Knowledge Creation through Inter-Cultural Communication in Multi-Cultural Groupwork

XiaoYan LI & Katsuhiro UMEMOTO
Japan Advanced Institute of Science and Technology, Japan

Abstract: We no longer work in separate compartments. As globalization sweeps across the world, multiple-cultural groupwork has become common in many fields such as higher education, business, and science. We present a case study of an intercultural communication class at Waseda University in Tokyo in which a multi-cultural group of 17 students participated from April to July, 2010. The research question concerns how multi-cultural groupwork was actually done in an autonomous learning class. The author collected data through participant observation, questionnaires, and interviews, in addition to Bulletin Board System (hereinafter referred to as BBS) messages, 7 facilitators' observation notes, and 17 students' reports. Qualitative data analysis software, MAXQDA, was used to analyze the text data. The case study constructed a theoretical model of knowledge creation through intercultural communication in multi-cultural groupwork. This model reveals the process of multi-cultural groupwork as a spiral of four phases of knowledge: articulation, socialization, consolidation, and internalization.

Keywords: Multi-culture, groupwork, knowledge creation, intercultural communication

1. Introduction

Learning Japanese as a foreign language (JFL) has never been more popular. At the end of 2009, about 3,650,000 people were learning Japanese as a foreign language in 133 countries (Japan Foundation). There were 2,080,000 foreigners residing in Japan in 2011, representing 1.63% of the overall population, while the number of foreign students was over 138,000 as of May 1, 2011 (Japan Student Services Organization). The Japanese government aims at taking in 300,000 foreign students by 2020. Thus, it is estimated that Japanese language education will prosper increasingly in the future.

Although it is often said that the purpose of foreign language education is the cultivation of inter-cultural competence, in practice Japanese language education is usually focused on language only. Where culture of education exists alongside language education in the curriculum, it tends to be in courses named *Japanese Civilization* which essentially deals with the study of Japanese society and culture. Hosokawa (2003, 2006) pointed out that the Japanese Civilization course lacks the viewpoint of *communication* which is necessary in order to connect Japanese learners and Japanese society. It can easily become trapped in stereotypes; the class, often, has been seen as an attempt to assimilate learners by turning them into quasi-Japanese (Kawakami, 1999; Kawano, 2001). In order to improve the acquisition of communication skills, we must integrate the study of both Japanese culture and language in the practice of Japanese language

education (Hosokawa, 2002).

In the past thirty years, learner autonomy has received increased attention in foreign language learning. Holec (1981) stated that learner autonomy requires learners to take individual responsibility for their own learning. Benson (2001) argued that autonomous learners have greater success in the process of language acquisition. Usuki (2007) summarized that learner autonomy emphasizes the learner's personal involvement in the content of their own learning, rather than a transmission of knowledge from teachers. However, the process through which learners create new knowledge in their own content in a learner autonomy class has not been clarified.

The purpose of this research is to construct a theoretical model of knowledge creation through intercultural communication in multi-cultural groupwork. This study aims to ascertain how multi-cultural groupwork was actually done in an autonomous learning class through a case study at Waseda University.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Language and Culture as Knowledge

Most researchers agree that language and culture are closely connected. Agar (1994) coined the term *languaculture* and stressed the notion that language and culture are inseparable. Some have described language and culture as *two sides of the same coin* (Kramch, 1998; Seelye, 1993). Some researchers believed that language is at the core of culture. For example, Maruyama (1984) argued that language is the means by which we articulate the world; the structure of cognition based on language is culture. Another who thinks that language is contained within culture is Schiffman (1996), who considered there are *nested relationships* in language. He claimed that language-as-text (including oral discourse) is nested in linguistic culture, while language-as-code is in turn nested in language-as-text. Thus, language is an integral part of culture.

As is well known, culture nurtures language, but in foreign language education, it is very important to realize language also has very strong effects on culture. According to Kramch (1998), language expresses cultural reality as common experience, embodies cultural reality as linguistic action, and also symbolizes cultural reality as value or social identity. Agar (1994) also noted that every language forms ways of action, thinking and feeling. Lo Bianco (2003) claimed that social environment changes will result in changes in language, which will necessarily produce new culture. In the same spirit, Kawakami (2007) noted that both language and culture are dynamic; therefore the relationship between them also changes dynamically. He suggests, therefore, that in language education students must consider language and culture from a dynamic perspective and also master and assimilate new cultural behaviors.

