

Chapter 5

Creating Intercultural Learning Opportunities in a Study Abroad Japanese Culture Course

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Note: Section II includes Chapters 4-14. These chapters use a standardized template to discuss the details of their respective study abroad programs and reference Deardorff's (2012) framework for intercultural competencies. The use of this template and the intercultural competencies framework are described in the Section II introduction. All courses in this section (except for Chapter 6) were taught through Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU), a mid-sized state school located in Murfreesboro, Tennessee (USA).

The *MTSU in Japan* (JAPN 3900) program is a short-term study abroad course that explores the traditional and modern culture of Japan with its primary offshore location at Reitaku University in Minami-Kashiwa in Chiba prefecture of Japan. Chiba prefecture is located on Japan's eastern Pacific coast to the east of Tokyo and is part of the Greater Tokyo Area. The key aspect of this course is the thematic-based pedagogical framework that follows a backward design approach where the learning goals drive the learning activities. This kind of framework enables the students to learn, experience, and reflect on the various theme-based cultural artifacts, practices, and ways of thinking in Japan. Excursions and field trips also cover the surrounding prefectures of Tochigi and Kanagawa, as well as the Tokyo metropolitan area. Four weeks are dedicated to the course, and a few days before and after the course are set aside for travel days. Typically, the program runs from around mid-May to mid-June. The program has been conducted three times

so far in 2016, 2017, and 2018, and the number of students in each of those years were 9, 13, and 10 respectively.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

The main goal of the course is to deepen students' understanding of the cultural complexities of thoughts and values in Japanese society seen from both historical and modern-day perspectives. This goal inevitably requires the students to develop critical and analytical skills to gain knowledge, expand on and articulate their ideas, and monitor their own behaviors, all qualities needed in cross-cultural interactions taking place during study abroad. The course was built on a combination of the experiential learning theory (Kolb, 1984) and the thematic unit-based approach (Tohsaku, 2010) to curriculum building. Kolb's (1984) recursive learning cycle includes the following stages: undergoing concrete experiences, observing and reflecting on the experiences, forming abstract concepts or generalizations about those experiences, and testing those generalizations in new contexts. Based on this model, students are encouraged to actively participate, observe, and reflect on concrete cross-cultural experiences. Students discuss their assumptions in class and then test the implications through purposely designed classroom activities or activities outside of the classroom (Jia, 2019).

A thematic unit-based approach was used to design the curricular structure for this course. This approach is one where the main topic is divided into multiple stand-alone units or modules that are interrelated by a recurring theme. A thematic unit is defined as “an instructional unit that organizes teaching around themes or topics and makes it possible for us to integrate instruction across such areas as language, culture, science, art, literature, and social issues” (Tohsaku, 2010). For this course, the main topic of ‘Japanese Culture’ was divided into

modules such as geography and history, cuisine and fast-food culture, family and work culture, religions and beliefs, popular culture and subcultures, school and college cultures, sports and leisure, and exporting Japan's culture. Excursions, hands-on workshops, lectures, guest speakers, and other activities were integrated around these modules.

While the course curriculum was built on the experiential learning theory and a thematic unit-based approach at the granular level, a backward design approach was adopted to connect the thematic units at the macro level. Rather than starting with the content or set textbooks, backward design argues that one starts with the end—the desired results (goals or standards)—and then derives the curriculum from the evidence of learning (performances) called for by the standard and the teaching needed to equip students to perform (Wiggins & McTighe, 1998). For this course, assessment instruments, evaluation criteria, and learning outcomes were put in place before deciding on the theoretical frameworks, course content, and activities.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This program offers multiple opportunities for students to explore diverse aspects of traditional and modern Japanese culture. These opportunities enable the students to critically examine, gain first-hand experience, and then reflect upon the myriad of unique cultural artifacts, practices, and ways of thinking they encounter in the everyday life of the Japanese people and their society. While a strong emphasis is placed on learning by examining, doing, and reflecting, the course curriculum also incorporates required texts and readings as a complementary part of this academic course.

There are two required textbooks that students purchase prior to the start of the program: *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Japanese Culture* by Yoshio Sugimoto (2009), and *Introduction to Japanese Culture* by Daniel Sosnoski (1996). The cultural themes chosen for the course follow the topics in the first book, while the second book provides a collection of essays and short articles on specific Japanese cultural artifacts to supplement the first book. Additionally, I also provide other relevant articles, news clippings, website links, and materials as recommended texts that evolve from year to year. The course is taught in English to include all students regardless of their Japanese language background. However, I do include a short Japanese language lesson at the beginning of each lecture session with the goal of teaching some basic survival Japanese that can be readily used by participants outside of the classroom.

