

When Words Are Not Enough: Going Beyond Language in Business English Communication

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In the Business English Communication sector in Japan most of the teaching focuses on the vocabulary building and traditional conversation / information exchange type language skills needed for international business. This comes after the Japanese school system, which focuses on grammar in their English language classes. So this paper will initially provide a background to the educational sector in Japan to explain why these limitations exist. However for a higher chance of success in the international business world Intercultural / Cross Cultural competence is also necessary, as language alone without understanding the culture and mindset of those others in any conversation is limiting. This is arguably even more neglected in most aspects of Japanese education. As these are of such great importance this paper will then cover some of the research done in these areas by looking at the work of Geert Hofstede in his National Culture Compass tool and the Seven Dimensions of Culture by management consultants Fons Trompenaars and Charles Hampden-Turner and students' reactions to the National Cultural Compass. These conceptual tools lay the foundation for more effective communication via better understanding of others, and this promotes a greater chance of success in business as these allow for the language used to be better tailored to the needs of the other parties when they come from other countries and cultures.

21st Century Business Communication Solutions

There are many serious issues facing the corporate world in the run up to the 2020's decade. One of the major problems corporations are facing when trying to prepare for the modern business arena and the changes coming are the hurdles involved in trying to hire staff with the skillsets needed to effectively compete in the modern world. The World Economic Forum (WEF) brings out a report every five years on the skills they think necessary for success in this area (Gray, 2016) and the most recent list has these top ten skills for 2020:

1. Complex problem solving.
2. Critical thinking.
3. Creativity.

4. People management.
5. Co-ordinating with others.
6. Emotional intelligence.
7. Judgment and decision-making.
8. Service orientation.
9. Negotiation.
10. Cognitive flexibility.

Along with these listed skills the WEF also compile a list of effective strategies corporations can use to help get their staff ready for these challenges. The list is here (Chan, 2019):

Invest in reskilling current employees (65%).

Support mobility and job rotation (39%).

Collaborate, educational institutions (25%).

Target female talent (25%).

Attract foreign talent (22%).

Offer apprenticeships (22%).

Collaborate, other companies across industries (14%).

Collaborate, other companies in industry (12%).

Target minorities' talent (12%).

Hire more short-term workers (11%).

Here the majority of these strategies involve some form of staff hiring and / or training.

Japanese Corporate Communication Problems

However for corporate Japan this brings an extra set of hurdles. Daryl Green, a human resources expert with the Manpower Group said, "The needs of corporate Japan are not met by the young people that are being produced by Japanese education and society," a comment in reference to their own survey which showed that "...a survey of 1,043 Japanese firms conducted by the Manpower Group in January, 85 percent said they can't find the right people for the positions they want to fill." (Daimon, 2013) Green also commented that "Japanese companies no longer have the capability or the willingness to train people for the long term. And Japanese education institutions don't train,

either,” and this lack of training of Japanese candidates has led to many Japanese corporations building manufacturing capacity and office overseas to take advantage of the availability of staff there. Therefore there is a growing demand for Japanese managerial level staff that have the necessary intercultural and cross-cultural communication skills to function comfortably when working overseas and / or in Japan working with foreign workers.

This demand for specialist training is an area where the existing traditional educational establishments are currently not prepared to meet. Green himself has said that the Japanese educational establishments are not adequately preparing graduates for work and that claim has been borne out by this author’s observations in nearly 20 years of working at 16 universities in Japan, and presenting / working with many more in one capacity or another. Partly this lack of preparation of graduates at an institutional level (some individual teachers do prepare students for professional level work very well in their own classes but these are oasis’s in a desert of mediocrity) can be put down to the way Japan addresses change in general and educational change specifically.

Japanese Educational Problems – The Root of the Issue

The modern Japanese education system was initially changed in a major way by reforms that came after World War II when a report on education in Japan was conducted by the U.S. Education Mission to Japan in 1946. This report basically stated that schools should enrich the lives of students, not make students into tools for the state (Eades et al., 2005, pp. 37–38). Therefore these ideals were put into practice in Japan and schools and universities were reformed along liberal lines and principles of universal access based on ability (both to learn and to fund the learning) with limited government input. A few years later the exigencies of the Cold War lead to the so-called ‘Reverse Course’ by the US government (*Occupation and Reconstruction of Japan, 1945–52*, n.d.). This brought in more Japanese right wing elements to power and when this became formalized when the U.S. handed over power officially, these liberal educational policies were altered in favour of a more conservative and insular approach.

