Using *Yasashii Nihongo* in Cross-cultural Virtual Exchange: Perceived Effects on the Mindsets of First-Year Japanese University Students

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0.   Abstract

This paper explores the kinds of learning, or changes in mindset about learning, that were brought about on the part of first-year Japanese university students through a 10-week virtual exchange program in which *Yasashii Nihongo* ("easier, gentler Japanese") was used as the primary mode of communication with undergraduate learners of Japanese at an American partner university.   Following a description of the program that was developed in response to the needs and wishes of students on both sides of the Pacific "to connect" during the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020, we discuss qualitative findings mainly based on a quantitative text analysis (using KH Coder) of the Japanese students' pre-experience class reports, daily reflective reports of their experience, and post-program questionnaire. Highlighted are the key areas in which the experiences have clearly stimulated their awareness and challenged some of their fixed beliefs about communication, as well as some obstacles preventing them from attempting deeper cross-cultural interaction and learning. We identify and discuss implications for further study towards future implementations of this program.

1.   Introduction

The year 2020 will long be etched in human memory due to the global COVID-19 pandemic and the drastic changes it brought to most of our lives.   Along with other sectors of society, tertiary education—university classes and even international exchange—went online, creating a "new normal" for students and teachers alike.   Although online educational alternatives are sometimes viewed with skepticism, their merits cannot be ignored.   For example, virtual international exchange programs have opened the door to students who would have previously been unable to participate in conventional study abroad programs due to cost or time constraints.   They also allow students who may be feeling linguistically or otherwise unready to travel and study abroad a chance at a trial

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experience without leaving the comforts of home—and possibly discover what they are actually capable of doing or achieving. Such benefits, among others, are clearly been recognized to the extent that it would be safe to say that online international exchange programs will be here to stay as an option for students to take even after the pandemic finally leaves us. And for that, universities must continue to develop and implement online programs that cater to a variety of student needs and interests, but most of all, encourage students' growth.

The *Taiken Jissen* (Arizona) Virtual Exchange Program was implemented for the first time over a ten-week period from August 31 to November 2, 2020. It was one of the many options made available to first-year students in the Faculty of Global and Community Studies in their course *Taiken Jissen* which aimed to help them become aware of the connection between their studies and society through experiential learning programs.

The online program featured the learning and use of *Yasashii Nihongo*—a mode of communication in Japanese that emphasizes intelligibility for its participants—by our students to create and offer a variety of materials and activities to encourage and support the learning of students studying Japanese at Arizona State University (ASU). The purpose of this article is two-fold. First, it outlines the program which was created and implemented in consultation and collaboration with a group of Japanese teachers at ASU. Second, through a quantitative and qualitative content analysis of our students' reflective writing which was done over the 10-week period, it examines and attempts to reveal the changes that have clearly occurred —or not occurred—in our students' thinking and beliefs about communication as a result of participating in this first-time, and rather ambitious, program.

In doing so, we will use the words they wrote as clues. This program, for our students, emphasized the importance of "verbalization of experience" (WAVOC, 2016). In our daily interactions with university students, we are sometimes concerned about their Japanese language skills. It is not so much a matter of knowledge, but a lack of self-reflection, careful attention to their own thoughts. Furthermore, they may lack the experience of communicating their thoughts to others in an easy-to-understand manner.

With the digitalization of society, opportunities for communication have increased, but are there also not any issues in terms of content? It is important to pay attention to one's own way of thinking and to have the ability to verbalize it in order to solve problems together with people of various backgrounds and values. Also, as will be discussed

later, in Japanese society, international exchange tends to be thought of in terms of English, but if we look specifically at the multilingual, multicultural nature of Japanese society, we could see that there is also a need for *Yasashii Nihongo* as a common language, or lingua franca. Colleagues and neighbors from other countries may not always be able to speak English. In implementing this virtual international exchange program, we hoped that our students would reflect deeply on their own communication, begin to develop a global perspective, and at the same time, look at the sustainability of their own community from a variety of angles.

2. Background

2.1. *Yasashii Nihongo*

In Japanese society, when one thinks of international exchange, it is often an exchange in English that comes to mind. As English is the language most widely learned as an additional language in the world (List of languages by total number of speakers, 2021) and used as a lingua franca among these learners as well as with its first-language speakers, the development of English proficiency and exchange in English has been considered a priority and an issue for decades. At the same time, however, in light of the globalization of the world and the growing multilingualism and multiculturalism seen in Japanese society as well, it has also become urgently necessary to increase and improve channels of communication other than English. In reality, the percentage of foreign residents in local communities in Japan who can speak English is 44%, and it has been pointed out that the common notion of "foreigners = English-speaking" is merely an assumption (Iwata: 2010). Those newcomers to Japan who do not conform to this questionable notion, most sadly, all too often experience steep challenges in being accepted societally. As a case in point, technical interns mostly recruited from non-Anglophone countries have frequently been subjected to various forms of ill treatment including bullying, and the language problem is a major factor in this. Even in Hiroshima Prefecture, where our university is located, it is known that these "foreign workers" are struggling for their voices to be heard while often being unthoughtfully given orders and instructions in the local dialect and blamed for their inability to understand them (City of Hiroshima: 2019).

Many native speakers are surprisingly unaware of the fact that they are the ones who are insufficient in the knowledge of, and therefore unable to explain, or control, their lan-

guage (especially in communication with non-native speakers). According to Imai (2020), knowledge of one's mother tongue is like an iceberg, and the knowledge of its operation that native speakers are aware of is only at the tip of this iceberg, a very small part of it. It is difficult for native speakers to verbalize and explain the use of their mother tongue, which they have naturally acquired almost instinctively. Therefore, in Japan, where most communities are comprised of a Japanese native-speaking majority and a growing non-native speaking minority, it would be essential for the former to review their language, learn to control their own usage and vocabulary, and otherwise choose a way of speaking that could be more easily understood by the latter; in other words, to become proficient in the use of *Yasashii Nihongo*. Iori (2019) explains that the Japanese adjective *yasashii* as used here has two basic meanings; one is "easy" or "plain" and the other is "gentle" or "kind," both of which are contained in the concept. Since it is difficult to find a suitable equivalent in English which includes both meanings, the original term *Yasashii Nihongo* is often employed, and will be used as well throughout this paper.

In recent years, more and more local governments and companies have begun working on this communication issue. There has been an increase in the number of local governments and companies that offer training, and in the number of local governments and websites that provide information, in *Yasashii Nihongo*. However, it is still difficult to say that it has become a household name, and the general public is largely unaware of it or its importance for the entire society.

2.2. Needs for Online International Exchange Using *Yasashii Nihongo*

According to The Japan Foundation (2018), the number of Japanese language learners worldwide is at an all-time high. As of March 2021, a search on Google revealed that local governments have launched international exchange programs in *Yasashii Nihongo* with similar objectives (of raising the awareness of, and proficiency in, *Yasashii Nihongo* communication on the part of Japanese participants) while also benefitting the learners of Japanese and promoting relations and goodwill between the two. For example, the Special Ward of Bunkyo, Tokyo, has introduced a program called "Gentle Exchange" and is also planning a virtual event called "Online Exchange with International Students in *Yasashii Nihongo*" (Bunkyo City: 2020). In addition, Hirosaki University has organized a series of five international exchange sessions with partner universities using *Yasashii Nihongo*, English, and any other languages participants know under the title of "Coffee

Hour" (Hirosaki University: 2020).   However, at this point in time, we have not been able to find any precedent cases of *Yasashii Nihongo* being placed as taught lessons in a university course to be immediately applied in a virtual international exchange program, which is the subject of this study.

