



# Effects of Participating in Multicultural Communication for English Learners on their Second and Third Language Use

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## Abstract

The present paper analyzes the effects of participating in intercultural communication in English as a lingua franca among second- or third-language speakers from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. By analyzing English conversations between eight pairs of Japanese students and overseas students from China, South Korea, and Vietnam, this study demonstrates how the English learners attempt to find a way to connect with each other at their first meeting using the language they learned in different countries. Through the conversation analysis focusing on the number of utterances as well as the occurrence of silence and the use of back-channeling, it becomes apparent that social or cultural norms underlying the participants' communication strategies can differ from those commonly shared in English-speaking countries. Unlike in English conversations between first-language speakers, these learners show a high degree of tolerance for frequent silence and for the extensive use of back-channeling that is often labeled as negative transfer from Japanese linguistic behavior. Silence can be interpreted as a process of making efforts to make themselves understood in English and back-channeling as a sign of showing interests rather than a lack of understanding of English communication style. Furthermore, the shifting degree of involvement in conversations observable in their utterances highlights the moments when their motivation to participate increases. The research on the factors contributing to these positive changes in attitudes supports the view that learning opportunities through multicultural communication should be actively incorporated into language education.

**Keywords:** conversation analysis; English education; expanding circle countries; Japanese students; learners' motivations

## **1. Introduction**

This paper makes an analysis of the effects of participating in multicultural communication in English as a lingua franca among second- or third-language speakers from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. The research project is conducted in one of the universities in Japan that specialize in foreign languages, aiming to promote exchange between Japanese students and overseas students from China, South Korea, and Vietnam. There are both educational and research purposes in the attempt to provide opportunities for multicultural communication.

From educational points of view, the experience of participating in the language activities is expected to enhance not only their English language skills, but moreover their interests in learning about both the cultures of international students and their own. Although most of the English courses are conducted in English as the language of instruction by its first-language speakers at the university, it is not always easy for the Japanese students to find opportunities to participate in intercultural communication, since majority of their classmates around were also born and brought up in Japan. Through communication with the students from different cultural backgrounds, many of the Japanese participants in fact report in the follow-up interview that they are motivated to learn more about China, South Korea, and Vietnam from them as well as to learn more about Japan to be able to teach them. Considering their positive remarks on the language activities, enhancing motivation for international communication can be regarded as important as teaching the language skills themselves.

Furthermore, from research perspectives, the analysis of positive aspects of teaching practice is significant for developing better teaching methods in language education. Case studies that demonstrate advantages of providing the students with experiences of participating in multicultural communication activities can in fact give rationale for ensuring the opportunity to effectively acquire them in the language classroom. Previous research, through the analysis of conversations exchanged in Japanese between Japanese and overseas students, has provided insight into effects of collaborative learning by demonstrating how strategically the Japanese students use their first language to the second language speakers whom they meet for the first time and how extensively their first language use is affected by the interaction (Kitamura, 2023). By analyzing their conversations exchanged in English, this study demonstrates how positively the experience of participating in multicultural communication influences the English learners to actively engage in the language learning through intrinsic motivation.

The data in this paper are derived from the recording and transcribing 10-minute conversations made by eight pairs of Japanese and overseas students during the language activities in an English class. The aim of this research is to elaborate on factors that lead to making the language activities in the classroom meaningful and engaging based on the analysis of their conversations exchanged in English. The conversation analysis, focusing on the number of utterances and turn-taking, the occurrence of silence, and use of back-channeling, contributes to the discussion of how the participants are engaged in multicultural communication activities in the language classroom. Through analysis and discussion on advantages and challenges, this paper attempts to provide implications for further research in education, particularly in teaching English as an international language in expanding circle countries.

## **2. Literary Review**

The conceptualization of second language proficiency has been discussed in the domain of language teaching as well as language testing and assessment (Canale & Swain, 1980; Canale, 1983; Bachman, 1990; Bachman & Palmer 1996). It has been decades since the theoretical framework of communicative competence proposed by Canale & Swain (1980) made a significant impact on language teaching. Communicative language teaching, derived from the

efforts to develop communicative competence, has not only corresponded to the increased demand to teach the major languages of the European Common Market (Richards & Rodgers, 2001), but led to a paradigm shift in the perspectives of language teaching worldwide from grammar- to communication-oriented approaches for improving the ability to use language effectively and appropriately in various contexts.