The economic impact of the Korean War shortly afterwards (and later the Vietnam Wars) resulted in huge economic growth for Japan. This led to a corresponding corporate demand for workers with a specific educational background to continue to supply the type of labour needed for this growth (Beasley, 2000). Therefore this caused schools, colleges, and universities to develop a more technical focus and also lead to the creation of *seimon gakko* (vocational schools) for the less academically able students so as to also be able to supply lower level workers during these boom years. These changes did not go unopposed by teachers, but educational establishments on the whole went along with the demands of the political powers that be and their business partners, and protesting students were discriminated against to stop dissent.

By the late 1990's the Japanese Diet Member Junichiro Koizumi went even further in this regard with the start of his push for education reforms that really came to fruition when he became PM in 2001. He sought to streamline the educational bureaucracy to reduce the financial burden on the state to help stimulating the by then stagnant Japanese economy, and he was successful in pushing his reform agenda through. This had a major impact on education in Japan and was called the 'Big Bang', as its effects were so dramatic and far-reaching in potential.

These reforms resulted in elite national universities becoming private educationally focused corporations, and as a result many workers lost privileged 'jobs for life' as well as many other benefits. A well documented declining birthrate in Japan also lead to decreasing student application numbers just when the pressures of these reforms were forcing many *seimon gakko* to try to upgrade their status to become universities to try to gain access to government funding (Eades et al., 2005, pp. 219–241). Part of this was the creation of the Center of Excellence program and initially was a program that aimed to help promote the top 30 universities in Japan become global ambassadors of Japanese education as until then Japanese universities had not fared well in university world ranking tables given their economic situation and relatively large numbers of universities. Also in Japan many professors only publish in Japanese due to their low English language levels, and many of these publications are in *kiyo* (in house, non-peer

reviewed) journals that have lower standards than expected in peer reviewed publications (Eades et al., 2005, pp. 313–321) so many professors were not so experienced in teaching academically to a high standard. Therefore the higher education sector saw a simultaneous low quality public image via world rankings, a drop in demand from high school graduates due to declining population, and an increase in supply of universities from reform pressures, in short a perfect storm of dangers to the quality and survival of many educational institutions in Japan.

Furthermore schools and universities in Japan traditionally used entrance tests to vet their students. Some elementary schools also did this and this was the beginning of the testing escalator in Japan, as only by entering a good school at the bottom of the educational conveyor belt could students more easily progress up to a 'name' university. Preparing students for this was the huge *juku* (after school cram school) industry. Here students 'learned the type of things they would have to memorise for these entrance tests as they were and still are mainly memory based. These memory based tests were of major importance in the past and still are important even today (Eades et al., 2005, pp. 208–209), even with the lowering of the acceptance rate to cope with declining students numbers and the effects of the *yutori* educational policies started in the late 1970's to address student over work (Schoolland, 1990).

These entrance tests themselves have been heavily criticised by educators with one claiming the exams and universities that run them only simulate testing and learning (McVeigh, 2010, Chapter 11). The focus of the testing regime itself has also been attacked for their inaccurate measurement of intelligence or academic ability as they only measure how well students can remember unconnected facts, leading to the system being called 'examination hell'.