2.3.   Shifting mindsets about "Communicating with Foreigners" through *Yasashii Nihongo*

The notion—or as Iwata has asserted, the *assumption*—that many Japanese people have had of "foreigners" (non-Japanese people) being necessarily "English-speaking" has clearly created, and reinforced, a loop of beliefs, or a mindset, about their ability to communicate with non-Japanese others.   In essence, this loop could be described as: 1.   Foreigners speak English;→ 2.   I am poor at English.   →3. I can't communicate with foreigners→ (Back to 1.).   Dweck (2017) defines *mindset* as "a view you adopt for yourself" (6) which could be either positive and dynamic, leading you to a desire to learn, and grow as a result, or on the other hand, negative and fixed, discouraging you from facing challenges and, therefore, leaving you "static" without ever achieving your full potential.   A mindset as the one described above would obviously be of the latter type, but do many Japanese actually have such a fixed—and potentially debilitating—mindset about their ability to communicate with foreign people?

One indication that they may, in fact, do in this respect is found in the low self-estimations and levels of confidence that they have had of their general proficiencies in English despite their years of studies in the language.   Among other investigations done on this topic, market research firm Rakuten Insight (2016) has found in a nation-wide survey of a sample of 1,000 women and men in their twenties to sixties randomly selected from their pool of 2.3 million registered monitors, that approximately 70% of respondents across *all* age groups felt that they were "not good" or "very bad" at English" whereas an average of only 8% stated that they were "good" or "very good" at it.   However, in spite of these figures which suggest a low, or extremely modest, self-assessment, the same survey revealed that even for those who rated themselves negatively, the wish or desire to communicate with foreigners "if they could speak English fluently" was apparent, with nearly 40% wishing to travel abroad, 20% wanting to interact with foreigners on a regular basis, and 16% dreaming of working in a multinational either domestically or abroad.

It was suspected that the starting point of the "fixed mindset loop" as mentioned

above could be on the excessive focus placed upon "having to use English" as the mode of communication rather than on the increased necessity of interacting with foreign people. This led to another rationale of our designating *Yasashii Nihongo*—and not English—as the primary common language of communication or lingua franca in this virtual exchange program and to observe what, if any, kinds of positive changes could be detected in our students' mindsets about international communication.

3.　The *Taiken Jissen* (Arizona) Virtual Exchange Program (AY2020)

3.1.　The *Taiken Jissen* Course and its Arizona Program Option

The general objectives of the greater *Taiken Jissen* course in the Faculty of Global and Community Studies were for students to (1) seek out and experience communication with people of different languages, cultures, customs, age groups, occupations in their chosen location either internationally or locally; (2) recognize and think about issues they faced in the process of this experience; and, (3) develop self-management skills through time management and metacognitive skills through daily reflection.　All of the program options were a combination of pre-experience class(es), practical experiential learning and post-experience class(es).　Students were expected to record their experiential learning activities and continuously reflect upon them in their daily online journal-type report.　In a required post-requisite course, students from various program options worked in teams to verbalize and discuss their respective experiences in further depths and produce a poster presentation to be given to the students and teachers of the entire faculty.

In previous years, students opting for an international experience over a local placement in this course physically travelled abroad for a variety of volunteer and service learning opportunities to locations like the Philippines, Cambodia, Australia and New Zealand. However, needless to say, most of these programs were cancelled outright (and with the others converted to greatly different versions online) due to the COVID-19 pandemic and its associated "stay home" restrictions.　The *Taiken Jissen* (Arizona) Virtual Exchange Program option was thus born out of an urgent necessity to make available safe and (hopefully) meaningful cross-cultural experiences that would still enable our students to achieve the greater course objectives.　It was possible only because, 16 hours and nearly 10,000 km away, a large number of students studying Japanese at our longtime partner institution, Arizona State University (ASU) were also being largely deprived by the pandemic of study

abroad experiences and other chances for interactions with Japanese students including those who would have been present as exchange students on their campus.   This led to a total of eight teachers (four from HSU and four from ASU) collaborate in the making and/ or the running of the experiential component of this program that would help fulfill the needs and support the learning of our respective students.

Within a short preparatory period of less than two months since the principal teachers from both sides agreed on this exchange, an initial framework for the program was developed and online meetings and email discussions were held to exchange ideas and come to agreement on such matters as the types of activities to be included, their content and timing, and the online platforms to be used.   Simultaneously, planning and preparations were made on the respective sides, which on our side included online information and consultation sessions for students interested in the program and the recruitment of the actual participants.   Prior to the start of the actual exchange, students on both sides were surveyed on Google Forms and partnered based on their shared interests.

3.2.   The Participants and their Roles

While the term "exchange" is used to name this program (in English), the program was not designed from its outset for the roles and learning outcomes for HSU and ASU students to be exactly the same or interchangeable.

On the ASU side, the participating students were a culturally and L1 diverse group of JFL (Japanese as a Foreign Language) learners, of all year levels and majoring in various disciplines.   Their primary purpose for participating in this program, in addition to potentially making friends from Japan, would have been to practice and learn Japanese through virtual interactions with their paired partner and other HSU participants online, and in the process, also be exposed to content on different aspects of Japanese culture that were presented in the activities.   Their final project in their respective Japanese language courses was also based on the personal or cultural information gained in their interactions with the HSU students.   In other words, the general role of the ASU participants in this program, at least as was initially perceived in the program design, could be said was one of "language and cultural content *recipient.*"   However, the ASU students generally exhibited greater maturity than did ours, not only due to the fact that many were older than our students, but also in terms of their goal orientation and attitude toward learning.   Regardless of their place of birth or upbringing, they were also accustomed to meeting and inter-

acting with people of other cultures in America, and clearly exuded more confidence and drive even while speaking in Japanese, a relatively new foreign language for them.

Our first-year students, on the other hand, were at various levels of English proficiency and with limited experience thus far in interacting with those outside their familiar circles of family and friends, let alone with online partners whose linguacultural backgrounds were different from theirs. Ostensibly, their role in this program was one of "Japanese cultural *informant*" using *Yasashii Nihongo* as their primary mode of communication. In reality, however, there was much to learn through their interactions with their American peers.

The aims and objectives of this program as communicated to our students were as follows:

- To raise competence in intercultural communication through exchanges using primarily *Yasashii Nihongo* but also English with partner student(s);
- To develop an objective view of Japanese culture [i.e., their "native culture"] and the Japanese language [i.e., their "native language"]; through interaction with partner students who are interested in Japan and studying Japanese;
- To develop proactivity, planning and action skills through voluntary exchange activities.

Specifically, 33 HSU students and 99 ASU students participated in the partnered exchange core portion of the program, with additional ASU students mostly at the higher 300-levels joining in certain activities and events on a free, voluntary basis. Due to this 1:3 ratio of core participants, each HSU student was partnered with three ASU students.

