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Toward the development of intercultural competencies through classroom-based activities in Japanese higher education

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Abstract ― In response to the growing awareness of internationalisation within Japanese higher education and a desire to produce graduates capable of functioning as global citizens, there is an increasing need for institutions to recognise the role of intercultural competence and how to incorporate it effectively into university classrooms. effectively. This study describes how activities based on the existing INCA model of intercultural competence can be implemented to develop students' intercultural competency during 15 weekly 90-minute general education seminar-type classes at a Japanese university. The critical self-reflections of 22 undergraduate students established a consistently high rate of intercultural competency attainment during in-class educational activities. Additionally, a qualitative analysis of students' reflections on their in-class learning revealed an awareness of intercultural competencies for personal benefit, development of employability skills, and increased motivation toward improving them in the future. These findings suggest that consolidating intercultural competencies into classroom activities may alleviate The many challenges faced by students and faculty in Japanese higher education. It concludes by proposing practical recommendations for incorporating intercultural competencies in university courses.

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1.0 Introduction

As a result of increasing globalisation, Japanese society is gradually diversifying, requiring institutions nationwide to respond and adapt to this evolving situation. Due to the communication problems associated with internationalisation, graduates must possess the necessary knowledge and interpersonal skills to interact effectively with people from different cultures (Centre for the New Economy and Society 2018). This is consistent with the social skills prospective employers necessitate from their future employees, primarily the ability to work effectively with others (Watkins and Smith 2018).

Japanese universities are a conspicuous arena for internationalisation, whose strategies have sought to gradually increase the number of international students and instructors within the country. A prominent example is Hokkaido University which has implemented numerous initiatives to broaden the scope of its research and educational activities in response to growing domestic and global competition from universities and the global pandemic. A representative policy which highlights this approach is the 'Hokkaido University Global Vision 2040' (Hokkaido University 2022), a notable goal of which is "to be a driving force in contributing to the resolution of global issues through partnership and

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collaboration with people from diverse countries […]" (Goal I). This goal aims to "create globally minded individuals able to pursue mutual understanding with people from diverse countries and regions with flexibility and open-mindedness". Another relevant goal is to "achieve an equitable and inclusive campus internationalisation in which diverse students, researchers, and faculty/staff members thrive and excel" (Goal III). This goal aims to "create a multicultural campus that attracts diverse and talented international students, researchers, and faculty/staff members" and "achieve the inclusive internationalisation of the campus that contributes to solving regional issues". Therefore, promoting an equitable and flexible multicultural learning environment has never been more critical, with a greater need to improve intercultural communication and cross-cultural understanding on campuses in response to increased student mobility.

However, while such policies have apparent benefits, they also present challenges, especially within Japanese higher education. Notably, the lack of cross-cultural awareness amongst Japanese students (Tokui 1995; Rebstock 2017) and adjustment issues encountered by international students in Japanese higher education (Murphy-Shigematsu 2001; Lee 2017) are well documented. Such problems are not restricted to students, with the recent results of Hokkaido University's international faculty questionnaire (Mazur 2022) highlighting numerous intercultural challenges associated with university employment conditions (communication, workload, and contract issues) and administration (lack of flexibility and language issues).

As such, higher education institutions are becoming increasingly aware of the necessity to respond to growing societal needs and develop graduates who can function as global professionals and citizens. Their typical response is that within the remit of internationalisation policies, university students will naturally develop intercultural competence (ICC) through frequent contact with other international students (Warwick and Morgan 2013). While numerous definitions of ICC exist, Deardorff's (2010) interpretation which broadly defines it as "effective and appropriate behaviour in intercultural situations", captures the essence of this complex phenomenon. However, recent studies have highlighted that while increased student mobility and the provision of an internationalised learning environment can support intercultural learning, this is not an automatic given (Lantz-Deaton 2017; Lantz-Deaton and Golubeva 2020). A pivotal suggestion to university policymakers is "to recognise that if students are to enhance their ICC, universities may need to do more to support it in practice" (Lantz-Deaton 2017). Therefore, this study aims to investigate the implementation of intercultural educational activities in a Japanese university course towards the development of students' ICC.