Course Learning Outcomes

There were four primary learning outcomes identified for the course. At the end of this course, the student will be able to:

- a. Critically examine a variety of topics related to Japan's traditional and modern-day popular culture and analyze the changes in the ways of thinking of the Japanese people over time as presented in texts, readings, and lectures.
- b. Actively participate in experiential activities and excursions to develop firsthand knowledge, skills, and attitudes that are effective and appropriate in interacting with the community outside of class.
- c. Reflect upon the similarities and differences between the Japanese culture and their own in a rational and non-judgmental manner.

- d. Appropriately articulate facts and opinions and effectively communicate them in both oral and written presentation formats.

COURSE HISTORY

The idea to offer a faculty-led study abroad program to Japan was first proposed by the Vice Provost for International Affairs (IA) at the university. As part of the university's efforts to increase internationalization on campus and to leave our footprints abroad, faculty members were encouraged to propose an MTSU faculty-led signature program. Several faculty members were funded by the IA office to conduct a reconnaissance trip to investigate the logistics and feasibility for putting together a new program. My program would become the first faculty-led program in Japan from my department. After thorough research of content and resources both in Japan and back home, I selected Reitaku University, located in the suburbs of Tokyo, as the program's destination. We already had an exchange partner agreement with the university for the regular semester and year-long programs, so the initial steps of making connections and relationships occurred relatively swiftly. With assistance from the faculty and staff at Reitaku University, and guidance from foreign language colleagues from my home department, I was able to propose and then offer the first program a year later. I successfully conducted this program for three years prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. My decision to plan, source, budget, and work on all administrative details of the program at MTSU instead of offering it through a consortium or a third-party vendor was driven by a desire to keep the program costs down and to have full autonomy over the curriculum planning.

COURSE LOGISTICS

This 3-credit hour course included 60 hours of in-class lectures in addition to the instruction that occurred during field trips, excursions, and group activities. The course had no prerequisites and could count towards any academic major or minor. Due to the limited available enrollment for the study abroad to Japan, two screening levels were conducted: level 1 was a document review, and level 2 was an in-person interview. For the document review, I included questions mostly on their reasons for participating, how relevant the course would be to their college study, and then logistical questions such as if they had a passport, or if they had previously traveled abroad. For the interview questions, I asked the students more pointed questions about their personal background, including their experience with managing their finances. The purpose of the interview was to see how they behaved in person, if they were suitable for a group setting, and if they came across as thoughtful and empathetic to others. I also encouraged them to share any other issues that they felt comfortable sharing at that point. I decided to include the two-step screening of participants to limit the class size at a maximum of 15 students. For the three years that I ran the program, I did not have to turn away any student after the interview. Following the two screenings, selected students were granted permission to register for the course.

Coincidentally, there was at least one student every year who had to pull out of the program after registration due to financial or personal reasons. In these cases, I refunded the initial deposits to these students.

PRE-PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

I conducted four pre-departure mandatory orientations that were spread throughout the semester prior to the study abroad semester. These sessions were comprised of information sharing pertaining to the logistics of the course, as well as some introductory lectures on cultural etiquette and appropriate behaviors expected of foreigners in Japan. The main purpose of these sessions was information sharing: both content and logistical, including reminders for dates and deadlines, and offering an informal space for the participants to get to know each other.

CLASS ACTIVITIES & INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCIES

During the program, in-class lectures were scheduled in 3-hour slots and delivered once or twice a day. Out-of-class group activities, field trips, and excursions were designed in half-day, full-day, or weekend slots. Outdoor activities were balanced with the in-class lectures to the maximum extent possible. For example, during the week we discussed traditional Japanese sports, we also watched a live sumo wrestling match. During the in-class lecture for this unit, we invited a guest speaker to give us a lesson about the background history and sumo rules that helped us understand and enjoy various parts of the competition. As part of the history unit, we spent a day in Kamakura, a city in the Kanagawa prefecture that was the center of power for the shoguns, or military generals, from 1185 to 1333, when political power and religious beliefs often conflicted.