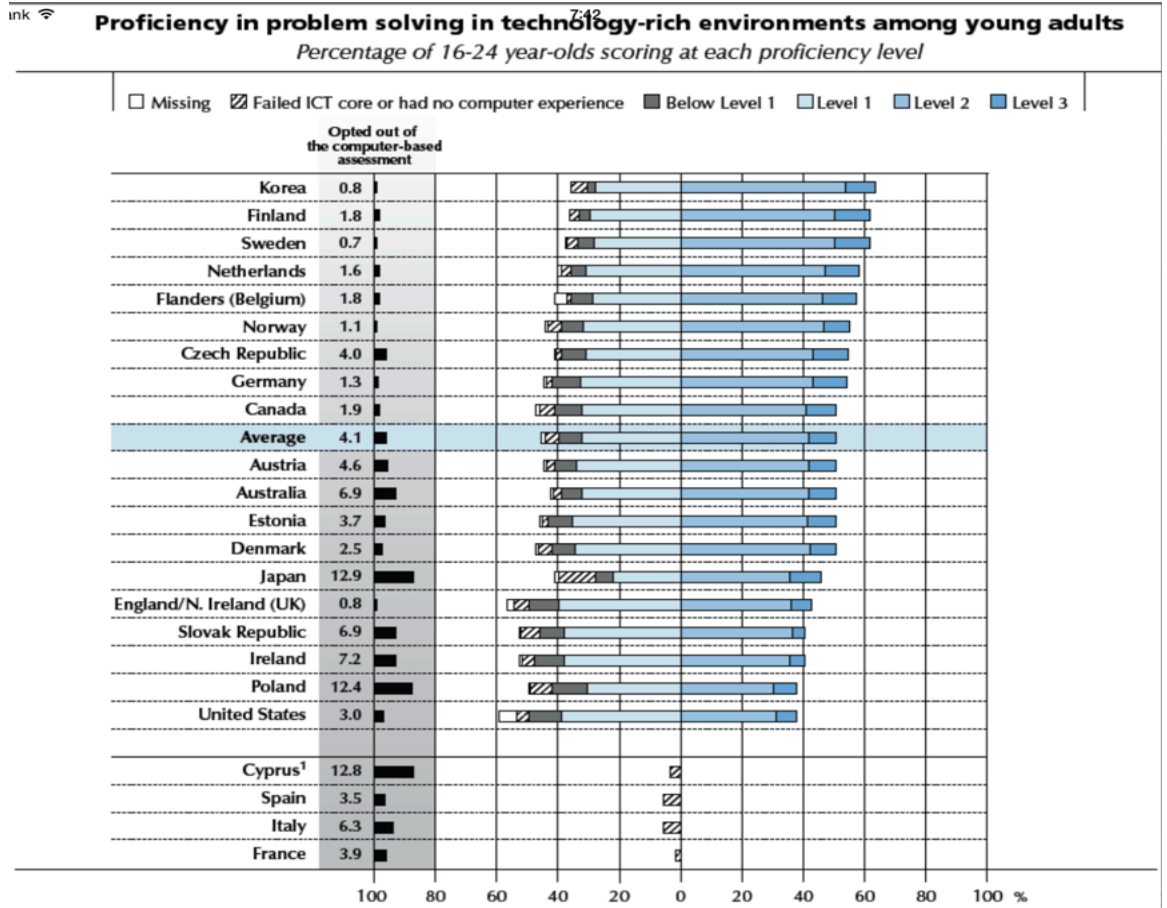
However the key take away here is that the educational system, until relatively recently, had an almost endless focus on rote learning. This by extension had a largely negative effect on the creativity and critical thinking abilities of students. Students thought that education is just the process of remembering things to pass examinations rather than learning for its own sake or looking for the practical applications of things they learn. Lee-Cunin

has conducted in depth interviews with students on exactly this point (Eades et al., 2005, pp. 136–164). McVeigh took this critique even further and argued that if people are educated to be mindless automatons purely to function in an economic system, then the system produces only mindless automatons that do not practice critical or original thinking (McVeigh, 2010).

Japanese ICT Problems – A Contributing Factor

Recent studies have also shown Japan to be one of the most risk averse societies (Aspinall, 2010; Peltokorpi et al., 2015) and this has had an effect on the speed of change in general (as indeed all change entails some risk), and in particular the pace of educational change in adopting ICT solutions to problems in higher education. In addition, although the education ministry was briefly liberal in orientation in the immediate post war period as mentioned above, it was quickly reformed back to its pre war conservative default setting as a result of the ‘reverse course’ in US foreign policy in Japan from 1947-1952 (Okada, 2002), and it has been relatively conservative in nature ever since. Therefore it is not surprising that these two factors have affected the Japanese educational sector in the pace of change relative to increasing ICT usage in higher education and schools. Indeed this author has encountered some resistance to teaching plans at universities when trying to incorporate ICT into curriculums.

Therefore in comparison with other sectors of industry in Japan, the education sector is especially neglected with Japan scoring poorly when compared to other OECD nations (Peña-López & OECD, 2016, pp. 44, 72). Japan is now also at the lower extreme of ICT usage compared with schools internationally in the PISA Database in 2012 for computer use at school (OECD, 2015, p. 152).



