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Chapter 6

Developing Learner Autonomy Through a Three-Week Learning Trip in Japan

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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 program in Chapter 6 was conducted through the University of South Florida located in Tampa, Florida (USA).

USF Japan: Culture, History, and Society is a summer program offered through the University of South Florida (USF). During this program, 20 participants visit nine different cities in Japan, traveling from western Japan to eastern Japan in mid-May to early June during the summer session at USF. The following cities are visited: Fukuoka, Nagasaki, Beppu, Hiroshima, Kyoto, Osaka, Nara, Tokyo, and Yokohama. A unique feature of this program is the attention on nurturing learner autonomy and on the role of the faculty as a facilitator. Various activities, tasks, and assignments were designed keeping these features in mind.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

When designing this course, three different theoretical foundations were considered: a constructivist approach; an experiential learning-based approach; and a collaborative approach. Creating student-centered learning environments and developing learner autonomy were the main approaches for the learning trip in Japan. Thus, in designing the course, a constructivist approach was considered because learning is a social activity through interaction with others (Dewey, 1938). In the constructivist approach, it is believed that people actively construct their own knowledge and that they build new knowledge upon the foundation of previous learning (Elliott et al., 2000; Phillips, 1995). For that, learners need to become aware of their own process of making meaning and appreciate how other people make meaning in different ways (Harvey, 2017). Through this approach, participants may construct their knowledge of Japan and Japanese culture rather than being passive participants (McLeod, 2019; University of Buffalo, 2022). Therefore, the faculty leader designed the course by creating activities that facilitated the construction of knowledge and experience. During the pre-departure phase, the participants read about various topics on general Japanese concepts that underlie the Japanese daily code of conduct related to their learning trip. The participants then reinforce the information learned from reading by experiencing it firsthand during the learning trip. The participants also reflect on their learning and experiences during the post-trip phase. These three phases, pre-departure, learning trip, and post-trip, allow the participants to transform their experience into learning through reflection and conceptualization. The phases were implemented into the course to facilitate an experiential learning-based approach for participants.

The second theoretical foundation used was the experiential learning-based approach that involves hands-on experiences in learning. Moreover, in an experiential learning-based approach, learners need concrete experiences, reflection on those experiences, and connection with concepts and other experiences in order to make meaning (Harvey, 2017). Through the learning cycle of experiencing, reflecting, thinking, and acting, they apply what they have learned to a new concrete experience (Harvey, 2017; Kolb, 1984). In this course, the participants experience the cycle of input and discussion, experience, and reflection for their effective learning to occur. Effective learning varies individually, so the curriculum must be adapted accordingly.

There is a need for the course theme to be general or flexible due to the participants' various backgrounds since students from various disciplines can apply for the course. For that purpose, the faculty leader's role should be interactive as a facilitator. Additionally, throughout the learning trip in Japan, the participants work in groups, collaborating and cooperating with each other in a variety of hands-on activities, which also leads to the third theoretical foundation, collaborative approach. A collaborative approach involves teamwork, pools in different abilities of learners, and allows differentiated teaching practices with different groups (Yadav, 2021). Throughout the course, especially during the learning trip in Japan, teamwork and collaboration are essential elements for the successful completion of the study abroad program.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The course was designed to facilitate a successful knowledge base of Japan, and participation is open to students from any disciplines or background. The course seeks to nurture the

participants' multicultural awareness needed to successfully navigate today's society and to investigate general concepts of Japanese culture, history, and society.

This course aims to give the participants an overall understanding of Japan and its culture through firsthand experiences in Japan. It also aims to nurture learner autonomy and enhance adaptability and flexibility through a variety of hands-on experiences, as well as to step out of their comfort zones. Students will develop a broad understanding of Japanese society and culture through readings and field trips. Through the course, the participants will be able to learn about another country, compare cultural differences with their own, and broaden their perspectives.

