss them. Each unit has at least five activities, with four units having eight activities, and one unit nine activities. The majority of the situations and examples are directly related to Japan and Japanese culture and how it compares to that of English-speaking countries, although examples are also provided from other cultures. *Speaking of Intercultural Communication* is the textbook most likely to encourage the interest of students in intercultural communication, however, as with the other textbooks discussed in this survey, it does not provide a summary at the end of each unit and there is no final summary unit at the end of the textbook to reinforce what should have been learned.

4. Analysis of Topics Covered in the Six Textbooks

Table 1 provides an overview of the main topics covered in the six textbooks, and it can be seen that there is a significant amount of duplication in topic areas. This chapter will analyze the different approaches taken to the most popular topics and contrast the primary message which each textbook intends to convey regarding the topic in question.

4.1 Stereotypes

All six of the textbooks examined for the survey

include a chapter/unit dealing with the topic of stereotypes. The message in *An Introduction to Intercultural Communication* is that stereotypes are dangerous because they “stop us from seeing other people as individuals”, while *Different Realities* suggests that stereotypes are of particular interest in the study of intercultural communication because they “include judgments about cultural others based on one’s own culture”. *Culture in Action* offers six pages of activities, split into three consecutive units, dealing with aspects of stereotypes including stereotypes about Japan and stereotypes about other countries, but refrains from making any declarations about how stereotypes can obstruct intercultural communication and only asks students to consider the problems that stereotypes can cause in communication.

The chapter on stereotypes in *This is Culture* states that learning about stereotypes is important because in order “to be culturally sensitive, we must become aware of the stereotypes that our cultures have transmitted

to us” and finishes the reading on stereotypes by saying, “if you resist stereotypes and always see others as individuals, you can’t go wrong”. *Intercultural Communication for English Learners in Japan* reminds students that “it is important to be mindful of the fact that individuals often do not conform to stereotypes”, while *Speaking of Intercultural Communication* mentions that “the negative stereotypes we hold of others and that others hold of us can destroy our chances for successful intercultural communication”.

What can account for the popularity of stereotypes as a topic for discussion in these intercultural communication textbooks? It seems reasonable to suggest that there is a connection to the authors’ personal experience of intercultural communication. When a person from one culture lives in another culture, or to put it another way, when a person spends their life in a situation where intercultural communication is part of everyday existence, that person will frequently encounter stereotypes about people from his own and other cultures. The authors

Textbook title → Topics ↓	An Introduction to Intercultural Communication (1995)	Different Realities (1997)	Culture in Action (1998)	This is Culture (2005)	Intercultural Communication for English Learners in Japan (2017)	Speaking of Intercultural Communication (2017)
Communication	○				○	○
Culture	○	○	○	○	○	○
Diversity		○	○			○
Hidden Culture		○	○			
Cultural Identity		○	○			
Culture and Language		○	○		○	
Nonverbal Communication	○	○	○	○		○
Perception		○	○	○		○
Culture Shock		○	○			○
Stereotypes	○	○	○	○	○	○
Communication Styles		○	○	○	○	
Values	○	○	○			○

Table 1: Overlap of topics covered by the six textbooks in the survey.

can also reasonably expect that any native English speaker teaching the textbook will have useful personal experience of stereotypes which can be used in class. Any native English speaker would be able to recall stereotypes about Japanese people which they may have held before coming to Japan to work.

In addition, in a Japanese classroom environment any discussion of the stereotypes about Japanese people held by people from other countries is likely to be an engaging topic for Japanese students. Whenever stereotypes are analyzed and discussed objectively it becomes obvious that a stereotype relating to Japanese people does not apply to all the members of the class. This, in turn, is effective from a pedagogic point of view because students, after having looked inwards at stereotypes of Japanese people, should then be able to then look outwards at the stereotypes they hold about people from other cultures and realize the danger of thinking in stereotypical terms about people from other cultures.

4.2 Culture

The other topic covered by all six textbooks is culture itself. The textbooks attempt various different approaches to help students understand what culture means in the context of intercultural communication. *An Introduction to Intercultural Communication* suggests that “everything that humans learn from other humans” is one definition of culture, whereas *Different Realities* states that for the purposes of the textbook, culture should be considered to be “the things that members of a group share in common”. The workbook style of *Culture in Action* means that no definition of culture is provided, however students are encouraged to think about places or things which represent their culture in order to help them answer the question “What is culture?”.