Whether it was entering the giant Buddha statue at the Kotoku-in temple in Kamakura or visiting the historical Edo-Tokyo Metropolitan Museum in Tokyo, these experiences made history closer to reality for the students. Performing Zen meditation at the local Buddhist

temple, followed by a calligraphy session that involved tracing Buddhist hymns on rice paper in traditional inkstone, was a lesson in how the monks sharpened their concentration skills. Students learned about the rich cuisine culture of Japan through several hands-on workshops, such as making soy sauce at the Kikkoman plant, creating a custom-made cup of ramen noodles by selecting their own ingredients at the Nisshin Cup Noodle Museum, and performing the traditional Japanese tea ceremony in the local teahouse on campus. A visit to the local elementary school provided an opportunity to observe and learn about the teaching and learning styles unique to the Japanese education system. Students also experienced leisure activities, such as karaoke, kabuki theater performance, and an overnight trip to a traditional Japanese hot spring resort in Nikko, a popular town in Tochigi prefecture.

Weekends were free days with optional activities such as a trip to Tokyo Disney Sea, Ghibli Museum, Ueno Zoo, and special events such as the Sailor Moon exhibition. Since the course content involved ten unique cultural topics (such as sports culture, family culture, work culture, school culture, and so forth) based on a common theme centered on Japan, a thematic unit-based pedagogical approach was most suitable to design the curriculum. Each of the ten topics were stand-alone units or modules that were allotted two to three class lecture sessions (usually 4-6 hours per topic) with accompanying activities, field trips, and assignments. Furthermore, the experiential learning theory was purposefully integrated into the curriculum by setting clear expectations about active participation in hands-on activities, outdoor excursions, and various cross-cultural engagements with the local community. It is reassuring to see that the part of the curriculum that was most well-received by the students were the cross-cultural interactions with the local students, whether structured and unstructured. These

opportunities were borne out of the guest lectures and collaborative classes where our students actively initiated and engaged in discussions with the Japanese students. The students formed buddy groups, organized periodic meetings and activities, and forged bonds of friendship beyond the classrooms. Refer to a sample program itinerary in Appendix 5.1 for details on the day-by-day breakdown of cultural topics and the interactive activities tied to each of them.

Scavenger Hunt Activity

During the first week of the program, the students were asked to use a campus map and go around the campus and surrounding places to familiarize themselves. The locations included the student cafeteria, main campus gate, supermarket, convenience store, post office, train station, ATM, fast food restaurant, etc. The students were required to take a selfie at the places that they visited, then compile all the photos in a photo diary and label the pictures appropriately. Finally, they were asked to share the link to the photo diary with their family and friends back home via social media. This activity pushed the students to step out of their comfort zone and start developing navigation skills. The activity also provided them an opportunity to connect with family and friends, hence encouraging empathy. The intercultural competencies highlighted in this activity are listed in Table 5.1. Refer to Appendix 5.2 for the guidelines used for this activity.

Table 5.1. Intercultural Competencies for Scavenger Hunt Activity

Knowledge	Skills	Attitudes
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Locations on campus and around	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Map reading• Creating a photo diary• Navigation skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Curiosity and discovery• Risk-taking• Stepping out of the comfort zone• Empathy

Elementary School Visit Activity

This activity was a full-day visit to a nearby elementary school and was scheduled in the third week of the program. The day's activities involved class observations, a performative activity that involved conducting a 10-minute mini-lesson on the English language for the Japanese schoolchildren, and participation in after-school club activities. For the mini-lesson, the students started preparing a few days before the day of the visit. They worked in groups of two or three to create interactive lesson plans, teaching materials, and visual aids. The lessons included playing games, using songs, learning English animal sounds, word search quizzes, and role plays. There were six groups in total. They were given time to practice during and after class hours and were provided with feedback from me on their lesson plans. On the day of the visit, we were given a pre-planned schedule by the school authorities with class observations in the morning and afternoon, a mini-lesson during the lunch hour, and optional after-school club activities. The students observed a combination of math, craft, and English language classes. Our student groups were divided into sub-groups during the lunch break, where they actively interacted with the schoolchildren to present their English lessons. The mini-lessons were followed by a cleaning routine (sweeping and mopping of the classrooms and hallways) that the Japanese schoolchildren led with assistance from our students. After school, our students were given the

option to attend after-school clubs such as the science club, instrumental music club, etc. The activities during the visit gave our students several opportunities to learn by observing and active listening, to work in groups, and to interact with the local community. This activity provided the students an opportunity to gain intercultural competencies as tabulated in Table 5.2. Refer to Appendix 5.3 for the day's schedule used for this activity.