In this course, the participants engage in activities where they read and learn about the basics of Japan's culture, history, and society. There is no core textbook for the course; however, the participants read chapters from *The Japanese Mind: Understanding Contemporary Japanese Culture* (Davies & Ikeno, 2011), *Understanding Japanese Society* (Hendry, 2012), *Wabi Sabi: The Japanese Art of Impermanence* (Juniper, 2011), and *Japanese Rinzai Zen Buddhism* (Borup, 2008). Through these readings, they gain general knowledge about Japanese society and culture before their trip to Japan. Additionally, students obtain firsthand personal experiences in Japan, analyze their learning experiences, and discuss cultural differences for further understanding. Finally, the students identify and demonstrate knowledge attained about the different elements of Japanese culture, history, and society.

Moreover, the participants focus on one of the following topics (but not limited to them) throughout the program:

1. People in general

2. Daily food
3. Community
4. Culture
5. Religious practices
6. Urban planning and neighborhood

Course Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the program, the participants will be able to:

- a. Differentiate Japanese culture and society from their own.
- b. Express appreciation of cultural differences.
- c. Report a deeper understanding of Japanese culture and society.
- d. Present certain significant aspects of Japanese culture and/or society by creating a picture portfolio.

COURSE HISTORY

The course was originally designed as a geo-perspective course for the USF Honors College in 2014. The course served as an introductory course about Japan to the Honors College students, where they learned about Japanese society. In its first year, it had two-week in-classroom sessions before the two-week learning trip in Japan. Since it gained popularity among non-Honors College students, especially among the students in the Japanese program, it was modified to the current course style (JPT4957) after submitting the course proposal to the

Florida State Board of Education. Until 2019, for five consecutive years, USF Japan was one of the most popular summer programs at USF. After a brief pause starting in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic's travel restrictions, the program resumed in the summer of 2023.

COURSE LOGISTICS

The study abroad applications open on the USF Education Abroad website at the beginning of the new academic year in August of every year, with rolling admission. The Japan program usually becomes full by the end of November. No prerequisite courses are required to take part in this summer program in Japan; any students at USF or any other institutions who are interested in Japanese culture and society can apply for the program with or without prior Japanese language knowledge. It is not a required course for World Languages majors with an East Asian Languages concentration, but it can be an elective course. Often, students take this course because of their interests. Once 20 students are accepted and committed, the Education Abroad office enrolls the participants in *JPT4957 Japan Study Program: Culture, History* and in the summer A term, which is a three-credit hour course. There is no formal in-class instruction during the course session; however, the participants and the faculty leader start meeting informally during the spring semester for pre-departure activities.

PRE-PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

Even though the primary focus of the course is the three-week learning trip to Japan, during the pre-departure phase, the students gather for at least three meetings and become familiar with fellow participants and the faculty leader. A constructivist approach and collaborative approach are strongly taken into consideration in this phase. The purposes of these meetings are to create

a student-centered environment, promote learner autonomy, and encourage teamwork among students. They are also assigned a series of reading materials designed to impart the basic knowledge of Japanese culture and history and to provide a foundation for the three-week learning experience in Japan. The reading assignments are mainly from books titled *The Japanese Mind: Understanding Contemporary Japanese Culture* (Davies & Ikeno, 2011) and *Understanding Japanese Society* (Hendry, 2012). Students also learn about Japanese Zen Buddhism and Shintoism, a religion that originated in Japan, from the assigned readings. A few topics from the texts are assigned before each meeting, and the participants discuss and share their opinions about the topics in small group settings to deepen and expand their understanding, and eventually narrow down their primary focus of observation and learning during their stay in Japan.

Additionally, some of the topics are taken up for discussion by the whole class. At the end of each meeting, a quick formative verbal assessment is conducted with a few review questions about keywords and concepts. The faculty leader acts as a facilitator for discussions to encourage learner autonomy. At the end of each meeting, the groups verbally review the discussion topics together, which serves as a quick formative assessment of their understanding. As a final component of the pre-program activities, the participants submit an expectation essay of at least 1,000-words regarding what they would focus on observing and what they expect to gain in Japan before their departure to Japan.

Furthermore, depending on the participants' backgrounds with the Japanese language, the faculty leader provides a summary of the language and the basic and useful phrases for those

with no prior knowledge of the language. Participants with higher Japanese proficiency sometimes act as mentor teachers and offer quick and simple Japanese lessons to others.