Since language and culture are inseparable, we must consider both language and culture from a standpoint of unity in the perspective of knowledge. Meyer & Sugiyama (2007) have argued that knowledge can be classified into three categories based on the degree to which it can be codified: explicit knowledge, implicit knowledge, and tacit knowledge. Explicit knowledge is the easiest one to codify, tacit knowledge is the most difficult, and implicit knowledge lies

somewhere in between. Most of our knowledge about our native language is unconscious *implicit knowledge*, while a second language must be considered *explicit knowledge* because we learn it consciously (Shirai, 2008).

These concepts can be arranged as follows. Explicit knowledge is knowledge expressed by language; implicit knowledge is displayed by language (or gesture) which contains the implied meaning; tacit knowledge is not expressed by language at all. Therefore, except when it is verbally explained in a textbook or a classroom, most of a society's culture consists of implicit or tacit knowledge, while some knowledge, such as grammar explained in a textbook, is typical explicit knowledge.

Table 1. The Criteria of Implicit Knowledge and Explicit Knowledge in Foreign Language Learning

Implicit Knowledge	Explicit Knowledge
Tacit and intuitive	Conscious
Procedural	Declarative
Available through automatic processing	Accessible only through controlled processing
Only evident in learners' verbal behavior	Verbalizable

Ellis (2009) argues that foreign language learning entails the acquisition of both implicit and explicit knowledge. He identified the criteria that can be used to distinguish the two, shown in Table 1.
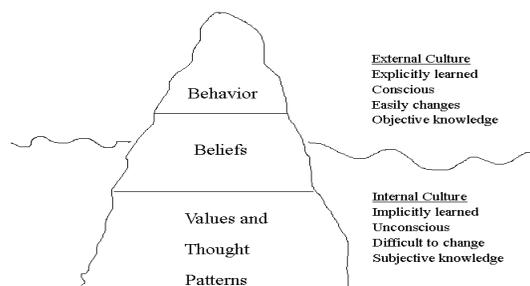

Figure 1. The 'Iceberg Analogy' of Culture (Weaver, 1986)

In Weaver's (1986) *iceberg model of culture*, actions and some beliefs form the external culture, which is the part of the iceberg that shows above the surface of the water; this is objective knowledge which can be intentionally grasped as explicit knowledge, and which can be changed (see Figure 1). Other beliefs, values, and thought patterns are internal culture, forming the larger part of the iceberg under the water's surface. This is the subjective knowledge which can only be mastered subconsciously, and which is difficult to change. We consider this part to be implicit knowledge and tacit knowledge.

2.2. Knowledge Creation in Education

Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) argued that tacit knowledge and explicit knowledge "interact with and interchange into each other in the activities of human beings" (p. 61). The authors identified four distinct processes - *socialization, externalization, combination and internalization* (SECI) – by which new knowledge is created through conversion between tacit and explicit knowledge. Socialization is a process through which individuals share experiences with each other; it also includes the creation and sharing of mental models, world views, and mutual trust (Nonaka & Konno, 1998; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). Externalization characterizes the conversion of tacitly held knowledge, such as specialized knowledge held by customers or specialists, into an explicit, readily understandable form (Nonaka & Konno, 1998; Nonaka et al., 2000). Combination is the next stage, wherein existing explicit knowledge is articulated, shared, and reconfigured into more complex and systematic sets of explicit knowledge (Nonaka & Konno, 1998; Nonaka et al., 2000). Finally, internalization is the process during which explicit knowledge is embodied and internalized through knowledge interpretation and is converted into tacit knowledge (Nonaka et al., 2000). Nonaka's theory of organizational knowledge creation, centering on the SECI model, is probably the most widely accepted theory in knowledge management. However, in the field of intercultural communication it is impossible to start from socialization, because people have different cultural backgrounds and at first they may not have a common awareness that enables them to socialize.

Umemoto and Okushi (2000) described knowledge creation in education using EASI model. They developed a spiral of *Experiencing, Articulating, Synthesizing,* and *Implementing*, in which tacit knowledge is changed to explicit knowledge, and then new knowledge is created. From the perspective of intercultural communication or foreign language education, this is also difficult for participants to experience before they know each other well.