Table 5.2. Intercultural Competencies for Elementary School Visit Activity

Knowledge	Skills	Attitudes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elementary education system of Japan • Teaching English in Japan • Differences in school culture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating lesson plans • Pair/group work • Class management • Observing • Listening 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open-minded • Stepping outside the comfort zone • Withholding judgment • Resilience • Patience • Tolerance for ambiguity

Inflight Letter Assignment

This was a two-part assignment (at the beginning and at the end of the program) whereby the students wrote a letter to their future self on the onward flight to Japan, and then wrote a reply letter to the first one on the return flight home. The goal of the first letter was to help the students pose at least three questions for which they needed to investigate and come up with answers in Japan. The questions could relate to the course content (that is facts about the Japanese culture they wanted to research), or a reflective question about themselves and their values. The letter assignment was a starting point for reflection on sensitivity to differences,

appreciation and respect of diversity, and openness to novelty, acceptance, and flexibility. This assignment was envisioned as a “pause and think” moment that would naturally lead the students to self-reflect while being creative. Students would later have another “pause and think” moment during their return flight when they wrote a reply to their first letter answering the questions they had posed earlier. It was interesting to see that some students added words of praise and self-encouragement in their letters on how much they had learned and how far they had come in four short weeks. In addition to the in-flight letter assignment, the students also had to write their daily reflections in an online blog and a final reflection paper assignment at the end of the course. These journaling exercises gave students an insight into their internal readiness toward and awareness of another culture. Intercultural competencies integrated into this activity are summarized in Table 5.3. Refer to Appendix 5.4 for the assignment guidelines.

Table 5.3. Intercultural Competencies for In-Flight Letter Assignment

Knowledge	Skills	Attitudes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-awareness • Awareness about other cultures • Academic content 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflective writing • Creative thinking and problem-solving • Research 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curiosity and discovery • Open-minded • Resilience (to complete assignments on the flight!)

Using Public Transit System Task

Since the program involved extensive local traveling almost daily throughout the length of the program, the students needed to become familiar with and confident in using the public transit system (buses, trains, subways, taxis) in Tokyo. While Tokyo's transit system is one of the most efficient in the world, it can also be overwhelming for an inexperienced traveler. Figuring out

the train and subway maps and purchasing the appropriate fare ticket can be a skill category by itself. There are other challenges as well. For example, it is rare to find direct connections between places, and one is often required to make multiple transfers between trains or modes of transport. Another challenge (less in Tokyo city) is to find romanization of station names or English translations of train announcements.

To get the students to understand the transit system and use it independently, I designed a task in which 2-3 students were made in charge of navigating the rest of the group to an assigned destination. They had to research all possible routes and fares to get to the destination on time. On my part, I introduced them to a couple of English language Japanese travel apps and gave them the station names for the start and endpoint. For example, the navigation leaders for the trip to Ghibli Museum used the travel app to decide the best route, with minimum transfers, within a reasonable amount of time, and well before our scheduled entry time. I would do the exact search on my end, and the student leaders and I would compare notes. The best route would be agreed upon by consensus and then shared with the rest of the class to have the same information. On the day of the trip, the navigators would lead the group giving clear directions about the platform number, train transfer, fare for each transfer, etc. In effect, the navigators were responsible for getting the whole group safely and on time to the destination. They would also then lead the way on our return. Since there were numerous places to visit in our itinerary, all students got at least one opportunity to be the group navigator. Students often picked their favorite destination to be the navigator for the day. However, some preferred not to volunteer more than once.

Towards the latter half of the program, students felt comfortable venturing out independently during free time and weekends. This task was immensely beneficial in helping students hone their navigation skills, step out of their comfort zone, and develop leadership skills. This task offered an opportunity where students were pushed into trying something unfamiliar and learned that making mistakes is part of the process. Also since this was a group task, the students always had peer support and were never completely out of their comfort zones. This task allowed the students to focus on intercultural competencies listed in Table 5.4. Refer to Appendix 5.5 for examples of travel apps and travel plans for this task.