CLASS ACTIVITIES & INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCIES

During the three-week learning trip to Japan, there is no classroom instruction provided. An experiential learning-based approach is the main approach in this phase, where the participants visit various locations to learn through observations and firsthand personal experiences. They travel from Kyushu, in the western part of Japan, to Tokyo, in the eastern part of Japan. As the participants travel through the learning trip, they rely on the public transportation systems in Japan including buses, subways, trains, and bullet trains, and become familiar with navigating around the country. The participants learn a lot about Japan through their hands-on experiences in this learning trip phase. Collaboration, cooperation, and teamwork, as well as harmony, are essential during the learning trip since all the participants travel around the country together. For the complete schedule summary, see Appendix 6.1.

The three-week learning trip in Japan consists of a variety of hands-on activities. The core intercultural competencies that emerged as a result of these activities were flexibility, adaptability, stepping out of the comfort zone, and awareness of self and other cultures. The following are examples of the activities, tasks, and assignments.

Activities

Through the course activities, the participants developed teamwork, collaboration, adaptability, and observation skills as demonstrated through the following activities.

Presentations at National Institute of Technology, Oita College

During the pre-departure phase, the participants were divided into five small groups (four students in each group) that prepared a seven-minute slide presentation in simple English. They selected their presentation topics on the introduction of 1. USF, 2. Florida and Tampa, 3. Theme Parks in Florida, 4. Famous sightseeing spots in the United States, and 5. Popular food in the United States.

These presentations were given to a college English class at the National Institute of Technology, Oita College. USF students set up five presentation stations in a lecture room. The Japanese students were also divided into five small groups. USF students remained at their own station while Japanese students rotated in groups to a different station every ten minutes (seven-minute presentation and three-minute Q&A). In this way, USF students repeated their presentations five times to different audiences. As they repeated, they gradually adapted themselves for better and more efficient presentation deliveries; they adjusted themselves more toward their audience. Many of them started bending over or kneeling on the floor so that they could maintain eye contact on the same level with their audience on a chair instead of standing in front of them. They also started using more body movements and hand gestures to express their messages. Some mixed the Japanese language when the audience had some difficulty understanding English. By the time they repeated their presentations five times, they had improved their presentation skills dramatically and gained self-confidence in delivering their messages to the audience. They also brought gifts from USF and Florida and snack samples for

the Japanese students to taste. This activity provides the students an opportunity to gain the intercultural competencies identified in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1. Intercultural Competencies for Presentations at Oita College

Knowledge	Skills	Attitude
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness about self and other culture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teamwork • Collaboration • Critical thinking • Technology skills • Observing • Decision making • Learning through interaction – communication skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexibility • Adaptability • Stepping out of the comfort zone

Taiko Drum Lesson

In the 2019 program, the participants learned how to play the Japanese Taiko Drum by receiving an hour-long lesson from professional Taiko performers in Tokyo. Participants first learned how to hold the Taiko drumsticks and stand properly in front of the drum, and then how to hit the drum. They were divided into 4 groups by rows and started with simple hits and gradually learned how to hit harmoniously. They were encouraged to shout out loud in Japanese as they were instructed. In the beginning, participants felt shy but eventually stepped out of their comfort zone to try speaking louder and harder. They repeatedly practiced the same rhythm until their drumbeats sounded in harmony. At the end of the lesson, their performance synchronized as a complete piece of music, and the participants' smiles were sparkling with a sense of accomplishment and confidence. Intercultural competencies gained by the participants through this task are shown in Table 6.2.

Table 6.2. Intercultural Competencies for Taiko Drum Lesson

Knowledge	Skills	Attitude
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culture-specific knowledge, e.g., Taiko 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teamwork • Collaboration • Harmony • Learning through interaction • Observing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curiosity • Discovery • Stepping out of the comfort zone • Open-minded • Adaptability • Flexibility

Tasks

Through the tasks, the participants developed decision-making, navigation, map reading, and judgment skills.

Meeting with the Faculty Leader at the Hotel Lobby in Fukuoka, Japan

The participants were to travel to the first destination by themselves since many of them had a preferred itinerary to travel to Japan; each participant decided when and how to travel to the first destination instead of traveling as a whole class. They were also given the choice to travel with the faculty leader to Japan and were encouraged to travel with other participants in groups. Through the pre-departure meetings and group chats, the participants became familiar with each other and most of them decided to travel together as a group. They were provided with detailed instructions on how to transit at international airports in Japan, how to get to the subway station at the airport, how to buy a subway ticket and take a subway, and how to get to the hotel from the subway exit (see Appendix 6.2). Ultimately, their very first task in the learning

trip was to arrive safely at the hotel in Fukuoka by the predetermined date and time. Thus far, all the participants have managed to arrive at the hotel on time.

