A Study on the Development of the Japanese EFL Learner's Intercultural Competence:
With Reference to Syllabus Design

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1. Introduction

Although such terms as 'intercultural communication' and 'intercultural understanding' have come to describe one of the aims of foreign language education, it is, in most cases, not clear what they really mean. As a result, the teaching of cultural contents in the foreign language classroom tends to be neither planned nor organized. Thus there is first of all a need for studies on the framework of culture teaching. The approach adopted for making this framework is a conventional one: an attempt is made to clarify the aims, design a syllabus and choose techniques which take account of these aims, then develop materials which are based on the aims, syllabus and techniques, and finally to discuss ways of testing which correspond to all of the aims, syllabus, methodology and materials.

The aims of culture teaching within foreign language education have already been discussed in Ito (1994); the present study follows on by exploring the possibilities of various approaches for syllabus design. Grounded on the argument about the aims in Section 2, Section 3 deals with the approaches designed to achieve cognitive and behavioral aims, and Section 4 takes up the approaches intended to achieve affective aims. After that, Section 5 treats the selection of appropriate approaches from various options which are presented in Sections 3 and 4. Lastly, the complex issue of the integration of the culture syllabus into the language syllabus is considered.

2. The Aims at Cognitive, Affective and Behavioral Levels

In Ito (1994), the three divisions of the aims, that is, 'Knowledge and Skill', 'Affective Domain' and 'Learning Strategies' for intercultural education, and 'Communicative Competence', 'Affective Domain' and 'Learning Strategies' for foreign language education, were adopted. This categorization holds true when discussing the matters concerning only the aims, but is inconvenient when considering the problems of syllabus design. That is why the present study instead uses three domains set by Bloom (1954) for the aims of the whole field of education: cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains. According to the definition of Bloom (1954: 7), cognitive domain "includes those objectives which deal with the recall or recognition of knowledge and the development of intellectual abilities and skills", and affective domain "includes objectives which describe changes in interest, attitudes, and values, and the development of appreciations and adequate adjustment". Concerning the psychomotor domain, Krathwohl et al. (1964: 7), in a sequel to Bloom (1954), define it as "objectives which

emphasize some muscular or motor skill, some manipulation of material and objects, or some act which requires a neuromuscular co-ordination". For the discussion in the following sections, the term 'behavioral' is employed instead of 'psychomotor'. This is because 'behavioral' is used in both the fields of intercultural and foreign language education while 'psychomotor' is hardly adopted at all within intercultural education.

In the light of the above consideration, the domains of the aims of foreign language education within the framework of intercultural education, which were presented in Ito (1994), can be recategorized as is shown in Figure 1.

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The domain of communicative competence  ─────────>  Cognitive  level

The affective domain                    ─────────>  Affective  level

The domain of learning strategies       ─────────>  Behavioral level
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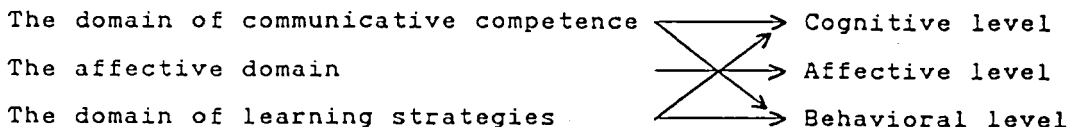
Figure 1. The correspondence between the aims of foreign language education and those of education in general

Figure 1 implies that it is possible for similar approaches to attain the aims in the domains of both communicative competence and learning strategies. It also indicates, however, that different approaches should be taken in order to achieve the aims in the affective domain. The following two sections will deal with possible approaches for designing culture syllabuses which are suitable for achieving the three-divided aims which were outlined in this section: those at the cognitive, affective and behavioral levels.

3. APPROACHES DESIGNED TO ACHIEVE COGNITIVE AND BEHAVIORAL AIMS

As mentioned in the last section, the aims at the cognitive level are achieved when the learner acquires some knowledge. On the other hand, the aims at the behavioral level are accomplished when the learner becomes able to do some performance. This performance is often based on the knowledge which was already obtained as one of the aims at the cognitive level[1]. This is one of the theoretical bases of the scholars who claim the necessity of synthesizing cognitive and behavioral levels. Valette (1971), for instance, claims that Bloom's three-divided taxonomy has to be modified in order to apply it to foreign language education and unites 'cognitive skill' with 'psychomotor skill' ('behavioral level' in this study). Because such integration makes sense, the present work follows Valette's claim.

3.1. Schematic and Empirical Approaches

Nostrand (1966) divides the approaches for the cultural syllabus into two kinds: the schematic approach and the empirical approach.

