

Analysis of an Intercultural Communication Incident at the Rugby World Cup and its Potential for Use as a Case Study for Teaching Intercultural Communication Skills

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Introduction

This paper describes an incident which occurred following the rugby match between France and the USA held on October 2, 2019, as part of the 2019 Rugby World Cup. Following the match, a French national was temporarily detained by Japanese police officers after having entered the playing area after the final whistle. The author of this paper was working at the match as a spectator services volunteer and was called upon to mediate between the French national and the police officers. This paper will describe the incident as it developed and then examine the situation in relation to selected aspects of intercultural communication theory. The paper will also discuss how the incident could be used as a case study for students studying intercultural communication.

1. An Intercultural Incident Following a Rugby World Cup Match

The intercultural incident which forms the starting point for the discussion in this paper occurred in the immediate aftermath of the rugby world cup match between France and the USA held at Fukuoka in Japan on October 2, 2019. The match started at 16:45, and finished approximately two hours later, shortly before 19:00. France won the match, scoring 33 points to 9 points scored by the USA. Shortly after the final whistle, a French fan of approximately 25~30 years of age ran onto the pitch with the intention of congratulating the French players on their victory. The fan was promptly chased down by the stadium security personnel and escorted by plain clothes police officers to an office beneath the main stand.

The fan was not being placed under arrest and he was not going to be charged with any offence. However, as stipulated by Japanese law, the fan was required to show the police officers his passport. Unfortunately, in advance of traveling to the stadium, the fan had placed his passport in a coin locker at Hakata Station in the centre of Fukuoka, and had no other form of identification on his person. This situation was compounded by the fact that the fan had shared the coin locker with a friend, also a French national, and it had been decided that the friend should retain possession of the key to the coin locker for the duration of the game. The fan who had been detained by the police was therefore not only unable to show his passport to the authorities, but he was also unable to show them the key to a coin locker in his efforts to explain the current whereabouts of his passport.

The author of this paper, a British national holding the status of permanent resident in Japan, was working at the match as a volunteer with responsibility for greeting fans upon entry into the stadium and helping them to find their seats. At the end of the game, the author was working with other volunteers wishing a good night to fans leaving the stadium. After the majority of the approximately 17,500 fans were clear of the stadium area, the author was contacted by the supervisor with overall responsibility for the volunteer workers. The author was escorted through security at the players' entrance to the stadium and shown into an office which was apparently the main control centre for the facilities at the stadium.

The French national who had been detained was seated at a desk surrounded by a dozen plain-clothes police officers.

For the purposes of this paper the French national in question shall henceforth be referred to as N. N appeared to be anxious and nervous, and did not appear to understand what was happening around him. The author has no way of knowing how much alcohol N had consumed before and/or during the match. However, although N showed signs of having been drinking alcohol in the recent past and although N could not be described as having been one hundred percent sober, in the opinion of the author, the role played by alcohol was of minor importance in the communication problems that N was experiencing. The author discovered that N spoke good English and that it was more appropriate to converse with him in English rather than French.

N was faced with communication difficulties because although all the policemen could speak some English, and a couple of them were relatively fluent speakers, they still experienced difficulty in expressing their demands to N. In addition to this N was apprehensive about the situation in which he found himself, and his apprehension appeared to make him distrustful of the police officers. Following some negotiation between the policemen and N, and with the author acting as an intermediary, it was decided that N could make a call using his iPhone to his friend who was in possession of the key to the coin locker containing N's passport. When N's friend arrived, the policemen agreed to drive the two French nationals to the railway station in order that the passport could be retrieved from the coin locker and then checked by the police. Before leaving the stadium N was required to prepare a simple promissory statement to the effect that he would never again try to gain access to the playing area at a sporting event. N wrote this statement in French and signed and dated it. The author then translated N's French into both English and Japanese to the satisfaction of the policemen, and N and his friend were taken by the police to the railway station to inspect N's passport.