ICT in Education

% of lower secondary education teachers who report students use ICT for projects or in class work

TALIS 2013 Table 6.1

Denmark	73.9
Norway	73.8
Australia	66.8
Chile	59.6
Mexico	56.2
Cyprus ^{2,3}	46.4
United States	45.9
Slovak Republic	44.7
Latvia	40.5
Spain	37.0
Czech Republic	36.5
Poland	36.4
Netherlands	34.7
Portugal	34.4
Sweden	33.8
Bulgaria	33.7
Iceland	31.8
Italy	30.9
Brazil	30.3
Singapore	30.0
Estonia	29.2
Korea	27.6
Romania	26.0
France	24.2
Croatia	23.5
Serbia	23.1
Malaysia	19.2
Israel	18.7
Finland	18.2
Japan	9.9
Average	37.5

PENN STATE

This low level of education technology integration in Japan illustrates the overarching levels of low ICT usage and experience in the educational sector in general. Lockley mentions that in 2002 a new non-binding recommendation for schools was introduced called “Information Studies”. It had three components, A focused on basic ICT skills such as Word, Excel and PowerPoint, B examined hardware, software, operating systems and how they all worked together, while C dealt with the social implications of ICT’s role in society. He also stated that MEXT aimed to have high-speed internet connections in 100% of classrooms by March 2011. However this was only for High Schools, not Junior High, it was only a suggestion, and the 100% penetration rate of high speed Internet in classrooms has not happened even now in 2019. Also the skills suggested in the ABC high school plan (even when implemented) did not transfer to the students the types of academic digital skills needed at university (Castellano et al., 2011; Lockley, 2011). So the feeling among many universities teachers was that students were coming to university from high school unprepared in an ICT sense (Williams, 2011) and of course many of the universities and staff are unprepared to teach that way (Paterson, 2019, 2018, 2017). Continuing on from university to the workplace corporate world sees students similarly unprepared. Vallance has also commented on how the Japanese ICT attitude suffered by comparison with the successful Singaporean approach (Vallance, 2008, p. 279) and a global assessment of internet usage rates at schools from primary to secondary has Japan situated lower than many similarly developed economy countries like Singapore (Pelgrum, 2001).

A short anecdote helps illustrate this problem. Recently in mid 2019 the Tokyo Institute of Technology (one of the top universities in Japan) had a job advertisement for a lecturer who could teach using multimedia. As usual with Japanese university job advertisements there was no web-based applications permitted, and all cover letters, CV’s, and other materials submitted had to be paper copies sent by registered mail. For the examples of multimedia work they requested these be put on a CD-ROM and also sent with the paper copies in the envelope! And this was one of the elite universities specializing in technology.

Related to these problems is the fact that Japanese schools and universities have a very low rate of non-Japanese students and teaching staff there. According to the latest 2020 estimated figures from the Times Higher Education survey all 110 Japanese universities (except two) in their database have 13% or less of their student population being non-Japanese (*World University Rankings*, 2019). Going back in time these figures were even lower as they only accounted for 3.3% of all university students in 2009 (Newby et al., 2009, p. 80) with overall foreign university undergraduate student numbers decreasing 2.0% overall in 2011 (Japan Student Services Organization (JASSO), 2012). That they have increased a little now is due to the declining birthrate in Japan and the need for foreign students to keep some of the universities financially viable when Japanese student numbers are declining. However this small increase is only a recent phenomenon.

Therefore the idea of high school or university students doing research based learning, utilising digital / ICT type resources, and with an international, intercultural or cross-cultural focus to prepare students for professional work in an international or cross-cultural setting after graduation did not traditionally factor into the Japanese educational curriculum in any major way, and largely still does not happen in any major way even in 2019. So it is hardly surprising that modern corporations would complain that graduates were not adequately prepared for 21st century work.

Professional Business English Communication Solutions

Given the problems described above much of the professional teaching in the Business English world in Japan focuses on the traditional vocabulary building and traditional conversation / information exchange pattern type of language skills needed for international business (Sato, 2017, pp. 62–68). There is no doubt that these are definitely important as these are the building blocks for basic communication and information exchange, and these are especially useful in the Japanese context given the extreme focus on English grammar that the Japanese school's rote based learning system focuses on in their English language classes.