2.0 Outline of Course Concept and Educational Activities

2.1 ICC Framework

Although ICC has become a recent hot topic in higher education internationally, its conceptualisation and frameworks have been debated for several decades (see Spitzberg and Changnon 2009 for a comprehensive review). To ensure the effective implementation of ICC within educational activities, it is advised that a suitable ICC framework should be utilised to support their structured development. Following a systematic consideration of the different ICC models, the INCA model of intercultural competence (INCA Project Team 2009) was adopted for this study. The INCA Project, funded by the Commission of the European Communities between 2001 to 2004, involved academic experts and employers across Europe to develop a valuable framework of ICC and robust instruments for assessing intercultural competence (Prechtl and Lund 2007).

As shown in Table 1, the INCA model of intercultural competence comprises six components, based primarily on research conducted by Kühlmann and Stahl (1998) and Byram (1997) into factors critical to success in international working environments. The six

Table 1. The six components and three elements of the INCA model of intercultural competence

	A. Motivation	B. Skill/Knowledge	C. Behaviour
i. Tolerance for Ambiguity	Readiness to embrace and work with ambiguity	Ability to handle stress consequent on ambiguity	Managing ambiguous situations
ii. Behavioural Flexibility	Readiness to apply and augment the full range of one's existing repertoire of behaviour	Having a broad repertoire and the knowledge of one's repertoire	Adapting one's behaviour to the specific situation
iii. Communicative Awareness	Willingness to modify existing communicative conventions	Ability to identify different communicative conventions, levels of foreign language competencies and their impact on intercultural communication	Negotiating appropriate communicative conventions for intercultural communication and coping with different foreign language skills
iv. Knowledge Discovery	Curiosity about other cultures in themselves and in order to be able to interact better with people	Ability to identify different communicative conventions, levels of foreign language competencies and their impact on intercultural communication	Seeking information to discover culture-related knowledge
v. Respect for Otherness	Willingness to respect the diversity and coherence of behaviour, value and belief systems	Critical knowledge of such systems (including one's own when making judgements)	Treating equally different behaviour, value and convention systems experienced in intercultural encounters
vi. Empathy	Willingness to take the other's perspectives	Skills of role-taking de-centring; awareness of different perspectives	Making explicit and relating culture-specific perspectives to each other

(Adapted from INCA Project Team 2009)

components are tolerance for ambiguity, behavioural flexibility, communicative awareness, knowledge discovery, respect for otherness, and empathy. The three elements, denoting competency of the six components (motivation, skill/knowledge, and behaviour), are associated with Ward's (2001) 'ABC' model of ICC (affective, behavioural, cognitive). As a result, the INCA model of intercultural competence formulates a development pathway commencing with an individual's willingness to engage in intercultural interactions ('motivation'), the development of the requisite skills and knowledge ('skills/knowledge') to do so successfully, and validation of these resources through recurrent intercultural interactions ('behaviour').

In implementing ICC within higher education, the INCA model of intercultural competence is highly relevant for several reasons. Firstly, it is universal, applying to all intercultural encounters regardless of the cultural groups involved. Given that international campuses are melting pots for students and staff from diverse nationalities and cultural backgrounds, the INCA model provides principles that can be applied regardless of the cultural groups involved. Secondly, despite second language skills being a motivating factor for the model's development (Prechtl and Lund 2007), its components do not incorporate any linguistic or language elements. This ensures that the model's principles can be applied in any classroom setting with any student composition, regardless of the primary language of instruction. Finally, Borghetti (2017) highlighted the model's comprehensive application, especially within academia, in contrast to other intercultural competence frameworks.

2.2 Course Description

'Intercultural Communication for Living in a Global Society' is a fifteen-week seminar-type elective course focusing on developing students' knowledge and skills necessary for effective communication with people from diverse backgrounds. The course is part of the General Education (Freshman Seminar) curriculum and teaches basic concepts and techniques for facilitating intercultural communication, encouraging students to evaluate stereotypes and cultural differences critically, and helping them develop an appreciation for cultural diversity and sensitivity in intercultural interactions. Students are

Figure 1. Explanation of students' preference for language choice during in-class activities (from Week 1: Orientation presentation slides)

awarded two credits for completing the course.

Participating students must possess basic competency in English communication (speaking, listening, reading, and writing). However, the course evaluation criteria did not consider students' ability to communicate in English. Students were allowed to select their preferred language (English or Japanese) when completing in-class activities and assessments and only encouraged to use English when communicating with teaching staff (Figure 1). This innovative aspect contrasts with typical General Education courses, which are generally conducted in a single language, allowing for greater flexibility and accommodating students who may be more comfortable using only one of the selected languages to complete the class activities.