In the field of JFL, the implicit portion and tacit portion of culture may be sharable when we express it in language. For example, Okada (2009) rhetorically interpreted the act of conducting an orchestra during a concert rehearsal: "The intense sensation of motion in our body which is originally inherent in music is clearly evoked by expressing it in language" (p. 63). He noted that nonverbal cultural business is nurtured by being expressed in language. Rhetoric and metaphor are good methods for changing implicit knowledge into explicit knowledge. That is one tool of knowledge creation in language education. However, Okada did not show us a model of how culture is shared and how knowledge creation is accomplished through communication.

2.3. Learner Autonomy Class

The concept of learner autonomy has been promoted by Holec (1981) and others in the context of language education. Learner autonomy in language education is interpreted in various ways in the literature on the topic, and various terms *(learner autonomy, learner independence, self-direction, autonomous learning,* and *independent learning*) have been used to refer to similar concepts. Holec (1981) defined learner autonomy as learners taking responsibility for their own learning. Kenny (1993) discussed for the contribution of learner autonomy approaches to

human development. Savignon (1997) defined learner autonomy linked to communication as "a continuous process of *expression, interpretation*, and *negotiation* of meaning" (p.14). Waite (1994) insisted that learners need to take charge of their own learning in order to make the most of available resources, especially outside the classroom.

Later, Scharle and Szabo (2000) argued that autonomous learners are learners who "accept the idea that their own efforts are crucial to progress in learning, and behave accordingly" and "are willing to cooperate with the teacher and others in the learning group for everyone's benefit (p. 3)". They present some methods to develop learners' autonomy: monitoring and evaluation by themselves; promoting cooperation and group cohesion; consistent control; delegating tasks and decisions, etc. (Scharle & Szabo, 2000). Meanwhile, Little, Ridley and Ushioda (2002) stress that the learners' potential to act independently can only be developed if:

1) Learners take their first steps towards autonomy when they begin to accept responsibility for their own learning.

2) They exercise and develop their autonomy by sharing in the decisions and initiatives that give shape and direction to the language learning process.

3) By planning, monitoring and evaluating their learning, they develop their metacognitive and metalinguistic capacities.

Benson (2001) argued that in language learning classes, "when learners succeed in developing autonomy, they not only become better language learners but they also develop into more responsible and critical members of the communities in which they live (p.1)." In autonomous learning classes, teachers have started to be seen not only as having an important role in encouraging student autonomy, but also more explicitly as potentially autonomous learners and practitioners themselves (McGrath, 2000; Smith, 2000; Vieira, 2003). To clarify the role of learner autonomy, Wenden (1998) made the explicit link between metacognitive awareness and learner autonomy. However, he did not define learners' metacognitive awareness.

3. Research Methods

The author participated in a weekly learner autonomy class at Waseda University titled "Japanese language for thinking" between 7 April and 21 July, 2010. Professor Hosokawa was in charge of the class. Hosokawa only decided the title, and at the first class he announced that he intended to do nothing more. Autonomous learning requires the learners' active participation in their own decision-making and knowledge creation. It would be up to the students to decide how to discuss the topic, what should be done to clarify it, how to present the results, and how to grade each other. In this term, the topic of "Japanese language for thinking" was "Connecting society to individuals."

