



The Role of Cross-Cultural Understanding in Foreign Language Communication in Intermediate Japanese Language Learners

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Abstract. Cross-cultural communication occurs when humans with their culture relate to other humans who come from different cultures, interact, and even influence each other. Cross-cultural is a term that is often used to describe situations when a culture is confronted with another culture and both have a mutual influence and impact both positive and negative. The existence of cultural differences is because culture is dynamic and always evolving so it needs a variety of approaches to understanding culture, among others by doing assimilation culture, including assimilation, integration, and cross-cultural understanding cross-cultural understanding. The realization that communication cannot be cultural context, then cross-cultural understanding, especially in cross-cultural understanding, especially in foreign language learning, is very important. Therefore, the role of cross-cultural understanding is needed in foreign language communication, especially Japanese. Data collection methods are observation and questionnaire. Observations were made in the learning of *chokai kaiwa* skills (listening and speaking courses) and questionnaires were distributed to 80 Japanese language learners who participated in *chokai kaiwa* learning in the 2023 academic year at Semarang State University. The role of cross-cultural understanding for learners can facilitate communication activities to avoid misunderstandings. It also plays a role in building communication in Japanese. The learners' understanding of Indonesian culture is 70% although it cannot be said to be low. However, it is lower than the learners' understanding of Japanese culture.

Keywords: Cross-Cultural, Communication, Understanding

1 Introduction

Etymologically, the English word "culture" comes from the Latin "*colere*" which means "to cultivate" or "to cultivate".comes from the Latin "*colere*" which means "to cultivate" or "to work" something related to nature (cultivation). "working" something related to nature (cultivation). In the Indonesian language, the word culture (nominalisation: culture) comes from the Sanskrit "buddhaya" which is the plural form of the word buddhi (budi or reason) or mind). Another explanation of the etymology of the word "culture" is a development of the compound word "budi daya"

which means empowerment of the human mind. That takes the form of copyright, work, and karsa [1]. Associatively, it can be stated that the word "culture" or "kultur" has the basic meaning of intellectual endeavor to improve the quality and quantity of quality and quantity (civilisation) human life [2]. This effort is realized in three basic systems, including (1) the complexity of ideas, concepts, and thoughts humans ideas, concepts, and thoughts or what is commonly called the cultural system, the complexity of interactional and transactional activities or (2) the complexity of interactional and transactional activities or what is commonly called the social system, and (3) the complexity of materiality as a means/tool to fulfill needs or what is commonly called the instrumental system [3]. Understanding the culture of others is very important, especially for people who work in the tourism and hospitality industry, including managers, decision-makers, or officers who are in their daily work officers who in their daily work have direct contact with people from other cultures direct contact with people from different cultures [4]. This includes an understanding of values, customs, habits, ways of communicating, and other aspects of behavioral aspects. Cross-cultural communication occurs when people with their own culture relate to other humans from different cultures, interact, and even influence each other [5].

1.1 Cross-cultural

Cross-cultural is a term often used to describe situations when a culture is confronted with another culture and both cultures are confronted with another culture and both influence and impact each other both positively and negatively influence and impact both positive and negative, as happens in every tourism activity, where travelers certainly interact with each other tourist activities, where tourists certainly interact and have both positive and negative impacts on the community. Cultural differences exist because culture is dynamic and always evolving so various approaches are needed to understand culture, including assimilation, integration, and cross-cultural understanding. Cross-cultural understanding. Cross-cultural understanding creates the ability to determine what is appropriate and what is acceptable to other cultures. Cross-cultural understanding allows humans to communicate well and ultimately, cross-cultural understanding can strengthen human bonds with other humans and give uniqueness to humans and society. By sharing experiences and knowledge, understanding and complementing each other through cross-culture, peace, and harmonisation of life will be created. If two people with different cultural backgrounds meet without an understanding of the other person's culture, it can lead to a lack of understanding of the other person's culture understanding of the other person's culture, it can lead to misunderstandings and conflicts as illustrated in the misunderstandings and conflicts as illustrated below.

1.2 Understanding

Cross-cultural understanding of foreign language learners has a role in communication [6]. If foreign language learners cannot understand the culture of the target language, misunderstandings can occur in communication [7].

Misunderstandings can occur in oral and written communication. Below is an example of cultural understanding in oral communication.

Example 1

Astri has been working as a receptionist at a five-star hotel for three months. Every day she meets different guests and comes from different places. One day she was told by the front desk manager that Dave Dalkin, a famous British artiste, would be staying at the hotel for four days from England would be staying at the hotel for four days. Astri happens to be a big fan of the artiste. She was very excited when her favorite guest arrived at the hotel she admired so much arrived at the hotel. They chatted excitedly about various things. During the next conversation, Astri mentions her guest's name, Dave. But suddenly, without saying anything and with a Dave Dalkin just walked away from Astri. Of course, Astri was shocked and wondered why her guest and favorite artist was acting this way her favorite artiste was acting this way. Until it was time to check out Dave Dalkin never spoke to Astri.