(a) The schematic approach

This is the most traditional approach, and most of the existing cultural syllabuses may be regarded as depending on it. In the schematic approach, those who design the syllabus de-

scribe the target culture, then categorize that description depending on their intuition. For a traditional example of this approach, Brooks (1964: 90-95) can be cited. He lists sixty four headings of cultural contents which can be dealt with in the classroom. They are, for example, "Greetings, friendly exchange, farewells", "Music" and "Radio and television programs". The inventories of cultural contents and the field to be covered under the name of culture teaching have been getting larger and larger, even though they are narrowed down according to the instincts of those who develop the syllabus. This suggests that some different way to select and order the contents has to be looked for; in other words, another approach for syllabus design is required in order to compensate for the defects of the schematic approach.

(b) The empirical approach

This approach first surveys the experiences of people who have come into contact with native speakers. In this way, the trouble spots which the learner is predicted to encounter when making contact with native speakers are specified. Selection of the contents to be taught reflects the ways to solve the expected problems. This looks promising as an approach which makes up for the shortcomings of the schematic approach, but the culture syllabus which adopts this approach does not exist. There are, however some studies whose results can be a resource for the development of the culture syllabus by the empirical approach. For example, Beebe & Takahashi (1989) carried out a comparative survey on the ways of expressing disagreement and giving embarrassing information. The result showed that there were differences between Americans and Japanese EFL learners. Because these differences may cause misunderstanding, they might have to be dealt with in the Japanese EFL classroom. Some scholars claim that piling up studies of this kind will ultimately lead to some academic organization on which the syllabus using the empirical approach, for instance, is based. However, this perspective might be too optimistic. Some rigid theoretical framework for research may be required before making numerous investigations at random.

3.2. An Approach Focusing on Learning Strategies

The importance of acquiring proper learning strategies has been maintained not only in foreign language teaching but also in intercultural education (e.g. Rubin 1975; Stern 1975). This approach first describes the learning strategies appropriate for language and culture, then selects and orders them, and after that, applies them to the contents of teaching. The standard for selection and sequencing can either be based on the intuition of those who design the syllabus or on the results of surveys on the learning strategies which are used by the good learner. As an instance of a syllabus following this approach, Hébert (1990) presents an inventory of the learning strategies of foreign language learning which are common to those of intercultural education. As those appropriate for seventh to ninth graders in Canada, she brings up two strategies. They are "to practice inferencing skills or intelligent guessing" and "to learn to self-correct" (Hébert 1990: 77).

4. APPROACHES DESIGNED TO ACHIEVE AFFECTIVE AIMS

Approaches designed to achieve the aims of the affective domain can be divided into

two, depending on which components in the affective domain are especially focused on. One of them attempts to enhance the learner's interest and motivation, the other aims at improving the learner's attitude.

4.1. An Approach Focusing on Interest and Motivation

The importance of the learner's interest in foreign language learning has long been recognized. Thus in designing the syllabus, approaches focusing on the learner's interest should be considered more seriously. In this approach, a survey is first done to find out which aspects of the target culture learners are interested in, and then the topics which are popular among learners become the constituents of the culture syllabus. Although there are few culture syllabuses designed according to this approach, there are some surveys whose results will be beneficial in designing this kind of culture syllabus in the future. They investigate the topics concerning the target culture which the learners tend to be interested in. For example, Fukazawa (1980) obtained information on the topics which interest Japanese junior and senior high school students by means of a questionnaire. The students were asked to evaluate topics in the questionnaire depending on the degree of their interest. The result of his survey showed the topics which do and do not attract the learners' interest. Topics such as 'meals' and 'movies' were popular among the students while those like 'morals' and 'religion' did not attract them. Although the importance of giving consideration to the interest of the learner has been advocated, little attention seems to have been paid to it. Further research into this issue is required.

4.2. An Approach Focusing on Attitude

This approach first makes a survey of the aspects of the target culture that help the learners to improve their attitude toward the target culture, and then reflects these aspects on the selection and sequence of the contents in the culture syllabus. There is no existing culture syllabus which adopts this approach, but some studies whose data could be the basis for the actual syllabus can be found. As an instance, Tuttle et al. (1979) insist that the the similarities between native and target cultures should be presented to the learner when the aim of the teaching is the improvement of the learner's attitude toward the target culture. However, it is not at all clear which of these similarities have to be shown to the learner. The improvement of the learner's attitude toward the target culture is an important aim of not only foreign language education but also intercultural education. Further works needs to be done before the culture syllabus can take shape using this approach.