A further difficulty arose when the police wanted to take a photocopy of the passport belonging to N's friend. N's friend was concerned that because the police were taking his details he would end up having a police record. The author explained that he was simply being asked to act as a guarantor for N, and that the copy being made of his passport was purely for administrative purposes. It also did not help that a further friend of N, also without a passport, was admitted to the room. This third party was clearly demonstrating the effects of overindulgence in alcohol and this did not make a positive contribution to the anxiety of the Japanese police. These two additional factors contributed to the reciprocal difficulties with intercultural communication being experienced by N and the police officers at the time, however the focus for analysis in this paper is solely concerned with the communication between N and the police officers so these extra distractions will not be discussed any further.

After 30 minutes of negotiation, a course of action was agreed upon, and N and his two friends were driven in a police car to Hakata Station. The author has had no subsequent contact with either N or the Fukuoka Police, and assumes that N's passport was retrieved from the coin locker and that N's identity was established to the satisfaction of the police, and that finally the three French nationals were given permission to carry on with their enjoyment of the rugby world cup.

Having described the situation in detail, this paper will now proceed to examine the problems that needed to be overcome through analysis in terms of some aspects of intercultural communication theory.

2. The Cultural Context of the Incident

This chapter will describe the incident in terms of the cultural context within which it took place. On a macro level the communication difficulties experienced in this encounter were simply those relating to differences in national identity, as either Japanese or French. The French national was in a foreign country; as a result of his rashness in entering the playing area he had been separated from his other French friends, and he spoke no Japanese. Conscious of the fact that he was in trouble it was only natural that N would be apprehensive about the consequence of his impetuosity.

In France, a fan who enters the playing area at the end of a game of rugby or football could reasonably expect to be released immediately after having been escorted away from the playing area. In this case, N was aware that he was not being arrested, but with no knowledge of the local laws he would not be confident that his circumstances might not become more serious. N was making no complaint about his treatment but clearly felt isolated. There can be no doubt that the language barrier was a significant contributory factor to the difficulties experienced in the situation. N spoke

no Japanese and none of the assembled policemen spoke French. At least two of the policemen present felt enough confidence in their English ability to attempt conversation in English, but to someone unused to listening to English as spoken by Japanese people, N found their efforts at communication very difficult to understand. In addition, N's English, spoken fluently, but with French idiosyncrasies and a French accent, was equally difficult for the Japanese policemen to understand.

In terms of intercultural communication, this situation demonstrated the limitations of English as the common language of global interaction. Mauranen (2015)^[1] asserts that when English is being used as a Lingua Franca (ELF) speakers adopt a variety of strategies in order to achieve mutual intelligibility. Although this may well be the case under normal conditions, in situations where one, or both, of the parties involved is in a stressful situation, the application of such strategies is less likely to be successful. Successful exponents of intercultural communication learn the value of receiving additional information from context which can help them to understand the meaning of a message even if the language used is rather hard to comprehend. In N's case, his complete lack of possessions (all he had in his possession was an i-phone) and the relative complexity of the situation he was trying to explain, meant that contextual information was of limited value in this case.

A further complication relating to the cultural context is that people dealing with policemen in a foreign country will often have an instinctive distrust of them. Although the policemen in the incident being described were scrupulously friendly and polite, N would not have trusted their "apparent" friendliness. With the policemen talking to each other most of the time in Japanese, it would have been natural for N to experience feelings of paranoia about what they might be discussing. In a relaxed situation in a foreign country it is common not to worry too much about not being able to understand everything that is being said around you. However, in this case, the extent of N's knowledge was that he had done something he should not have, that he was in trouble, and that the policemen had it in their power to make life difficult for him if they chose to do so.

This highlights another problem of communication that occurred in this situation. On a macro cultural level, the problems were caused by differences in nationality, differences in culture, and of course differences in language. However, on a micro cultural level there existed the problem of communication between anyone finding themselves in a stressful situation with those people whose job it is to resolve that situation to a satisfactory conclusion. The situation required an intermediary who could empathize with N's situation and his motives for not carrying his passport with him, and who could then explain those motives to the police officers in their own language. Furthermore, an intermediary was also necessary in order to explain to N the reason why the police could not simply release him immediately.