2.3 Course Schedule

The course schedule encompasses various topics related to intercultural communication, including understanding culture and cultural identity, dealing with culture shock, improving cross-cultural communication skills, and building intercultural friendships (Table 2). Excluding the initial orientation class, the other fourteen-weekly classes can be divided into four distinct categories:

1. Core Knowledge Base: These classes focus on providing students with subject-specific knowledge necessary to achieve the course goals. This includes lectures, discussions, and activities on key concepts and theories related to the class topic (weeks 2-5; 9-12).

Table 2. Outline of the course schedule and class categorisation

Week	Categorisation	Class Name
1	None	Orientation
2	Core Knowledge Base	Culture and Cultural Identity
3	Core Knowledge Base	Culture Shock
4	Core Knowledge Base	Communication Styles
5	Core Knowledge Base	Communicating Clearly
6	Skill Acquisition	Presentation Skills
7	Practical Assessment	Mid-term Presentation
8	Reflection	Mid-term Reflection
9	Core Knowledge Base	Diversity
10	Core Knowledge Base	Critical Incidents
11	Core Knowledge Base	Building Intercultural Friendships
12	Core Knowledge Base	Developing Cultural Awareness
13	Skill Acquisition	Presentation Practice
14	Practical Assessment	Final Presentation
15	Reflection	Final Reflection: Becoming a Global Person

2. Skill Acquisition: In these classes, students cultivate skills that benefit the quality of the course outcomes and overall university learning. This course aims to develop students' presentation skills with consideration placed on providing students with the requisite knowledge and opportunity to practice and gain feedback on these skills (weeks 6 and 13).

3. Practical Assessment: Students practice their skills and knowledge in these classes, and their performance is assessed. Class presentations allow students to apply intercultural communication knowledge, utilise skills learned, and receive feedback from their peers and teaching staff (weeks 7 and 14).

4. Reflection: In these classes, students reflect on the intercultural aspects discussed in class, considering how they can apply them in their future endeavours. The teaching staff provides feedback on student performance and recommendations for improvement (weeks 8 and 15).

2.4 Class Organisation

The organisation of most classes in this course is structured to provide students with a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter through a combination of mini-lectures and practical activities (Figure 2). A

Figure 2. Explanation of the organisation of a typical class (from Week 1: Orientation presentation slides)

typical class begins with an overview of the learning objectives, followed by two or three mini-lectures designed to facilitate knowledge acquisition. These are interspersed with active learning-based group work activities that allow students to implement this knowledge. The class concludes with a reflection on students' learning, allowing them to contemplate their progress and identify areas for improvement.

2.5 Course Assessments

Students are evaluated based on diverse assessment criteria (Table 3). 25% of students' total grade is based on their ability to reflect on their learning through critical self-reflection. An additional 25% of their grade is based on their ability to assess the contribution of their group members during activities through peer assessment. These assessments are conducted following each of the eight 'core knowledge base' classes in weeks 2-5 and 9-12, respectively. Students give two presentations during the 'practical assessment' classes in weeks 7 and 14, accounting for 10% and 25% of students' grades, respectively. Finally, students submit a final mini-report after the last class, with content based on their learning throughout the whole course, accounting for the remaining 15% of their overall grade. Additionally, students must attend at least 70% of classes to be eligible for assessment.

Table 3. Outline of course assessments

Assessment Description	Grade Weighting (%)
1. Critical self-reflection	25.0%
2. Peer evaluation	25.0%
3. Mid-term presentation	10.0%
4. Final presentation	25.0%
5. Final mini-report	15.0%

2.6 Development of in-class ICC educational activities

The pedagogical principles that inform the development of ICC educational activities are understood as "the ability to mobilise and deploy relevant attitudes, skills, knowledge and values to interact effectively and appropriately in different intercultural situations" (Shuali Trachtenberg et al. 2020). The formulation of ICC educational activities for this course was based principally on students confronting various intercultural differences and misunderstandings, including their own cultural biases. Twenty-three activities were developed and categorised based on the six components of the INCA model of intercultural competence (Table 4). Regarding instances (*n*) of the six components of intercultural competence, 'empathy' (21) and 'respect for otherness' (20) were most represented across the twenty-three activities, with 'behavioural flexibility' (11) and 'tolerance for ambiguity' (13) the least represented. In addition, activities also incorporated 'Critical Incident Exercises' (CIEs), which can broadly be defined as "descriptions of situations in which individuals from different cultures experience misunderstandings caused by their different cultural backgrounds" (Herfst et al. 2008) and are followed by questions requiring learners to evaluate the underlying cause(s) of the misunderstanding.