Table 1:   Number of "Core" Participants - *Taiken Jissen* (Arizona) 2020

Hiroshima Shudo University (HSU)		Arizona State University (ASU)	
English Proficiency Level	Number of Students	Japanese Class Level	Number of Students
Level 3 (intermediate+)	9	300/400-level (high intermediate+)	0
Level 2 (lower intermediate)	6	200-level (intermediate)	30
Level 1 (basic)	18	100-level (basic/basic intensive)	69
Total:	= 33	Total:	= 99

3.3-1. Components of the Program

The *Taiken Jissen* (Arizona) program for the HSU students was broadly comprised of two components: the "classroom component" and the "experiential component".   Each was further subdivided as follows:

Table 2: The Components, Sessions and Activity Types - ***Taiken Jissen*** (Arizona) 2020

Component	Session/Activity Type	Configuration	Activities / Tasks	Week
The Classroom Component	Pre-Exchange	Whole Group	Preparation & Warmup Activities (x3)	1–2
			Yasashii Nihongo Sessions (x4) ➡ ****Pre-exchange Yasashii Nihongo reflective report***	2–4
	Mid-Exchange		Progress Monitoring & Peer Feedback (x1)	6
	Post-Exchange		Review and Reflection (x1)	10
The Experiential Component	Individual Exchange	Individual	Email exchange, SNS communication, ASU class assignment support **(*Log / journal entries throughout the process)**	3–10
	Conversation Tables (CT Sessions)	Teams	Preparation of cultural topic and presentation material in *Yasashii Nihongo* ➡ Rehearsal & feedback ➡ Meeting with ASU students on REMO (x 3 per team) ➡feedback from ASU participants **(*Log / journal entries throughout the process)**	3–8
	YouTube Video Creation		Brainstorming and selection of video topics ➡Storyboard creation and sharing/consulting ➡ Scriptwriting in *Yasashii Nihongo* ➡ video recording ➡ editing /uploading on YouTube ➡ feedback from ASU participants. **(*Log / journal entries throughout the process)**	3–9
(Post-Experience)	Informal Farewell Event	Free Participation	Free Conversation, Chats with partners, Announcement of video awards by ASU.	
			➡ ***Post-experience survey**	

The "classroom component" consisted of a total of nine 90-minute whole-group sessions led by the instructors via Zoom: seven pre-exchanges (in Weeks 1-4), one mid-exchange (in Week 6), and one post-exchange (in Week 10).

The pre-exchange sessions centered on orienting, preparing and equipping students to take on and carry out their active roles in the ensuing "experiential component" activities.   The mid-exchange session was one of sharing team progress in the experiential activities, and the post-exchange session on reviewing and reflecting upon actual experiences.   Particularly important, as it turned out, in the first pre-exchange sessions

were the ice-breaking and warm-up activities as these first-year students had been connecting to classes from home since starting university, and clearly knew very little about each other.　They first needed to get accustomed to showing their faces, hearing their own voices and speaking amongst themselves on Zoom prior to their doing the same with their American peers.

3.3–2. The *Yasashii Nihongo* Pre-classes

The remaining four pre-exchange sessions were dedicated to the learning of, and practice in, *Yasashii Nihongo*, and their objectives were:

- To understand the role of *Yasashii Nihongo* in building a multiculturally inclusive Japanese society;
- To look at the Japanese language from a brand new perspective: from a mother tongue (taken for granted) to a foreign language;
- To learn the basics of using *Yasashii Nihongo* to interact with non-native speakers.

The progression of the four sessions was as follows:

Class Session 1: Reflecting on Communication: The Key to *Yasashii Nihongo*

The first session began with an ice-breaker, a role-playing activity in which students reflected on their own communication patterns.　First, they role-played variations on a particular conversation with friends, seniors, and international students, and reflected on changes in their own way of speaking in each case.　Afterwards, they learned from Iwata (2010) and other data that there were more foreigners who could speak Japanese than English in local communities, that there was a need for *Yasashii Nihongo*, and that the idea that "foreigners = English" in Japanese society, is just an assumption on the part of the hosts.　The fundamental rules of *Yasashii Nihongo*, the "Scissors Law", as proposed by Yoshikai (2020) was also introduced and practiced.　*Hasami* ("Scissors") is the general postmanteau used for the three rules that Yoshikai advocate for speaking *Yasashii Nihongo*. They are to speak ***ha***kkirito (clearly), ***sa***igomade (to the end of each sentence, without omissions), and ***mi***jikaku (concisely).

Class Session 2: Rules and Tools of *Yasashii Nihongo*

In the second session, students were given many specific examples of what was *not* considered a *yasashii* or easily intelligible use of Japanese for many non-native speakers. The examples were taken from dramas, comic dialogues, and TV programs, and included uses of onomatopoeia, dialects, excessive honorifics, foreign words, idioms, as well as challenging collocations and examples of grammar such as the passive voice.　Following the explanations, the students tried to paraphrase the examples into a more *yasashii* version. In addition to this, online tools for *Yasashii Nihongo* training and practice, such as "Reading Chuta," "Communicating Web," and "*Yasashii Nihongo* Checker" were introduced.　Using these tools, students worked on paraphrasing their own sentences about their hobbies and interests.

Class Session 3: Characteristics of the Japanese Language, Characters and Vocabulary, Foreigners as Fellow Residents (not Outsiders)

The third session began with a review of the previous session where students compared their original sentences to their paraphrased versions in *Yasashii Nihongo*.　This was followed by a lecture on the peculiarities of Japanese *kanji* characters and the issue of vocabulary control when translating or interpreting into *Yasashii Nihongo*.　The final point of this session was for the students to begin to realize that *Yasashii Nihongo* is an essential part of first-language Japanese education in order to improve communication with non-native and native speakers alike (Iori: 2016, p. 204) as it included such abilities as reading the other person's facial expressions to check comprehension.　Seen in this way, *Yasashii Nihongo* is an important mode of communication with the elderly, children, and people with disabilities as well.

Class Session 4: *Yasashii Nihongo*, SDGs, and Multicultural Inclusivity

In the fourth session, students learned through role-playing how to communicate in more sensitive situations such as those involving complaints (e.g. rules for taking out the garbage), which are not pleasant but necessary in a community.　They also worked on paraphrasing original news while watching NHK's News Web Easy.　We also touched on the background behind the creation of *Yasashii Nihongo* in the wake of the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake of 1995, and its implications for the aging Japanese society, labor shortage, the working environment of technical interns, and human rights issues.　While it was

not possible in this timeframe to discuss each of these issues in depth, it was also explained that *Yasashii Nihongo* is essential for the realization of the SDGs and multicultural inclusivity.

The "experiential component" of the program consisted of: (1) 8 weeks of individual exchange with three ASU partners (in Weeks 3-10), (2) a total of six 60-minute virtual Conversation Table (CT) sessions where our students "met" in teams to talk with ASU students on a selected Japanese cultural topic (in Weeks 3-8), and (3) a total of sixteen short videos on aspects of Japanese life and culture (in Weeks 3-8), which were planned and created by our students, then posted on a closed-member ASU YouTube channel. For each of the above, our students were asked to record their activities as well as their thoughts and reflections on their communication in their log/journals along the way.