Although Japanese law requires visitors to Japan to carry their passport with them at all times (Immigration Services Agency of Japan)^[2], it is common for tourists when visiting other countries to leave their passport in a coin locker or hotel safe in order to prevent its loss, either from theft or carelessness. It is meaningless to speculate as to whether or not N was consciously disobeying Japanese law when he locked his passport in the coin locker and headed to the rugby match. It is, however, instructive to speculate as to why he did so. Even when visiting a country such as Japan, which enjoys a high reputation for public safety, it is human nature to believe that almost anywhere has the potential to be more inconvenient than one's home culture, and that language and cultural barriers will make the loss of a passport a tedious affair. The possible inconvenience of being asked for identification by the police might seem to be a risk worth taking compared to that of losing a passport or having it stolen, and then not being able to leave the country until an emergency or temporary passport has been arranged.

Could anything have been done to ameliorate the difficulties presented by the cultural context in which this situation occurred? The answer is probably very little. N found himself in a foreign country and in trouble with the police. Of course N should have considered the potential difficulties of his situation before having rashly entered the playing area at the end of the rugby match. The UK Government's Foreign and Commonwealth Office produced a pocket travel guide called 'Stay Onside'^[3] for British nationals traveling to the Rugby World Cup in Japan. In this travel guide, rugby fans are specifically advised to carry their passport with them at all times, although it would be most interesting to discover the percentage of tourists who visit Japan who actually follow or respect this official advice. On the micro level the Japanese police officers could have made an effort to appear less like bureaucrats; all of them were wearing suits and ties and this probably added to N's suspicion of them. The next chapter will consider the environmental

context within which the incident occurred.

3. The Environmental Context

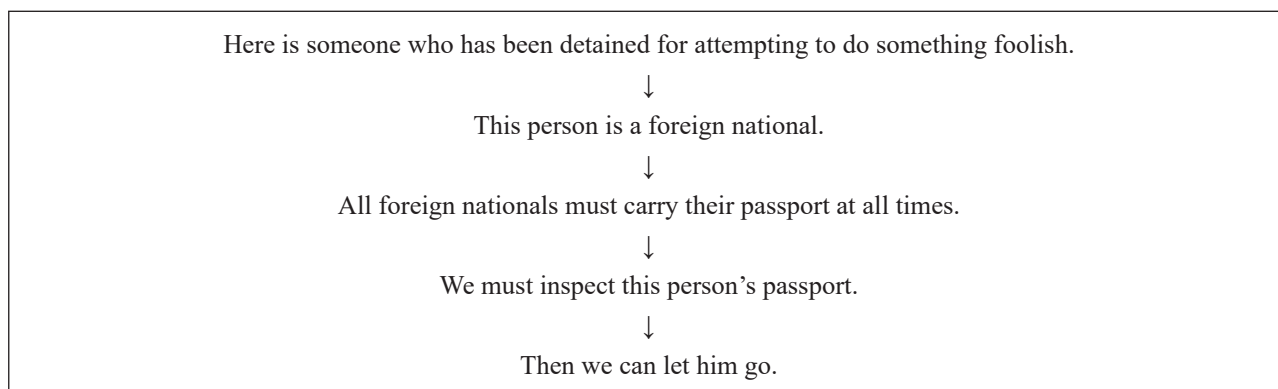
In terms of environmental context, the room in which the meeting took place proved to be a hindrance to effective intercultural communication. The room was large and appeared to be the main office for the day-to-day management and operation of the stadium. One section of the room was an open-plan style office, while towards the back of the room there was a table surrounded by chairs which presumably served as a place for meetings to be held. At the time that the author of this paper entered the room, N was seated at this meeting table while a dozen or so plain clothes police officers were standing around.

This physical environment was not at all conducive to successful intercultural communication. The room had multiple entrances and exits, and other people, as well as police officers, were coming and going all the time. In addition to this constant movement of people, the room was noisy. The policemen themselves were talking to each other and background noise was also being made by other employees in the front section of the room. Several of the police officers had walkie-talkie radios carried on their belts which frequently disturbed conversation with incoming messages. Under such conditions, N must have found it extremely challenging to understand the communicative efforts in English of the Japanese policemen.