Table 5.4. Intercultural Competencies for Using Public Transit System Task

Knowledge	Skills	Attitudes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Locations in Tokyo and suburbs • The public transit system in Tokyo • Differences in transportation cultures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Map reading • Using travel apps • Research and critical thinking • Leadership • Decision making • Teamwork 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patience • Risk-taking • Stepping outside the comfort zone • Withholding judgment • Empathy • Tolerance for ambiguity

Class Presentations Assignment

Besides assigning written research papers and reflection papers, I had students do in-class presentations at various points in the program as part of their evaluated assignments. There were mainly two types of in-class presentations. The first type was a presentation on a topic

from within the content area. Each student had to present one topic of their choice from a list of ten that were relevant to the course. For example, in the unit on leisure culture, a student prepared a presentation on *onsen*, or traditional Japanese spa. This unit was timed immediately before going on a weekend trip to a Japanese *onsen* resort in a location four hours north of Tokyo. For the presentation, the student was asked to include the rules about using a public *onsen*. In the unit on work culture, a student was assigned a presentation on exchanging business cards in Japan. The students then followed up by creating their own business cards in Japanese and role-playing with appropriate bowing etiquette and the proper way of exchanging cards. In the unit on Japanese popular culture, all students made presentations on introducing one of their favorite works and a character from any of the popular culture genres: manga, anime, video games, JPop, and so forth.

The second type of presentation was for the final group project. For this one, each student group had to research a topic of their collective interest related to Japanese culture (traditional or modern) and then make an interactive final oral presentation that would be teachable to their classmates. One group, for example, inspired by the amulets and charms sold at Japanese temples and shrines, researched and presented on this topic. For the interactive activity, they had their classmates make an origami amulet. Another group focused on introducing the New Year festivities of Japan and taught the class three kinds of communal games traditionally played in Japanese homes during the New Year holidays. A third group worked on the housing culture and landscape patterns of modern Japanese homes. For the interactive activity, everyone designed a house floor plan with the characteristics of an eco-friendly Japanese home. Another group worked on Japanese cuisine culture and shared a

Japanese recipe prepared in the dorm kitchen for their final presentation. The assignment required students to make their presentations teachable and interactive, which compelled them to be creative, think out of the box, work in teams, and be empathetic and mindful of each other and their audience. This assignment helped the students develop intercultural competencies as shown in Table 5.5. Refer to Appendix 5.6 for the prompt used for this assignment prompt.

Table 5.5. Intercultural Competencies for Class Presentations Assignment

Knowledge	Skills	Attitudes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic content area • Awareness of other cultures • Differences with own culture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creative thinking and problem-solving • Teamwork • Articulation • Oral presentation • Leadership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open-minded • Empathy • Risk-taking • Patience • Tolerance for ambiguity

Partnerships with Local Students

Both structured and unstructured student interactions in partnership with the local students were built into the program throughout the four weeks. The students evaluated these interactions as the most memorable and enjoyable experiences of the entire program. Group interactions included the following:

- a. Student volunteers from the host university led the effort and organized structured buddy group meetings three times in the program. They organized introductions and games at the first meeting, watched anime followed by discussions in their second meeting, and then set up a kimono-wearing activity at the third meeting.

- b. Our students were invited to participate in a weekly English language table on campus, where they played a variety of creative games learning fun Japanese words and phrases while also helping the host students practice English conversation.
- c. Students on both sides participated in collaborative lectures organized by the faculty. They then kept up the communication by meeting up over the weekends to go for movies, pizza parties, karaoke, and trips to Pokémon Center, Owl Café, Cat Café, Sanrio Store, and more.

These student partnerships led to forming strong bonds of friendship at a very personal level for those students who chose to maintain these friendships even after returning to the United States. It became clear that the program’s curricular structure, with its focus on community interaction, directly impacted the students’ ability to develop intercultural competence. Through these partnerships, the students could gain intercultural competencies as listed in Table 5.6.

Table 5.6. Intercultural Competencies for Partnerships with Local Students

Knowledge	Skills	Attitudes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness of self • Awareness of other cultures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teamwork • Articulation • Observing • Listening 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open-minded • Withholding judgment • Patience • Tolerance for ambiguity • Respect • Adaptability • Flexibility • Empathy

POST-PROGRAM AND FUTURE CLASS ACTIVITIES

There was one mandatory group meeting in the week immediately after our return.

Additionally, one optional information panel session was held in the following semester as part of International Education Week, where students shared their experiences and reflections with the university community.