There were 17 students in the class: seven graduate students of the GSJAL (Graduate School of Japanese Applied Linguistics), including the TA and the author, and 10 undergraduate and non-degree students. In addition, seven students were native Japanese, and the other 10 were non-Japanese. In this class, Japanese was the standard language; everyone spoke Japanese and 8 of the 10 foreign students had passed the Japanese Language Proficiency Text (level one). These 17 students combined into three groups (see Figure 2). The seven GSJAL graduate students wrote field notes after each class session and had a seminar every week to discuss the class.
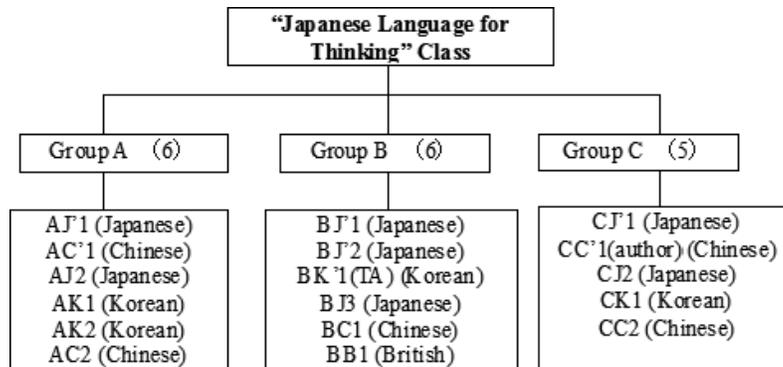
Figure 2. The Composition of the "Japanese Language for Thinking" Class.
Note: Apostrophes (') indicate graduate students in the GSJAL

The author collected data by the following methods. Questionnaires were administered to all of the class members before and after the course. Class members' postings to a BBS (the author included), individual reports, and 7 facilitators' observation notes were saved as data. Of course, consent was obtained from all participants.

We selected Qualitative data analysis software **MAXQDA,** a qualitative data analysis software, as our data analysis tool to handle the above text data.

1) Open coding of the text data was carried out by MAXQDA based on the Grounded Theory Approach (GTA). Next, the generated concept was summarized in categories such as "changes in students" and "collaboration." The text data was coded three times by trial and error until it reached theoretical saturation. All of the members were set as the analysis target.

2) The number of codes obtained at the above step for each of the three groups was added up, and the group which had the most codes of "obtained awareness" was identified. The totals of the three groups' codes were Group A 43, Group B 57, and Group C 50. The most was Group B.

3) Based on Step 2, Group B's activity process was analyzed in detail.

4. Qualitative Analysis of Group B

4.1. Group B Activity Summary

Group B consisted of Japanese, Chinese, Korean, and British participants (see Table 2). Graduate student members indicated by apostrophes acted as facilitators. BJ'1, BJ'2 and BK'1 all had a Japanese language education history. Korean BK'1 was TA of the class. She participated as a member of the group, but she did not take charge of the assignment. British BE1 and Chinese BC1 were graduate students, but their majors were not Japanese language education. Japanese BJ3 was the only undergraduate student.

The group found some keywords like *love, commitment,* and *cognition.* They realized society has diverse styles and cannot be thought of in the abstract. Then they went out to interview people in different fields. They also decided to create a newspaper – not only to document their activities and awareness, but also because they wanted to experience *commitment* and

cognition within their little society (their group). They think that during the process of making a newspaper they did in fact comprise a society. From their front-page editorial, we know they tried to link members' opinions; as a result, they found that *language* lies at the core of the society. Language serves as a lubricant; it can overcome the roadblock of communication, and then common cognition will be born and people will be connected with others and society.

Table 2. Members of Group B

Name	Sex	Nationality	Japanese Learning History	Stay in Japan	Japanese Level	Major	Japanese Teacher History
BJ'1	F	Japan	—	—	Native Tongue	Japanese Language Education	3 years (Philippines)
BJ'2	F	Japan	—	—	Native Tongue	Japanese Language Education	5 years (China)
BK'1 (TA)	F	Korea	14	12	Level 1	Japanese Language Education	2 years (USA)
BJ3	M	Japan	—	—	Native Tongue	Lifelong Education	—
BE1	M	UK	5	1	Level 2	International Relations	—
BC1	F	China	3	2	Level 1	Social Science	—

4.2. Group B Activities

4.2.1. Improved Recognition of Their Respective Cultural Backgrounds and Their Role in Groupwork Based on *Articulation* and *Socialization*

From April 14 to 28, members of Group B articulated their individual cultural knowledge based on experience and shared with the group. As a result, each of members found out their theme related to "connecting society to individuals."