Viewed from the opposite side of the situation, the Japanese policemen, no doubt, found it exceedingly trying to understand the French-accented English of N under these conditions. In situations where the topic being discussed is not so serious, intercultural communication can take place satisfactorily in a café or nightclub. However, most people if they were talking a test in an unfamiliar language would not like to take a test under such noisy and distracting conditions. Whilst it is true that N might have felt more isolated in a smaller office with no other distractions, and whilst it is possible that no such office was available, there can be little doubt that a quieter location would have been beneficial to communicative efficacy.

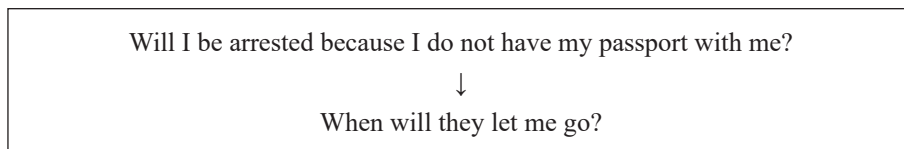
4. The Perceptual Context

Intercultural communication theory divides cultures into high or low context cultures depending on the degree of information it is necessary to explain to someone explicitly in order for them to understand an utterance. Languages such as Japanese are described as high context cultures because communication between two individuals relies heavily upon the context of their discourse and a significant amount of communication can take place without being spoken. On the other hand, in a low context culture, such as English or French, much greater reliance is placed on context being specifically explained in the course of communication. In the situation described, N appeared to be completely ignorant as to why it was necessary for him to show the police officers his passport. Before the arrival of the author of this paper, N had not understood that Japanese law requires that foreign nationals carry their passport with them at all times. From a Japanese high-context point of view, the logical process in the minds of the police officers probably followed a path similar to the following:



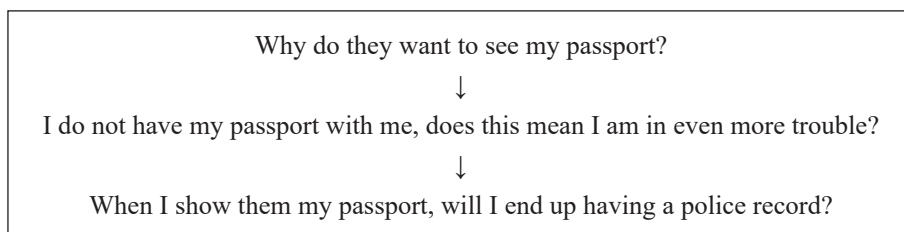
In terms of high context cultural logic and in simple, communicative, non-native speaker English, this thought process would translate to a basic demand; “Show us your passport”.

However, for N with a cultural background in the low context culture of France, and with his inability to understand the cultural clues provided by the context of the situation in which he found himself, his thought process was likely to be completely different. N would probably have been asking himself the following questions;



In other words, the Japanese policemen were in complete control of the knowledge which could lead to a satisfactory resolution of the situation. They knew why they had detained N and they knew what they needed him to show them before they could let him go. However, in the uncertainty of intercultural communication this knowledge was left unexplained.

As for N, if it is assumed that he was ignorant of the law regarding foreign visitors to Japan to carry their passport with them at all times, he would also have been surprised and anxious about being asked to show the officers his passport. It is reasonable to assume that his thought process might have been as follows:



The answers to all of these questions would have been paramount to N, and with no previous experience of the cultural situation in which he found himself he would have been completely unable to infer from context that in this case, provided he could produce his passport from the coin locker, he would be in no further trouble, and that he would not be given a police record.

Such were the questions uppermost in the mind of N when the author of this paper arrived on the scene. Critically, the Japanese police officers who spoke English had not been able, or perhaps, had not considered it necessary to try to explain the situation in crystal clear detail, and they did not have sufficient experience of speaking English with French nationals to understand and subsequently answer N’s questions which would have clarified the situation for him. Making use of his native-speaker English ability and fluency in Japanese the author was able to converse with N in English, understand N’s English spoken with a French accent, and then ask the police officers direct questions in Japanese in order to clarify the situation. This process of intercultural communication was then enacted in reverse when a Japanese police officer outlined the problem to the author in Japanese. The police officers did not possess the intercultural communication skills necessary for N to feel at ease in his predicament. On the contrary, the author was able to communicate with N in clear and concise English, that N was able to understand. When the somewhat trivial nature of the problem and its lack of more serious consequences became apparent to both sides it was only a matter of minutes before the incident was resolved amicably.