However for a higher chance of success in the international business world much more is needed as the WEF Skills list shows. In addition to these

listed skillsets Intercultural / Cross Cultural competence is also necessary, as language alone without understanding the culture and mindset of those others in any conversation is limiting and the possibility for causing offense is high. This is arguably even more neglected in most aspects of Japanese education, given its relatively insular approach.

Furthermore, as culture and mindset are also of such great importance it is necessary to cover some of the research done in these areas by looking at the work of Geert Hofstede in his National Culture Compass tool and the Seven Dimensions of Culture by management consultants Fons Trompenaars and Charles Hampden-Turner. These conceptual tools lay the foundation for more effective communication via better understanding of others, and this promotes a greater chance of success in business as these allow for the language used to be better tailored to the needs of the other parties when they come from other countries and cultures.

Hofstede has written a lot on how cultural awareness is indispensable for effect and efficient communication between people from different cultures (Hofstede et al., 2010; Hofstede, 2003, n.d.). He has a free web based app which is part of a more detailed subscription service called the Cultural Compass Tool (“Culture CompassTM (Updated),” n.d.). This provides a snapshot of cultural values across 6 key areas on a scale of 1 to 100. These are Power Distance, Individualism, Masculinity, Uncertainty Avoidance, Long Term Orientation, and Indulgence.

Power Distance looks at the extent and range of inequality in a society or organization and to what extent less powerful people in these societies expect power to be unequally distributed. Individualism examines the degree of interdependence members have in any given society or organization, and to what extent group harmony is seen as being more important than individual satisfaction. Masculinity looks at how important traditionally masculine values of competition, achievement and success are seen as being paramount in a society or organization, compared to the feminine values of quality of life and caring for others. Uncertainty Avoidance addresses how risk is viewed in a society or organization, specifically if ambiguity and the unknown are things to be desired or not. Long Term Orientation is as the name implies and looks at how much the past influences current and future decisions by drawing on a

long-term history viewpoint for appropriate behavioural patterns. Indulgence is the last factor and looks at how well members of a society or organization can control their desires and impulses.

The Seven Dimensions of Culture is a framework for cross-cultural communication developed by consultants Fons Trompenaars and Charles Hampden-Turner, and takes a broadly similar approach to Hofstede. Their model was first described in their book *Riding the Waves of Culture*, (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012) first published in 1993. To create the datasets the model draws on, they surveyed over 40,000 managers from over 30 companies in 50 countries on a range of issues. Unlike the 1 to 100 scale on 6 criteria used by Hofstede, Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner have a continuum for cultures between two extremes on a 7-item list featuring Universalism vs. Particularism, Individualism vs. Communitarianism, Specific vs. Diffuse, Neutral vs. Affective, Achievement vs. Ascription, Sequential Time vs. Synchronous Time, and Internal Direction vs. External Direction. They run a website with a range of tools on it to help understand the cultures of different areas (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, n.d.) however, sadly some of the tools are no longer free to access.

In their system Universalism vs. Particularism examines the governing principles in relationships and whether there are rules or relationships based. Particularism-based cultures bend the rules for people with special relationships like family members, Universalism-based cultures do not as they treat all people the same irrespective of relationships. Individualism vs. Communitarianism looks at the way people in cultures work and expect recognition. Individualism-based cultures reward and praise successful people, Communitarianism-based cultures do this along team or group lines. Specific vs. Diffuse examines the separation in cultures between private and professional lives. Specific cultures keep these separate, Diffuse cultures see them as interconnected and related. Neutral vs. Affective look at how people from certain cultures show (or hide) emotions in public. Neutral culture people would hide them to stay calm, cool, and collected, Affective culture people use shows of emotions to provide extra communication. Achievement vs. Ascription looks at status and whether it is earned or given in certain cultures. Achievement-based cultures tend to allow challenges to authority by

anyone if they are well argued and logical, Ascription based societies give status according to social, educational, wealth backgrounds and do not allow so many challenges to those with status. Sequential Time vs. Synchronous Time looks at how cultures manage time and tasks. Sequential cultures want to do things in order and on time, Synchronous cultures are more flexible with time keeping and doing multiple tasks at the same time. Internal Direction vs. External Direction looks at how cultures perceive their environment. Internal Direction cultures think most things can be controlled and people are more self-centered and aggressive, External Direction people tend to be more aware of environmental factors and relationships with others.

Ethical & Research Design Considerations

Students in two cohorts of a semester long Business English Communications at Toyo University were taught the online tools described above. Near the end of the course a short six-question voluntary survey on the National Cultural Compass tool was given to all the students and 37 responded (the detailed app for the Seven Dimensions of Culture framework was not available for free so it was not explored in the survey). The students in the classes were told the survey was voluntary and anonymous and 37 out of a possible 48 completed the survey and 31 gave more detailed comments at the end. They were all informed prior to the survey that the results would be used for this paper and the accompanying presentation at the HICE Conference in 2020. In addition they were informed that the survey would have no effect on their grades and that it could be done outside of class, as it was an online survey.

The survey design was kept fairly simple as 1 - these were mainly freshmen students and inexperienced in taking part in educational research, and 2 – this was an exploratory research project to see if it warranted a deeper study later. Therefore there were only six questions and most were of a simple numerical value scale type for easy of student completion. My actual research plan utilised Bassey's model (Halsall, 1998) and involved only one class (of 48 students), with all students receiving the same instruction (to avoid any ethical problems with differences in control groups in course content and delivery), as my research project was focused only on particular business focused class from a specific English language / cultural group only

(Japanese educational setting with international and Japanese students) , The study involved a great deal of authentic in-class participation (McTaggart, 1989) as there was frequent in-class discussions of various aspects of business communications.

As I work at the university with these students I was and still am an insider researcher, with the benefits and challenges this brings (Floyd & Linet, 2010). The first challenge therefore, was power distance. In this case the students had been in my classes for almost a whole semester before this research project started. So they had the time to get used to my teaching style as I try to minimise the power distance as much as possible in my teaching as a matter of course. Second is the effect of grade boosting on survey answers. Here I planned for the final surveys to be conducted only after I had given out final grades after my class, so there would be no grade incentive influencing their comments. Finally these students would only ever be in my class again if they signed up to take one of my elective courses, so creating a positive (in their eyes) relationship with me for future classes is not an influencing factor either. Therefore I feel these points adequately address any negative issues arising from insider research in this instance.

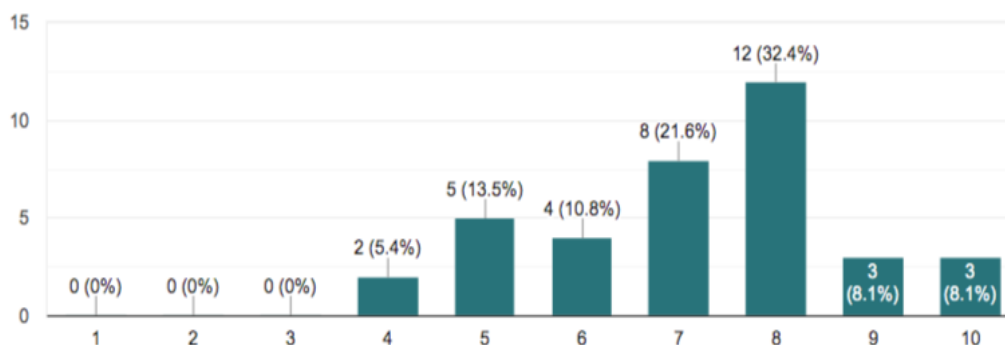
Student Reactions & Results and Discussions

The first optional question (for internal use only) was to see which department students were from, and which major the students were taken. The other five questions were concerned with their evaluation of the online tools and the results are as follows:

Question 2 - How useful are you finding the National Cultural Compass to be in general?

2 - How useful are you finding the National Cultural Compass to be in general?

37 responses

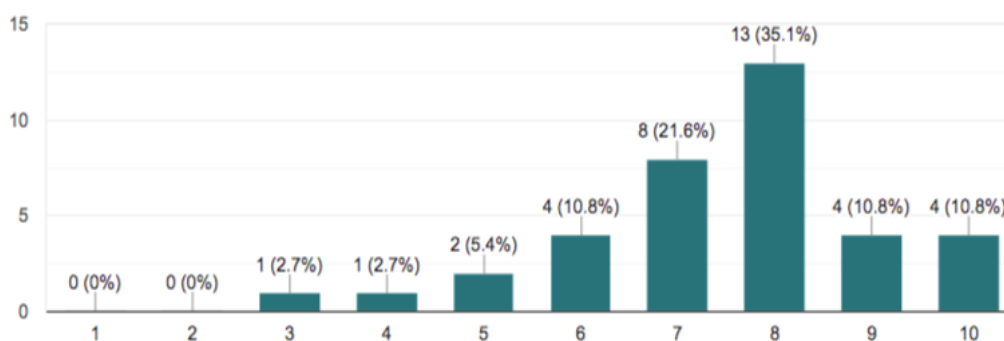


Here it is clear that overall students found the National Cultural Compass tool to be useful overall in their coursework.