Example 2

Consider Rio's conversation with Japanese Tanaka.

Conversation 1

Tanaka: Rio san, kondo no shumatsu kurasu patii ga arimasu. Ikimasenka.

Tanaka: Rio, there's a class party this weekend. Let's go to the event.

Rio: Sumimasen, Isogashiikara, ikemasen.

Rio: I'm sorry for being busy, but I can't attend the class party.

Conversation 2

Tanaka: Rio san, raishuu no shumatsu kurasu patii ga arimasu. Ikimasenka.

Tanaka: Rio, there's a class party this weekend. Let's go to the event.

Rio: Sumimasen ga, ikitai desu ga... isogashi desu kara chotto...

Rio: Sorry, I wanted to go, but I was busy...

From the two conversations above, in the first and second conversations Rio both refused Tanaka's invitation. But in the second conversation, when Rio refused Tanaka's feelings as a Japanese person were not too disappointed, because Rio showed his desire to go because he was busy so he could not. In the first conversation, Tanaka's feelings when rejected were very disappointed because Rio refused to directly say that he could not go to the class party. From the above conversation, it can be understood that if someone communicates and understands the culture of the other person, there will be no misunderstanding. Foreign language learners, in this case, Japanese, need to have the ability to understand cross-culture in communicating with interlocutors using the target language. The role of cross-cultural understanding for Japanese language learners when communicating with Japanese people is important. Due to different cultural traits, we often have different perceptions of other cultures. Different perceptions lead to negative and subjective assessments of the behaviors, customs, ways of thinking, values, and ideas of others from other cultures. Behavior, customs, ways of thinking, values, and ideas of other people from other cultures. It is this that can later lead to misunderstandings between people of different cultures. We may not realize or understand how different perceptions are formed in

different ways, but these differences are real and must be dealt with in situations where two different cultures meet. Where two different cultures meet [8]. The fact that there is no society in the world without culture shows that every human group needs culture to fulfill its physical needs. Every human group needs culture to fulfill its physical and needs. Culture becomes a self-concept in every human group to make provisions in organizing its life. To make provisions in organizing their lives. Without this, then without, then there will be conflicting circumstances from various parties and the result is not the realization of a peaceful and the realization of a peaceful and harmonious society. As [9] says "Culture is a system of integrated patterns, most of which remain below the threshold of consciousness, yet all of which govern human behavior just as surely as the manipulated strings of human behavior "behavior just surely as the manipulated strings of a puppet control its motion".

Culture has aspects of material and non-material aspects. Material aspects include real objects that along with the development of time change form or function. For example, a horse-drawn carriage horse as a means of transport changes function to become not a means of transport, because it has been replaced by electric trains and cars. The non-material aspects of culture include all patterns of life that are made by humans. These aspects include [10]:

1. Folkways: Folkways are ways of thinking, feel, act that are shared by a society. Society. When these ways of thinking or acting are deeply rooted, then they will be followed from one generation generation to the next. These folkways indeed develop as an effective way of effective way of doing or thinking. Folkways may not force a group to follow them unless these folkways have become established and deeply rooted in society.
2. Mores: Mores are considered the only correct way to perform a particular societal function. A certain function in society is deemed necessary for the welfare of a group society. Customs become the benchmark for human activities and thoughts. Unlike folkways, customs measure whether something is right or wrong and must be followed. If not, the person who violates it can be given customary sanctions, even banishment from the community.
3. Law: As a group's culture advances, complex mores or customs become written laws. Rules are drafted based on these customs to bind the entire community. Cross-culturalism occurs when people with their own culture come into contact with other people from different cultures, interact, and even convert each other. Other people from different cultures interact and even influence each other. The term is often used to describe the circumstances in which a culture interacts with another culture, and both other cultures exert mutual influence and impact both positively and negatively.

Cross-culturalism creates values to determine what is appropriate and what is acceptable to other cultures. Cross-culturalism allows people to communicate well, and in the end, cross-culturalism can bring people closer to different people and give uniqueness to people and society. And give uniqueness to people and society. By sharing experiences and knowledge, humans and other humans seek to understand and complement each other to create peace and harmonization of life through cross-culture. Cross-cultural knowledge helps improve the ability to recognize differences between cultures and learn to live together amid disagreements. Cross-culture can be learned through education in the family, socialization of values in society through

social interaction and the media, and multicultural learning, which can facilitate participants in understanding learning materials without the constraints of different backgrounds [11]. An understanding of diversity, respect for differences, and an appreciation of the differences between cultures. Respect for differences, as well as how to behave and act in multiethnic and multicultural situations [12]. To know the proper use of the language, learners need to understand the background and mindset of the language speakers [13].