On the next iteration of the MTSU in Japan program, I would like to incorporate a few different ideas. First, there is still potential to experiment with hands-on class activities and assignments that could help students gain intercultural skills and attitudes: for example, assignments that will require the students to conduct onsite interviews with the local community and collect survey data on various sociocultural phenomena such as the use of English words in Japanese, linguistic code-switching (shifting between a language or dialect), use of personal pronouns, and such. This activity will not only add to their knowledge domain but will result in increased gains in confidence and articulation skills. Given the favorable student feedback on the cross-cultural interactions with the local people, it may be worthwhile to investigate the possibility of arranging home-visit experiences, even if for a weekend. Second, I would like to add practical tasks to the itinerary that require students to use more than just their map-reading and navigational skills. For example, I can have student groups take the initiative to plan and create a full itinerary for a day trip. This would require them to first conduct their own research to select a suitable destination, check out the various modes of transportation available, places to eat, things to do, time management, and budgeting. The preparation for this activity would span over several weeks and can be assigned for deployment during one of the several free weekends. Third, the online photo album assignments could be swapped out with a few shorter, low-stake

extra credit assignments using social media to keep the students engaged and motivated. Finally, as many of the past participants have been Japanese majors and minors, it would be useful to increase the number of optional opportunities for casual conversations with local speakers. Such experiences would be excellent occasions for students to improve their Japanese language proficiency.

EVALUATION AND ASSIGNMENTS

The evaluation criterion for this course was based on the following components;

1. Attendance and Class Participation 15%
2. Chapter summaries 5%
3. In-flight letter assignment 5%
4. Presentations 10%
5. Photo diaries 20%
6. Daily online blog 20%
7. Final group project 15%
8. Reflection paper 5%
9. Discipline 5%

I measured the daily and weekly progress made by the students through formative assessments, such as class participation, chapter summaries, in-flight letter assignment, daily

online journaling blog, photo diaries, and presentations for each of the topic sets. These formative assessment tools assisted me in periodically gauging the amount of material learned by the students. The summative assessment included the final group project and the reflection paper assignment that helped me evaluate how much the students had learned throughout this program. The ultimate goal of using the formative and summative assessment tools was to see how much of the students' learning outcomes had been attained.

In addition, I assigned 5% of the overall grade to soft skills such as politeness, respect for others, active listening and engagement, and teamwork. At the beginning of the course, it was made clear that there would be no tolerance for behaviors related to tardiness, disruptions, disrespect towards others, and lack of discipline. I had the students sign a contract that spelled out the program policies, rules, and regulations at both institutions and consequences for violations. I included several items in the contract that directly referred to the targeted soft skills. Refer to Appendix 5.7 for a sample of the contract agreement for this course.

STUDENT FEEDBACK

The reflection papers that students submitted at the end of the course yielded encouraging responses specific to gains in intercultural competencies during the three years of the *MTSU in Japan* program. Below are three direct quotes taken from the student reflection papers.

Following each quote, the program year and the intercultural competencies gained by the students are listed.

1. “For me, personally, the greatest impact of the program was a sense of inspiration and determination...Before the program, I was uncertain of how comfortable I would

be living and working in Japan. After this past month, I am absolutely sure that I would be thrilled to live the rest of my life there. Furthermore, I have witnessed firsthand how my current skill set and education stack up against the necessities of Japanese life, and that translates into a very clear goal for my continued studies.”

(Student 1, 2017, determination, taking risks, Japanese language skills)

2. “The best takeaway from this trip is the appreciation of two cultures: Japan and home. I found myself comparing a lot of things I experienced here to America. It’s important to have a chance to step back and reflect on one’s own too. Because many of us have lived our lives in one place, we can ignore and take for granted our own culture. Our culture is our norm and our everyday, so we can’t see it from an outside perspective. Having a chance to go to a country on the opposite side of the world than mine was a perfect opportunity to do that... This trip gave me more confidence than I previously had about studying abroad for a year in Japan.” *(Student 2, 2017, appreciation of other cultures, comparing and analyzing, reflection, confidence)*
3. “I would recommend this program to another student because of just how much can be gained from the experience. I feel like a changed person; I feel compelled to be nicer to those around me, more appreciative of what others do for me, and more respectful of nature and the products we consume. I feel happier and like that my life has been much more enriched by this experience. For those who are going into a field that has the potential to touch international audiences, I believe a study abroad experience, especially to Japan, is almost necessary so that you can become sensitive

to world views and another culture that is so different than our own.” (*Student 3, 2018, appreciative of others, respectful, intercultural sensitivity, observing differences*)

To summarize these quotes, the students themselves experienced transformation in more than one way. Even in this short-term program, they saw a visible growth in their own intercultural competency skills (compare, analyze, reflect, etc.) and attitudes (empathy, adaptability, open-mindedness, etc.). As a faculty leader, it is extremely gratifying to see such outcomes, especially when articulated by the participants themselves.