### 3.3-3. Online Exchange as E-pals + assisting in ASU course project (Individual)

Most of our students were partnered with two Japanese 100-level and one 200-level ASU students, and were expected to communicate with each of their partners roughly once a week for the duration of the 8 weeks.   They typically started with email, but most quickly added other online modes of communication such as Instagram, LINE, WeChat, Skype and Zoom.   At least one assignment given to the ASU students by their Japanese teachers was tied directly to this exchange.   For the 100-level partners, our students were asked to respond to their self-introductions with their own, and for the 200-level partner, they were asked to contribute information about a Japanese cultural topic that was going to become the basis for their partner's final class presentation.   For these assignments, our students were requested to use mainly *Yasashii Nihongo*.   Outside of these assignments, they were free to interact in any language, or a combination of languages, that they felt most comfortable between them.   As our students also differed significantly in their English proficiency levels, this combination or proportion of *Yasashii Nihongo* and English use (in most cases) would have varied by partnership.   Moreover, some students also reported occasional use of another language such as Spanish, Korean or Chinese, especially in cases when it was their partner's first or additional language and they had been paired based on this common linguistic or cultural interest.

3.3‒4. Conversation Table Sessions (Teams)

Our 33 students were also grouped into eight teams (A~H) of 4-5 students each.   For the 6-week duration of Weeks 3-8, the first and second halves of these teams alternated weekly between the Conversation Table (CT) activity and the Video Creation activity below.   In other words, each half (4 teams) participated in each activity for three weeks.

The 60-minute CT sessions were held every Saturday at 10:00 a.m. (Japan Standard Time) which was Friday at 6:00 p.m. (Arizona Standard Time).   ASU students were invited each week with an email from us sent to them via their Japanese instructors to this event with the planned conversation topics of the day.   At the request of the ASU instructors, the general target level of Japanese for each week was previously decided; therefore, different classes were invited each week, and it was the task of our students to prepare their topics and explanations in *Yasashii Nihongo* to suit this level as much as possible. This preparation task was done under our guidance in two online sessions each week.

The CT session took place on an online platform called REMO.   (See Figure 1 below.)
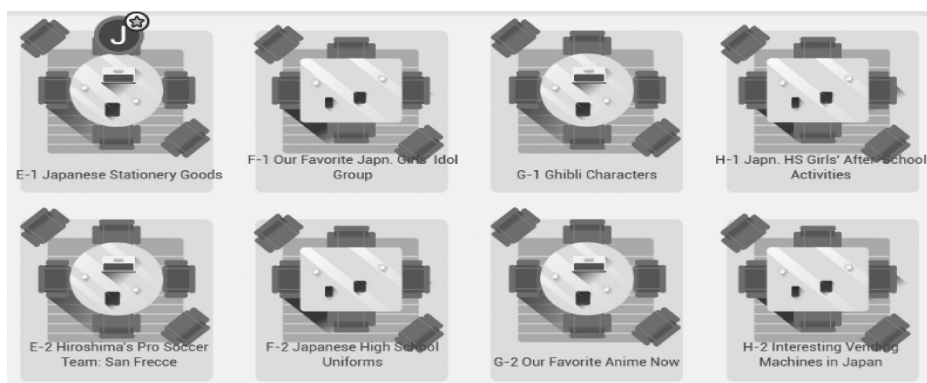
Figure 1:   A Conversation Table (CT) Session Configuration on REMO (before student entry) - *Taiken Jissen* (Arizona) 2020

Two HSU students awaited ASU students at each table marked with their conversation topic.   As ASU students entered the platform, they were free to visit the tables of their choice.   With one of us instructors as MC in both Japanese and English, four rounds of 15-minute conversation sessions took place each week, with the ASU students moving to a different table after each round.   Following the end of each session, the ASU instructors gave their students a survey, quickly organized the results and sent them to us so that our

students could use the ASU student feedback to make any necessary adjustments or improvements for their next CT session.

For these sessions as well, participating students were required to record their activities and impressions in their log/journals.   (See complete list of CT sessions and topics in Appendix A.)

3.3–5. Video Creation Sessions (Teams)

On weeks not scheduled for a CT session, teams worked with and without an instructor to plan and create their narrated videos.   The process involved a number of steps, from brainstorming their themes, creating a storyboard, thinking and practicing their script in *Yasashii Nihongo* all the way to recording and editing their videos which averaged 10-12 minutes in length.   In most cases, teams decided to add captions and / or same-language subtitles, and some even had bilingual captions when they were deemed necessary.   (See Appendix B. for the full list of videos.) The completed videos sent to ASU were uploaded on to their YouTube site for any of their students to view, Like, or comment, and are still available for members of the Closed Group to see today.   ASU students and teachers also voted on these videos to choose awards that were announced at the informal farewell gathering of ASU and HSU on REMO after the end of the program.   An ASU student representative in an advanced Japanese class described each award category, then announced and congratulated the winners warmly in impressive, unrehearsed Japanese.

4.   Methods of Data Collection and Analysis

Research Method

In order to help clearly see the nature of our students' learning in the above program, we conducted a quantitative text analysis (using KH Coder) of their reflective writings in an attempt to find clues to any (1) changes in their awareness of using *Yasashii Nihongo* and (2) changes or deepening of their metacognitive or cognitive thinking, or *mindset,* about cross-cultural communication through this experience.   Specifically, for (1), their mini-report after the class and the questionnaire after the experience were analyzed, and for (2), their daily log/journal was analyzed.   The results were organized to examine what elements in the experience could have contributed to any learner growth.   The results of the analysis are presented below, along with the flow of their experience from the pre-

lesson to the end of the program.

5.　Findings and Discussion

5.1.　Changes in student awareness after the *Yasashii Nihongo* (Pre-Experience) Sessions

The content of the mini-reports received from 32 out of the 33 HSU participants who attended at least three of the four Pre-Experience Sessions in *Yasashii Nihongo* were text analyzed in KH coder.　(Total number of words extracted: 17,369 / Number of words differing: 1473).　The results are shown in Figure 1 below:
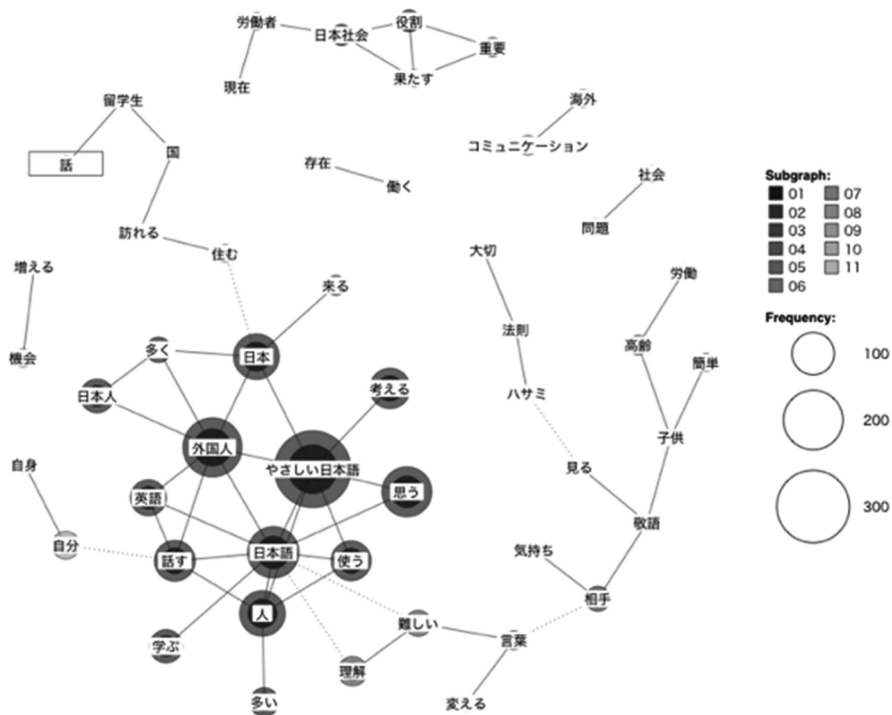

Figure 2:　Co-occurrence network of mini-reports after the four pre-exchange *Yasashii Nihongo* classes

The above results indicate that the following ideas (or combination thereof) as they pertain to *Yasashii Nihongo* most clearly appeared in their reports:

1. Use *Yasashii Nihongo* instead of English to communicate with foreigners.
2. It is important to think of your recipient when you communicate.

3. It is difficult to use *Yasashii Nihongo*.

4. *Yasashii Nihongo* is necessary for communication with the elderly and children, too.

5. It is also connected to labor and social issues.

6. The "Law of the Scissors" is important.

The following are some representative student impressions about one or more of the above ideas from their actual mini-reports (as translated into English):

(Student A's impression)

At first, I thought I was going to learn Japanese for "foreigners studying Japanese," but I realized that *Yasashii Nihongo* is [also] important for solving global problems that Japan is facing today.　I also realized that these problems are closer to home than I thought, and that we could change them little by little with our awareness.　I am really glad that I was able to learn *Yasashii Nihongo,* and I would like to continue using it actively whenever I have the chance.　Just recently, I spoke in *Yasashii Nihongo* to a foreign customer who came to my place of work, and I was able to serve him more smoothly than usual!

(Student B's comments)

First of all, I learned something that changed what I'd always thought was normal... I had always spoken with foreigners when they spoke to me, using only the little English I knew and gestures.　For example, when I was working part-time at a convenience store, there were many foreign workers from Asian countries who came to Japan.　Several times they would ask me, the clerk, questions about the location of products.　I used to think that most foreigners could speak English, so I always spoke in broken English.　However, there were many people who said they couldn't speak English, and it was often difficult to communicate with them.　...Still, *Yasashii Nihongo* is very difficult.　You can't use honorifics, and yet you have to be polite and kind in your speech.　I've never thought that speaking in Japanese was so difficult before.

5.2.　Changes in student awareness as detected in their daily logs / journals

In order to better understand what the 33 students thought and felt over the entire

course of their experiential activities, a quantitative text analysis was performed on their daily logs / journals.　(Total number of words extracted: 56,525 / Number of words differing: 3,047).　The results are shown in Figure 2 below:

Figure 3:　Co-occurrence network of descriptions in the entire log/journal entries

　　Words such as "difficult," "speaking," "conversation," "enjoyable," and "awareness" co-occurred with *Yasashii Nihongo* indicating that the participants experienced both difficulties and enjoyment through conversation.　In addition, words such as "Japanese," "partner," "level," and "English" co-occurred with "CT," suggesting that the participants used Japanese and code-switched to English according to the level of their partners' Japanese proficiency in the Conversation Table sessions.　In addition, "Japan" co-occurred with "introduction," "culture," "anime," "like," "interest," etc., indicating that the participants interacted with each other about their likes and common interests, focusing on Japanese cultural topics such as anime through the activities.

　　Further, in the actual entries, we were able to see how the students had tried to put into words their encounters with totally unexpected situations involving their knowledge

or use of their own language and how they struggled with, found solutions to, or were even starting to be changed by, them. Here are some examples of how the e-mail exchanges with their partners gave them an opportunity to take a fresh new look at their own language and to realize that they did not know as much as they had thought about their own culture:

My partner wrote to me in polite Japanese (using honorifics), so I [naturally] thought that I'd want to write back that way. But when I actually started writing, I found myself asking, "Is this wording correct in Japanese?" I don't normally write in polite Japanese. (Student C)

I felt as I was writing mostly in hiragana [to my partner] that I'd better use a lot of commas to break up my sentences or else they'd be so hard to understand. I recently started to notice that, even when I write to my friends in Japan, my sentences are naturally more carefully written than before. (Student D)

I thought that I myself needed to know more about Japan. During the exchange, my three partners asked me to introduce some 'interesting topics in Japanese culture.' But I realized that I didn't have a clear understanding of what kind of culture and history Japan had. (Student E)

One student pondered as to what extent she should use *Yasashii Nihongo* to write to her partners for the sake of their language learning:

Email from both of them were mostly in *hiragana*, so I used *hiragana* even for words I'd normally type in *kanji* [to write them back]. However, looking back on it later, I kept on thinking whether I should have written as I normally would in order to help them learn Japanese. (Student F)

Some students used several social media sites in addition to email to conduct their exchange. The following student wrote about how he managed to quickly deal with his partner's language errors in a *yasashii* manner:

[My partner] 'A' (...) and I were able to make friends right away.　In Gmail, I had the impression that his Japanese was perfect, but when it came time to messaging each other in real time on Instagram, I noticed that he made a lot of mistakes in his particles, like he once wrote, 'My dog has a dog' instead of 'I have a dog.'　I felt it was a bit risky to directly point out his mistakes when we still didn't know each other well enough.　So I purposefully included similar sentences used correctly in my return messages to him.　I hope this will lead to an improvement in 'A's' language skills. (Student G)

The practice of correcting language in a kind manner was a task given in Session 3 of the *Yasashii Nihongo* pre-classes.　It is easy to point out or correct a mistake, but if that affects the relationship, it defeats the whole purpose of the exchange.　This was a good example of how a student supported his partner's Japanese language learning by taking the other person's position into consideration.

Finally, there was a student who appeared to have realized through experience that it was not only all right, but also beneficial in communication, to code-switch to another common language whenever necesssary:

Many of the ASU students this time were from a 100-level class and did not understand a lot of Japanese, so it was very difficult for me to communicate with them.　I thought I was speaking in *Yasashii Nihongo*, but when it came to conversation, I sometimes spoke without thinking, so I have to be careful from now on.　I also think ASU students have their own [language] limitations, so it would be good if we HSU students could use English more often in order to have a more pleasant conversation. (Student H)

5.3.　Changes in student awareness as detected in the post-experience survey

In the questionnaire given at the end of the 10-week program (see Appendix C. for results to the Likert-scale questions), our 33 participants were also asked to write about any changes they perceived in their awareness of *Yasashii Nihongo* through their experiences.　Their responses to that question was finally analyzed here.　The total number of words extracted for this analysis was 2,820 and the number of different words was 483, which differed greatly from the numbers in Figure 1, so a simple comparison could

not be made between the two sets of results.