Understanding the culture of foreign language speakers as the target language (which is learned) will be easier to achieve by comparing one's own culture with the culture of foreign language speakers [14]. Culture with the culture of the foreign language speakers. Thus, learners can clearly and objectively see the similarities and differences between the two cultures. Introduction to the culture of the foreign language learned can avoid culture shock if the learner is in the country where the language is spoken [15]. Culture shock is an individual's response to a cultural situation that is foreign to them. The response can be confusion, restlessness, and discomfort in the foreign cultural environment. Culture shock is a cultural conflict and is an obstacle to communication. Cultural context, then cross-cultural understanding, especially in cross-cultural understanding, especially in learning foreign language learning, becomes very important [16]. So far, foreign language learning is still emphasized on mastering reading skills and grammatical understanding. Meanwhile, the introduction to the target language's culture still needs to be improved. Therefore, cross-cultural understanding is needed in foreign language communication, especially in Japanese.

2 Methods

The study is a descriptive qualitative research—the study of cross-cultural understanding of textbooks used in Japanese language learning. The book used is Marugoto. Marugoto is a language and culture textbook. The book contains cultures from other countries in the world. Data collection methods were observation and questionnaire. Observations were made in the learning of *chokai* (listening and speaking courses), and questionnaires were distributed to 80 Japanese language learners who took *chokai* lessons in the 2023 academic year at Universitas Negeri Semarang.

3 Results and Discussion

3.1 Results

The research results in data collection by observation in chokai kaiwa learning show that cross-cultural understanding in students has a role in communicating Japanese. Observations were made on five chokai kaiwa learning themes: 1) "Atarashii Tomodachi" (New Friends), 2) "Mise de Taberu" (Eating at Stalls), 3) "Okinawa Trip" (Okinawa Tourism), 4) "Nihon Matsuri" (Japanese Festival) and 5) "Tokubetsu na Hi" (Special Day). As for the learning flow of chokai kaiwa, each theme that becomes a topic will be implemented in situations in Japan and situations in Indonesia. The results of research in data collection by questionnaire, it is known from 10 indicators of the questionnaire related to the role of cross-cultural understanding in communicating Japanese: 85 percent of respondents have a sense of Japanese culture, 70% of respondents have an understanding of Indonesian culture, and 90% of respondents cannot implement cross-cultural understanding when communicating Japanese.

3.2 Discussion

Based on the study results, the role of cross-cultural understanding in five themes will be discussed based on the observation results.

Table 1. The Role of Cross-Cultural Understanding Theme 1 "Atarashii Tomodachi".

Situation	The Role of Cross-Cultural Understanding
Introduce yourself and share some personal information	Learners need to understand Japanese culture: 1) when conveying personal information, not mentioning age or asking about age, 2) doing origin (bowing), 3) when women's hands are in front, and men are on either side. The role of cross-cultural understanding in introducing oneself is to know the politeness behavior when introducing oneself.

Based on Table 1, the learners' cross-cultural understanding is the cross-cultural understanding of Indonesia and Japan. The learners' understanding is that Indonesia has a different culture when getting acquainted. They can mention their age and shake hands. With the learners' understanding of introducing themselves in Japanese, the learners can behave politely.

Table 2. The Role of Cross-Cultural Understanding Theme 2 "Mise de Taberu"

Situation	The Role of Cross-Cultural Understanding
Eating with friends at a restaurant	Learners need to understand Japanese culture: 1) how to order food, 2) types

of seating in Japanese restaurants, including *zashiki* and *teburu*, 3) before there is a custom of toasting, 4) just before eating say *itadakimasu* and afterward *gochisosamadeshita*.

The role of cross-cultural understanding in dining situations is that food reflects the culture of a nation or region. Through food, we can understand a community's history, values, and traditions.

Based on Table 2. the role of cross-cultural understanding about eating together in restaurants is different from that in Indonesia. There is no culture of toasting and saying things before and after meals. Indonesians have the habit of praying before eating. Learners can recognize the types of seating in Japanese restaurants. Types of seating in Japanese restaurants

1. *Kaunta*|*Seki*

Kaunta|*Seki* or bar seating is found in almost all Japanese fast food restaurants, such as udon, ramen, and izakaya (Japanese gastropubs). This kind of seating is a way to accommodate more solo diners without taking up all the tables in the restaurant. The presence of *kaunta seki* is considered effective for a cozy dining experience.

2. *Zashiki*□

Zashiki is Japanese seating for rooms that use tatami flooring. This kind of seating is mostly found in very traditional Japanese restaurants, izakaya, and kaiseki. If you are directed to a room with a *zashiki* in it, you will be asked to remove your shoes before stepping into the tatami room.