CAVEATS AND REFLECTIONS

Although the *MTSU in Japan* program has only been offered three times as of August 2023, I think it has been able to achieve its purpose of introducing diverse aspects of the Japanese culture to our students in ways that would not have been possible with an on-campus iteration of the same course. In addition to providing the content knowledge, this course also effectively integrated key intercultural competencies by intentionally weaving them into the class activities, tasks, and assignments. The experiential activities and tasks involving cross-cultural interactions provided the most opportunity to integrate intercultural competency skills and attitudes. As a faculty leader, it is encouraging to see that the intercultural competency-infused activities and interactions led some students to make important life decisions, such as going for an extended second study abroad and applying for jobs to teach English in Japanese schools after graduation.

In future programs, it might be helpful to add a few more opportunities for students to come together for reflections in the post-program stage of the cycle. Although some of the students continued to communicate through social media, those post-program activities

gradually declined as time went by. It might also be helpful to talk to students about what intercultural competencies are and encourage them to always be mindful of those. Including the intercultural competency elements in the assessment rubrics would also be one way to make their importance visible to the students. Faculty leaders must intentionally introduce the students to the benefits of developing intercultural competencies starting as early as possible, even during the recruitment stage. With some creativity, the ideas presented in this chapter can be effectively adapted to any other short-term, faculty-led study abroad program regardless of the discipline.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 5.1: Sample Itinerary

Appendix 5.1: Sample Itinerary for Japan Program

Date	Morning	Afternoon
May 10	Depart Nashville	
May 11		Arrive Tokyo
May 12	Campus orientation	
May 13		Tokyo Tower evening tour
May 14	Course Introduction	Lecture 1 (introduction) Evening: Welcome party
May 15	Lecture 2 (sports culture)	Sumo guest lecture Buddy Group Meeting #1
May 16	Edo Tokyo Museum	Sumo Tournament
May 17	Lecture 3 (food culture)	Lecture 3 continued (food culture) Traditional sit-down dinner
May 18	Kamakura	Kamakura
May 19	Free day	Optional: Meiji Jingu, Harajuku, Shibuya
May 20	Free day	Optional: Asakusa
May 21	Lecture 4 (family culture)	Lecture 5 (religions)
May 22	Kikkoman Shoyu Sauce Museum	Guest lecture (Japanese religions)
May 23	Lecture 6 (work culture)	Lecture 6 continued (work culture)
May 24	Kabuki Museum	Kabuki Performance
May 25	Lecture 7 (pop culture)	Lecture 7 continued (pop culture) Buddy Group Meeting #2
May 26	Free day	Optional: Sumida River cruise, Odaiba
May 27	Nikko onsen	Nikko onsen
May 28	Nikko onsen	Nikko onsen
May 29	Cross cultural communication guest lecture	Lecture 8 (school culture) Temple Visit for Zazen
May 30	Elementary school visit	Elementary school visit
May 31	Toshiba Museum	Free time
June 1	Transfer to YMCA in Tokyo city	Tokyo tour
June 2	Yokohama: Nisshin Cup Museum	Ramen Museum
June 3	Free day	Optional: Akihabara, Nezu
June 4	Free day	
June 5	Return to Reitaku campus	Lecture 9 (leisure culture)

Date	Morning	Afternoon
		Tea Ceremony on campus
June 6	Ghibli Studio Visit	
June 7	Lecture 10 (exporting Japanese culture)	Wrap up (final projects prep)
June 8	Final Projects	Final Projects Buddy Group Meeting #3
June 9	Free day	Optional: Karaoke
June 10	Free day	Optional: Tokyo Disney
June 11	Free day	packing and post office
June 12	Depart Tokyo	Arrive Nashville

Appendix 5.2: Reitaku Scavenger Hunt Guidelines

Objectives: Getting to know the Reitaku University campus and surroundings

Directions:

1. Go to the following destinations on foot and take a picture.
2. Create a "Reitaku Scavenger Hunt" PhotoPeach album. Label your pictures.
3. Upload the link as part of your daily blog for May 26.

Destinations:

- a. Hiiragi Café (with a Reitaku student)
- b. Main Gate or Side Gate entry to campus (with a guard man)
- c. Rose Garden (smelling the roses)
- d. Yamazaki convenience store (with your favorite snack)
- e. "Reitaku Daigaku Mae" Bus stop (going towards the station)
- f. Post Office (closest to campus)
- g. Seven-Eleven ATM
- h. Okaasan supermarket
- i. Lawson convenience store
- j. Your favorite restaurant around campus