Witnessing their proud and relieved smiles upon arrival is priceless every single time. Participants gain confidence through this “survival” task since this is the first time traveling abroad and taking the subway for many of the participants. Even though detailed instructions have been provided by the faculty leader, participants often use their own strategies to accomplish the task. In previous years, some participants asked strangers to help them out with directions and arrived at the hotel accompanied by a Japanese person. Some used Google maps, and one even took a taxi on their own from the airport. Intercultural competencies integrated into this activity are summarized in Table 6.3.

Table 6.3. Intercultural Competencies for Meeting with the Faculty Leader in Fukuoka

Knowledge	Skills	Attitude
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness about other cultures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical thinking • Decision making • Navigation skills • Map Reading • Planning • Observing • Interacting independently with the local people and system - Communication skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making judgment • Stepping out of the comfort zone • Risk-taking • Tolerance for ambiguity • Flexibility

Climbing Mountains – Mt. Misen and Mt. Inari

Since there are no mountains in Florida, many students at USF are not accustomed to seeing mountains in their daily life nor climbing them. Thus, we have decided to incorporate mountain climbing experiences into the program. We have two events related to mountains: one at Mt. Misen on Miyajima Island in Hiroshima and the other at Mt. Inari at the Fushimi Inari Shrine in Kyoto. These are not mandatory activities; depending on the participants' health and physical conditions, they can choose whether to opt-out or complete the tasks.

Mt. Misen is a 535m high (1755 ft) mountain. A ropeway leads up the mountain from the town, and we must climb the rest of the way to the peak, which is another 100m higher (328 ft) from the upper ropeway station. The participants can choose to enjoy the scenery at the observatory near the ropeway station and wait for others who hike up the mountain peak to come back. Those who prefer a challenge can trek up to the peak on unpaved hiking paths and enjoy the spectacular view of the Seto Inland Sea. There are numerous Buddhist structures near the peak to stop by while hiking. They can always return to the ropeway station in the middle of hiking depending on their physical conditions. The whole group unites at the upper ropeway station about two hours after hiking.

Mt. Inari is located behind the Fushimi Inari Shrine, which enshrines Inari, the god of the rice harvest, commerce, and business. The mountain is 233m high (764 ft), and there is a pilgrimage circle with paved stairs around the shrines. There are thousands of red *torii* (Shinto Shrine gates) along the hiking paths. Upon arrival at Fushimi Inari Shrine, the participants are to look freely around the main shrine areas and climb up the mountain and meet back at the entrance of the shrine at a set time in about two hours.

Through these mountain climbing tasks, according to the interviews with the participants after the activity, they have developed self-confidence and a sense of accomplishment. The faculty leader witnessed that the students encouraged one another to keep up with their fellow participants while hiking. Some students have also built leadership skills in navigating through the hiking trails. Intercultural competencies observed in this activity are identified in Table 6.4.

Table 6.4. Intercultural Competencies for Climbing Mountains

Knowledge	Skills	Attitude
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness of self 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Navigation skills • Map reading 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making judgment • Decision making • Stepping out of the comfort zone • Risk-taking • Hardworking

POST-PROGRAM AND FUTURE ACTIVITIES

After the learning trip to Japan, the participants think back and reflect on their experiences in Japan. This functions as the reflection and thinking phases of Kolb's learning cycle in the experiential learning-based approach (Harvey, 2017; Kolb, 1984). Participants connect to the acting phase of the learning cycle by incorporating the values and behaviors that they have learned in this course into their daily lives. They submit a 1,000-word reflection essay that highlights their experience in Japan. In this essay, they look back on their trip and identify the most influential or eye-opening moments for them. In addition, participants consider how they can apply their cross-cultural experiences to their lives as a global citizen. Based on their reflections, the participants have discussions about what they have learned through the course.