In the first lesson (April 14), Group B was very worried about *what is society*, because while this term sounds very simple, it is actually difficult to define. They thought society is "the shared space of love", but they could not share their individualized experience. So facilitators BJ'1 and BJ'2 became conscious that they should build a relationship of trust (BJ'1, BJ'2, observation notes on April 14). The expression based on their experience means articulating their implicit knowledge and sharing it through groupwork. Each member offered an opinion based on different experience, stimulating recognition of the culture to which he or she belonged. "It's so difficult to articulate thinking by means of language" (BJ'2 observation note, April 21). BJ'2 points out the difficulty of articulating tacit knowledge. Next, opinions became

clearer after hearing others' opinions. "When beginning the real discussion, recognition about the range which 'society' attains was considerably different among members (BJ'1 observation note, April 21)." As the result of members' collisions on April 28, they finally agreed to express their ideas in the form of a newspaper (BJ'1 observation note, April 28). According to the activity report for that day, they realized society has diverse styles and cannot be thought of in the abstract. Then they went out to interview people in different fields. They also found their keywords for the interview like *love, spirit of self-sufficiency, commitment* and *cognition.* (B group BBS).

4.2.2. Preliminary Arrangements of Interviews: *Consolidation* through Conversation

Three lesson periods (May 12 to 26) were spent making preliminary arrangements for the interviews. Each member thought and talked about the next questions: "Why I chose this person to interview," "Why we need to create a newspaper," and "What kind of questions should we ask". Compared with the first stage, this stage had increased conversation. "Sharing" is the most necessary factor in conversation. BJ'1 made the following comment regarding the sharing of opinions: "Through sharing, 'my concern' becomes 'our concern', and the relation within the community was strengthened" (BJ'2 observation note, May 12).

Articulating opinions based on the cultural backgrounds of the individuals and sharing them in the group, turned personal concerns into common group concerns. This represents the *articulation* and *socialization* of individual cultural knowledge. The feeling of affiliation to a group is born by "strengthening the relation".

After the May 12 lesson, the TA set up a BBS, so everyone would be notified by email when somebody posted to the BBS. This promoted the practical use of the bulletin board. Another space for conversation was created and, with the increased space, conversations on the BBS continued even after lessons. Moreover, since exchanges by BBS had a margin of thinking different from face to face conversation, it was suitable for arranging ideas. Members of Group B consolidated their ideas both through face to face conversations and BBS. For example, on May 16 BJ'2 threw a question at the BBS, "If a person has no job, is she or he a member of society?", then, on May 18, Chinese student BC1 wrote a new opinion: "Even a NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) or stay-at-home has a connection to society, since man must be connected with other people, mentally, emotionally, and instinctively" (Group B BBS, May 18). BJ'2 consciously gave inspiration to the group members and BC1 used her social science knowledge in this class, to create a new idea.

In this stage BJ'2, as a facilitator, advised everybody in the class to use the BBS to share their thought processes (BJ'2 observation note, May 19). Teacher and facilitators agreed to fully utilize the BBS, regarding it as "the visualization of thinking" (sound recording, seminar, May 26).

4.2.3. Newspaper Making: Construction of Ideas through Conversation and *Internalization*

Members of Group B finished their interviews during the week between the May 26 and the June 2 lessons. Then, each group member handed out stacks of paper and prepared the editorial content together. The idea construction process included discussion about the results of each

member's interviews, consolidation of the results, and the creation of new ideas through *internalization*. As a "classroom assistant," the BBS played a great role in reporting interview results, the exchange of opinions, and in confirmation of each other's views. BC1's development of her newspaper article is the evidence.

BC1 decided her title should be "not only language connects society to individuals". She interviewed two Chinese businessmen who had been living in Japan for more than ten years. She found that "common recognition is more important than language when it comes to connecting a society. Human beings have a sense of belonging and feel happy when they are with the same group" (Group B BBS, June 8).

BJ'2 then asked BC1, "How does the sense of belonging germinate?"□BJ'2□also realized *the rule of B group*, which was: "We talk a lot, share our views, adjust ourselves, that's how we make the same context" (Group B BBS, June 8). Based on BJ'2's comment on BBS, BC1 got a new rule of B group, which was: "We always speak straight out" (Group B BBS, June 8). That is the process by which they created new ideas.