CIEs have a long history of application in ICC training (Snow 2015), and offer a range of benefits during the intercultural training in academia. Firstly, CIEs can support students to understand about different cultures (Fowler and Blohm 2004; Apedaile and Schill 2008), helping them to "develop more accurate expectations in intercultural interactions" (Albert 1995), and making them less likely to be unprepared for problematic cultural differences. Secondly, CIEs can support students understanding of their own cultures (Fowler and Blohm 2004), with the conflicting points of contrast making learners

Table 4. The organisation of in-class activities based on the INCA model of intercultural competence

	i. Tolerance for Ambiguity	ii. Behavioural Flexibility	iii. Communicative Awareness	iv. Knowledge Discovery	v. Respect for Otherness	vi. Empathy
Week 2						
Activity 2.1						○
Activity 2.2				○	○	○
Activity 2.3				○	○	○
Activity 2.4		○		○	○	○
Week 3						
Activity 3.1					○	○
Activity 3.2					○	○
Activity 3.3	○			○	○	○
Activity 3.4*	○			○	○	○
Week 4						
Activity 4.1			○		○	
Activity 4.2		○	○	○	○	○
Activity 4.3*	○		○	○	○	○
Activity 4.4	○	○	○	○	○	○
Week 5						
Activity 5.1			○	○		
Activity 5.2	○	○	○	○	○	○
Activity 5.3	○		○	○	○	○
Activity 5.4*	○	○	○	○	○	○
Week 9						
Activity 9.1			○	○		○
Activity 9.2*	○	○	○		○	○
Week 10						
Activity 10.1*	○	○	○	○	○	○
Week 11						
Activity 11.1*	○	○	○		○	○
Activity 11.2*	○	○	○	○	○	○
Week 12						
Activity 12.1*	○	○	○	○	○	○
Activity 12.2*	○	○	○	○	○	○
n	**13**	**11**	**15**	**17**	**20**	**21**

*(Indicates that the activity was a CIE)

receptive to aspects of their own culture they had not previously been consciously aware of. Finally, CIEs provide learners with opportunities to prepare for future intercultural encounters through rehearsal (Wang et al. 2000), helping them to become more aware of the required processes to interpret unfamiliar behaviours during such encounters (Wight 1995; Apedaile and Schill 2008).

While the INCA model of intercultural competence was the selected framework for the development of in-class educational activities, its utilisation was primarily to inform the activity categorisation based on the model's six components (tolerance for ambiguity, behavioural flexibility, communicative awareness, knowledge discovery, respect for otherness, and empathy) to ensure students exposure to a broad range of ICCs. While the INCA model's three elements of intercultural competence (motivation, knowledge/skill, behaviour) were not a critical factor in the development of activities, it is anticipated that by participating in activities, students would have the potential to develop competency in the first two elements. Also, given that evaluating behavioural development would necessitate the evaluation of students on a longitudinal scale, it is not considered

Table 5. Descriptions of selected in-class ICC educational activities

Activity	Description
Activity 2.1	*What is Culture?* The activity involves students considering the concept of culture and selecting three words to describe it. They then discuss their choices, and as a group, select three words from all member suggestions and add them to the class board. This activity aims to help students understand and reflect on the concept of culture and how it can be described.
Activity 3.4	*Culture Shock Support* This CIE describes the situation of an international student who has recently moved to Japan and is seeking support and advice from an assigned supporter. The student experienced an incident in Japan that made them uncomfortable. Within groups, students utilise the 'DIE' framework (Describe, Interpret, Evaluate) introduced in the class to analyse the situation. By listening to the student's account of what happened, the impact of the incident on the student and any potential long-term consequences, the group formulates advice on how to handle the situation and support the student with their discomfort. After their discussion, each group presents their analysis with the class.
Activity 9.2	*Diverse Team Conflicts* The activity involves each group reading different CIEs relating to various intercultural conflicts that can arise within diverse teams (concept of time, loss of face, trust, humour, and leadership). Groups discuss their CIE, answering a related question. For example, one group discussed the case of a Japanese team member, Akari, being frustrated with her Indian colleague's punctuality and behaviour during meetings. She wants to address it but is cautious about being culturally insensitive. Students were asked to consider what Akari could do to encourage her colleague to attend the meetings on time. After their discussion, each group presented the case and the results of their discussion to the rest of the class.
Activity 11.1	*Strategies for Intercultural Friendships* In this CIE, students were asked to brainstorm and discuss ways an overseas student can initiate a conversation toward building friendships with Japanese students on campus. Students were given a set of questions to guide their discussion, including 'What strategies can be used to initiate a conversation?' and 'What clubs or activities can overseas students join to meet Japanese friends or friends from other countries?'. After their discussion, each group shared their results with the class.