"*Yasashii Nihongo*" is connected with "difficult." The following students describe that they were not able to use "easy Japanese" well after completing the program:

When I actually tried to use *Yasashii Nihongo* with foreigners, I had many difficulties in communicating with them because I couldn't understand unexpected words [from them] or couldn't think of [the right] words to paraphrase. (Student L)

"Why didn't I use gentler Japanese?" I thought to myself, "Why didn't I use kinder Japanese at that moment?" When I was not in a hurry, I could think of *Yasashii Nihongo*, but when I was in a hurry, I could not speak at all. I thought that we should have tried harder to communicate with each other. (Student M)
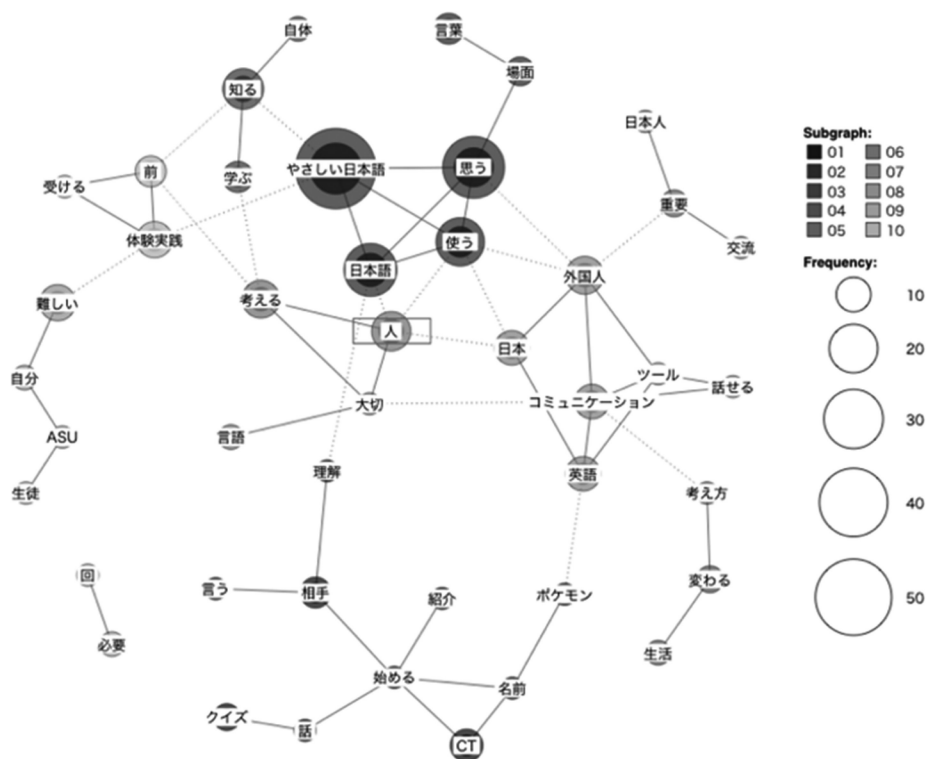
Figure 4: Co-occurrence network of survey responses

"Communication" is connected to "how we think" and "how we change." The following students described their changes in thinking about *Yasashii Nihongo* communication:

In my daily life, I am more conscious of using *Yasashii Nihongo*, and I think that is what has changed.   (Student I)

At the beginning, I felt uncomfortable and awkward about using *Yasashii Nihongo*, but at the end, I was happy because I was able to convert [my ideas] into *Yasashii Nihongo* more smoothly (Student J).

The following student understood the importance of applying this experience to his daily life and of the role that *Yasashii Nihongo* has in Japanese society:

I did not know or think about *Yasashii Nihongo* before this experience, but after the experience, I realized how important and easy to understand it is for foreigners who are learning Japanese or staying in Japan.   So, <u>the next time I find someone in trouble on the street, etc., I will actively try to use *Yasashii Nihongo*</u>.   (Student K)

6.   Analysis of descriptions related to potential influences on learners' mindsets

What kinds of experiences did the learners encounter and struggle with during this exchange, and how did they verbalize in their journals any challenges to, or changes in, their mindsets?

In this section, we discuss what did not appear in the diagram of the co-occurrence network of the KH coder, i.e., statements that for many students did not reach the level of verbalization in the journals or questionnaires, but which a few students may have succeeded in verbalizing.   Specifically selected here are the mentions of challenges in communication, silence, and their own passivity versus the positivity of their interaction partners.   The fact that there were only a handful of entries regarding such ostensibly negative topics in the journals suggests that more work is necessary in the "verbalization of experience," which is the most important mission of the entire *Taiken Jissen* program.

6.1. Communication and Silence

The CT experience required the ability to detect communication problems and improvise on the spot. These students wrote about their reflections on their inability to confirm understanding or read their listeners' reactions, and their discomfort with the silence that occurred:

(⋯) we need to make sure that the <u>other person understands what we are saying</u>. There were times when we were not able to see the <u>reactions of the ASU students when we were </u>explaining about the theme we had decided on, and the ASU teacher would give advice based on the reactions of the ASU students.(⋯) I will make use of today's experience, and at the next conversation table, <u>I will try to check with the other person to see if he or she understands, even if it is in the middle of a conversation</u>. (Student N)

(⋯) the conversation did not last long and there were many times when silence occurred. I think the reason for this was, first of all, a lack of preparation on our part. <u>I had assumed that we would be able to talk about anime because it was a common hobby, but when we actually talked, we soon ran out of things to say.</u> I regret that I should <u>have prepared and devised a way of bringing the topic in a more progressive direction so that we would not just end up saying, "I know this" or "I know that too,"</u>(⋯) I feel that I should have [said more] <u>to convey my intentions regardless of whether it was in English or Japanese.</u> (Student O)

She talked about how they regretted not having been able to deepen the content of the discussion because they ran out of things to say. It could be said that the awkward silence was meaningful in order to come to this realization.

6.2. Anxiety, Passivity and Proactivity

In their journals, several students expressed anxiety and nervousness about their preparations, their own English skills, the Japanese level of their counterparts, and the quality of their performance. It is natural to feel anxious and nervous in an international exchange with people you have never met before. The important point to learn is how they tried to solve this anxiety. Some stated that they were influenced by the positive

attitude of the ASU students.　Stimulated by his partner's positive attitude, this student was able to verbalize the vague anxiety and reluctance he had been feeling:

> I was impressed by how actively everyone was trying to use Japanese in their conversations.　In my case, I think it is <u>difficult to speak actively because I worry about what if my grammar is wrong or what if I don't get the message across.</u> (Student P)

On the other hand, in many cases, students did not sufficiently describe or explain the nature of their anxiety and nervousness or how they tried to face and overcome them.　It would be helpful for them to remember whether they spent their time passively or tried to overcome them but failed as a result:

> I sent her an email, but she didn't reply to it, so for the past week, I've been feeling quite anxious, wondering if I had said something wrong.　（Student Q）

> I was worried because their Japanese level was lower than the last time.　The other students didn't have much to say, either because they didn't understand our Japanese, or because they didn't understand the Japanese I was speaking.　（Student R）

> At first I was worried about my English, but by mixing it with *Yasashii Nihongo*, I was able to enjoy the conversation.（Student S）

Finally on anxiety, this is an example of a pair who was so anxious that they over-prepared, only to find that their preparation actually hindered communication.

> Our pair was not sure if the conversation would continue at first, so we tried to put it in a quiz format.　From our point of view, it seemed to be going well, but after listening to the (ASU) professor, we realized that the ASU students were not interested in talking to us because they couldn't do so and were just listening to us.（Student T）

This may have been a disappointing situation; however, describing such failures clearly as they had is meaningful for deep learning.