While groupwork in this autonomous learner class had different types of collaboration, the process was the same: articulate, socialize, consolidate and internalize. Members of group completed the assignment through the spiral of *articulation, socialization, consolidation and internalization.*

5. The Role of Teacher and Facilitators

Hosokawa, the teacher of this class, claims that the role of teacher in an autonomous class is as "the designer, the organizer, and the booster" (Hosokawa, 2002). According to the results of qualitative data analysis and MAXQDA, the teacher appears to have played a very small role in this learner autonomy class, but this appearance is deceptive. First, the teacher designed the framework of the class. Second, although the teacher monitored the flow of the whole class as an observer, he seized on the weak points of activities clearly. For example, when students were discussing who they would interview, Hosokawa suddenly asked "*Why* do you want to interview this person?" That question deepened the level of thinking. Third, he affected the flow of the class through the facilitators from behind the scenes. During the seminar with the seven GSJAL graduate students, the teacher modified the class design after reaching an agreement with the graduate students. The teacher's role can be summarized in Figure 3.
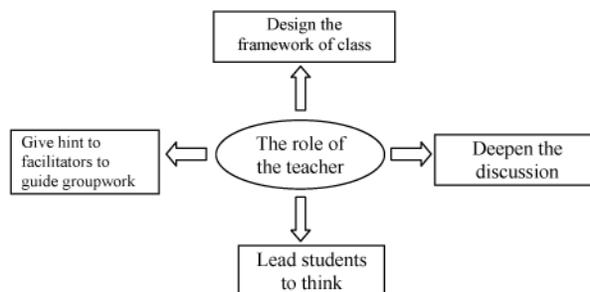

Figure 3. The Role of the Teacher

Brookfield (1986) noted the role of facilitators is to show choices and demand the reconstruction of the reflections or interpretations of learners. Cranton (1992) argued that skillful questions from an educator to learners can change the attitude of a class. In this case, however, the facilitators began discussions with a "blank slate" like the other students in the class, without any standard answer for the meaning of "connecting society to an individual". So, they could not present any choices. We have noticed that the biggest difference between a learner autonomy class and a traditional class is that group activities cannot be duplicated. In a traditional, textbook-type class, there is a unified way of teaching, while group activities in a Learner autonomy class are always different, depending on the members' characters, motivation, and affinity, etc. Then, we think, *duplication of group activities is impossible*. But are there some common strategies? According to the results of the MAXQDA analysis, we ascertained the role of facilitators, as summarized in Table 3.

Table 3. Strategies for Supporting Group Work as a Facilitator

Angle	Concrete Approach
Businesslike Problems	Summarize opinions from the group, or make proposals and get agreement
Exchange of Opinions	Create an environment in which participants can express their real intentions and offer their true opinions
	Maintain a neutral position regarding the opinions of other members, and give responses that will elicit new ideas
	Give feedback on interview results
Coordinate the Group	To link the topics of all the members
	To ensure that everyone participates in discussions
	To use others' words when writing on the bulletin board system (BBS).

6. Conclusions

In this article we analyzed the process of intercultural communication in multi-cultural group work. We can describe three types of collaboration in the learner autonomy class. One was between teacher and class. As we described previously, the teacher designed the framework of the class and during the seminars the teacher prompted facilitators to modify the course design. Also, the teacher commented and asked some important questions during the entire class. Though the teacher did not take part in any activity, he continually observed the learners and modified the framework based on learners' reactions. At the same time, the learners could not ignore the existence of the teacher. The second collaboration type was between facilitators and learners. Though the facilitator would sometimes lead group members' activities, they all had the same aim and put their minds together to finish the groupwork. Thus, they connected them tightly and supported groupwork. The third collaboration type was among the learners.

The learners clarified the theme "connecting society to individuals" through groupwork. They learned to *articulate* their vague ideas in explicit words and *socialized* with other group members. When they became open with each other in groupwork, they *consolidated* their ideas and *internalized* their own new idea.

Based on the previous analysis, we can see the process of the multi-cultural group work as the spiral of *articulate, socialize, consolidate and internalize*. Dialogue almost always arose out of discussion among the group members. According to the author's field notes (9 June), "we kept thinking even during group discussions, so *some new awareness would be born with a whiff, or in a flash*. The synergistic effect of a rap session is powerful." The articulation process also included interviews outside of class with people in different fields. "I *achieved new realizations and an exciting awareness* when I finished my interview. I am surprised to know we have such different thoughts, though we are both Korean" (CK1 interview, July 7). Thus, learners got a new awareness not only of language, but mainly of cultural thinking.