5. SLECTION OF APPROPRIATE APPROACHES FROM VARIOUS OPTIONS

Various approaches were outlined in the previous sections. When deciding which approach should be taken and which approaches should be combined to design a culture syllabus, it is necessary to pay attention to at least three points. The first point to note is that the characteristics of the teaching program and learners affect the choice of approach. For example, when the period of the program is short, what can be dealt with within the term is in-

evitably limited. In this case, it is difficult to use plural approaches to design a syllabus. Secondly, when the span of the course is comparatively long, plural approaches can be adopted to design a syllabus to suit the advancement of the learner. As an instance of this, it is appropriate when designing a culture syllabus for the novice learner to use the approaches for achieving affective aims, and for the intermediate and advanced learner to use the approaches for achieving cognitive and behavioral aims. This is because it is easier to influence the affective side of the young learner than that of the adult learner, as Hendon (1980) remarks. Thirdly, even when the culture syllabus which employs two approaches cannot cover all of the aims, they can be dealt with at the level of methodology. It is not realistic to synthesize more than two approaches; however, it is true that all the aims which the above approaches intend to meet are, without exception, important. This means that the aims which are not expected to be accomplished within the syllabus have to be attained by devising suitable teaching techniques in the classroom.

6. INTEGRATION OF THE CULTURE SYLLABUS INTO THE LANGUAGE SYLLABUS

In discussing the design of the culture syllabus, the integration of the culture syllabus into the language syllabus is another important and complex issue. When the culture syllabus and language syllabus are synthesized, either syllabus has to be the basis of the other. Both the culture and language syllabuses have their own contents and sequence. A sequence of a syllabus cannot be compatible with that of any others; thus only the culture syllabus based on the language syllabus (e.g. Stern 1983) or the language syllabus based on the culture syllabus (e.g. Crawford-Lange 1982) can be developed. In foreign language teaching, however, it is reasonable to give linguistic aspects priority over cultural aspects. This means that the sequence of the contents in the culture syllabus has to be modified according to that in the language syllabus. As a concrete example, Allen (1985) describes a 'culture-based syllabus' (Appendix). Her syllabus comprises four components: context, grammar, functions and culture topics. In spite of the correlation between cultural and functional syllabuses, and that between structural and functional syllabuses, the grammatical syllabus seems to have little to do with the culture syllabus. That is to say, it is possible to graft the cultural syllabus onto the functional syllabus or to combine grammatical and functional syllabuses while it is difficult to unite grammatical and cultural syllabuses. Thus, the integrated syllabus which has grammatical, functional and cultural components could be the most suitable for achieving the aims of intercultural education within the framework of foreign language education. In this respect, the culture-based syllabus of Allen (1985) is quite close to this ideal except for its arbitrary selection of cultural topics, or, in other words, its exclusive dependence upon the schematic approach.

7. Conclusion

A number of approaches for designing the culture syllabus were introduced in the previous sections. However, there are no empirical data which serve as the bases for these approaches; thus a number of surveys have to be made in order to collect the necessary data.

Grounded on the data, it will for the first time be possible to design various culture syllabuses which adopt the approaches shown in the present study. These culture syllabuses must be selected depending on the aims of program or course; they then have to be put into practice in the EFL classroom. After that, the employed syllabus ought to be evaluated in empirical ways in order to find out to what extent the original aims can be achieved by the syllabus. In addition, the issues of methodology[2], material development and testing of intercultural education within the framework of foreign language education have to be discussed.

Note

1. The attainment of the aims at the cognitive level precedes, generally speaking, that of the aims at the behavioral level, but there are some exceptions. Some learners behave appropriately in the target culture unconsciously even though they do not have sufficient knowledge about the target culture. In a case like this, they can be regarded as having achieved the aims at the behavioral level without accomplishing those at the cognitive level.

2. The matter of teaching strategies of intercultural education within foreign language education is discussed in Ito (1993) as a sequel to the present study.

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Appendix

Allen's culture-based syllabus for an introductory-level French course
(Adapted from Allen 1985: 162-165)

CONTEXT	GRAMMAR	FUNCTIONS	CULTURE TOPICS
1. Meeting each other: departure for France Greetings		Extend greetings	Notions of register, body language
Introductions	To be	Make introductions	Notions of register, body language
Simple conversation	Interrogative form	Carry out simple conversation	
Leave-taking	To go Definite article	Say good-bye	Notions of register, body language Tie to basic concrete objects related to travel

CONTEXT	GRAMMAR	FUNCTIONS	CULTURE TOPICS
3. At train station Finding way around			Train station as microcosm of culture: notion of class structure of society
Buying ticket	Official time Immediate future	Interpreting train schedule	Different kinds of tickets