Appendix 5.3: Elementary School Visit Schedule

Appendix 5.3: Elementary School Visit Schedule

Start Time	Activity
9:00-10:30	Lecture/Prep at CMSE Classroom
10:50	Leave campus
11:00	Arrive at school, explanation, school tour, etc.
11:20	4th class period observation
12:05	Lunch (bring your lunch)
12:40-12:50	Mini Lesson
12:50	Break
13:15-13:35	Cleaning activity
13:40	5th class period observation
14:25	Wrap up meeting
14:45	Club activities observation
15:30	Return to campus

Appendix 5.4: Inflight Letter Assignment Guidelines

You will be required to write a letter to your future self during the onward flight posing three (3) questions that you would like to know about Japan. On the return flight, you will reply to this letter while answering those questions. To answer the questions, you will need to investigate the questions during your time in Japan. There will be two (2) letter assignments in total.

Guidelines

Write a letter addressed to your future self, formatted with an opening, main body, and closing. In the main body, compose three (3) questions related to the theme of this course (Japanese traditional and modern culture) that you would like to explore in Japan. While in Japan, investigate the answers to these questions.

You will write a reply addressed to yourself following the same format (opening, main body, closing) on your return flight. In the main body, you will be answering the questions you had posed in the first letter. Keep the answers to each question brief, 150-200 words at minimum for each answer.

Appendix 5.5: Public Transportation Sample Plan

Japanese Travel Apps

<https://www.hyperdia.com/>

https://world.jorudan.co.jp/mln/en/?sub_lang=ja

Sample Travel Plan to Ghibli Museum

Start Point: Minami-Kashiwa

Destination: Mitaka

Total time: 76 minutes

Total fare: 910 Yens

Number of Transfers: One

Table 5.7: Travel details to go from Minami-Kashiwa to Mitaka

From	Via	To	Notes
Minami-Kashiwa	Ayase (non-stop)	Shin Ochanomizu	Takes 22 minutes and costs 510 Yens using the JR Joban Line Local that changes to Tokyo Metro Chiyoda Line for Mukougaoka Yuen
Shin Ochanomizu	Ochanomizu	Mitaka	Walk 6 minutes to the JR Special Rapid for Takao which takes 27 minutes and costs 400 Yens

Appendix 5.6: Final Class Presentation Guidelines

The final group project will be an interactive class presentation on a topic related to Japanese culture. Each group consisting of 2-3 students will make a 30-minute presentation on the final day. All members of the group must contribute equally to get a fair grade for this project.

Detailed guidelines are given below:

The final project will be an interactive group project involving a topic of your choice. Each group must follow the criteria given below:

- a. Choose any topic that interests your group or has not been covered in this class.
- b. Your presentation must include a compare and contrast element of that topic with American culture. You may present the pros and cons of each culture, looking at why they are different in those ways.
- c. You will need to make the presentation interactive with the audience by way of teaching them through your research something that they did not know.
- d. Structure your presentation to include title, introduction, main content, conclusion, references. Include activities such as short skits, pop quizzes, games -- be creative!
- e. Prepare a brief outline for the project (include title, intro, main body, conclusion) and get it approved by me by Friday, May 25
- f. The length of the presentation will be 30 minutes per group.

Appendix 5.7: Participant Contract Agreement Sample

- I will attend all class sessions and all events that are a part of the program itinerary (my grades will be affected adversely should I not adhere to the attendance policy).
- I will be punctual to all class sessions as well as group events and will not make excuses for tardiness. (**Tardiness will NOT be tolerated as group events are coordinated with the help of many individuals*).
- I understand that I serve as an ambassador for both MTSU and the United States, and I will uphold the highest standard of student conduct and behavior.
- I will refrain from certain behaviors and activities that carry unacceptable risk both to myself and others.
- I will agree to use the 3-3-4-4 (*san-san-yon-yon*) buddy system at all times during our travels.
- I understand that this is an academic experience and that academic responsibilities take priority.
- If there is a medical emergency, I will contact my program faculty/leaders immediately.
- I will read, understand, and abide by the laws of Reitaku University and Scholars Dorm (read p.2).
- I will not travel overnight without faculty supervision. I agree to the curfew time of 10 pm on all weekdays and weekends.
- I will strive to
 - Being polite and listen to one another
 - Participate and engage with the group
 - Respect other students, leaders, and local people affiliated with the program
- I understand MTSU policy prohibits alcohol (even if you are of drinking age) or drug use as this is an MTSU-sponsored program.

Consequences for Violation

1. Verbal warning
2. Written warning
3. Dismissal

By signing this document, you agree to the above contract details.

Student Name (printed):

Student Name (signed) and Dated:

Student cell phone #: