

Julia Tanabe

Japanese students' intercultural gains in a study abroad context

Abstract

This multiple case study explores the intercultural development and its underlying factors within a Hungarian study abroad (SA) context through researching four Japanese students' experiences. Participants were four female Japanese exchange students who studied for one year at the University of Pécs, Hungary. Data were collected retrospectively using various instruments. In-depth interviews were conducted immediately after the sojourn and follow-up interviews took place four years later to tap into the long-term impact. The interview questions elaborated on the participants' experiences at four time intervals: prior SA, upon arrival, during SA and post SA; the follow-up interviews applied stimulated recall to elicit the sojourners' accounts. Participants filled in a questionnaire about their self-perceived intercultural communicative competence. In addition to these data, Facebook posts about their SA experiences were also used as authentic SA materials reflecting lived experiences. The cross-case analysis revealed that although the majority of participants studied abroad at different times, they shared many aspects of their SA outcomes. Findings suggest that visiting Hungarian homes and social networking with locals and international students played a major role in their intercultural development and it was necessary for constructing a critical self. It also expanded their knowledge and shaped their understanding of their own context. English as a lingua franca was an important aspect of communication in three cases, boosting students' self-confidence in approaching speakers of other languages. SA supported all participants to a varying degree to think more globally and served as an essential opportunity to grow and shift towards becoming intercultural individuals.

Keywords: intercultural communicative competence, study abroad, lingua franca

1 Introduction

In today's interconnected world, the number of university students crossing borders for study purposes is proliferating across the globe. There is an agreement among scholars about the need to research study abroad experiences and their impact as it can be transformative for individuals who are going through such an experience. In the past, the sole aim of SA was recognized as language learning, but now the possibilities are unlimited. According to Coleman (2015), those who go abroad for educational purposes are provided with the chance of earning credits, getting a university degree, building their international social network, learning about other countries' cultures, economy, society, and learning or improving their language skills. Other realistic goals include developing friendships across borders and participating in other societies appropriately (Fantini 2019). A further aim of study abroad is to achieve better employability in the globalized world (Coleman 2015). According to Teichler (2015: 15), study abroad students are likely to function in international environments more successfully and tend to be more internationally mobile after completing their university studies. The study presented in this

paper looks at Japanese students' intercultural enrichment and is part of a larger project endeavoring to find out diverse SA-related gains.

Study abroad researchers have covered issues such as second language acquisition (SLA), cultural adjustment, intercultural learning processes, and cultural stereotypes. A large number of studies (e.g., Clément Gordon & Noels 1996, Coleman 1998, Freed 1998, Regan 1998) were published on American and European students' sojourn in an EU member state or in Russia, taking part in Erasmus programs (for a summary see: Nagy 2005, Coleman 1998, 2015). In contrast, few projects dealt with Asian students' experiences in SA contexts (Siegal 1995, Yashima Zenuk-Nishide & Shimizu 2004) even though Asian countries dominate the record of sending students abroad with 43 % (Varghese 2008: 20). Sood (2012) reports that the highest number of students venturing abroad are Chinese, outnumbering other nationalities in the world.

Besides China, Japan has to be noted as a significant sending country, as recent data suggest. According to Glanz (2014), since 2006, there has been a considerable increase in the mobility of Japanese SA students enrolled at Hungarian medical universities. A new scholarship program, Stipendium Hungaricum was launched by Tempus Public Foundation to attract Asian students, according to an NHK news report (2014, November 5). For Asians, such as Japanese, the university lectures and seminars held in English may mean a great challenge. This issue was confirmed in the case of Japanese medical students in Hungary, by the NHK news report (2014, November 5). These facts also indicate that Japanese students' SA in Hungary is a highly relevant topic to research.

2 Theoretical background

Intercultural communicative competence (ICC) has never been so much in demand as it is now, thus being continuously in the center of scholars' attention, as the world is becoming more and more interconnected, due to the prevalence of communication technology and traveling. Globalization has made the geographical boundaries transparent and populations' increased border crossings call for a need to interpret intercultural issues critically. In our multicultural world, it is very likely for a multitude of individuals to experience encounters between people with multilingual and multicultural backgrounds. Therefore, language and communicative skills alone are not enough to prepare learners for the sojourn and intercultural encounters. Students need to be well equipped with analytical and critical skills to be able to become aware of their own cultural lenses through which they perceive the world around themselves and to be able to relate to new values and customs, to understand intercultural encounters and situations. A study abroad experience, if well exploited, has the potential to grant students with these skills to function more successfully as an intercultural person upon return.

Byram's (1997) ICC model was chosen as the framework for this research because it was developed for educational purposes, thus the most relatable for the SA context. Fantini's (2019) large scale SA research captured ICC in a way that shares many similarities with Byram (1997), which further confirmed the choice of this model. Byram's (1997) model originated from van Ek's (1986) framework of communicative competence. Byram's conceptualization of ICC consists of communicative and intercultural elements. The intercultural elements composing intercultural competence are defined by Byram (1997) as follows:

- (1) Attitudes: "curiosity and openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one's own" (1997: 50)
- (2) Knowledge: "of social groups and their products and practices in one's own and in one's

interlocutor's country, and of the general processes of societal and individual interaction" (1997: 51).

- (3) Skills of interpreting and relating: "ability to interpret a document or event from another culture, to explain it and relate it to documents from one's own (1997: 52).
- (4) Skills of discovery and interaction: "ability to acquire new knowledge of culture and cultural practices and the ability to operate knowledge, attitudes and skills under the constraints of real-time communication and interaction" (1997: 52).
- (5) Critical cultural awareness/political education: "an ability to evaluate critically and on the basis of explicit criteria perspectives, practices and products in one's own and other cultures and countries" (1997: 53).

To build a model of ICC, Byram (1997) further related intercultural competence to communication. He adopted three components from van Ek's (1986) model and modified them in the following way:

- (1) Linguistic competence: "the ability to apply knowledge of the rules of a standard version of the language to produce and interpret spoken and written language."
- (2) Sociolinguistic competence: "the ability to give to the language produced by an interlocutor – whether native speaker or not – meanings which are taken for granted by the interlocutor or which are negotiated and made explicit with the interlocutor."
- (3) Discourse competence: "the ability to use, discover and negotiate strategies for the production and interpretation of monologue or dialogue texts which follow the conventions of the culture of an interlocutor or are negotiated as intercultural texts for particular purposes" (1997: 48).

Byram (1997) rejected the native speaker model for L2 learners; therefore, proposed the idea of an intercultural speaker as an ideal for foreign language learners to attain. Byram (1997) shares in his work what exactly is required from an IS, concerning attitudes, knowledge, skills and critical cultural awareness. According to Byram (1997), an IS needs to

- (1) internalize attitudes (such as curiosity, openness towards one's own and the speaking partner's culture).
- (2) gain knowledge about issues such as national memory of one's own and the speaking partner's country, perceptions of regions and regional identities, institutions, social distinctions, processes of social interaction, and possible cause of misunderstanding
- (3) acquire the skills of interpreting and relating (such as identifying ethnocentric perspectives in the media, identifying areas of misunderstanding and being a mediator between conflicting interpretations of an issue) as well as the skills of discovery and interaction (such as using knowledge of verbal and non-verbal communication, eliciting different interpretations, using sources to understand relationships between cultures and establish as well as maintain contacts over a period of time)
- (4) internalize critical cultural awareness (Byram, 1997: 57–64).

In the Hungarian context, Dombi's (2017) aim was to reveal the factors underlying Hungarian students' success or failure in intercultural communication situations; she identified: language proficiency, intercultural knowledge, attitudes, motivation, willingness to communicate and anxiety. Her quantitative study contributed to the understanding of which individual difference variables influence ICC. As a result, perceived communicative competence was found to impact ICC, while communication apprehension had a negative influence on it. However, surprisingly the link between frequency of intercultural contact and ICC was weak, even though

one would assume that socializing and interacting with culturally different others enhances one's ICC.

Menyhei (2016)'s aim was to track down English majors' ICC development in a classroom context. She found that during an Intercultural Communication course embedded in the social constructivist learning theory, students could improve their ICC in terms of knowledge, attitudes, and skills; however, the latter also demonstrated no shift for some participants. Her students also demonstrated awareness about how much more needs to be learned which indicates their awareness of the complexity of ICC. Critical reflection was found to be problematic and less developed in students. Moreover, the study confirmed that individual differences played an important role in impacting students' ICC. These variables were intercultural contact, age, motivation, attitude to intercultural learning, anxiety, perceived L2, learner autonomy, critical thinking, and reflection.

Previous studies have proven the complex nature of ICC and that several affective variables influence it; therefore, it is suggested that particular aspects of ICC should be prioritized. For that reason, in this study, I have chosen a few points to focus on, such as perceived intercultural communicative competence, attitudes, knowledge, skills and critical cultural awareness.

After reviewing ICC literature spanning over 50 years, Fantini's (2019) literary search resulted in a construct of ICC, which is holistic and comprehensive. Fantini (2019) re-conceptualized ICC as a "complex of abilities needed to perform effectively and appropriately when interacting with others who are linguistically and culturally different from oneself" (2019: 34). It involves three domains: (1) "the ability to establish and maintain relationships" (referred to as social networking in the present study), (2) "the ability to communicate with minimal loss or distortion", (3) and "the ability to collaborate in order to accomplish something of mutual interest or need" (p. 36). Further, ICC consists of four components: attitudes, skills, knowledge, awareness and takes into consideration the target language ability as well (Fantini 2019: 28). Target language skills complement ICC because without it sojourners cannot directly access the thoughts, culture, and worldview of the speakers of the target language (Fantini 2019).

Fantini (2019) also believes that the awareness component embraces the whole, as already noted by Dombi (2013) in connection with critical cultural awareness. Fantini's (2019) concept of awareness is strongly linked to identity because it is about "a critical look at the self in social situation" (2019: 37). Awareness can lead to the transformation of self, in which one deals with reality critically and creatively through exploring, experimenting and experiencing (Fantini 2019). Although there are some alterations within a description of some ICC components, Fantini's (2019) recent concept of ICC shares many similarities with Byram (1997)'s model, together with Dombi's (2013) specifications (about the language component and critical cultural awareness being in the center). Hence, Fantini's (2019) literary search makes it more certain that it was the right choice to rely on Byram's (1997) model of ICC, with Dombi's (2013) further conceptualization.

There are several empirical studies on SA, which looked at intercultural gains (Dombi 2011, 2016, Engle & Engle 2004, Fantini & Tirmizi 2006, Gao 2000, Patterson 2006, Shiri 2015, Talburt & Stewart 1999, Vande Berg Connor-Linton & Paige 2009). Szentpáli-Ujlaki (2007) revealed in an Erasmus study abroad research that Hungarian students found it very relevant to gain knowledge on the foreign culture before going abroad. Fantini's (2019) multinational, mixed method large-scale study included 338 Japanese participants who sojourned in various countries such as Australia, England, France, Germany, Portugal, and the US. The sojourn reportedly had an impact on students in terms of expanding their worldview, evoking interest in another culture and sense of belonging. According to the Japanese participants, flexibility, curiosity, and open-mindedness were the most important personality characteristics to deter-

mine intercultural success. Nishida (1985) investigated Japanese EFL university students in the context of a four weeks SA program in the US. The results indicated that those participants who could tolerate ambiguity more were better at handling culture shock. Hanada (2015) conducted a mixed method study with 344 EFL Japanese students who studied abroad either in Canada or the US. The findings revealed that both short and medium-term study abroad programs had a positive impact on students with lower intercultural competence before departure, while medium-term programs were more productive for students whose intercultural competence was more progressed.

To my knowledge, no study has examined Japanese students in a Hungarian SA context so far. Malota's (2016) large-scale study included Japanese SA participants in Hungary. However, that research did not focus exclusively on them in depth. Therefore, the gap in the literature calls for the need to take a closer look at Japanese students' intercultural gains through a Hungarian SA experience. This paper addresses the intercultural gains Japanese students could achieve as a result of their SA.

3 Research context and participants

The context of the research was the exchange program between the University of Pécs in Hungary and two international universities in Japan. One of the Japanese universities makes a one-year SA obligatory for all students. The other Japanese university has a unique feature: it has a Hungarian Department where students can study Hungarian language, culture, and society in both undergraduate and graduate programs.

The University of Pécs in Hungary attracts many international students from all over the world, including both degree-seeking and credit-seeking sojourners. The participants of this study belong to the latter category. The exchange between the two Japanese universities and the University of Pécs is an overseas scholarship program that lasts for one academic year. Apart from that, the European Erasmus Plus program is also relevant to the context, as this exchange allures the majority of international credit seekers to study at the University of Pécs. Consequently, Japanese participants of the current study not only socialized with co-nationals and members of the host country but with Erasmus students as well.

My research focuses on five undergraduate Japanese students' experiences from which four cases were chosen to elaborate on (See: Table 1). All participants have sojourned in Hungary, Pécs for one year to study their subject matter. Three students, namely Arisa, Hinano, and Yuuna¹ majored in Global Studies and two students, Sakura and Keiko majored in Hungarian language and culture. Arisa and Sakura studied in Pécs in the academic year of 2010/11, Yuuna in 2011/12, whereas Hinano's and Keiko's sojourn period took place in 2012/13. After the exchange program, four students returned to Japan, graduated from their university and completed job-hunting successfully. One participant who majors in Hungarian decided to continue her studies and enrolled in the Master's course of Hungarian language and culture at her home university, researching Mohács and its traditions. The other student, Keiko from Kansai finished her undergraduate studies and found employment in Japan. With Keiko, only one interview was conducted in the pilot phase of the study. The language of the interview was Hungarian, upon her request. However, that interview was not included in the study because the researcher and the participant faced some language barriers due to Keiko's level of Hungarian, which prevented her from expressing herself fully. Thus, the collected data was not suitable for

¹ All participants are referred to by pseudonyms.

thorough analysis. Her interview, however, helped to test the data collection instrument and enabled the researcher to revise certain questions. Also, it exposed that the language preference of the participant might not always be the best choice. For that reason, interviews with other participants were conducted in Japanese or English. In the case of language difficulty, code-switching was encouraged.

Participants were selected with homogeneous sampling in which the researcher has chosen stakeholders from a specific subgroup who have some shared experience, important to the study (Dörnyei 2007: 127). In this case, the participants were all Japanese who have taken part in a credit seeking SA program in Pécs, Hungary.

Pseudonym	Nationality	University Program	Year of SA	Duration of stay	Career
Arisa	Japanese	Global Studies	2010/11	one year	employed
Hinano	Japanese	Global Studies	2012/13	one year	employed
Yuuna	Japanese	Global Studies	2011/12	one year	employed
Sakura	Japanese	Hungarian Studies	2010/11	one year	employed
Keiko (pilot)	Japanese	Hungarian Studies	2012/13	one year	employed

Table 1. Research Participants

4 Research questions

The following research questions are addressed in this study:

1. How can participants' ICC be characterized?
2. In what ways did SA contribute to the development of their ICC?

5 Data collection instruments and procedures

First, semi-structured, in-depth interviews (Table 2) were conducted in Japan with each participant in August 2014. Three years later, follow-up interviews were carried out with the participants to see whether their ideas changed over time. The interviews were conducted in the participants' first language (L1), Japanese, or in their second language (L2), English to assure that language proficiency does not interfere with the quality of answers. Also, the researcher aimed to ensure construct validity by conducting a pilot interview to make sure that the questions were appropriate for eliciting data about students' SA experiences. The interview questions consist of four sections: before SA, upon arrival, during SA, and after SA to provide insights into the longitudinal nature of the study.

Interview transcripts from the first interview and students' Facebook posts were used for stimulated recall in the follow-up interviews with the participants, to aid in evoking relevant thoughts concerning their experiences. Nunan and Bailey (2009) describe this technique as a "procedure for generating introspective data" (2009: 289). It helps the participants to see their experiences from another angle compared to the way they lived those events. Therefore, in the second interviews participants were asked to read previous interview excerpts and Facebook

entries of their own and reflect on them as well as interpret particular moments and situations they encountered during their sojourn. It was expected that the stimulated recall procedure in the follow-up interviews yields more valid conclusions about students' SA experiences.

Participants	Date of interview	Language of interview	Date of the follow-up interview	The language of the follow-up interview
Keiko (pilot)	2014/07/24	Hungarian	x	x
Sakura	2014/08/25	Japanese	2017/06/18	Japanese
Hinano	2014/08/14	English	2017/05/06	English
Arisa	2014/08/21	English	2017/04/30	English
Yuuna	2014/08/20	English	2017/05/07	English

Table 2. Date and Language of Interviews

The second source of my data set was the posts my participants uploaded on Facebook. In light of my research questions, I analyzed the content of Japanese students' Facebook entries, which served as authentic texts about their sojourn period. The unstructured nature of posts and comments on Facebook might be a disadvantage of this data collection instrument, as these are not regular diary entries; however, they serve as authentic SA data sources and reflect students' personal accounts meant for their own audiences and not for research.

The third source of my data set was a questionnaire on perceived intercultural communicative competence (See: Appendix), which was adopted from Dombi (2013), evolving from Byram's model (1997). The questionnaire consisted of 51 items. In the first 12 situations, students were asked to indicate their competence by giving a percentage. As for the remaining items, participants were asked to assess how true the statements were for them on a four-point Likert scale. The researcher modified the PICC items so that participants could give information based on their own background. The modified questionnaire was piloted in 2016 with Japanese medical students studying in Hungary, at the University of Pécs. After piloting, further items were modified.

Triangulation is a key principle in qualitative research, which "increases the internal validity of the study" by combining both insider and outsider aspects of phenomena (Duff 2008: 143). Triangulation of the findings was fulfilled by the analysis of different sources of information such as the interviews, Facebook entries and the questionnaire. Thick description helps the reader to determine whether and to what extent the context is similar to another setting (Mackey & Gass 2005: 180) as it supports the reader with a clear understanding of each case. A thick description was given on each participant's case to ensure credibility. Further, establishing an emic approach helped to gain a deeper understanding of the researched phenomenon.

Qualitative content analysis was applied in the case of the interview transcripts and Facebook entries. Data were coded by looking for patterns or repeated themes, and these were identified with codes generally emerging from the dataset. This practice is called open coding (Mackey & Gass 2005: 241). Labels were assigned to chunks of data, guided by the research questions so that the data set became more manageable. Headings were given to parts of the data, following Nunan and Bailey's technique (2009: 416). Superordinate headings were given to the main themes and subheadings were assigned to in-group categories. Thus two levels of codes were established.

The ICC questionnaire was initially a quantitative data collection instrument hence participants' mean scores were calculated (See Dombi, 2013, 2017a). The questionnaire also served

the purpose of triangulation. Besides looking at how multi-item scales correlated with one another, the statements were examined separately, finding supporting examples in the interview accounts for in-depth analysis.

6 Findings and discussion

6.1 Perceived intercultural communicative competence

Figure 1 represents the mean of participants' percentage values of their perceived intercultural communicative competence (PICC). As the questionnaire results revealed, individual differences in the ratings show how each participant thought about her competence. While Arisa (63.33%) and Sakura (50.83%) were less confident in their PICC, Hinano was more certain about her perceived competence (74.16%), and Yuuna rated her competence the highest (94.16%).

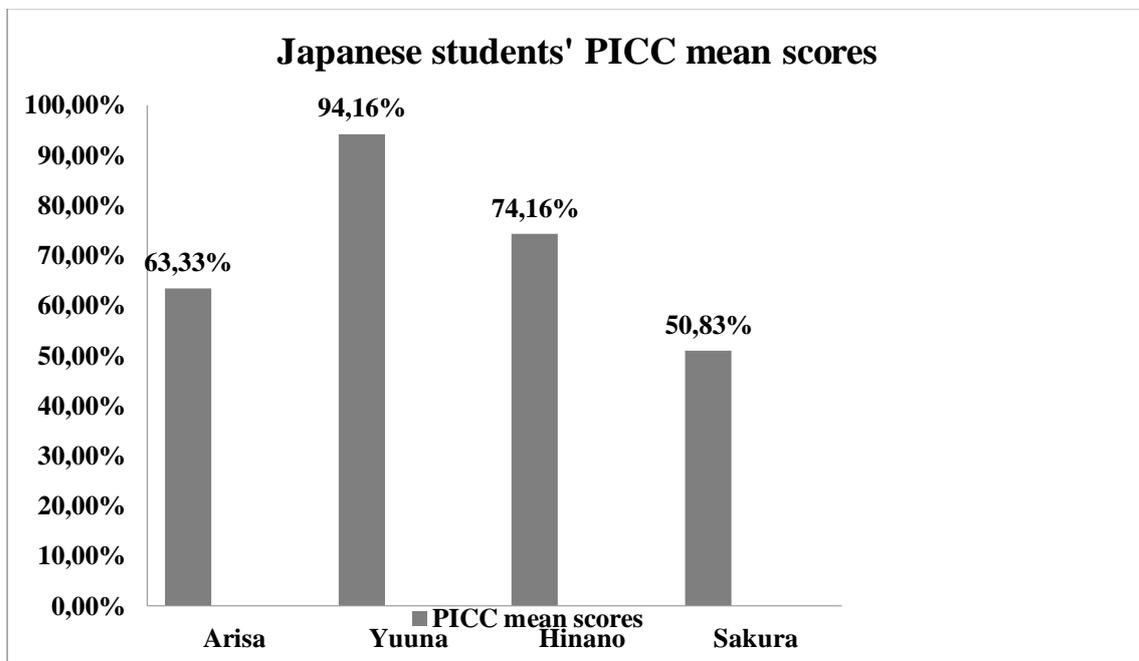


Figure 1. Japanese students' PICC mean scores in percentage value

6.2 Attitude, knowledge and skills

Figure 2 illustrates the mean of participants' ICC scores in terms of their attitude, knowledge, and skills of discovery and interaction as well as skills of interpreting and relating which are essential components of Byram's (1997) model of ICC. As it becomes apparent from the questionnaire responses, all four students rated themselves high on their positive and open-minded attitude towards other languages, cultures, and people, similarly to Menyhei's study (2016) on Hungarian students. Hinano rated the attitude component the highest (3.33), followed by Arisa (3.22) and Sakura (3.11). Yuuna's attitude scores were the lowest (2.66), which could be explained by her interview responses. The negative perception of Hungarians' concept of time was the core reason behind her unpleasant experiences, as well as a negative attitude towards international students' party culture causing conflict. However, at the end of

the follow-up interview, she revealed her understanding of stereotypes evolving from one's own assumption based on their context. Her reflection revealed her ability to evaluate her own ideological perspectives and values (Byram 1997), in other words critical cultural awareness.

In Figure 2 it is also evident that participants rated their knowledge the lowest of all the components. Qualitative data may have an explanation for that since difficulty with explaining one's own culture emerged in three cases along with the awareness of limited knowledge about ethnic minorities across borders and the inability to fully grasp such a complex topic. It also indicates their awareness of how much more they need to learn; a finding surfaced in Menyhei's (2016) study. Arisa and Sakura reported on their knowledge as equally competent (2.80). Sakura's rating was surprising since as a Hungarian major she had broad initial knowledge about Hungary through university classes and could deepen her expertise during her SA through classes, social events, and home visits, even researching Hungarian cultural practices after SA.

Concerning ICC skills, Sakura perceived her competence the highest (3.14) on that matter. Her interview responses revealed that she explored the cultural differences through reflection and interpretation which made her aware of not to base her expectations of Hungarians on her own culture as in the host country different norms operate. In other words, it embodies the critical cultural awareness component of Byram's (1997) model. Hinano, Arisa, and Yuuna had average scores for skills. Arisa's rating (2.57) was quite modest because her interview data supported that she could develop these skills to a great extent. Yuuna's score was the lowest (2.42) corresponding with her interview responses.

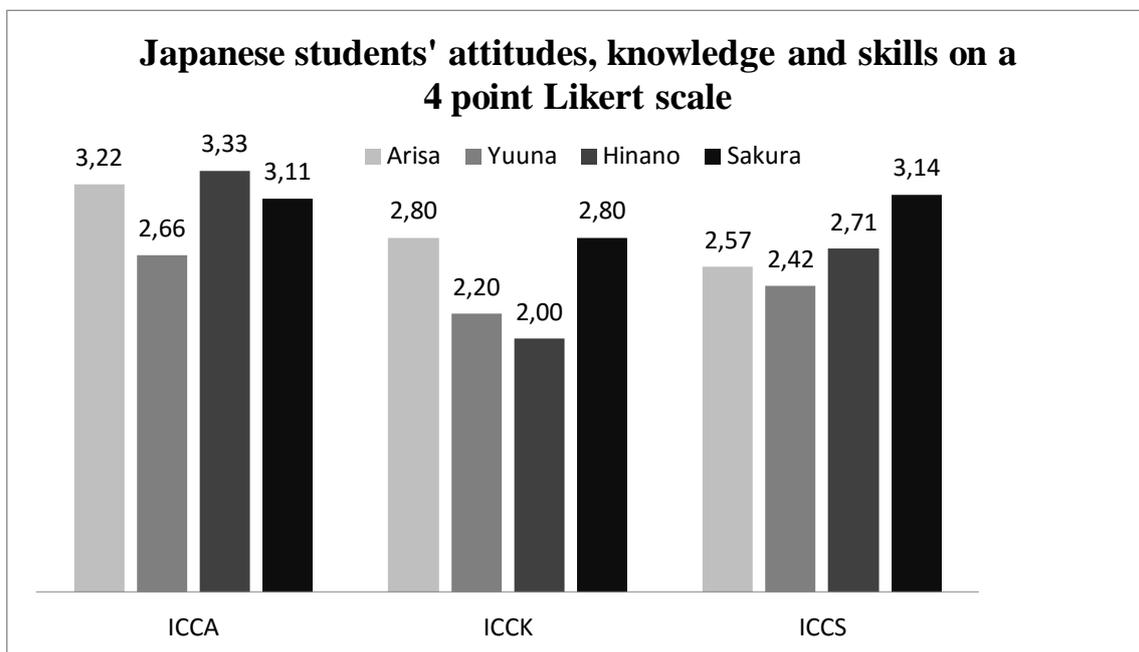


Figure 2. Japanese students' attitudes (ICCA), knowledge (ICCK) and skills (ICCS) on a 4 point Likert scale

In the following sections supporting evidence emerging from the qualitative interview data is provided.

6.3 Attitude

Arisa's attitude towards foreign people was quite positive since she rated herself highly on interest in Hungarian people and low on discomfort with foreigners in the questionnaire. Similarly to Hinano, Arisa perceived herself very interested in foreign culture and intercultural communication, and she felt reasonably interested in her own culture. The interview data supported it, but it also revealed that she was more into her exotic European interest than something closer to her home but lower in perceived cultural value historically. It demonstrates her curiosity and interest in other cultures which was the main finding in Japanese students' case in Fantini's (2019) SA research as well.

"in macro view it seems the same but in micro view, I mean, like, more detail, we can find the difference, so, for example, &mmm (3) like I don't know, I am not sure about the &mmm Korean sushi kind of stuff, I just know one sushi kind of staff, that is like roll, roll sushi" (second interview, Arisa)

Hinano's interview accounts also revealed that she had positive attitudes towards Hungarian people even before her sojourn and she wished to establish a friendship with them, which she fulfilled successfully. Jackson (2018) noted that optimistic attitudes paired with realistic expectations potentially promote positive SA outcomes, as happened in Hinano's case.

"I wanted to make new friends... I am very looking forward to do in Hungary" (second interview, Hinano)

Sakura had a very positive attitude towards Hungarian language and culture. She was genuinely interested in Hungarian, especially intrigued by the tendency of English loanwords translated into Hungarian, unlike in her own language. She used her skills of interpreting and relating (Byram 1997) to analyze and contrast Hungarian with Japanese.

"Also another very interesting thing is the computer's window (screen) or the computer's mouse, these are all in Hungarian. For example <L3hun>egér<L3hun> and such... for example homepage is <L3hun>honlap<L3hun> right? We don't say 'the paper of the house'... I think in Hungarian language so many things are translated." (first interview, Sakura)

Yuuna demonstrated a positive attitude towards Hungarian people before SA. She based her image of Hungarians on her Hungarian friend's attributes, getting a quite generalized, superficial image, corresponding with her lower ratings on the scale in the questionnaire.

"I expected that they would be so nice, friendly, not so loud, kinda familiar to Japanese people" (first interview, Yuuna)

Arisa was willing to adapt to her new environment in Hungary, which also entails positive attitudes towards the host culture. Her visits to the local market, her effort to communicate in Hungarian at the supermarket and her appreciation of "slow life" all underpin that. Bhawuk and Brislin (1992) found that one's willingness to try new things such as participating in international activities and trying new food positively correlated with intercultural sensitivity. Arisa enjoyed taking part in the country presentation and joined Western-style parties,

reflecting her very flexible attitude towards other cultures, which was evident from many instances of the data such as how she changed her attitude towards Spanish and Chinese students. The way Spanish students behaved clashed with Japanese social norms which was the reason why she could not tolerate it at first; however, she became empathic later on as she participated in some shared activities. Patterson (2006) also found that SA resulted in altered ways of seeing the world and more positive attitudes towards other cultures. Arisa also became aware of her unconscious bias underlying her negative attitude towards Chinese people; however, she was able to critically reflect on that and change her perception.

“in the center of the typhoon there is always the Spanish girls, the Spanish guys, Spanish is...But I, sometimes I really hate them but sometimes I really &mmm how can I say, I really (.) <L1jp>urayamashii<L1jp> <translation: envy> they they strongly try to enjoy (.) their lives...Even though they seems very @ crazy yeah so I'm not join, I can't join, but I I can, I can yeah, I can understand how they feel” (second interview, Arisa)

“I am not sure anything about the Main Island China but I have &mmm I have like, I have like (.) strong feeling when I called as Chinese, like strong feeling come to me to like, I wanna say I am not...but I, I don't have any unpleasant experience &mmm suffered by the Chinese guy...But, yeah even though I don't have any experience (.) I have the bias so &mmm yeah I think, this experience is , is really, I can, yeah (.) understand because their father and mother or their education like, told them something like (.) your country is better. And other is not. And also that happened to me as well so yeah...after that I can change my attitude like, I can say &mmm, I can't say &mmm I can't say anything, &mmm, how can I say (.) I can't say that country is good or bad, even not based on my experience.” (second interview, Arisa)

Initial negative attitudes towards international students' parties and discrimination against Chinese people surfaced in other datasets as well. Interview outcomes also shed light on Hinano's negative perception of Erasmus students. Yet, over time a shift occurred in her attitudes when social networking with them made her aware of other explanations and perspectives and lead to her acceptance and understanding. This finding is in line with her statement about using SA opportunities to adjust herself to the intercultural context, which was rated high in the questionnaire. Shifts in the attitude component of ICC took place in other contexts as well, for instance, in Menyhei's (2016: 151) Hungarian classroom research some students reported increased tolerance towards others and a “broadened scale of acceptance” as a result of the ICC seminar. In both cases, the shift was initiated by exposure to difference.

“many drunk people and they are like just (.) dancing, go to club and then (.) I didn't like them because like I didn't want to be like them, like I'm lazy... but once I get there, I felt like I @@ am doing the same thing@ but I think that is the way to get friends because I could get really good friends with them” (first interview, Hinano)

It has to be noted though that Yuuna also had a negative attitude towards international students' party culture, as appeared in previous datasets. It didn't appear in Sakura's case, but she did not socialize with international students as much as the other participants. Nishida (1985) found that those who had a higher tolerance of ambiguity could handle culture shock more than others, which could be a potential reason behind Yuuna's unpleasant experiences.

“There were some crazy people, who made noises...this was annoying because we couldn't get sleep...our neighbor had the craziest party ever...I break into the neighbor's room and then told them to get out... but on the next day we made rules...” (first interview, Yuuna)

In all four datasets, negative attitude and unpleasant experiences emerged as a result of service encounter situations, administration and the concept of time. Their service encounter experiences also support the questionnaire item about their knowledge, knowing the differences between how Hungarians and Japanese people behave in social situations. Sakura perceived Hungarian customer service as more hostile than welcoming at first. Later on, she used her skills of interpreting and relating (Byram 1997) to find an explanation behind the Hungarians' behavior and accept it as another cultural norm.

“The way people receive me when I am a customer was difficult to accept... in Japan everyone is smiling but Hungarian people not really, how to say, don't smile... there was no smile, and unfortunately, at times I somehow thought it is scary... they all looked angry, somehow looked very bored.” (first interview, Sakura)

“Maybe the culture is also different, the things what I think is taken for granted is not taken for granted at another place” (first interview, Sakura)

Negative attitude towards the concept of time and working style emerged in three datasets but to a varying degree. Yuuna had a negative perception towards the working style of people, but the follow-up interview revealed her awareness of generalizing based on her context, being aware that her negative attitude formed due to her expectations. Hinano had some unpleasant experiences due to Hungarians' way of dealing with appointments when the tour organizer did not let them know about the changes in schedule. Arisa perceived Hungarians slow, but later on, she criticizes her own country's way of treating time as the extreme one, indicating a shift in her attitude, integrating Hungarian values in her value system. According to Fantini (2019), awareness can lead to the transformation of self in which one deals with reality critically through experiencing and relating, which depicts exactly what happened to Arisa.

“I had to apply for the VISA for the entry into Hungary and it took about I think 3 months for the Hungarian Embassy just to make one document and send it to me... I wasn't sure if I was going to get a VISA for Hungary before the departure date... Well it definitely made me feel that maybe some Hungarian people could be &mmm lazy? Or even if not lazy, like, not on time.” (first interview, Yuuna)

“one thing really important... is that &mm stop expecting others to behave in the way you want...Do not have expectations. Do not speak anything &mm following your (.) standard or assumption. It's quite dangerous. These two things...give away your assumption and expectation towards others... these would just make you unhappy...people are, I am sorry to say this but people are a bit lazier than Japanese people. If you have this &mmm stereotype of how the clerks should behave, for example...in Japan...if you apply that to Hungarian people you just make yourself unhappy. People just, Hungarian people just don't behave in the way Japanese people do...so just take away all the stereotypes (.) of how people should behave.” (second interview, Yuuna)

October 8, 2012

"Hungarian "5minuites" = 30-40 minuites" (Facebook, Hinano)

"in Hungary I feel they almost forget about me and maybe they lost my documents and they don't tell me anything but my due date, I mean my flight date is coming really quickly so I was really upset. (first interview, Arisa)

"some foreigners say Japanese are really strict <L1jp>majime<L1jp> (.) and I, I believe it's normal, before going to abroad. But since a lot of things happened... yeah, everything, not going on time@ ...Now I can agree that Japanese may be too much (.) punctuate @"
(second interview, Arisa)

6.4 Knowledge

All participants rated their knowledge the lowest among other components of ICC. The interview data demonstrated that their knowledge increased during their SA, but the lower scores may be due to their awareness of limited knowledge about their own context as well as the difficulty to understand complex topics such as ethnic minorities in Hungary. For instance, Arisa developed her understanding of the cultural differences and the local lifestyle in Hungary through visiting a Hungarian home, similarly to Yuuna, Sakura, and Hinano. They all took part in home visits which contributed to their knowledge. It may suggest that intercultural contact through home visits impacted their intercultural learning, which is different from Dombi's (2017) study outcome about the weak relation between intercultural contact and ICC. These contrasting results could be attributed to the difference in the classroom context and SA context.

Arisa and Sakura could learn about how Hungarian ethnic minorities define themselves across borders. While Sakura visited a Slovakian-Hungarian friend's home, Arisa got interested in the story of her friend, and she tried to interpret her narrative about being Hungarian and Serbian, but due to the complicated narrative she was caught up with, she felt that her understanding is limited (*"I'm not sure"*). Yuuna took a course related to that topic, implying that she learned about ethnic minorities as well, but no first-hand experience was mentioned in her case in contrast with the other two girls. The following excerpt is an example of how an experience in the exotic, hard-to-understand context allows Arisa to reflect on her own context:

"but she born in Hungarian family, living in Serbia... and she went to. So she living in almost border of the Serbia near Hungary so she went the, she said she went the &mmm Hungarian school, I am not sure ...and then of course &mmm her parents were Hungarian so she has &mmm I am not sure (.) she has, is she, I am not sure whether she is, she has Serbian passport or Hungarian passport but, I am not sure, maybe both, yeah but if so like in that in that sense I realized like the people describe themselves not because of where to born ...and also I can say, it also happen in Japanese I realized, for example we have like Korean school and they also have &mmm education system, like Korean school and also there is Chinese school in Japan as well, there is China town." (second interview, Arisa)

"my tutor friend...her house is at the border between Slovakia and Hungary...but she is Hungarian. Yeah I went to this village in which many Hungarian people live...I thought that it is so amazing and also in Slovakia, near the border, even though I am in Slovakia, there is

Hungary, everyone speaks in Hungarian. In Japan, there is no such thing, no such experience so I thought that is interesting.” (first interview, Sakura)

In the next excerpt, Arisa's awareness of her limited knowledge about her own culture surfaced. She wished to seek further understanding of her own country and culture to be able to present it to culturally different others which is a fundamental part of Byram's (1997) ICC model.

“Ah, I really enjoyed the country presentation because it's really &mmm really like fun experience like I never &mmm so I realized, I don't know so much about my country @ then I study my country in abroad.” (first interview, Arisa)

The excerpts also demonstrate that Arisa obtained necessary “knowledge of social groups and their products in one's own and in one's interlocutor's country” (Byram, 1997: 51), although the former was limited. Interestingly, she was more confident in reflecting on the new cultural context (the origin of goulash) than her own (sushi):

“And one more important thing is that I think their national awareness is stronger than Japanese. For example, Japanese people think that all gulyás is gulyás, but this is gulyás, and the gulyás leves is Hungarian food, the gulyás stew is Austrian food, but from an outsider's perspective they are all the same. That's what I think. But they all say, no that is my country's food”. (first interview, Arisa)

“like I don't know, I am not sure about the &mmm Korean sushi kind of stuff, I just know one sushi kind of staff, that is like roll, roll sushi...I'm not sure the history about the &mmm other country's sushi like food. I, I'm not sure, and also they are not sure.@” (second interview, Arisa)

Awareness of limited knowledge about one's own culture was found in other cases as well. Social networking with Erasmus students made Hinano aware of that essential component in Byram's (1997) ICC model's knowledge dimension. The next excerpt supports the idea that SA not only makes an individual learn more about the host culture but also encourages reflections about one's own culture.

“I felt that I don't really know (.) about my own country Japan, like yeah because like (.) for example German or French like they know lots of histories, they are proud of their histories and their countries but in Japan, like I felt sometimes (.) uhum (.) I don't really know about it...the religion, Japan didn't have so strict religion problem or (.) uhum, and I felt like Japan was not so internationalized country. Cause like when we were talking with like European people, classmates in small group and (.) they are very close to each other but Japan is the kinda island and yeah, kinda isolation, and they didn't have, didn't have like so much (2) association with other countries.” (first interview, Hinano)

“I feel the same thing now, and after I came back from study abroad I tried to read some like Japanese books and...when I travel...I have to choose the destination, of course, I am interested in some foreign countries, but I am also interested in some Japanese prefectures and such things.” (second interview, Hinano)

Hinano also gained knowledge about Hungarian people's lifestyle (Statement 5) through home visits, which gave her authentic experiences to learn about the hosts and Hungarian culture. She learnt about gender roles in the household and used her skills of interpreting and relating as well:

"I went to the homestay, I saw like there are lots of different Hungarian food and I could really taste it...and I thought like Hungarian husband likes cooking... more try to participate in the housework than Japanese." (first interview, Hinano)

Sakura as a Hungarian major had initial knowledge about the host country and further deepened her knowledge by for instance taking a Hungarian poetry class. Seeking further knowledge, she decided to research Hungarian culture demonstrating her investment into expanding her cultural knowledge by approaching and interacting with Hungarians to find answers for her research questions. Sakura had several opportunities to talk about her own culture such as in the Hungarian poetry class or during the country presentation event. However, she also became aware of the difficulty to talk about her own culture to others, similarly to Arisa and Hinano. Socializing with a Hungarian friend raised her awareness and motivation to introduce her own country. Thus Sakura felt the need to learn more about it, uncovering intercultural contact's impact on ICC.

"when I talk about Japan, or I am asked about it, I feel that after all, I don't know Japan that much. For people who don't know anything about Japan, it is very hard to explain it so that they understand... for example, Hungarian people often asked me: What is your religion? That they asked me often, but in Japan, we don't really have the belief in one specific religion but well, we go to Shinto shrine, and also we go to Buddhist temple but to explain my own religion was very difficult, and I think they often couldn't understand me" (first interview, Sakura)

"my close Hungarian friend well, for example, explained me many things about Hungary...she worked as <L3hun>idegenvezető<L3hun> ... and she knows about Hungary very well, and well, she talks to me about Hungary often and... I thought to myself: that's so nice! I don't really know many things about Japan, I can't really explain things deeply about Japan; therefore, I thought this is so wonderful. I felt that I want to study about Japan more, thanks to my friend's influence, so me too, I wanted to teach more about Japan to Hungarian people" (first interview, Sakura)

Yuuna could also deepen her knowledge and get acquainted with Hungarian culture in various ways: verbally, visually and through gustatory perception. She felt successful in sharing her knowledge about her own country. She was eager to promote Japan and its culture and expressed no difficulties with that compared to the other participants. The absence of fellow-nationals made her feel exceptional as she could impress others and evoke their interest in Japan, indicating a similar outcome to that of Tanabe (2016) about Japanese medical students in Hungary.

6.5 Skills of discovery and interaction

Regarding the skills of discovery and interaction, the questionnaire results showed that Arisa felt quite competent as she was willing and able to express herself in English, although it was accompanied by anxiety underlying her low-level linguistic self-confidence during SA. This is a common outcome with Menyhei's (2014, 2016) and Dombi's (2017) study in which anxiety emerged as a barrier in students' responses. Eventually, as Arisa got closer to international and Hungarian students, she could overcome her anxiety. Arisa could demonstrate her skills of discovery and interaction (Byram, 1997: 52) because she could learn about various cultures from Erasmus students, from Hungarian people and also during her travels. Travelling taught her how to solve problems on her own and how to become independent. Arisa believed that she was best in decoding non-verbal communication to complement her language skills for the sake of successful communication with others, a finding that emerged in Hinano's dataset as well. Interview data also underpinned that Arisa experimented with body language to a great extent to make herself understood in Hungarian, for instance at the Sunday Market and in English with Erasmus students. Using knowledge of non-verbal communication and establishing contacts are required for the skills of discovery and interaction successfully attained by Arisa and Hinano. The next example took place in the dormitory, where Arisa tried to socialize with international students and used gestures to create conversation opportunities:

Yeah, I tried to &mmm get new word day by day, but &mmm my main strategy is &mmm telling my feeling &mmm, non-verbal communication @ like facial expression...sometimes I am making &mmm dinner and invite international students, that's &mmm how to show my &mmm how can I say (.) show my feeling...(first interview, Arisa)

Hinano also attributed high relevance to non-verbal communication skills. In the questionnaire, she rated Statement 1, about being misunderstood in English as not entirely true. Hinano claimed in the interview that instead of her L2 proficiency, Erasmus speaking partners' poor English skills were the reasons behind communication breakdown and misunderstandings. As a solution, she became aware of the importance of English as a lingua franca (Crystal 1995, Jenkins 2006, Knapp & Meierkord 2002, McArthur 2001) and adjusted her language to the context. She relied on the shared repertoire and constructed meaning together with her speaking partners to ensure successful communication.

"I felt like (2) some Erasmus student... couldn't speak English as much as I could so (2) yeah, I could speak more than them" (first interview, Hinano)

"she was not good at English, and she was using Google translation...I asked her some questions... like: do you mean like you wanna copy and then she said yes, that's the word I want to say...so translation, google translation is not good but I felt like real conversation is enough I think. If we try to understand and to be understood, we can make a communication. That's the one." (first interview, Hinano)

Related to Statement 5, about reading body language, Hinano rated herself as entirely competent and her interview accounts supported it as she had a great interest in non-verbal communication. So much so that it became the reason for choosing a non-native English speaking country for her SA: she wanted to develop her non-verbal communication skills.

During her sojourn, there were various situations in which she could compensate for her limited Hungarian language proficiency and pronunciation by using gestures.

“I wanted to say the colors red, blue, I tried to find on my clothes like some, like this is red, this is blue and then I wanna have this color of this one so (.) with the gesture, yeah (.) pronunciation is the problem I think.” (first interview, Hinano)

Sakura found it challenging to address people in culturally appropriate ways in Hungarian both at the university and in Hungarian homes. She felt unsure about the usage of honorific and casual forms of Hungarian. The discovery of cultural differences between proper ways to address others made her confused, and her consideration of such complex issues indicate her implementation of both skills in Byram's (1997) ICC model, namely the skills of discovery and interaction as well as the skills of interpreting and relating.

“Gradually my opportunities to talk to friends increased so most of the times I used <L3hun>tegező<L3hun>, but for example my friend, like her mother or father when I used <L3hun>Ön<L3hun>, the <L3hun>ragozás<L3hun> got all mixed up in my mind, I didn't understand it and to use <L3hun>Ön<L3hun> is pretty difficult. When I talk to my teacher, the teacher says that we <L3hun>tegezhetjük<L3hun>, but I am not sure whether it is really okay to use <L3hun>tegező<L3hun>...but if it's in Japan, we never use <L3hun>tegező<L3hun> to a teacher, so we have to speak very politely, so I didn't know how I should speak.” (first interview, Sakura)

Yuuna could also progress her skills of discovery and interaction (Byram 1997) in terms of lingua franca interactions, to communicate successfully with international students, a finding in line with Arisa's and Hinano's case.

“all those people I hanged out with were non-native speakers, but they still spoke English. So I just got used to &mmm using English daily, doesn't have to be correct. In vocabulary or in grammar. I just could make myself perfectly understood by others, no matter what country they are from, no matter what mother tongue they have. That was really important.” (second interview, Yuuna)

6.6 Skills of interpreting and relating

In the questionnaire, Arisa rated herself low on the awareness of the differences on the micro level, concerning people's lives. That was probably because the similarities were more apparent for her. Therefore, it does not mean that she was less competent regarding her skills of interpreting and relating. Interview data further confirmed that as she could understand Hungarian culture, explain people's behavior and connect them to her own experience. Her reflection on Japan as an island without borders, related to borders in Europe, her interpretation of goulash in Europe compared to sushi in Asia, Hungarian education in Serbia related to Korean education in Japan are all evidence which underpins that her skills of interpreting and relating were highly developed.

The questionnaire outcomes along with the interview responses revealed that Hinano acquired the skills of interpreting and relating (Byram, 1997). Her developing skills became apparent in her discovery of cultural differences between the working style, public services, perception of time and the role of males in the household in Hungary and Japan. She related

opening hours in shops to her own experience, highlighted the different distribution of family values and work, which serve as examples for Statement 4 and 6. Similarly to this outcome, Shiri (2015) also found positive impacts of SA on American students' skills of interpreting and relating in a Tunisian homestay context. Several other studies highlighted that students perceived cultural differences positively (Callahan 2010, Dombi 2017, Roberts 2006, Xiao & Petraki 2007) and these outcomes are supported by Hinano's positive recognition of different time concepts across cultures.

"I went to the homestay...and I thought like, Hungarian husband likes cooking...more try to participate in the housework than Japanese" (first interview, Hinano)

"time goes very slowly; Japan is very (.) busy... we don't have (.) time any break time... they had a tea time or (.) the shops close early, earlier, so that means that they have more (.) private time with their families or friends &mmm I think that's very good because they work (.) but not too much (.) compared to Japan. In Japan, we sometimes sacrifice our private time to do the work." (first interview, Hinano)

Sakura's skill of interpreting and relating revealed itself in the way she contrasted reasons behind Japanese and Hungarian people's behavior in service encounter situations. Her changed perspective over time became visible through her explanation and acceptance rather than being judgmental. She realized that her negative experiences were due to her expectations based on Japanese behavior and that those norms might be different in Hungary. Identifying areas of misunderstanding and considering conflicting interpretations are essential requirements for the intercultural speaker (Byram 1997) fulfilled by Sakura.

"When you book something for the customer, or you ask the menu and if they don't smile they get complaints right after... In Japan. Customers get angry, that happens very often... At a shop or restaurant (.) they call the shop later and complain a lot...but I think maybe in Hungary there is no such culture... Therefore I am sure (.) Hungary is not bad at this. Because the way they do is like @ the way, it is." (second interview, Sakura)

SA enabled Sakura to take a step towards getting to know and understand people from other cultures and develop an awareness of the differences, accepting them as they are, indicating her progressed skills of interpreting and relating.

"maybe I couldn't make use of studying Hungarian (.) but the things I experienced over there, I think I can use those... for example...I could talk to various people (.) and maybe if I never go to Hungary, I never understand foreigners I think." (second interview, Sakura)

Although in Yuuna's case instances for the skills of interpreting and relating were not that prominent as in the other cases, she compared the university classes in Hungary and in Japan, appreciating the passionate and logical debates in the classroom. Similarly to Arisa and Hinano, she also started to appreciate new values of the host country, such as spending more time with family as opposed to a career.

6.7 Critical cultural awareness

Arisa's critical cultural awareness turned out to be remarkably high. During SA, she became someone who weighs the pros and cons in situations carefully. She became a critical thinker who wants evidence to decide how things are. This was triggered by discussions with international friends (Portuguese and Korean) whose way of thinking impacted her and led Arisa on the path to becoming a critical thinker. This finding implies that social networking during SA may lead to ICC development also in terms of raising critical cultural awareness.

"he (Portuguese friend) told me there is a lot of thinking and there is a lots of &mmm, the people is not describe me in one way so then after that I tried to think, thinking &mmm good way, bad way, both... tried to find &mmm (.) tried to see a lot of side, not only one side"
(second interview, Arisa)

"when I called as Chinese, like strong feeling come to me to like, I wanna say I am not ...Yeah and but I, I don't have any unpleasant experience &mmm suffered by the Chinese guy....So I don't know reason why. My Korean friend said &mmm this unpleasant feeling happened because you look down them. ...So I was really shocked because I don't have, don't have any experience (.) to talk to them and suffer from them but somehow unpleasant bias &mmm like (2) comes up like, exist me, (.) it, it was really shocking, I am same kind of person...I think this experience is, is really, I can, yeah (.) understand because their father and mother or their education like told them something like (.) your country is better...I can't say that country is good or bad, even not based on my experience. I can say: I don't know...But some people say that is good, that is bad (.) very easily. Unconscious bias."
(second interview, Arisa)

The next excerpt is another example of her critical reasoning, the way she reflected critically on her own culture by comparing it to her SA context:

"Now I can agree that Japanese may be too much (.) punctuate@" *(second interview, Arisa)*

Arisa realized that she was no different from those Erasmus students perceiving Hungary low in value because she expressed similar attitudes towards Chinese students. That marks another pivotal point in her development of critical cultural awareness. In the Hungarian university context, Dombi (2011) revealed that intercultural awareness-raising could be attained through reflection on previous intercultural encounters. Arisa did the same when she discussed with her Korean friend her uncomfortable meeting with Hungarians who called her Chinese. Such reflection made her aware of unconscious biases.

As a result of SA, Hinano's way of thinking changed gradually as instead of accepting things the way they are; she started to question them. She could express her critical thoughts and suggest new ideas at her workplace in an appropriate, context-sensitive way, within the borders of Japanese expectations.

"I went to Hungary, and then there are lots of things I did, I don't know, and then I thought like why do they do like this or maybe they, because of this one maybe they do like this, then I can check and ask them, I repeated this kind of things...for example...a trainer says something to me and...okay I do, but I do like, I ask like: why do they? And then if they say the reason, I think: oh okay, so I could understand more...and sometimes I thought like

maybe this way is better and then I can say it (.) or ask them like: okay, I understand that way but maybe I think it's better or why not, why don't you do that like that? Then the trainer thinks about hmm hmm yeah so we can share the idea...in a polite way still or polite or like I am a little bit good at to express to those (.) to communicate like, I don't wanna make them angry but I wanna, I just wanna like ask you, share the idea" (first interview, Hinano)

Sakura's and Yuuna's critical cultural awareness surfaced less compared to Arisa and Hinano. In Yuuna's case, change in her communicative behavior was indicated by being more logical and outspoken. Upon return to her country, she tried to use those skills at her workplace, and as a result, she faced some re-adjustment difficulties. She was critical of her own context because she could not feel the value of her new skills in Japan. This is in line with Burgess' (2013) note on concerns about SA's impact on work re-adjustment and the inflexible nature of Japanese companies not valuing global talent (Tabuchi 2012). Yuuna's final advice for future sojourners entailed her critical thinking, and that was very similar to the finding in Sakura's case. They both demonstrated an awareness of the danger of initial expectations based on their home culture which was an overlapping point with their skills of interpreting and relating. Further, Sakura could gain a deeper understanding of foreigners' thought processes through socializing with them.

7 Conclusion

This paper aimed to reveal a Hungarian SA's potential to develop intercultural communicative competence through multiple cases. Four Japanese students were asked about their ICC in the form of a questionnaire which was complemented with a semi-structured interview and a follow-up interview as well as the analysis of students' Facebook posts to gain an understanding underlying their reported scores. Although most participants studied in Hungary at different times, the cases shared many aspects. It has been found that all participants rated themselves high on the positive attitudes towards other cultures, people and languages scale. However, the qualitative data unfolded some negatives attitudes towards certain cultural differences and specific groups of people, which were reflected on critically. The knowledge component received the lowest scores due to the difficulty of expressing their knowledge about their own culture. Similar patterns emerged in all datasets concerning their wish to explore more about their Japanese contexts. In terms of skills, all participants reflected on the cultural differences but to a varying degree. Arisa and Hinano distanced themselves from the situation and reconstructed it from other possible perspectives. They related new experiences to previously lived ones, reflecting on them critically. While Arisa and Hinano demonstrated higher critical cultural awareness, in Yuuna's and Sakura's case it was less apparent. Findings revealed that SA in Hungary also enhanced lingua franca interactions and non-verbal communication skills.

Overall, all participants took essential steps to fulfill the requirements of the intercultural speaker (Byram, 1997). Arisa was on a more progressed stage compared to the others. Her active social networking enabled her to learn and relate her knowledge to her context, and interpret her experiences causing her progress in becoming an intercultural speaker. Sakura's case demonstrated that knowledge about the host culture and language alone were not enough to reach the same goal. Social networking and interaction with international students played a highly relevant role. SA has the potential to develop friendships across borders and to grant sojourners skills, which enhance the awareness of biases, facilitate international cooperation,

mutual understanding and functioning in global environments successfully, making a small step towards peace in the world.

References

- Bhawuk, D.P.S. & Brislin, R. (1992): The measurement of intercultural sensitivity using the concepts of individualism and collectivism. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 16, 413–436.
- Burgess, C. (2013, May 21): Ambivalent Japan turns on its 'insular' youth. *The Japan Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/community/2013/05/21/issues/ambivalent-japan-turns-on-its-insular-youth/>
- Byram, M. (1997): *Teaching and Assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence*. UK, Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Callahan, C. (2010): Going home: Deculturation experiences in cultural reentry. *Journal of Intercultural Communication* 22, Retrieved 4 January, 2011 from <http://www.immi.se/intercultural/nr22/callahan.htm>.
- Clément, R., Gordon, P. & Noels, K.A. (1996): Language, identity, and adjustment: The role of linguistic self-confidence in the acculturation process. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology* 15.3, 246–264.
- Coleman, J.A. (1998): Evolving intercultural perceptions among university language learners in Europe. In: Byram, M. & Fleming, M. (eds.): *Language Learning in Intercultural Perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 45–75.
- Coleman, J.A. (2015): Social circles during residence abroad: What students do, and who with. In: Mitchell, R., Tracy-Ventura, N. & McManus, K. (eds.): *Social Interaction, Identity and Language Learning During Residence Abroad*. Eurosla, 33–52. Retrieved from <http://www.eurosla.org/monographs/EM04/EM04tot.pdf>
- Crystal, D. (1995): *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Dombi, J. (2011): Exploring Korean EFL students' intercultural experiences. Presented at the XX International Grastyán Conference, Pécs, Hungary.
- Dombi, J. (2013): *A Mixed-Method Study on English Majors' Intercultural Communicative Competence*. Doctoral dissertation. Pécs (Hungary): University of Pécs.
- Dombi, J. (2016): A study on advanced EFL learners' intercultural encounters. *Journal of Intercultural Communication* 42.
- Dombi, J. (2017a): Working towards a model of intercultural communicative competence for advanced-level EFL learners. In: Krevelj, S.L. & Geld, R. (eds.): *UZRT 2016: Empirical Studies in Applied Linguistics*. Zagreb: FF Press, 17–22.
- Dombi, J. (2017b): 'Egyszerre volt érdekes és ijesztő; de azt hiszem, leginkább hihetetlenül izgalmas volt.' Angol szakos egyetemi hallgatók interkulturális élethelyzetekben ['It was interesting and meanwhile scary, but eventually, it was unbelievably exciting' A qualitative study on English majors intercultural encounters]. *Modern Nyelvoktatás* 23.1, 17–30.
- Dörnyei, Z. (2007): *Research Methods in Applied Linguistics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Duff, P.A. (2008): *Case Study Research in Applied Linguistics*. New York, NY: Taylor & Francis Group.

- Engle, L. & Engle, J. (2004): Assessing language acquisition and intercultural sensitivity development in relation to study abroad program design. *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad* 10, 253–276.
- Fantini, A. & Tirmizi, A. (2006): Exploring and assessing intercultural competence. *World learning publications* 1. Retrieved from http://digitalcollections.sit.edu/worldlearning_publications
- Fantini, A. E. (2019): *Intercultural Communicative Competence in Educational Exchange: A Multinational Perspective*. New York: Routledge.
- Freed, B.F. (1998): An overview of issues and research in language learning in a study abroad setting. *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad* 4, 31–60.
- Gao, M.C.F. (2000): Influence of native culture and language on intercultural communication: The case of PRC student immigrants in Australia. *Journal of Intercultural Communication* 4. Retrieved from <http://www.immi.se/intercultural/nr4/gao.htm>.
- Glanz, K. (2014, November 5): Heading to Hungary. *NHK World-Japan*. Retrieved December 20, 2018, from the NHK database: <https://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/en/news/editors/5/20141105/index.html>
- Hanada, S. (2015): *Assessing Intercultural Competence: A Comparative Study of Japanese Students in Study Abroad Programs*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Toronto (Canada): University of Toronto.
- Jackson, J. (2018): *Interculturality in International Education*. New York: Routledge.
- Jenkins, J. (2006): Current perspectives on teaching World Englishes and English as a Lingua Franca. *Tesol Quarterly* 40.1, 157–181.
- Knapp, K. & Meierkord, C. (eds.) (2002): *Lingua Franca Communication*. Frankfurt: Peter Lang.
- Mackey, A. & Gass, S. (2005): *Second Language Research: Methodology and Design*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Malota, E. (2016): *Hallgatói véleményfelmérés 2016: Magyarország és a magyar felsőoktatás a külföldi hallgatók szerint [Student survey 2016: Hungary and Hungarian tertiary education based on international students' perspectives]*. Budapest: Tempus Közalapítvány.
- McArthur, T. (2001): World English and world Englishes: Trends, tensions, varieties, and standards. *Language Teaching* 34, 1–20.
- Menyhei, Zs. (2014): Exploring English majors' perspectives on their development in an intercultural communication course. In: Horváth, J. & Medgyes, P. (eds.): *Studies in Honour of Marianne Nikolov*. Pécs: Lingua Franca Csoport, 119–132.
- Menyhei, Zs. (2016): *Developing English Majors' Intercultural Communicative Competence in the Classroom: "We have learnt [...] how much more we need to learn about Intercultural Communication"*. Doctoral dissertation. Pécs (Hungary): University of Pécs.
- Nagy, B.C. (2005): *Language learning through student residence abroad: A critical overview*. Unpublished manuscript. Groningen: University of Groningen.
- Nishida, H. (1985): Japanese intercultural communication competence and cross-cultural adjustment. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 9.3, 247–269.
- Nunan, D. & Bailey, K.M. (2009): *Exploring Second Language Classroom Research: A Comprehensive Guide*. Boston, MA: Heinle.
- Patterson, P.K. (2006): *Effect of Study-Abroad on Intercultural Sensitivity*. Doctoral dissertation. Columbia: University of Missouri. Retrieved from <https://mospace.umsystem.edu/xmlui/bitstream/handle/10355/4422/research.pdf?sequence=3>.
- Regan, V. (1998): Sociolinguistics and language learning in a study abroad context. *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad* 4, 61–91.

- Roberts, J.M. (2006): Wearing the hijab: An argument for moderate acculturation of newly immigrated Arab-American women. *Journal of Intercultural Communication* 11. Retrieved from <http://www.immi.se/intercultural/nr11/roberts.htm> .
- Shiri, S. (2015): The homestay in intensive language study abroad: Social networks, language socialization and developing intercultural competence. *Foreign Language Annals* 48.1, 5–25.
- Siegal, M. (1995): Individual differences and study abroad: Women learning Japanese in Japan. In: Freed B. (ed.): *Second Language Acquisition in a Study Abroad Context*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 225–244.
- Sood, S. (2012, September 26): The statistics of studying abroad. *BBC*. Retrieved from <http://www.bbc.com/travel/blog/20120926-the-statistics-of-studying-abroad>
- Szentspáli Ujlaki, E. (2007): Study-abroad motivation: Preliminary results of a pilot project. In: Horváth J. & Nikolov M. (eds.): *UPRT 2007: Empirical Studies in English Applied Linguistics*. Pécs: Lingua Franca Csoport, 3–18.
- Tabuchi, H. (2012, May 29): Young and global need not apply in Japan. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/30/business/global/as-global-rivals-gain-ground-corporate-japan-clings-to-cautious-ways.html>
- Taguchi, N. (2013): Production of routines in L2 English: Effect of proficiency and study-abroad experience. *System* 41, 109–121.
- Talburt, S. & Stewart, M.A. (1999): What's the subject of study abroad? Race, gender, and 'living culture'. *The Modern Language Journal* 83.2, 163–175.
- Teichler, U. (2015): The impact of temporary study abroad. In: Mitchell, R., Tracy-Ventura, N. & McManus, K. (eds.): *Social Interaction, Identity and Language Learning During Residence Abroad*. Eurosla, 15–32. Retrieved from <http://www.eurosla.org/monographs/EM04/EM04tot.pdf>.
- Vande Berg, M., Connor-Linton, J. & Paige, M.R. (2009): The Georgetown consortium project: Interventions for student learning abroad. *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad* 18, 1–75.
- van Ek, J.A. (1986): *Objectives of Foreign Language Learning. Volume I: Scope*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.
- Varghese, N.V. (2008): Change in cross-border student mobility patterns. In: Varghese, N.V. (ed.): *Globalization of Higher Education and Cross-Border Student Mobility*. Paris: IIEP, 20–21.
- Xiao, H. & Petraki, E. (2007): An investigation of Chinese students' difficulties in intercultural communication and its role in ELT. *Journal of Intercultural Communication* 13. Retrieved from <http://www.immi.se/intercultural/nr13/petraki.htm>.
- Yashima, T., Zenuk, L. & Shimizu, K. (2004): The influence of attitudes and affect on willingness to communicate and second language communication. *Language Learning* 54.1, 119–152.

Appendix

Modified Intercultural Communicative Competence Questionnaire

Dear Students,

My name is Julia Tanabe and I am a Ph.D. student at the University of Pécs. The following questionnaire constitutes part of my research project about study abroad. I would like to kindly ask you to fill out my questionnaire. Each participant receives a pseudonym and all the data will be handled confidentially. There is no right or wrong answer, therefore, please give your answers sincerely, as only this will guarantee the success of my investigation.

Task: Please reflect on your experiences in Hungary. There should have been situations in which you had opportunities to talk in English to both native and non-native English speakers. Please indicate how competent you believe you were, during your study abroad, in each of the 12 situations described below. Estimate your competence and put a percentage in the box.

0% means completely incompetent and 100% means competent.

1.	Ask English speaking Hungarian, or international friends about general attitudes towards immigrants and minorities in their country.	%
2.	Discuss with a group of English speaking acquaintances the similarities between social networking (e.g.: Facebook) in their country and in Japan.	%
3.	Ask English speaking Hungarian, or international friends about public holidays in their country.	%
4.	Discuss with an English speaking Hungarian, or international friend the differences between student life there and in Japan.	%
5.	Explain in English to an English speaking Hungarian, or other international acquaintance what do Japanese people celebrate on Setsubun.	%
6.	Explain in English to an English speaking Hungarian, or other international acquaintance what is Tanabata.	%
7.	Explain in English to an English speaking Hungarian, or other international acquaintance what do Japanese people celebrate on the 3rd of March.	%
8.	Discuss with an English-speaking Hungarian, Erasmus or other international friend the differences between attitudes towards immigrants, such as Philipinos in Japan and in their country.	%
9.	Discuss with an English speaking Hungarian, or other international friend the differences between attitudes towards foreigners („gaijin”) in Japan and in their country.	%
10.	Talk in English about the way Japanese celebrate New Years Eve in a small group of English speaking strangers.	%
11.	Discuss with a group of English speaking Hungarian, or other international acquaintances the similarities between Japanese movies or animation and movies in their country.	%
12.	Discuss with an English speaking Hungarian, or other international friend the differences between family values in their country and in Japan.	%

Task: Please read the statements below. Think about how true they are for you.
 4=absolutely true; 3=somewhat true; 2= somewhat false; 1= absolutely not true

1.	I am not interested in foreign culture at all and I do not like such things.	4 3 2 1
2.	I am interested Hungarian people, living in Japan or Asia.	4 3 2 1
3.	I am interested in Ainu history, language, fashion and culture in Japan.	4 3 2 1
4.	I am very interested in the way people use gestures and body language.	4 3 2 1
5.	During my stay in Hungary, I often have the feeling that I do not know enough about my own culture.	4 3 2 1
6.	I enjoy getting to know more about other cultures during my stay in Hungary.	4 3 2 1
7.	I wish I knew more about the diversity of religions in Japan and their culture.	4 3 2 1
8.	I feel uncomfortable in the company of foreigners.	4 3 2 1
9.	I try to grab every single chance in Hungary to adapt myself to the new intercultural environment.	4 3 2 1

1.	I know many differences between the way Japanese and Hungarian people behave in social situations, for example shopping in a supermarket.	4 3 2 1
2.	I find it challenging to communicate with strangers in English.	4 3 2 1
3.	I know nothing about the differences between the way Japanese and Hungarian behave at their workplace.	4 3 2 1
4.	Using formal language (honorific) in Japanese is very easy for me.	4 3 2 1
5.	I know very few facts about life in Hungary.	4 3 2 1

1.	I am often misunderstood in English.	4 3 2 1
2.	I often worry that what I say in English is not appropriate.	4 3 2 1
3.	When I have to speak English on the phone I easily become anxious.	4 3 2 1
4.	I often notice differences between the way Hungarian and Japanese people do things.	4 3 2 1
5.	I can read people's gestures and body language easily.	4 3 2 1
6.	I often notice differences between the way Hungarian and Japanese people behave.	4 3 2 1
7.	I am often unable to express myself in English.	4 3 2 1

1.	I am good at reading in English in general.	4 3 2 1
2.	I am good at reading in English materials related to my field of study.	4 3 2 1
3.	I am good at writing reports or other papers in English.	4 3 2 1
4.	I can talk about any topic in English easily.	4 3 2 1
5.	I speak English almost as well as a native speaker.	4 3 2 1
6.	I need to work a lot on my English.	4 3 2 1
7.	I am good at English grammar in writing.	4 3 2 1
8.	I am good at understanding spoken English.	4 3 2 1

1.	I often browse English websites on the Internet.	4 3 2 1
2.	I often meet international students in the town where I study.	4 3 2 1
3.	I often watch films and Youtube videos in English.	4 3 2 1
4.	I often read books or articles in English.	4 3 2 1
5.	I often watch videos in Japanese.	4 3 2 1
6.	I often write emails or chat in English.	4 3 2 1
7.	I often interact with international or Hungarian students at our university.	4 3 2 1
8.	I try to meet as many speakers of English as possible to practice English.	4 3 2 1
9.	I try to meet as many speakers of Hungarian as possible to practice Hungarian.	4 3 2 1
10.	I often interact with international or Hungarian students in my neighborhood.	4 3 2 1

Please answer the following questions concerning your background. The contents of this questionnaire are absolutely confidential.

Pseudonym: _____

Age: _____

What foreign languages have you learnt? _____

How long have you learnt them and where?

2nd language: _____ for _____ years/months/weeks ; Place: _____

3rd language: _____ for _____ years/months/weeks ; Place: _____

4th language: _____ for _____ years/months/weeks ; Place: _____

Thank you very much for your cooperation!

Email address (if you would like to receive information about the results of this study):