Communicative language teaching, despite its advantages and achievement discussed in literature, has often faced criticism for its limited applicability. One of the issues when implementing it in different language learning contexts arises from cultural factors. Developed on sociocultural norms in an inner circle (Kachru, 1990) of English-speaking countries, communicative language teaching may not be practiced effectively without consideration for local norms outside of the circle. Differences in sociocultural norms are most notably presented as a hurdle for practicing communicative language teaching by several studies on Asian educational settings (Littlewood, 2007), particularly in China (Hu, 2002), Malaysia (Raisii and Nor, 2013) and Japan (Tanaka, 2009), where expectations of learners, characteristics of contexts, and rolls of teachers must be taken into consideration in line with the local norms.

The review of communicative competence in language education leads to the issue of cultural appropriateness. To make English learners interculturally competent, there have been further discussions on competence in intercultural education. However, problems remain when discussing in expanding circles (Kachru, 1990), where English is learned as a foreign language. Although the perspectives of intercultural competence (Byram, 2003) and interactional competence (Young, 2011) may give theoretical insights and practical approaches to develop them, it is difficult to create real-world intercultural communication in many English language classrooms in expanding-circle countries. It is of crucial importance to create educational contexts in which the learners from the same first-language background have opportunities to interact with people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds so that they can develop the ability to use English effectively and appropriately in intercultural communication.

### **3. Materials and Methods**

Learners in Japan, one of the expanding-circle countries, tend to have a little exposure to English outside the classroom and a few opportunities to use it with learners from different cultural backgrounds even in the classroom. It is challenging for teachers to create genuine communicative purposes for using English in such language activities as pair/group work, role-play, and project tasks in the educational context. This research on the effects of participating in multicultural communication is based on the motivation to provide more opportunities for learners to practice using English effectively and appropriately with people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

The research is conducted in an English language classroom at a university in Japan, aiming to encourage Japanese students to realize how enjoyable it is to use English in communication with overseas students from China, South Korea, and Vietnam, and to demonstrate how extensively such realization through firsthand experiences promotes them to acquire positive attitudes for learning language and culture. To find out the moments when and how the learners' attitudes change in their ongoing interactions, this study analyzes the conversation between the two groups by providing an occasion for them to speak English in pairs. The analysis of their interactions focusing on the number of utterances, the occurrence of silence, and the use of back-channeling is expected to elaborate on some factors that affect their ways of involving in multicultural communication.

To organize the first contact settings in the classroom, a group of Japanese students are invited to join an English course for students from China, South Korea, and Vietnam. The visitors are

asked to wait outside the classroom until each of the overseas students seats him/herself with audio-recorders at a set of desks arranged for pair work. Then the Japanese students enter the classroom, meet one of the overseas students as a conversation partner, and start their conversations in English in pairs. The conversation data extracted for analysis in this paper are the first 10-minute parts of free conversations by six pairs, before they start working together on some tasks.

As for English proficiency of the twelve participants in terms of CEFR or the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, the Japanese students are in between B1 and B2 levels (i.e. intermediate to upper-intermediate learners), while the Chinese, Korean, and Vietnamese students are in between A2 and B1 level (i.e. pre-intermediate to intermediate learners). Although English proficiency of the overseas students is relatively low as a university student, all of them are regarded as successful learners of Japanese corresponding to C1 level in CEFR. They had studied Japanese hard enough to take all the courses conducted in Japanese as the language of instruction in the university.

#### 4. Results

Over ten years of producing opportunities for Japanese students to participate in multicultural communication activities in English language courses for overseas students from China, South Korea, and Vietnam, their conversations have occasionally been recorded for research purposes. The audio data to be dealt with in this paper are from six sets of 10-minute conversations between the twelve participants, which were collected on the same occasion as in the previous research (Kitamura, 2023). While the former study deals with their conversations in Japanese collected before and after participating in the English language activities, this study analyzes their conversations in English.

Six Japanese students are referred to as Japanese (a), (b), (c), (d), (e) and (f), while six overseas students as Chinese 2 (A), (B), (c), (E), Korean (f) and Vietnamese (D). The alphabets in brackets represent the gender of the speakers: Capital or uppercase letters for male, and lowercase letters for female speakers respectively. The number of utterances, the occurrence of silence, and the use of back-channeling observed in their conversations are available in Table 1 illustrated below.

*Table 1. Features of conversations between Japanese and overseas students*

Pair	Participants	The number of Utterances	The occurrence of Silence	The use of	Others		
1	Japanese (e)	( 74)	312	46	41	7	16
	Chinese (A)		751	43	25	0	12
2	Japanese (c)	( 96)	319	28	78	7	23
	Chinese (B)		571	30	25	0	17
3	Japanese (d)	( 69)	216	23	30	15	20
	Chinese (c)		553	29	15	23	24
4	Japanese (b)	(131)	302	8	82	13	24
	Vietnamese (D)		727	15	30	1	14
5	Japanese (f)	( 75)	397	20	26	6	27
	Chinese (E)		413	20	20	5	6

6	Japanese (a)	( 88)	371	9	46	10	28
	Korean (f)		505	21	30	13	8

The number of utterances in Table 1 shows that both groups of Japanese and overseas students have actively participated in the interactions during the 10 minutes of English conversations, though all of the Japanese participants say that they are not confident in their speaking skills. Their self-report may well be reflected in the occurrence of silence on the table. The frequent occurrence of silence in the utterances of both groups indicates that there are many moments when they have experienced some difficulties in speaking English. Still, the number of questions they ask of each other demonstrates that they have attempted and managed to keep their conversations going. Spending some moments with laughter, the participants can be interpreted to enjoy the English conversation activities to some extent.

However, when looking at the number of words uttered by each participant, it is noticeable that Japanese participants tend to speak less, despite the fact that they have studied English longer, than any of their conversation partners. The gaps in Pair 1 and Pair 4 are apparent, since Chinese student (A) and Vietnamese student (D) utter more than twice as many words as Japanese student (e) and (b). While Japanese student (e) and (b) utter about three hundred words (i.e. 312 and 302 words), their conversation partners, Chinese student (A) and Vietnamese student (D), more than seven hundred words (i.e. 751 and 727 words).

Furthermore, the extensive use of back-channeling, which corresponds with many times of their turn-taking, indicates that Japanese students tend to play a listener's role. The tendency is most notably observed in conversations in Pair 2 and 4, where Japanese student (c) and (d) repeatedly use back-channeling about eighty times (i.e. 78 and 82 times). The result on the use of back-channeling as well as the number of utterances from the conversation data can raise a question if the benefits the Japanese students derive from the collaborative learning may not be noteworthy. There needs to be discussion to explain the effects of the language activities by analyzing the process of participating in multicultural communication.

## 5. Discussion

The gap in the degree of participation in their conversations between the Japanese and overseas students cannot be revealed until the number of utterances and the use of back-channeling are highlighted in this study. It implies that observing the learners' interactions by simply walking around the classroom or collecting reaction papers may not provide sufficient information to evaluate the educational effects of language activities. It is true that all the Japanese participants give positive comments in the follow-up interview about their collaborative learning with Chinese, Korean, and Vietnamese students in English. Many of them are in fact motivated enough to sign up for other occasions held for multicultural communication activities. However, to maintain and develop the educational practice further as a method to promoting the ability to use English in intercultural communication, there needs to be a rationale behind it. The discussion is founded on conversation analysis to elucidate how the Japanese students develop themselves as active participants in their ongoing multicultural communication.

### 5.1 The treatment of silence

In the follow-up interviews with the six Japanese participants, the top five words or phrases repeatedly mentioned to describe their thoughts and feelings about the English communication with overseas students are "fun," "(very) useful," "(somehow) relaxed," "(a little bit) nervous,"

and “interesting (to learn their culture).” Among them the two words, “relaxed” and “nervous,” are notable because they are contradictory to each other. The word “nervous” may sound negative but understandable. Rather, the opposite word “relaxed” is exceptional, or the word not expected to hear from the students who have participated in communication in English especially in first meeting situation. The features of their conversations illustrated in Table 1 may provide a key to analyze some reasons for their taking the intercultural communication as “relaxed.” The occurrence of silence is the key feature in this respect.

It is noticeable that the conversations between the pairs of Japanese students and Chinese, Korean, and Vietnamese students are different from those between the pairs of the first-language speakers of English in the treatment of silence. In fact, the moments of silence are recognized in many parts of their conversations as illustrated in e.g. 1 below.

*e.g. 1. Conversation of Pair 2 between Japanese student (c) and Chinese student (B)*

13. JS (c) : *Umm ... What is your hobby?*
14. CS (B) : *... What is my hobby? I like free basketball.*
15. JS (c) : *Free basketball?*
16. CS (B) : *Yeah.*
17. JS (c) : *What is ... free basketball? Free?*
18. CS (B) : *Three ... basketball.*
19. JS (c) : *No, not same basketball? Basketball and free basketball?*
20. CS (B) : *What is three basketball?*
21. JS (c) : *What is free basketball? Free?*
22. CS (B) : *Three ...*
23. JS (c) : *(Laughter)*
24. CS (B) : *Free? Basketball.*
25. JS (c) : *Umm ... Basketball? Un-un-un ...*
26. CS (B) : *3 on 3.*
27. JS (c) : *Ah, 3 on 3. I understand.*
28. CS (B) : *... I like 3 on 3.*
29. JS (c) : *Ah*
30. CS (B) : *Maybe, I play with my friend 3 on 3 ... in the ground.*
31. JS (c) : *Ah. KUIS ground*
32. CS (B) : *... But now, we have a lot of homework.*
33. JS (c) : *Yeah. (Laughter)*
34. CS (B) : *Yeah, I think ... I think this time, everyone is busy*
35. JS (c) : *Yeah.*

36. CS (B) : *in the university ... So, I have Japanese homework, English homework,*
37. S (c) : *Wow*
38. CS (B) : *and Chinese homework. I have Chinese homework!*
39. JS (c) : *(Laughter)*
40. CS (B) : *This is amazing!*
41. JS (c) : *:Yeah. Chinese homework?!*
42. CS (B) : *Yeah. Chinese, use Chinese, learning Japanese. And learning Japanese, so Chinese.*
43. JS (c) : *Wow ... You don't have time to play basketball.*
44. CS (B) : *And I go to time part time job.*
45. JS (c) : *Umm ...*
46. CS (B) : *My part time job now, almost one week, two times.*

In the part of conversation between Japanese and Chinese students illustrated in e.g.1 above, both struggle with a single word “three” because of their slightly different ways of pronouncing it. Since Japanese student (c) fails to catch the word correctly in Turn 15, Chinese student (B) has the difficulty getting the meaning across successfully to her until Turn 27. Not having effective ways to cope with the communication gap or strategic competence in Canale and Swain’s term (1980), they often pause or stop speaking for a few seconds.

Silence in conversation, in many English-speaking countries, is commonly seen as awkward and therefore there are many types of strategies to avoid it. As a learner of English, those students should be encouraged to be equipped with communication strategies to maintain their communication go smoothly by using fillers such as “well,” “you know,” and “how should I put it?” for example. However, in the case of the intercultural communication between learners of English from expanding-circle countries, it is arguable if they should be encouraged to use strategies based on sociocultural norms developed in inner-circle countries.

When looking at the bright side of the conversation in e.g.1, it is interpreted that silent moments do not bother their communication as there are no overlaps or interruptions observed. In fact, they just wait while the other is trying hard to make themselves understood in English by searching for words. Their mutual understanding or patience to the silence can be considered as one of the factors that make the Japanese students say they feel “relaxed” when speaking to the overseas students who are also English learners. It is of great use for them to be able to treat silence effectively and appropriately in conversation with the first-language speakers of English; however, it is important for the learners to feel secure that there is no need to be perfect in participating in the multicultural communication activities.

## **5.2 The use of back-channeling**

As it is mentioned in the relevant study of multicultural communication in Kitamura (2023), many of the Japanese participants who have joined the English language activities with Chinese, Korean, and Vietnamese students report in reaction papers that they tend to feel at ease with the English learners and can focus on “what they talk about” rather than “how well they speak English.” Some even report that they cannot help worrying about grammar mistakes they are making while speaking English to overseas students from English-speaking countries. It is important to acquire sociolinguistic knowledge and develop the ability to speak English

according to social and cultural norms widely shared among the first-language speakers. However, when it comes to international communication between students who learn English as a second or third language, it is not unusual for them to maintain communication styles of their first language.

Back-channeling is a commonly used communication tool by listeners to signal that they follow and understand what speakers are saying. However, its forms and functions vary from language to language or culture to culture. The use of back-channeling, including such non-verbal forms as head-nod, by Japanese speakers may therefore look strange especially when it is used in intercultural communication in English as in the following conversation in e.g. 2.

e.g. 2. *Conversation of Pair 4 between Japanese student (b) and Vietnamese student (D)*

24. VS (D) : *So, today I would like to talk about hobby.*

25. JS (b) : *:Hoppy?*

26. VS (D) : *Yeah.*

27. JS (b) : *Hoppy? What is hoppy?*

28. VS (D) : *Hobby is ...*

29. JS (b) : *Hobby! Oh.*

30. VS (D) : *So, I have a lot of hobbies.*

31. JS (b) : *Un-un-un.*

32. VS (D) : *But one of them is*

33. JS (b) : *Un*

34. VS (D) : *going to the gym.*

35. JS (b) : *Gym, yeah.*

36. VS (D) : *And I went to the gym last year.*

37. JS (b) : *Last year? Yeah.*

38. VS (D) : *So, my first purpose is improve my health.*

39. JS (b) : *Un-un-un.*

40. VS (D) : *And ... last year, the first time when I come, came to Japan,*

41. JS (b) : *Un.*

42. VS (D) : *I haven't used to Japan climate.*

43. JS (b) : *Un.*

44. VS (D) : *So, I easily got sick.*

45. JS (b) : *(Laughter)*

46. VS (D) : *So, that's why I started going to the gym.*

47. JS (b) : *Un-un-un.*
48. VS (D) : *I started to go to the gym. So ... You know, the first time I go to the gym, it's very boring for me, because I haven't, I didn't have any idea about*
49. JS (b) : *Un.*
50. VS (D) : *body-building.*
51. VS (D) : *So I just run.*
52. JS (b) : *(Laughter)*
53. VS (D) : *Yeah, I just run. But, the more I go into the gym,*
54. JS (b) : *Un.*
55. VS (D) : *the more ... I, I'm interested*
56. JS (b) : *Un-un-un.*
57. VS (D) : *about new things, new thing. I met a lot of friends*
58. JS (b) : *Un-un-un.*
59. VS (D) : *who teach me about how to do exercise*
60. JS (b) : *Un-un.*
61. VS (D) : *and how to eat healthy.*
62. JS (b) : *Un-un-un.*
63. VS (D) : *Yeah. So, do you have any hobby?*
64. JS (b) : *My hobby ... is go to Starbucks.*

In the part of conversation between Japanese and Vietnamese students illustrated in e.g.2 above, it is notable that the frequent use of back-channeling by Japanese student (b) leads to the quick changes of their turns, which results in the total number of turn-taking as many as 131 in just 10 minutes of conversation. Particularly noteworthy is that she speaks the cue in Japanese “un” even in conversation with the overseas student in English. Moreover, she uses the Japanese back-channeling in the same way as if she was talking in Japanese by giving the cues so frequently even in the middle of the sentences.

The application of the Japanese linguistic behavior to English conversation is regarded as language transfer. In the content of English language education, it is often treated as negative transfer of the first language in the process of learning the target language. Therefore, when participating in conversation in English-speaking countries, she may well be expected to switch to use English back-channeling in the same way as the first-language speakers. However, in the same line of argument with the treatment of silence, it is also arguable if they need to follow linguistic behaviors based on sociocultural norms developed in inner-circle countries when communicating with those who do not belong to the countries.

In the case of conversation in e.g.2, since Japanese student (b) at least realizes that the Vietnamese student is a fluent speaker of Japanese, the use of Japanese back-channeling in English conversation can be interpreted to derive from her attempt to express a sense of solidarity by showing the utmost interests in a friendly manner. Even her linguistic behavior is

a deviation from English speakers' perspectives, it can be interpreted as one of the features of multicultural communication between second- or third- language speakers of English. The diversity of linguistic behavior can be an enjoyable feature as long as the participants have shared understanding of the meanings of the linguistic signs in intercultural communication between learners of English from expanding-circle countries.

### **5.3 The degree of involvement in conversation**

The result illustrated in Table 1 shows the total number of words uttered by each participant for 10 minutes of their conversation in English. Some pairs maintain similar rates in the numbers of utterances throughout the conversation, while others demonstrate some changes in the rate depending on topics. It is not unusual to observe some speakers taking a longer turn with the topic they are familiar with. For example, in the conversation in Pair 1, Chinese student (A) introduces Japanese student (e) about some popular local food in his hometown in China with nearly 50 words in a single turn. Although he tends to hold his turn longer with his motivation to explain how tasty they are, there are some parts where he keeps listening to his conversation partner about Japanese food.

On the contrary, there are some cases in which such a change rarely takes place and one participant spends most of the time listening to the other with simple back-channeling cues. Important to note on the participants of this study is that the unequal number of utterances does not necessarily result from difference in English proficiency between them as it is evidenced from the following conversation in e.g. 3 between Japanese student (d) of upper-intermediate level and Chinese student (c) of intermediate level.

*e.g. 3. Conversation of Pair 3 between Japanese student (d) and Chinese student (c)*

1. JS (d) : *Hi. (Laughter)*
2. CS (c) : *(Laughter) We should choose a topic to talk about.*
3. JS (d) : *Topic?*
4. CS (c) : *Which topic do you want to talk about?*
5. JS (d) : *Topic. Umm ... about ... Chinese and Japanese.*
6. CS (c) : *The culture?*
7. JS (d) : *The culture. What do you think?*
8. CS (c) : *I think Japan is very ... very beautiful.*
9. JS (d) : *Oh, really?*
10. CS (c) : *Ah, very clean.*
11. JS (d) : *Oh*
12. CS (c) : *The streets is very clean. Cleaner, cleaner than ...*
13. JS (d) : *He said the same thing.*
14. CS (c) : *(Laughter)*
15. JS (d) : *(Laughter)*
16. CS (c) : *It's cleaner than China. And ... Umm ... Japanese is ... umm ... Japanese*

*don' t throw the rubbish away.*

17. JS (d) : *Yeah*
18. CS (c) : *in the street. But Chinese is different. (Laughter)*
19. JS (d) : *Aha-ha (Laughter) Really? (Laughter)*
20. CS (c) : *Yes!*
21. JS (d) : *Everyone?*
22. CS (c) : *Yeah (Laughter) throw the rubbish ... away in the street*
23. JS (d) : *Umm*
24. CS (c) : *And in Japan, service ... is better than China.*
25. JS (d) : *Really?*
26. CS (c) : *Wherever, you go, they treat you as a customer. So, they treat you very friendly.  
And they speak very polite.*
27. JS (d) : *Ah, yeah*
28. CS (c) : *But in China, it's different. (Laughter)*
29. JS (d) : *(Laughter)*
30. CS (c) : *(Laughter)*
31. JS (d) : *How do the service?*
32. CS (c) : *Umm, If you, if you buy something ...*
33. JS (d) : *Uh-huh*
34. CS (c) : *... but, but Umm, then you don't, you don' t want it. You want to return the  
items  
to the shop.*
35. JS (d) : *Ah*

The inequality in the number of utterances is apparent in the first 2-minute part of conversation between Japanese student (d) and Chinese student (c), though their English proficiency is nearly on the same level. The involvement or contribution of Japanese student (d) to the communication activities is apparently small. Most of the utterances given by the Japanese student are in fact simple responses such as “Oh,” “Yeah,” “Uh-huh,” and “Really,” which is reflected in her number of words (i.e. 47) compared to the Chinese student’s (i.e. 115).