Question 3 – 3 - How useful do you find the cultural viewpoints you learn from the National Cultural Compass in helping you understand people from other cultures?

3 - How useful do you find the cultural viewpoints you learn from the National Cultural Compass in helping you understand people from other cultures?

37 responses

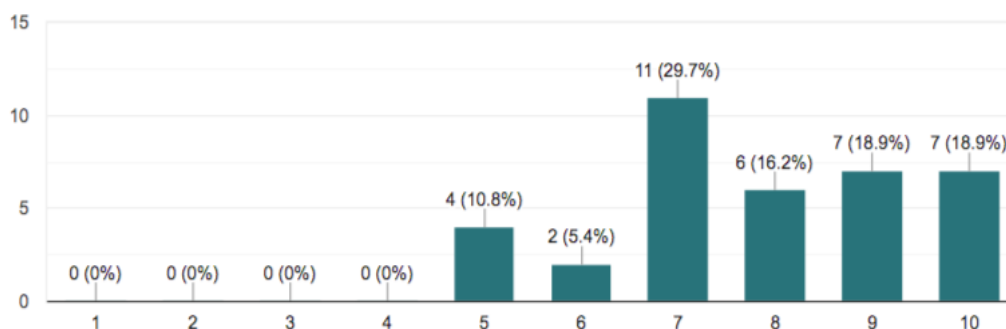


In more specific cultural understanding applications the National Cultural Compass tool was again found to be valuable by students.

Question 4 – 4 - How much would you recommend the National Cultural Compass to other students for helping them in understanding people from other cultures in international business?

4 - How much would you recommend the National Cultural Compass to other students for helping them in understanding people from other cultures in international business?

37 responses

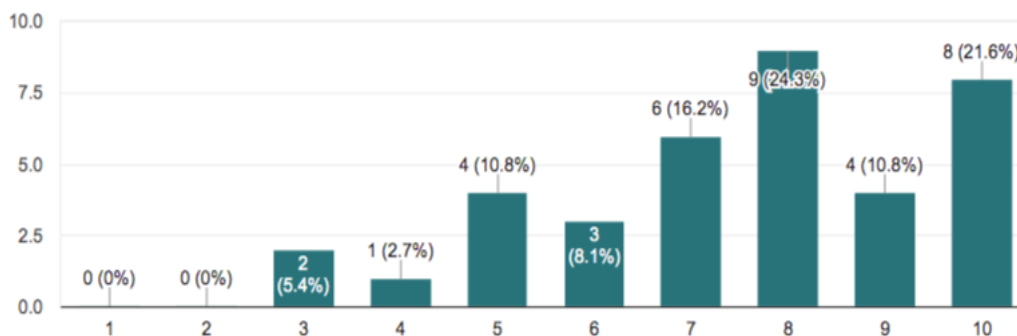


In terms of recommending it to other students the National Cultural Compass tool was unsurprisingly found to be something they would suggest to classmates in other courses.

Question 5 – 5 - How easy to use and understand do you find the National Cultural Compass?

5 - How easy to use and understand do you find the National Cultural Compass?

37 responses



Here the scores were again good for its ease of use. However it did received two students giving it a score of 3 out of ten. My feeling is these are probably low scores given by Japanese students as coming straight from Japanese high school their experience with any educational technology is very low (as shown above).