The key to the solution of the difficulties in communication was not necessarily linguistic ability. Much more pertinent was the author’s extensive experience of communication between people from different cultures and an ability to understand how the two sides in the situation perceived each other.

5. Application of Byram’s Model of Intercultural Communicative Competence

According to Byram’s model of intercultural communicative competence (2009)^[4] (see Figure 1) five areas of knowledge, skill, or ability, work together to create intercultural communication competence. The five areas are

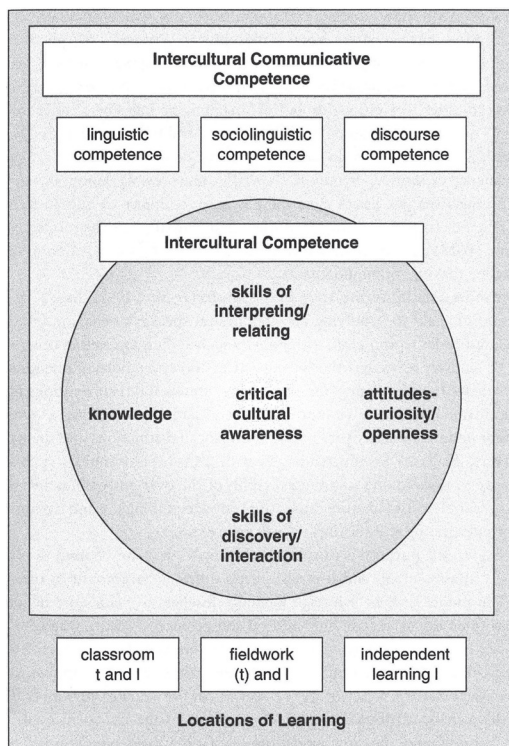


Fig. 1: Byram's model of intercultural competence

skills of interpreting and relating, knowledge, critical cultural awareness, attitudes, and finally, skills of discovery and interaction. This chapter will examine each of these five contributory areas to intercultural competence and discuss any relevance to the incident being discussed.

5-1 Skills of Interpreting and Relating

These skills are defined as the ability to reconcile an event or communication in another culture with one's own culture and being able to explain and relate to it. Mediation is an important aspect of this skill area. In this respect, it seems probable that both parties in the Rugby World Cup incident were deficient in skills in this area. Fortunately, the police officers made the sensible decision to call in the author of this paper who proved able to smooth over the intercultural communication problems being experienced. This was probably because the author was himself an intercultural contributor to the exchanges as he is neither Japanese nor French; instead, the author's long experience of living in Japan and his native-speaker ability in English, plus knowledge of French, provided him with the skills to relate and communicate with both sides.

5-2 Knowledge

The second skill identified in Byram's model of intercultural competence is knowledge of how social groups function and knowledge of how other people see oneself. In the incident described, it can be assumed that the Japanese police officers possessed satisfactory knowledge of how social groups in Japan function, and in this case the police officers were dealing with an individual so knowledge of social groups in other countries would not apply. However, in the opinion of the author, the Japanese police officers were lacking in awareness of how an individual from a different culture might see them. An online article published in May 2016 and entitled "Why does 'everyone in France hate the police'?"^[5] suggests that French people hate the police due to perceived police brutality in response to strikes in the country. Whether this is actually a national trend or not is impossible to say, but articles such as this indicate strong levels of anti-police feeling. This being the case, the Frenchman temporarily detained in Fukuoka might have identified the police as an enemy rather than as people who were trying to help him. On the other hand, Cao, Stack, and Sun (1998)^[6] report several studies which indicate that, historically, Japanese people are likely to have a predominantly positive view of Japanese police officers; for this reason Japanese police officers may be unaware of any feelings of hostility or distrust towards the police that people from other countries might have. Any lack of awareness of how other people see the police may have contributed to their lack of knowledge in terms of intercultural competence.