within the scope of this study.

A detailed breakdown of examples of in-class ICC educational activities is presented in Table 5.

3.0 Methods

3.1 Sample

The sample for this study consisted of (N=22) undergraduate students, comprising a mix of Japanese (n=20) and international (n=2) students.

The majority of students were first-year students (n=18), with a small number of second-year (n=2) and fourth-year students (n=2), respectively.

Students' affiliations encompassed a wide range of departments (Table 6), with most students affiliated with Economics and Business (n=8).

Table 6. Affiliations of participants

Affiliation	Number of Participants
Economics and Business	8
Law	5
Humanities and Human Sciences	3
Medicine	2
Modern Japanese Study Program	2
Education	1
Science	1

3.2 Data Collection and Analysis

Data from the critical self-reflection assessment was utilised to assess the efficacy of the in-class educational activities in developing students' ICC. While the use of self-reflection is a relatively recent and novel approach to evaluating ICC, its suitability has already been validated by several sources (Deardorff 2011; Holmes and O'Neill 2012), noting that university student self-reflections "provide a tool or process for developing and self-assessing intercultural competence" (Holmes and O'Neill 2010). Student consent to use this data in the context of an academic study was obtained prior to the study's commencement.

Data was collected following each of the eight 'core knowledge base' classes (weeks 2-5; 9-12). Students were first asked to reflect on the content and their contribution in each class, providing descriptive feedback on their learning. In addition, students were asked to confirm whether each in-class educational activity had

developed the indicated ICC, as detailed in Table 4.

Students' self-evaluation of in-class ICC educational activities was appraised to confirm the activities' efficacy in developing ICC. Comparative analyses between the attainment of varying activities were conducted to assess if students indicated specific activities as being more beneficial towards the development of ICC. In conjunction, a qualitative analysis of student reflections regarding their in-class learning was employed to gain a deeper understanding of students' comprehension and acquisition of the six components of the INCA model of intercultural competence.

4.0 Results and Discussion

4.1 Self-evaluation of in-class educational activities towards the development of ICC

Students reported a consistently high rate of the efficacy of each in-class educational activity towards the development of ICC (Table 7), with average attainment of at least 90% across the whole course for all six components of the INCA model of intercultural competence. While no statistically significant differences were identified between types of activity, there was a noticeable decline in the attainment of ICC components during the last activities of weeks 2-5 (activities 2.4; 3.4; 4.4; 5.4) compared with the preceding three activities of each class. Given that a similar drop-off was not observed during weeks 9-12, which incorporated fewer activities per class, there is a suggestion that an over-saturation of ICC activities in each class can diminish students' ability to develop the associated ICCs successfully.

4.2 Student reflections on the acquisition of the six components of ICC

Analysis of students' critical reflections was congruent with the high rate of ICC attainment of in-class educational activities. The majority of student comments indicated that through reflections on in-class learning and completion of the educational activities, they had acquired a level of ICC consistent with the 'motivation' and 'skill/knowledge' elements of the INCA model of intercultural competence, as described in Table 1. Examples of students' critical self-reflection comments and their relationship to each of the six components of the INCA model are presented below.

i. Tolerance of Ambiguity:

"*I realised that it is difficult but essential to evaluate the cause of a problem from many different perspectives*." [Student N, Week 11].

ii. Behavioural Flexibility:

"*The way of thinking and personalities are greatly influenced by each culture, and various problems can occur due to these differences. To solve these problems, it is necessary to understand these differences correctly and to think about and implement concrete actions*." [Student P, Week 12].

iii. Communicative Awareness:

"*I learned how different cultures interact with each other (or hypothetically interact with each other) in teams. It is essential to consider the cultural backgrounds of those you are talking to and adapt your communication to such audiences.*" [Student A, Week 9].