The comparisons of the expectation and reflection essays are remarkable. In their expectation essays, many participants state their concerns that their unconscious behaviors as foreign visitors may offend Japanese people or that they may accidentally do something rude in Japan. They express more concern than excitement before their trip. In their reflection essay, on the other hand, they state that they should be more considerate of others and what they should do in the United States to improve their society. Examples of actions they mentioned in the essays are lining up while waiting for a bus or train, walking on one side on walkways, and standing on one side of escalators instead of standing in the middle so those who are in a hurry can pass on the other side. Many students stated that they now observe the society of the United States more objectively and show a sense of confidence in their reflection essay.

In addition to the essay, the students select five photos of significance from the trip, with at least a two-sentence caption that explains why each photo was chosen and why it was of significance to the trip. During the following fall semester, the participants are encouraged to present their experiences in Japanese courses, USF Japanese Culture Club meetings, and Education Abroad information sessions.

Upon reflection of this trip, there could be improvements to future activities. During the trip, the participants have limited interaction with Japanese people in their age group. Thus, we would like to include visits to more schools during the trip. It could be a high school or a college/technical school. Ideally, we would visit one school in western Japan and another school in the Tokyo area. The faculty leader is working on arranging one visit with her former colleague who currently works at a technical school in Japan. In addition, when planning for future study abroad, students in both schools can begin with virtual language and cultural

exchanges on Microsoft Teams during the academic year before the summer. These virtual exchanges will serve as pre-trip activities in which the students get to know each other. In the summer, the participants will visit the technical school in Japan for in-person activities for a day.

Another possible activity is food education. Participants visit a farm in Kyoto, where they help harvest vegetables and learn about nutrition and how to cook them since many enjoy Japanese cuisine and are interested in learning about Japanese food. Through the process of harvesting and cooking the vegetables, the participants are required to interact with the farmers to deepen their knowledge of the food that they consume daily.

Through these interactions with local people, participants can enhance their understanding of others' worldviews and culture-specific knowledge. Moreover, since most of the participants may not be very familiar with farming in general, they would learn how vegetables are grown and processed before going on the market. Furthermore, the farmers may not speak much English; some of the participants with higher Japanese proficiency may need to play the role of a translator, which will be a great opportunity to improve their Japanese language and leadership capabilities.

EVALUATION AND ASSIGNMENTS

Grades are issued based on the total points earned for the pre-departure preparation for the trip, the trip participation, and the completion of the assignments. Table 6.5 shows the grading distributions which have been used for the course:

Table 6.5. Evaluation Breakdown

Phase of Course	Assignments	Point Value
Pre-departure Phase	Reading and Discussions	10
	Expectation Essay	10
Learning Trip	Participation in Daily Activities	60
Post-trip Phase	Reflection Essay	10
	Significant Photos with a Caption	10
Total Point Value		100

The pre-departure assignments are used as formative assessments to evaluate how the participants are learning through reading and discussions. During the learning trip, the faculty leader observes the individual students for their participation in daily activities. If a participant has a problem following the program itinerary, the faculty leader would privately follow up with the individual. In that sense, formative assessments are used throughout the learning trip. The post-trip assignments are used for summative assessments to evaluate how much the participants have learned throughout the course. Since the participants are from different disciplines, the scope of the assignment topics are set broadly depending on the students' purposes and interests.

Expectation Essay

During the pre-departure phase, the participants meet with the faculty leader at least three times and discuss Japanese culture and society based on their previous knowledge, experience, and reading assignments. We also ask previous participants to join the meetings and share their experiences and advice. Before their departure to Japan in May, the participants are asked to submit an expectation essay (at least 1,000 words) regarding what they want to gain from the trip, what they want to focus on observing and learning, etc. Since the participants' majors and

backgrounds vary, they have autonomy in their learning focus. This assignment allowed the students to focus on the intercultural competencies listed in Table 6.6.

Table 6.6. Intercultural Competencies for Expectation Essay

Knowledge	Skills	Attitude
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness of self 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Articulation in writing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Autonomy • Curiosity

Reflection Essay and Five Photos of Significance

Upon their return to the United States, the participants start working on a reflection essay (at least 1,000 words). In this essay, students reflect on their trip and identify what were the most influential or eye-opening experiences. In addition, students would consider how they can apply their cross-cultural experiences to their lives as a global citizen. Based on the reflections, the students discuss what they learned through the course. In addition to the essay, they select five photos of significance from the trip, with at least a two-sentence caption that explains choice selection and why it is significant to them (see Appendix 6.3 for assignment details). Students submit the essay and photos two weeks after the program ends in Tokyo. This assignment allowed the students to focus on the intercultural competencies identified in Table 6.7.