5-3 Critical Cultural Awareness

This skill is largely concerned with evaluation of another culture and having the intercultural communicative competence to act accordingly. Census data from 2015 show that only 1.7 per cent of Japan's population are foreign nationals (Statistics Bureau Japan, 2017)^[7]. It is therefore hardly surprising that the Japanese police officers involved have not had abundant opportunities to practice dealing with people from a variety of cultures. In the Rugby World Cup incident, the deadlock in communication was only broken when a third party arrived who possessed the critical cultural awareness skills to evaluate the difficulties being experienced.

5-4 Attitudes

Byram's model defines attitudes as qualities of curiosity and openness, which means in practice, curiosity towards other cultures and openness towards the ideas of another culture. Since this skill is mostly concerned with attitudes

of wishing to learn about other cultures and being tolerant of them, both of which concepts are more applicable in the long-term in regard to spending time to develop them, the application of this intercultural competence skill to the situation under discussion is not especially relevant.

5-5 Skills of Discovery and Interaction

This skill is explained as relating to the ability to use the other competencies for intercultural communication to interact and communicate with people from another culture in real-time. While the other skills mentioned above can also be considered to have a base in previous experience of intercultural communication, it is this final skill, with its implications of improvisation, and having an ability to cope with situations as they arise that is the most practical skill of the five described in Byram's model and would have been the most useful skill in the incident being described. Although these skills of discovery and interaction could possibly be developed in the classroom, by comparing examples of communication from different cultures, including communication relating to the negotiation of cultural misunderstandings, it is the opinion of the author of this paper that the only effective method for improving this skill is frequent and repeated exposure to actual, real-life, intercultural situations.

Nevertheless, if such skills are to be learned, classroom training may be a suitable vehicle for making people aware of the need for such skills. The next chapter of this paper provides a suggestion for how the intercultural communication incident at the rugby world cup could be used as an educational resource.

6. Using the Rugby World Cup Incident as a Case Study for Teaching Intercultural Communication

The incident described in this paper has many aspects that would make it suitable for use as a case study for teaching intercultural communication skills. In order to understand the communication problems arising from the situation described, students would have to try to empathize with both the police officers and the Frenchman who had been temporarily detained. Due to the cultural problem of suspicion of a possibly drunken suspect on the part of the police officers, and the suspicion of bureaucratic police officers by a foreigner in a country where he speaks none of the language, this case could be used as a tool to remind students that improved language skills are not the universal answer to communication problems; other cultural factors are of significant importance too.

Students should be instructed to remember that the Japanese police officers and the Frenchman were more or less able to communicate with each other in English, albeit imperfectly and with much misunderstanding on both sides. The problem was that their lack of collective experience in dealing with people from each other's countries meant that the English they used was inappropriate, or of insufficient quality, for effective communication. Students could be taught that the most important element missing in the exchanges between the police officers and the Frenchman was trust. It was only when a mediator arrived whom both sides felt able to trust, thanks to the possession of appropriate intercultural skills, that the deadlock in communication was broken and the situation could be resolved to the satisfaction of all parties.

6-1 Outline for Use of the Incident as a Role-Play Activity

- The class of students should be divided into two groups. One group will play the role of Japanese police officers and one member of the second group will be chosen to play the role of the French rugby fan.
- The students should be given the following description of the situation:

At the end of a match at the Rugby World Cup, a French rugby fan climbed over the advertising boards separating the spectators from the playing area. He was quickly stopped by the on-pitch security and handed over to Japanese police officers. The Frenchman was taken to an office inside the stadium where the police officers requested that he prove his identity by showing them his passport. The Frenchman was unable to do this because he had left his passport in a coin locker at the railway station.

- The first group of students will pretend to be police officers. This group should be instructed to discuss how they would communicate effectively with the Frenchman in order to bring the incident to a satisfactory

resolution.