Table 7. The average percentage of participants' self-evaluated attainment of the six components of the INCA model of intercultural competence concerning in-class educational activities

	i. Tolerance for ambiguity	ii. Behavioural flexibility	iii. Communicative awareness	iv. Knowledge discovery	v. Respect for otherness	vi. Empathy
n	13	11	15	17	20	21
MEAN	0.90	0.91	0.93	0.92	0.91	0.91

iv. Knowledge Discovery:

"*I am surprised that the meaning of thumbs-up differs from country to country and want to know how the difference arose. I also want to study how to avoid conflict in communication.*" [Student S, Week 5].

v. Respect for Otherness:

"*I was able to reaffirm the importance of the cultural background of the other person, not only the way they speak but also their gestures, hand gestures and vocabulary in communication. I have learned that ineffective communication is stressful not only for me but also for each other.*" [Student C, Week 5].

vi. Empathy:

"*I learnt that I had unknowingly been looking at other cultures in a stereotypical way. It may help me to understand other cultures, but the stereotypical view I had of them may make them feel uncomfortable, so from now on, I decided to look at them more carefully.*" [Student T, Week 3].

In addition to the above ICCs, student critical reflections also reveal that through participation in the in-class educational activities, students acknowledged the development of additional cognitive, intrapersonal, interpersonal, and technical skills, frequently grouped under the umbrella term '21st Century Skills' (Geisinger 2016). Of the skills highlighted by students, the development of critical and creative thinking, leadership, and effective collaboration and teamwork skills were frequently cited as supplementary outcomes of the activity design, especially during weeks incorporating CIEs into the activity design:

"*I learnt why leadership is important. I also understood that critical thinking is important, which I knew before, but that creative thinking is equally important for developing one's ideas into opinions. I am not good at looking at opinions objectively and criticising them, so I want to be more aware of this in the future.*" [Student C, Week 10].

"*We learned how to discuss effectively in group settings. Whilst someone else is presenting, it is important to be an active listener and evaluate what is being said. Then, when they are done presenting, you should communicate your ideas with them. Also, opinions should always come with evidence to back them up. When giving/receiving feedback, it is important to be respectful and considerate of others.*" [Student A, Week 12].

These results highlight the capacity for ICC educational activities, conducted as group exercises, to facilitate the development of additional employability skills university graduates are expected to possess to assist in transitioning into 21st-century workplaces (Suarta et al. 2017).

5.0 Conclusion

The results of our study indicate that through the systematic integration of in-class activities based on the six components of the INCA model of intercultural competence, students showed an increased disposition towards the development of ICC knowledge and skills and increased motivation to utilise them in their future endeavours. Furthermore, by implementing ICC educational activities, students cultivated additional cognitive and social skills that complement the taught subject knowledge. It is recommended that incorporating ICCs into classroom activities may alleviate many of the challenges facing students and faculty in Japanese higher education and support the realisation of the growing number of university policies concerned with campus internationalisation, such as the 'Hokkaido University Global Vision 2040'.

While this paper provides valuable insights into the practical benefits of applying ICC in a Japanese higher education classroom, this pilot study is restricted to a General Education seminar-type course, and its integration into a broader range of courses offered within the university curriculum requires further exploration. Furthermore, this study was only able to relate students'

development of the first two elements of the INCA model of intercultural competence ('motivation' and 'skill/knowledge'), and it is recognised that the confirmation of behavioural elements would necessitate a much broader longitudinal study design, which considers students' intercultural interactions outside of the classroom. Finally, a deeper understanding of university faculty's motivations for implementing specific ICC aspects into their classes requires further investigation and clarification. Future research works will aim to address these critical limitations.

Despite this, the following tentative recommendations are proposed to faculty to support the integration of ICC into university courses:

1. Early interactions between students are good opportunities to address cultural differences. Incorporating activities that enable them to explore these differences can help break down cultural barriers and create a positive environment for future classes.
2. Systematically structuring the composition of activities and discussions allows students from different cultural backgrounds to interact with each other, developing an awareness of different cultures, furthering ICC development, and supporting the development of employability skills without impacting the acquisition of subject-specific knowledge.
3. Consider incorporating ICC as a fundamental component of class design, supported by a suitable ICC framework, toward the growing aspiration of Japanese higher education internationalisation strategies. The inclusion of ICC should not be of significant detriment to the course goals and objectives.

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