In general, we found that the journal was not sufficiently used as a means by the students to deal with their anxiety and other uncomfortable emotions, to acknowledge their failures, and think of how to restart from there.

6.3.　Issues of communication among Japanese students

The following student wrote about the discomfort of not being able to interact well with fellow Japanese students during the preparation for a CT session.　It is easy to get too narrowly focused on our students' communication with ASU students, but in fact, its success also depended on developing trust and rapport among their own team members.

> In deciding on the theme, I felt that we could not come to a conclusion that would satisfy everyone.　I think the reason for this was that we still couldn't find anything in common with our team members, so we couldn't find a topic that would allow all of us to show our true potential.　But even before that, the reason for the lack of progress may have been that everyone was too reserved with each other and there were not enough opinions flying around.　I felt that I needed to reflect on how to communicate with my teammates.　(Student U)

6.4.　Willingness to Communicate

The following student comment revealed an awareness of multimodal communication, not only in English, but also in gestures, facial expressions, etc., and an increased willingness to communicate:

> At the first Conversation Table, I put too much emphasis on the "introduction" and didn't have time to enjoy the conversation.　However, from the second time, I started to enjoy the conversation more and more.　<u>There were many things that happened, such as not being able to communicate in Japanese, not being able to understand the other person's English, and not being able to explain well in English.</u>
> <u>However, I found that I could speak if I wanted to, even with gestures, facial expressions, and a simple list of English words.</u>
> <u>I used to think that I had to speak perfect English, and I was so nervous that I couldn't do anything, but now I'm a little more confident than before, and I want to have more conversations.　It was a lot of fun.</u>　(Student V)

The last thing we would like to share in this section is a journal entry made by a student from the post-experience class where we reflected on the entire program. The in-class activity was for each person to freely choose one *kanji* character that most clearly represented their emotions through the whole experience of the previous two months. The following student selected the *kanji*「勢」[*ikioi*] and stated his reasons for it. This character is comprised of "heat" at the top and "force" at the bottom. It denotes vigor, vitality, activity, or power.

> I decided to choose the Chinese character 勢. It is important to use gentle Japanese, but I felt that momentum is also necessary for communication if it is a little difficult to convey [something]. I feel that just having 勢 can often raise excitement and make everyone feel better. I chose the Chinese character for "vigor" because I was able to use various kinds of vigor, which is a little less common among Japanese people, in activities such as making videos and exchanging e-mails with students. (Student W)

The "momentum" that this learner described, which may be "a little less common" among Japanese, represents the positive attitude and willingness to communicate that we wanted to foster through *Taiken Jissen*. What may be just as important as knowing the rules of *Yasashii Nihongo* is cultivating one's own capabilities for interacting with different people. From this student's comment, it is not impossible to read that there was a mechanism embedded in this activity to encourage such an awareness to develop.

In summary, the journal entries of our 33 students revealed that even though the students were online, their attitudes gradually changed, and while they experienced silence and difficulties in communication, they were able to break down the assumption of "Foreigners=English". They took a long hard look from new angles at their native language and culture. In addition, the enthusiasm of the foreign students clearly stimulated them to shift their mindset about communication, especially when they saw over and over again that the ASU students were able to convey meaning to them successfully regardless of the accuracy of their grammar or usage. Of course, there are individual differences and differences in the timing of the effects of this program, but it is expected that the experiences had in this program, especially those of unsuccessful interactions such as silence and failure to communicate, are important steps that lead to awareness.

7. Considerations

Absence of social issues

While the analysis of students' writings suggested a degree of change in mindset in about communication, it also revealed some major issues. First of all, in looking at the results of the co-occurrence network of the entire journals in Figure 3, there clearly seemed to be a lack of depth and breadth in "awareness," a key point of learning in *Taiken Jissen*. In particular, the repeated mentions of *anime* stood out in the content. There were many ASU students who were "interested" in *anime*, and one of the patterns that emerged was that students on both sides were able to feel connected through their "favorite" *anime*. This makes us wonder how the exchange would have proceeded if there had not been this common denominator. At the same time, important social issues in Japan behind *Yasashii Nihongo*, such as the issues of "workers" and the "aging" of the population, which had been showing in the analysis of pre-experience student work (Figure 2), disappeared entirely from later analyses. It can be seen that some kind of encouragement or mechanism might be needed to help our students maintain a certain level of awareness of such issues at this time.

This program was not a one-time event, but a continuous series of exchanges over a full term. Although there was a large time difference between Arizona and Japan, the program gave students flexibility in terms of time. Moreover, they had the freedom to choose their own topics. In spite of this, the results of the quantitative analysis of all the entries in the journals showed hardly any mention of current world events or social issues. There was only one vague mention of the US Presidential election as follows:

> I thought there was only a two-party system, but there are still political parties and my partner said Americans should know more about them, so I learned a lot and found it interesting. I thought it was interesting. (Student X)

Thirty three of our students interacted with at least 99 people of their age group for two months in the fall of 2020, and other than the brief comment above, there were zero mentions of terms like "Trump," "Biden," "president," "election," "Republican," "Democrat," "Black," "White," "race," "discrimination," or "BLM." The analysis results also indicate that, at least from student writing, there seemed to have been no deep discussion

about the COVID-19 pandemic either.

While there were three mentions of Miyajima, a World Heritage Site, and was featured in CTs and student videos, there were zero mentions of the atomic bomb or the A- Bomb Dome. In January, after the completion of this program, the entry into force of the Nuclear Weapons Convention would be global news, but there was no sign of such a conversation. Although Asahi Shimbun reports that "Generation Z is active in social movements and 70% of teens 'want to participate'" (2021), there was also no mention of global issues such as "environmental problems," "climate change," "peace," or "gender."

So what *were* the learners talking about? When we looked at the frequency of mentions in the daily reports, topics related to their hobbies stood out. The most common topics were *anime* (63), video games (25), *Ghibli* (14), *Conan* (11), *Beyblade* (9), *Kimetsu* (9), and *Pokemon* (8). In addition to this, we also observed that the topics discussed included Korean dramas and K-pop idols. The program participants seemed to be more interested in finding common ground with each other than in learning about each other's culture and society. Perhaps because of the difficult situation under COVID-19, they were seeking conflict-free time and healing. In the fall of 2020, Arizona, in particular, was the focus of much attention, both in the presidential election and in terms of the spread in the virus, and we could imagine that the students there were exhausted.

It might be considered unrealistic to expect them to move from such light and care-free topics as *anime* to deep social issues in a two-month project on their own. On the one hand, if the teachers tried to force the students to talk about the BLM movement, for example, this would not be a student-led exchange. On the other hand, there may be cases where students really want to talk about such social issues, but are afraid of conflicting ideas, and need a little push or guidance. Therefore, as a class design, it might have been effective to set up a discussion session to talk about "global issues" as a preparatory step for the presentation. The purpose of experiential learning is to collaborate with others of different backgrounds. After an ice-breaker on a common topic such as *anime*, it may be necessary to include a discussion on an issue on which opinions differ.

It *could* be possible that there actually were conversations about such topics, but they simply did not show up in their journals. However, that would mean that there were some issues in "verbalizing their experience," which was the original purpose of the entire program. It is necessary for the class instructors to seize the right moments to talk to the students about this so that their "verbalization of experiences" does not simply become

empty routine work.