Removing shoes in Japan also has its rules. Japanese people usually place their shoes facing away from the tatami to make it easier to put them back on when getting off the tatami.

3. *Horigotatsu*

There is another type of seating in Japanese restaurants called *Horigotatsu*. This type of seating has a low table and a floor that is recessed underneath so that people can stretch their legs underneath the table. *Horigotatsu* can be found in traditional Japanese restaurants and izakaya, especially in group restaurants.

4. *Kotatsu*

In traditional Japanese restaurants, there is a seating called *Kotatsu*. This kind of seating has a heating table that is commonly found in Japanese homes. The heating unit is usually placed under the table with a special blanket covering the entire frame of the table to keep the hot steam out.

The top of the blanket is covered with a table for food and drinks. Nowadays, there are fewer and fewer restaurants that have *kotatsu*. This is due to the emergence of other, more sophisticated heating devices.

5. Private Dining Room

This kind of private seating is commonly found in *izayaka* and places used to accommodate celebrations and parties. Since there are many diners and it is always noisy, the private dining area is made separate from other diners' tables. Restaurants in Indonesia, on the other hand, have only two types: *lesehan* and seated.

The importance of cross-cultural understanding by Japanese language learners to establish proper communication.

Table 3. Role of Cross-Cultural Understanding Theme 3 "Okinawa Trip"

Situation	The Role of Cross-Cultural Understanding
Okinawa Trip	Learners need to understand Japanese culture: 1) when arriving home say "tadaima" and people at home say "okaerinasai" 2) the seasons in Japan when traveling, and 3) what is there in Okinawa. The role of cross-cultural understanding in travel situations is to determine one's mental, physical, and material readiness for travel.

Based on table 3. The learners can understand the cross-cultural theme "Okinawa Trip" related to the location of Okinawa and the famous beautiful beaches in Okinawa. Learners can understand what preparations are made when traveling. Japanese people have a habit of preparing everything carefully such as reading the travel guidebook carefully so that they can determine the right time to travel to Okinawa. Unlike Indonesia, which has only 2 seasons, namely summer and rainy season, so there is no difficulty in determining the time to travel.

Table 4. Role of Cross-Cultural Understanding of Theme 4 "Nihon Matsuri"

Situation	The Role of Cross-Cultural Understanding
Japanese Festival	Learners need to understand Japanese culture: 1) festivals in Japan 2) what is done during the preparation of Japanese festivals, and 3) festivals in Japan differ depending on the season in Japan. The role of cross-cultural understanding in Japanese festival situations is to understand the history and customs of the people in a region.

Table 4. shows that cross-cultural understanding of the theme "Nihon matsuri" has a role in communication, i.e. learners can know what festivals are in Japan and what

is done during Japanese festivals. Learners can also build communication by exchanging knowledge with cultures in Indonesia where there are also cultural festivals in each region of Indonesia. Thus, cross-cultural understanding plays a role in communication to improve the delivery of the right message.

Table 5. Role of Cross-Cultural Understanding Theme 5 "Tokubesuna Hi"

Situation	The Role of Cross-Cultural Understanding
Special Day	Learners need to understand Japanese culture: 1) special days in Japan 2) what customs are done on special days in Japan such as oshogatsu, and 3) what foods are served on special days. The role of cross-cultural understanding in shared meal situations, namely the history of why there is a special day in Japan.

Table 5. Shows the role of cross-cultural understanding of theme 5 special day situations in Japan. The learners' understanding plays a role in communication where the learners also have knowledge of Indonesian culture so that the learners can exchange knowledge related to special days both in Japan and Indonesia. Thus, communication can run well and smoothly.

The results of the questionnaire to respondents can be seen in the following table.

Table 6. Cross-Cultural Understanding Questionnaire Results

Indicator	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	%			
The role of cross-cultural understanding helps in communication	40	20	20	20
Have an understanding of Japanese culture Japan	20	65	10	5
Have an understanding of Indonesian culture	20	50	15	15
Cross-cultural implementation is difficult for me.	80	10	10	10

Based on table 6. There is an imbalance in learners' understanding of culture. The learners' understanding of Indonesian culture is lower than that of Japanese culture,

which is 70%. Meanwhile, the learners' understanding of Japanese culture is 85%. And 90% of the learners have difficulty implementing cross-culture in communication. This is because Indonesian culture is diverse and Indonesian culture needs to be strengthened in educational institutions while the learners' understanding of Japanese culture is high.

4 Conclusion

The role of cross-cultural understanding for learners can facilitate communication activities to avoid misunderstandings. It also plays a role in building communication in Japanese. The learners' understanding of Indonesian culture is 70% although it cannot be said to be low. However it is lower than the learners' understanding of Japanese culture.

Therefore, it is important to strengthen Indonesian culture in the family, environment, and education so that learners do not forget their own culture despite learning Japanese.

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