From this research, a theoretical model which shows knowledge creation through the intercultural communication in multi-cultural groupwork was built (Figure 4). One characteristic of the theoretical model is the interaction of tacit knowledge, implicit knowledge, and explicit knowledge—in other words, the process of knowledge creation. *Articulation, socialization, consolidation* and *internalization* are connected spirally. When learners discuss face to face, the four phases can be regarded as one, and when learners communicate by BBS or emails, each one of *articulation*, *socialization*, *consolidation*, and *internalization* is a phase in which different knowledge types interact.
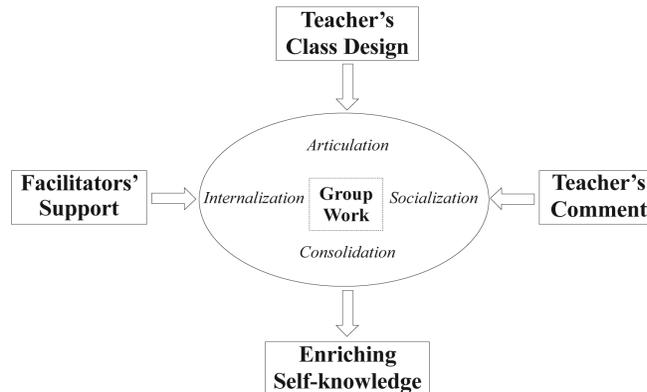

Figure 4. Knowledge Creation through Intercultural Communication
In Multi-Cultural Groupwork

In this model, knowledge comprises the whole of language and culture. When learners' tacit knowledge and implicit knowledge is expressed in language, they realize self-knowledge, which becomes common in the community. And in the process of sharing knowledge, they achieve a new awareness of language and culture. The tacit and implicit part creates new self-knowledge. The result of the class is enriching self-knowledge. In the spiral of articulation,

socialization, consolidation, and internalization, new knowledge is created and becomes the base of communication for the next knowledge creation.

We consider the spiral of *articulation*, *socialization*, *consolidation* and *internalization* is the real method by which we can realize Japanese language education integrating language and culture. We also consider the spiral of *articulation, socialization, consolidation* and *internalization* as the process through which learners can create new knowledge to change implicit and tacit ideas into explicit knowledge. The results of group activities, such as the newspaper (Group B), magazine (Group C), and reports (Group A), are the new explicit knowledge created in the class through all of the collaborative communication. The spiral of *articulation, socialization, consolidation* and *internalization* created new knowledge and learners in this spiral achieved self-renewal and self-knowledge.

Unlike the SECI model of *articulation*, *socialization*, *consolidation* and *internalization* (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995), here the phase of *socialization* is placed after that of *articulation*. Although explicit knowledge and tacit knowledge are simultaneously shared by communication — whether face to face, email, voice mail, BBS, etc. — socialization takes place after articulation. After that, the information and knowledge expressed in the shared language are consolidated, and cultural knowledge (a view of the world and a conduct code) is created, digested, and utilized to a view of the world by internalization. This model explains how multi-cultural groupwork proceeds through intercultural communication.

We know the new knowledge created in class has changed the participants' way of thinking, conveying, and engaging in dialogue. Will this new knowledge make a mark on the students' identities? Is it valuable? Is it necessary? Our future work may investigate these points, as the answers to these questions may contribute to explaining and understanding the importance of implicit and tacit knowledge in foreign language education, as well as improving students' inter-cultural competence.

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Author Note

XiaoYan Li is a Post Doctoral Fellow at the Japan Advanced Institute of Science and Technology (JAIST). She has been a Japanese language teacher at Dalian Foreign Languages University in China and Hokuriku University in Japan. Her research explores the integration of culture and language in second language acquisition. Key to this is an understanding of knowledge creation processes. Her publications include "Toward an Integrated Approach to Teaching Japanese Language and Culture: A Knowledge Perspective" (*ICS, 18*(2), 285-299) and other papers in Japanese language publications.

Dr. Katsuhiro Umemoto is professor of knowledge management at JAIST. His current research interests include knowledge management in non-business sectors such as education, public administration, health care, social welfare, NPOs, etc.