A slightly different approach is taken in the first chapter of *This is Culture*. The chapter is called “What Does “Culture” Mean?”, and after a few warm-up exercises provides a reading which answers the question for the students by stating that culture is “learned and socially transmitted products shared by the members of a group”, and the reading also includes the useful advice that “children don’t have to study culture; they learn it naturally”. In the case of *Intercultural Communication for English Language Learners in Japan*, the textbook introduces the idea that cultural anthropologists see culture as a system including “behaviors, norms, values,

symbols, beliefs, and products shared by a community”.

Finally, Unit 2 of *Speaking of Intercultural Communication*, is dedicated to culture, and the reading begins by explaining that “culture is the way of life of a group of people, including the way they see the world, the way they think, the values they have, the way they act, and the way they communicate”. The unit makes use of the concept of the cultural iceberg to encourage students to consider the parts of a culture which are more obvious, together with those aspects of culture which are usually hidden to the casual observer.

4.3 Nonverbal Communication

Stereotypes and culture are covered by all six of the textbooks and the next most popular topic is that of nonverbal communication which is discussed by five out of the six books. *Intercultural Communication for English Language Learners in Japan* does not have a unit dedicated to non-verbal communication but covers the topic briefly in a unit called Important Features of Human Communication. *An Introduction to Intercultural Communication* discusses the difficulties that arise from misinterpretation of nonverbal communication, while *Different Realities* explains gestures and body language as being two important aspects of nonverbal communication. *Culture in Action* provides activities based around hand gestures in various countries in one chapter, followed by a discussion of personal space differences in the next. In addition to activities relating to hand signs and head movements, *This is Culture* expands the discussion of nonverbal communication to include eye contact and the messages encoded in the clothes people wear. Finally, *Speaking of Intercultural Communication* provides several activities for practicing aspects of nonverbal communication and includes examples from English-speaking cultures, as well as providing examples of how foreign visitors to Japan can misinterpret Japanese nonverbal communication.

5. Conclusion

As has been described, all six of the textbooks in this survey provide similar, but slightly different, approaches to using intercultural communication as a topic for an English-based university course. This paper has also shown how the textbooks take a variety of approaches, from simply reading about the issues in intercultural communication, to providing activities showing how a

different cultural background can cause difficulties when people try to communicate. All the textbooks introduced in this survey would be suitable for teaching Japanese university students about the field of intercultural communication while exercising their English skills at the same time.

Nevertheless, none of the textbooks gives sufficient practical advice regarding how to overcome the problems experienced in intercultural communication, and none of the textbooks really challenges students to try to experience those problems for themselves. The textbooks explain the problems of intercultural communication but fail to explain how they can be resolved. Rogers et al. [1] mention that, "Hall insisted that a learner had to do intercultural communication, not just talk about it", and this is the area where the textbooks in this survey are lacking.

Intercultural communication courses taught in English do not necessarily need to be built around a multicultural classroom with students of many nationalities and cultures studying together. However, as the second quarter of the twenty-first century approaches, textbooks should challenge students to be more proactive and to go in search of intercultural communication with the international students who are present on every university campus in Japan.

There is also potential for each chapter or unit of all the textbooks to provide an additional two sections. First, each unit/chapter should contain a summary of what the student should have learned about intercultural communication in the unit/chapter, and how any relevant difficulties can be overcome. Second, each unit/chapter should end with a call to action to put intercultural communication into practice.

Each textbook should also have a summary at the end containing a checklist of useful advice for intercultural communication. All the textbooks analyzed in this survey risk educating students about intercultural communication without being effective at improving students' intercultural communication competency. The textbooks in this survey all seem to expect students to develop intercultural competence intuitively without explicitly providing instructions on how to become a successful intercultural communicator.

The textbooks in the survey take a hands-off approach to intercultural communication and avoid giving students practical advice on how to succeed at it. They also

refrain from motivating students to try intercultural communication for themselves. It is to be hoped that future textbooks will adopt a more hands-on approach to intercultural communication.

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概要

傍観的なアプローチ：南雲堂から出版された異文化コミュニケーションテキストの調査

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本稿では、南雲堂から出版された異文化コミュニケーションテキストの調査を報告する。調査対象の6冊のテ

キストは全て、異文化コミュニケーションをテーマにした大学の授業で活用することを目的とし2018年に販売されたテキストである。はじめに異文化コミュニケーションコースの説明をする。次に、本稿で調査するテキストの共通点と相違点を説明し、テキストに最も取り上げられている課題のアプローチを比較する。最後に調査のテキストを総合的に評価し、学生の異文化コミュニケーションスキル向上につながる改善案を述べる。

キーワード：異文化コミュニケーション、英語教育、国際理解教育