There should be many factors involved; however, one of the plausible reasons is that she may not be good with first meetings rather than with English. As reported in the follow-up interview, since she is aware of her tendency to be shy with the people she doesn’t know well, the first conversation with Chinese student (c) in English is expected to have been a challenging task for her. However, her willingness to overcome the difficulty makes some changes that are realized in the degree of her involvement in conversation. It is noticeable in the number of utterances in the last 2-minute part of her conversation with Chinese student (c) illustrated in e.g. 4 below.

e.g. 4. *Conversation of Pair 3 between Japanese student (d) and Chinese student (c)*

106. CS (c) : *Many Chinese people buy it. (Laughter)*
107. JS (d) : *Hee?! (Laughter)...*
108. CS (c) : *I, I like Japan ' s cosmetics.*
109. JS (d) : *Really?*
110. CS (c) : *Yeah.*
111. JS (d) : *Japanese cosmetic is ... high quality.*
112. CS (c) : *Yes!*
113. JS (d) : *So I always use Japanese cosmetic, foundation and base. Yes, base.*
114. CS (c) : *I also like ... Japan cosmetics.*
115. JS (d) : *What do you use? The brand, the brand?*
116. CS (c) : *Umm, brand is like ... Kanebo? And ...;*
117. JS (d) : *...*
118. CS (c) : *Kanebo.*
119. JS (d) : *Ah!!!*
120. CS (c) : *And ... hum ... A, Addiction, Addiction?*
121. JS (d) : *Ah-ah-ah! yeah!*
122. CS (c) : *And ... Hum, ... Shiseido?*
123. JS (d) : *...*
124. CS (c) : *Shiseido.*
125. JS (d) : *Shiseido. Ah, yes. I know. I like it. The brand very much.*
126. CS (c) : *And ... Can-Make (Laughter)*
127. JS (d) : *Can-Make. (Laughter) It is ... cheap.*
128. CS (c) : *But its, its new collection. It's very kawaii.*
129. JS (d) : *Yes-yes, very cute. Many people buy it*
130. CS (c) : *And some ... I also like Shu ... I mostly like Shu Uemura. Shu Uemura?*
131. JS (d) : *Yeah yeah.*
132. CS (c) : *Yes, I like it. And, I bought the foundation last week.*
133. JS (d) : *Oh, really? (Laughter)*
134. CS (c) : *Yes. How about you? Which brand do you like?*
135. JS (d) : *Umm. My... I, always use Shiseido's foundation, nowadays. Because it, it*

*protects ... umm, Nikibi?*

136. CS (c) : *Ah, I know! D.*

137. JS (d) : *Yeah, D-Program, yes, yes.*

138. CS (c) : *Is it very useful? I haven't used it.*

139. JS (d) : *It's so very useful. Yeah.*

It is noticeable that there is a change in the way Japanese student (d) participates in the last 2-minute part of conversation. In fact, in comparison with the first 2-minute part of conversation, the number of words in her utterances increases from 47 to 78, while that in the Chinese student's decreases from 115 to 88. Since such a drastic change is not observed until they get to the last 2-minute part, there are some factors that function as a trigger for her increasing degree of involvement in participation. One of the key factors behind the shift which can be inferred from the conversation data is the topic.

It is observed in Turn 108 that Chinese student (c) changes topics from popular souvenirs among Chinese tourists to cosmetics in Japan. Judging from their lively conversation about cosmetics showing some excited responses (e.g. "Ah!!" and "yes-yes-yes") to each other, cosmetics can be the topic she is not just familiar with, but the one she is really fond of. What really counts to actively participating in communication may not be choosing a topic itself, but rather sharing the favorite topic with the conversation partner. For Japanese student (d), the experience of sharing her special interests in cosmetics can be considered as a factor that affects her attitudes for participation.

The analysis of the shifting degree of involvement in conversation contributes to shed light on some factors that are associated with learners' motivations to actively connect with other participants. It can be insisted that finding special interests in common and sharing them with others should be such a powerful tool that makes their communication activities engaging. As an effective method to provide learners with an opportunity to develop the willingness to get involved in communication interculturally, the language activities between second- and third-language learners of English should more actively be incorporated into language education. Participating in multicultural communication is not only enjoyable, but moreover solidarity-enhancing activities that promote learners to acquire positive attitudes towards learning languages in collaboration with people from diverse cultural backgrounds.

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