Question 6 - Please comment on anything you particularly liked or disliked about the National Cultural Compass (exact comments where given are listed below):

- 1 - *I think their numbers and data is easy to understand and to compare.*
- 2 - *it really says the truth about my own country, so I think I could believe other countries too.*
- 3 - *Wider range of sample (needed), i.e millennial and gen Z*
- 4 - *I think it's pretty right about my country's individualism*
- 5 - *I like National Cultural Compass. also I recommend them.*
- 6 - *I liked long term orientation part, but there can be segment if business is dependent on relationship based or task based*
- 7 - *it is easy to get information with using it. But i want to get much information through it.*
- 8 - *I like to use this one, but there are some limitation what could we learn.*
- 9 - *Attractive homepage Comparison Tool is helpful for anyone who interested in working/manage a cross-cultural team*
- 10 - *This class is little difficult for me to follow. But there are some useful information to write English and understand other culture for me.*
- 11 - *I'm wondering that the service helps business people because it is just based on average and they cannot apply for everyone.*
- 12 - *i liked this tool because it is easy to understand the other national culture through overall. and it is very helpful tool to know needs and customer"s tendency of different country*
- 13 - *It can help my understanding of my own country and other countries in terms of cross culture and intercultural communication. But I concern that it is also important to try to get knowledge of the causes such as history and geographical situation.*
- 14 - *It's pretty simple to use.*
- 15 - *It shows really clearly the differences between the countries. I also like the fact that you can have more information about the different countries.*
- 16 - *it doesnt give a clear idea but give a good general direction*
- 17 - *Just have a few countries and my country was not in the list*
- 18 - *it is easy to understand.*
- 19 - *I guess the gap would be the business people have heavier influence on the data when a culture can pertain to any body residing in the country*
- 20 - *I was particular surprised that National Cultural compass showed how different was the culture of every country in six different dimensions by showing the score*
- 21 - *It is very nice, that there is the possibility to compare up to 4 different countries.*

22 - *it is interesting to know each countries from various point of view.*

23 - *To compare with various countries is good. I like it.*

24 - *I liked long term orientation because I did not consider about it when I compare each countries.*

25 - *If it's possible, I want to know more detail. For example, why one country has higher number and another country has lower number.*

26 - *it doesn't show the detail of smaller areas*

27 - *When I was in Japan, I sometimes felt frustrated of people from other countries because they don't follow our rules. But I noticed that I could make local people irritated when I wan in other countries.*

28 - *liked*

29 - *I do not like party culture.and after that why don' t they put away what they used?*

30 - *I could understand easily, because the graph is compared by each country*

31 - *It is difficult to communicate with foreigner because of lack of language skill.*

On the whole these seem a fairly positive set of responses and comments although a few students did report some limitations. These were of the generic nature of the scores for each country as some larger nations have regional variations that the National Cultural Compass tool does not take into consideration.

Conclusions

The Business English Skills and Training (BEST) courses at Toyo University's Centre for Global Education and Exchange teaches Business English Communications type courses using these approaches and online resources. The courses themselves are of a challenge based learning / project based learning style and involve teamwork with students from many countries and usually involve interviewing external (from Toyo University) business people. So students have an opportunity to put these tools into real world practice.

As seen above the initial feedback from the students on our first semester using this approach was very positive as they found these apps and approaches novel and very useful as the results show. Over the next few years the program aims to do a more detailed longitudinal survey of the students and their reactions to these approaches to Business Communications as a way of further improving the course offerings.

Furthermore with the Olympics coming to Japan in 2020 there is currently a huge demand in Japan for intercultural and cross-cultural communication training. As shown above the vast majority of English language school (the so-called *eikaiwa*) and university English language classes are woefully unprepared to meet this demand. So there is a huge potential for growth in this area

Limitations

The initial work by Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner in the first edition of their book has itself been critiqued on cultural grounds by Hofstede as he has argued that the 7 dimensions they use are themselves culturally biased. Hofstede claims they were drawn from the work of researchers working in a narrow US context (Hofstede, 1996, p. 196). The work by Hofstede has some limiting factors. His Cultural Compass Tool aggregates some countries like England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales into composite constructs like the United Kingdom when each nation has separate and distinct cultures. Also large nations like the United States will also have very large regional deviations between cultural behaviour patterns between diverse and different areas like California, Hawaii, Montana, New York, and Texas for example. However this is not to say the two approaches are not without value as these tools do help Japanese business people and university students going outside Japan and / or working with non-Japanese people.

Another limitation of this particular research study is the relatively small number of respondents. The two classes only had a combined 48 students sign up, and 37 took part in the survey. Obviously these are not huge numbers but they were the test group available to me. So a larger longitudinal study should be done later to try and confirm the results.

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