Another unanswered question was if the emphasis on *Yasashii Nihongo* in this exchange caused the students to avoid serious topics that were considered difficult to understand.   If that was indeed a common perception, it might be necessary to encourage our students to use more multimodal communication and easy-to-understand diagrams and images even while online so that they may be able to get more smoothly into talking about deeper and more complex topics.   These issues would need to be addressed in the future.

Also related to the hesitancy by our students to touch upun social issues was a perceived lack of initiative in learning from their partners.   It must be said that our first-year students in 2020 who started university in the midst of the COVID disaster were likely trying their best amid all the unfamiliarities that they were in.   That having said, we could not help but note with concern a similar passive attitude in some students as the one pointed out below by Kirchhoff (2017) in another study:

It was clear that while students gained knowledge about American culture, they lacked the ability to request and discover new information.(1)

Our students' writings also suggested that, while they responded to requests from their counterparts for information, they rarely, if ever, made their own.   Wistner et al. (2021) reported on a similar phenomenon.   Although this kind of passivity may be amplified in online international exchange, it does stand out as a major hurdle for our students to clear if they wish to enjoy interacting on an equal and mutually satisfying basis with their international peers.

8.   Summary and Implications for Future Program Implementation and Further Study

In this study, we have searched for clues as to what our first-year Japanese students most clearly seemed to have learned about "communicating with foreigners," and if (and how) any of their notions about such communication have changed for the better through regularly negotiating meaning in *Yasashii Nihongo* with their American peers online and recording/reflecting upon these experiences.

By focusing on the rationale and essential elements of *Yasashii Nihongo* in the pre-classes, the students were clearly able to recall them as they applied their learning to the experiential

activities in this exchange. Over the weeks, we were increasingly able to detect—both in their reflective writings as well as in their actual, real-time interactions—increased positivity, willingness and confidence in their views on interacting with non-Japanese people primarily through the mindful use of their own language. We also saw in some students an increased ability not only to notice problems in their interactions but also to devise and try out strategies on their own to solve them either on the spot or in their next opportunity. It was clear that most students, though to varying degrees, were gaining a "new," reliable and effective lingua franca in *Yasashii Nihongo* for use with anyone with a degree of knowledge in Japanese, regardless of their proficiency in, or additional use of, English. It could be said that this is a promising start to breaking any fixed mindset about "not being able to communicate with foreigners." For more objective comparative results, a survey to more clearly learn the nature and state of student mindsets about international communication both before and after the program would need to be designed and implemented.

The analyses of student writings revealed that there was ample room for improvement in their ability or willingness to verbalize their experience either completely or at a depth that would be conducive to a self-reflection more beneficial to their learning and growth. Also salient was their strong, mutual reluctance to attempt talking about social issues, or even about the powerful events of the year by which their lives must have been greatly influenced at the very time of this exchange. Instead, they clearly opted to stay in the comfortable realm of shared hobbies as to the content of their communication.

A follow-up study is needed to determine if and how the perceived changes in our students' awareness may have resulted in their subsequent learning, or changes in their attitude toward it. It has been noted that a relatively large proportion of the first-year students in our faculty who took the (online) TOEIC and TOEIC Bridge tests offered at the end of the academic year were from this *Taiken Jissen* group in spite of the broad range in English proficiency among its members; one student even managed to jump from the most basic to the highest-level English group in the university placement system as a result. However, it cannot be said conclusively whether these favorable signs were in any way due to the influence of this experience or not without further investigation such as through individual interviews. A related point to be examined further is whether learning and mindfully using *Yasashii Nihongo* leads students to look at language in general more objectively, as this would have a positive effect on second language acquisition.

If, for future *Taiken Jissen* programs of this kind, instructors are to hope for, or to

expect, risk-taking on the part of our students to take a step forward in attempting to discuss social (thus controversial) issues beyond their mutual topic "comfort zone," instruction and encouragement on that particular point would have to be provided starting from the pre-experiential classes.　In addition, although it was not possible this time, a survey of ASU students' awareness and interviews with ASU teachers will be necessary for the true realization of a better *exchange* program.

　Regardless of when this pandemic ultimately comes to an end, it has become definitely clear that the opportunities for collaborating online with people of different linguistic and cultural backgrounds will continue to grow in the future.　The necessity is felt stronger by the day to continue to improve and enrich the content of, and learning in, online international exchange and to foster in students a foundation for global problem-solving.

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10. Appendices

Appendix A. *Taiken Jissen* (ASU) - Conversation Table (CT) Sessions (Sept. 19~Oct. 24, 2020)

Session #	HSU Teams in Charge	Conversation Table Topics	ASU Japn. Class Level
CT #1	A~D	Ghibli Anime Music Karate Hiroshima-Style Okonomiyaki Singer-Songwriter Yonezu Kenshi Popular Spots on Miyajima Hiroshima *Shamoji* Popular Game Characters Ghibli Anime	High Intermediate ~Advanced (300~400 Level)
CT #2	E~H	Japanese Stationery Items Hiroshima San Frecce (Pro-Soccer) Girls' Idol Group NiziU Japanese High School Uniforms Ghibli Characters Our Favorite Anime Now High School Girls' After-School Activities Interesting Vending Machines	Intermediate (200 Level)

CT #3	A~D	How to Enjoy a Japanese *Matsuri* How we Spend the New Year's Interesting Frozen Food *Conbini* Sweets School Children's Summer Vacation Anime: Our Recent Favorites High School Club Activities Japanese Snacks and Nibbles	Basic~ Pre-Intermediate (100 Level)
CT #4	E~H	*Wagashi*: Traditional Sweets J-Pop/Rock Groups: One Ok Rock & Higedan Sushi Chain Restaurants Covid Prevention Measures in Japan 100-yen Shop Items Shinto Shrines *Sento*: Public Baths Japanese & English Proverbs	High Intermediate ~Advanced (300~400 Level)
CT #5	A~D	Japanese *Ramen* Daily Life Routines Young People's Japanese Expressions Anime: Detective Conan Popular Japanese Actors Japanese Urban Legends School Lunches in Japan *Yokai*: Supernatural Creatures	High Intermediate (300 Level)
CT #6	E~H	Seasons and Seasonal Symbols Chopstick Manners *Inkan*: Seals as Signature *Karuta*: New Year Card Game *Osechi*: Traditional New Year Food *Matcha*: Green Tea as Beverage & Food *Koma* Spinning: Old and New Manga/Anime: *Kimetsu no Yaiba*	Basic~Intermediate (100~200 Level)

Appendix B. *Taiken Jissen* **(ASU) 2020– Original YouTube Video Creations**

TEAM	VIDEO 1	VIDEO 2
A	Making *Temakizushi*	Making *Bento*
B	Original *Cup Ramen* Recipes	Original *Cup Udon* Recipes
C	An *Origami* Lesson	Enjoy *Natsu Matsuri*
D	What is *Kagura*?	Popular Japanese Munchies
E	Hiroshima San Frecce Soccer	Making *Okonomiyaki*
F	Making *Takoyaki*	Hiroshima Sport Team Mascots
G	Miyajima Walking Guide	Onomichi Walking Guide
H	*Shodo*: Practical Do's and Don't's	A *Sado* Lesson