- The group playing the role of police officers should discuss the following questions:
 1. What environment would be conducive to better intercultural communication?
 2. What attitude should the police officers adopt in order to increase the likelihood of communication success?
 3. What intercultural communication skills would be useful for the police officers to learn?
 4. What stereotypes or prejudices do you think the police officers might hold against a foreign national in this situation?
- The second group of students should discuss similar questions from the point of view of the Frenchman in the case. This second group should try to view the incident from the position of the detainee and they should discuss the following questions:
 1. How would the Frenchman feel about being completely outnumbered in this situation?
 2. What attitude could the Frenchman adopt to make the situation better?
 3. What stereotypes or prejudices might the Frenchman hold about police officers in a foreign country?
 4. Why did the Frenchman leave his passport in a locker instead of carrying it with him?
- After each group has spent 15 minutes discussing these questions, two students should be chosen to act out an imagined dialogue in English between a police officer and the Frenchman, while the other students make notes about any communication difficulties encountered.
- As with the original situation, the student in the police officer role should be allowed to confer with the other members of the police officer group, in Japanese, at any time, to ask for advice about what to do when the Frenchman's passport cannot be produced. On the contrary, the student in the Frenchman role must pretend that Japanese is completely unknown to him and also that he is completely alone without the option of receiving any help from his group.
- Following this role-play activity, the teacher should demonstrate the value of having a mediator in such a situation and explain the problems this situation posed in terms of intercultural communication as outlined in this paper. The key lesson that students should learn is that cultural factors, environmental factors, and the building of trust, are as significant in the success of intercultural communication as foreign language skills.

Conclusion

In the case study described, intercultural communication problems fortunately did not lead to intercultural conflict; the two parties involved in the exchanges, N on the one side, and the Japanese police officers on the other, remained wary and uncertain of each other until the author of this paper arrived to arbitrate between them in a way that was satisfactory to both sides. In short, this case of communication failure was limited to confusion and did not escalate to conflict. However, given the fact that N had certainly been drinking alcohol, it might not have taken very much longer for him to allow his frustration to be expressed in anger or violence. In fact, even without being influenced by any of the effects of alcohol, a person with a short temper could have easily become frustrated to the point of violence at their inability to communicate in this type of situation. This paper proposes that the potential for intercultural communication problems to lead to intercultural conflict is one of the best reasons why professionals in any field should persevere at improving their competence at intercultural communication. In any situation where people from different cultures come into contact with each other, the possession of intercultural communication skills can be the difference between intercultural confusion and intercultural conflict. Confusion may well be inevitable as different peoples try to communicate, but conflict is avoidable in many cases. People often talk about the acquisition of foreign language skills in terms of making new friends and having the opportunity to meet people from other countries, however, intercultural competence is necessary if the confusion which is a natural result of intercultural communication is not to produce intercultural conflict.

It may appear that this paper is being critical of the Japanese police officers involved. The author of the paper wishes to state that this is absolutely not the case. The police officers always treated N with the utmost respect and friendliness

and were doing their best to help him under difficult conditions. Also, the police officers took appropriate action by asking the Rugby World Cup volunteer team to contact the author of this paper who was then able to mediate between the two sides. In a discussion about Edward Hall's approach to intercultural awareness Rogers et al. (2002)^[8] say that, "Hall insisted that a learner had to do intercultural communication, not just talk about it". The Japanese police officers in this situation seemed to be lacking in experience of doing intercultural communication, however, as the number of foreign visitors to Japan increases, and as the number of foreign nationals living in Japan rises, opportunities for police officers to gain more experience of intercultural communication will surely become more frequent.

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概要

2019年ラグビーワールドカップで発生した異文化間コミュニケーション事例：
その分析と教材の可能性を検討

Senneck Andrew

本稿では、2019年ラグビーワールドカップで発生した異文化間コミュニケーションの事例を報告する。フランス・アメリカの試合終了後、観客の一人がスタジアムの芝生に飛び降り、警察に拘束された。拘束されたのはフランス人であったが、日本の警察とのコミュニケーションがスムーズにいかなかったため、試合会場でボランティアをしていた本稿の著者が呼ばれ、フランス人と警察の仲裁を行った。本稿はその事例を異文化コミュニケーションの観点から分析を行うとともに、その事例をどのように異文化コミュニケーションの教材として用いることができるか検討する。

キーワード：異文化コミュニケーション、異文化理解教育