Table 6.7 Intercultural Competencies for Reflection Essay and Photos of Significance

Knowledge	Skills	Attitude
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness of self • Understanding others' worldviews • Deeper knowledge and understanding of culture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Articulation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open-minded • Reflection • Discovery

STUDENT FEEDBACK

The score on the student course evaluations in 2019 was 4.96 out of 5.00. The only category that received “very good” rather than “excellent” was the “expression of expectation for performance” category in the USF course evaluation. Upon reflection, the faculty leader should have articulated clearer explanations and expectations to the participants in the pre-departure phase. Despite the ambiguity in expectation for performance, however, the participants seemed to gain intercultural competencies as seen in the following students’ comments regarding the school visit at Oita Kosen. After each quote, the intercultural competencies gained by the students are listed.

“I liked interacting with students at Oita Kosen because of the exposure to other perspectives and ways of thinking that these experiences provided, as well as practicing my ability to speak the language.” (*Student 1, awareness of other perspectives; Japanese language communication skills*)

“Oita Kosen and speaking with students was such a unique experience. I have forgotten why I even wanted to become a teacher and these students, as well as the faculty, have reminded me why. It was great to see how the students reacted to learning about Florida. It was great to see the students break the mold and come over to socialize with us despite our language barriers. It was great to learn about so many social-related cultural aspects of Japanese culture. Every aspect of the day, while nerve wracking at first, is something I will always cherish into the future.” (*Student 2, cultural self-awareness/understanding, awareness of other perspectives, learning through interaction – communication skills, stepping outside the comfort zone, open-minded, respect*)

According to the comments above, the participants have developed intercultural competency characteristics mainly in attitudes, such as respect, flexibility, adaptability, open-mindedness, and the ability to learn from other people's perspectives. Participants have also improved their communication skills by interacting with Japanese students. Their comments illustrate the concept of understanding others' worldviews.

CAVEATS AND REFLECTIONS

The strength of the course is that the participants can immerse themselves into Japanese society. Participants learn firsthand the lifestyle of the Japanese, such as taking public transportation and buying meals at restaurants and convenience stores, which are quite different from the lifestyle of the participants. Moreover, traveling abroad is a first-time experience for many of the participants, and even going through immigration and customs are significant experiences that make them step outside their comfort zone and broaden their horizons. As one of the students stated in their comments, the participants learned not only about Japanese culture but also important life lessons that will last a lifetime. A student commented in the course evaluation that, "Zen Meditation was a very relaxing activity and it taught me a few valuable lessons in life. I hope to continue to meditate when I return to the States."

Since college is preparation for life in the global society, educators should make sure that the students gain intercultural experiences and competencies through college courses by incorporating student-centered learning and learner autonomy into a course. Educators should integrate activities that require teamwork, creative and critical thinking, and problem-solving skills into lesson plans. Moreover, educators should encourage students to step outside of their comfort zone and respect others through their teaching. By doing so, students will gain

intercultural experiences through collaboration, communication, and interaction with others. They will develop intercultural competency characteristics in all categories: knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Another benefit of this course is that it serves as an introduction to Japan for the participants. After participating in this program, many students have intentions to return to Japan by applying for semester abroad programs, graduate schools, the JET (Japan Exchange and Teaching) Program, or job positions in Japan.

One of the challenges we consistently face is the program cost. The faculty leader tries to keep the cost as low as possible by finding less expensive accommodations and activities, but the program cost increases every year. The group used to stay at business hotels with buffet-style breakfasts, but the prices at these hotels have increased dramatically over the last few years. Since there were many students who did not take advantage of the hotel breakfast, the accommodation plans without breakfast will be adopted for future summer programs, which will save about \$200 per student, even if the participants are to buy breakfast at convenience stores every day. Considering the current inflation worldwide, a further increase in the program's cost is expected in the coming years. Although there are several scholarships available through the education abroad office and student loans specifically for study abroad are available from USF Credit Union, only select participants would benefit from this financial aid. Therefore, other accommodation options such as youth hostels, dormitories, and weekly apartments will also be taken into consideration for future trips.

Despite the increase in the program cost the USF Japan program maintains its popularity among students. Even before the program applications are available each year, the faculty leader receives quite a few inquiries about the program. Some are interested in taking part in the

program as non-degree-seeking students even though they have already graduated from USF. Over 20 students started their online applications within two days after the application opened for summer 2023. The education abroad advisor was astonished at the level of student interest and remarked that he had never witnessed such a popular program in his career as an advisor. The faculty leader believes that the reputation and popularity of the program were primarily built through word-of-mouth recommendations from past participants rather than extensive marketing efforts by the faculty. This indicates that the program has delivered valuable intercultural experiences and competencies to the students, which they long to experience and highly appreciate. By participating in this program, students develop intercultural competency characteristics to become global citizens who are equipped to thrive in today's society. These skills are essential in navigating an interconnected world where cross-cultural understanding and adaptability are highly valued.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 6.1: Japan Trip Schedule

Day	Morning	Afternoon
Day 1	Depart from Tampa-Fukuoka	
Day 2		Arrive in Fukuoka 9:00 Meeting at the hotel lobby
Day 3	9:00 Meet at the hotel lobby 10:30-11:30 Disaster Prevention Center	12:30 Group Lunch Dazaifu
Day 4	8:40 Meet at the hotel lobby 9:20-10:30 Asahi Beer Factory Tour	Hakata Furusato Kan Temple tour
Day 5	6:45 Meet at the hotel lobby Train to Nagasaki Peace Dome and Museum, Chinatown, Suwa Shrine, and Glover Garden Train to Hakata	
Day 6	8:15 Hotel Check out - pack for two nights in Beppu Train to Beppu	Takasaki Mountain –Monkey Park Beppu
Day 7	8:30 Meet at the hotel lobby Beppu Hills	
Day 8	8:00 Hotel Check-out; Visit Oita Kosen; Train to Hakata	
Day 9	8:00 Hotel Check-out Bullet Train to Hiroshima	Peace Memorial Museum/Park Hiroshima Castle
Day 10	9:00 Meet at the hotel lobby Miyajima/Misen Mountain Climbing	
Day 11	7: 30 Hotel Check-out Bullet Train to Kyoto	1:00 Kanji Museum 3:30-6:30 Samurai Kenbu Experience 7:00 Group Dinner
Day 12	8:00 Meet at the hotel lobby 9:00-10:30 Wagashi making	Sanjusangendo Kiyomizu
Day 13	8:00 Meet at the hotel lobby 9:00 Kyo-Yuzen dye experience Nijo-Castle	Kinkakuji
Day 14	6:00 Nishi-Honganji Morning Service (optional) 9:00 Meet at the hotel lobby Visit Nara – Todaiji, Nara Park, Kasuga Shrine	
Day 15	8:45 Meet at the hotel lobby 10:00-11:30 Zen Meditation @ Taizo-in	Arashiyama bamboo forests River Cruise Trolley Train
Day 16	8:30 Meet at the hotel lobby Fushimi Inari	7:00 Group Dinner

Day 17	8:30 Meet at the hotel lobby Visit Osaka – Osaka Castle 13:30 Osaka Aquarium	
Day 18	7:45 Hotel Check-out Bullet Train to Tokyo	3:30-4:30 Taiko Drum Experience 7:30 Team Lab Planets
Day 19	9:20 Meet at the hotel lobby Train to Yokohama 11:00 Cup Noodle Museum 11:45 Chicken Ramen Factory	Yokohama Free
Day 20	9:00 Meet at the hotel lobby 9:30 Tokyo Metropolitan Government Building Observatories	Harajuku/Akihabara
Day 21	10:00 Program dismissed in the hotel lobby	

Appendix 6.2: Airport Transits & Directions to the Hotel

Note: This is an example for reference only. Airport transits, directions, and currency amounts may change.

Arrival at Narita Airport

If you are flying with **Delta** or **United**, you will arrive at **Terminal 1** (Delta-North Wing, United-South Wing). Your connection flight to Fukuoka is by **ANA (NH)**. When you get to the arrival lobby, go toward the right. The ANA domestic check-in counter is located at the far end of the building. You re-check your luggage and go upstairs for security.

If you are flying with **American** or **Japan Airlines**, you will arrive in **Terminal 2**. Your connection flight to Fukuoka is by **JAL (JL)**. When you get to the arrival lobby, go toward the left. The JAL domestic check-in is located at the far end of the main building. You re-check your luggage and go upstairs for security.

If you are flying with **Jetstar** to Fukuoka, you will need to go to **Terminal 3**. You need to take a shuttle bus to Terminal 3. From Terminal 1 arrival floor, go outside and look for **BUS STOP #6**, which will be between the North Wing and the South Wing. It will be a 10-minute ride.

Arrival at Haneda Airport

You will arrive at the International Terminal. At the arrival lobby, go toward the right and look for the domestic connecting flight baggage check-in counter. After re-checking in, proceed to the domestic connecting security check area. Then, an airline connecting bus will take you to the domestic terminal.

Or go downstairs for the free shuttle bus to the domestic terminals. Look for **bus stop Number 0** on the first floor (outside).

Remember the following:

- If your flight to Fukuoka is by **JAL (JL)** or **SKY**, you need to go to **Terminal 1**.
- If your flight to Fukuoka is by **ANA (NH)**, you need to go to **Terminal 2**.

JAL & SKY – You get off the bus at **Terminal 1 (bus stop #8) (red terminal)**. Go upstairs.

If you are taking **SKY**, go to the North Wing and look for the **SKY (スカイマーク)** counter and check-in.

If you are taking **JAL**, go to the **South Wing JAL** counter and check-in.

ANA – You get off the bus at **Terminal 2 (bus stop #9) (blue terminal)**. Go upstairs.

Go to one of the check-in counters and check-in your luggage.

Arrival at Nagoya – Chubu Kokusai Airport

You will arrive on the **second floor**. Go to the **third floor** and look for **ANA check-in counter (K~P)**.

How to get to Comfort Hotel in Hataka, Fukuoka

When you arrive at Fukuoka Airport (*Domestic* from Tokyo/Nagoya/Osaka), you will be on the first floor. Look for the Subway (Chika-tetsu in Japanese) sign and go to the basement.

If you are arriving at Fukuoka on an *international flight*, take a shuttle bus to the domestic terminal and get off the bus at the last stop (domestic terminal south – Kokunai-sen terminal Minami) and follow the Subway sign and go downstairs.

Then, do the following:

1. At the Subway station, purchase a **260-yen** ticket at one of the machines (CASH ONLY! Make sure you have some Japanese yen). You can insert money and push the 260-yen button. The machine should take bills as well as coins.
2. Put the ticket in the ticket gate (Kaisatsu) and take it as you go through the gate. **DO NOT FORGET TO GRAB** the ticket when you enter the station to the tracks.
3. Our destination is **Hakata Station (K11)**, and it is just two stations away from Fukuoka Airport (Kuukoo) (**K13**) and takes only 5 minutes on the orange line.
4. When you get off the train at Hakata Station, follow the ticket gate sign. Again, you insert the ticket into the gate and go through. This time, the ticket **WILL NOT** come out; you just keep walking without the ticket.
5. Then, look for the **WEST 8 Exit** (you will still be on the underground level); when you take the stairs up at the WEST 8 Exit, the hotel will be just around the corner. (OR you can take the WEST 9 Exit to the ground level and cross the street at the traffic signal.)

The hotel is just across from the station; it should be just a few-minute walk.

There is a Seven-Eleven convenience store next door.

Appendix 6.3: Reflection Essay and Five (5) Photos of Significance

Upon your return to Tampa, please start working on your reflection essay (at least 1,000 words) and choose five (5) most important pictures that you have taken in Japan. In this essay you look back at the trip and identify what was the most influential or eye-opening to you. In addition, you should consider how to apply your cross-cultural experiences to your life as a global citizen. Moreover, please select five (5) photos of significance from the trip, with at least a two-sentence caption that explains why each photo was chosen and why it is of significance for you during the trip. Both the essay and the photos are to be submitted by June 18.