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# The Connection Between Interculturality and Foreign Language Education

## A Comparison between Japan and the United States

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# Outline

- Significance of the Study
- Research Questions
- Research Background
- Research Method
- Research Findings
- Conclusion
- Limitations of Study
- Future Research
- References
- Acknowledgments

# Significance of the Study

- While studying in our **Service Learning class**, we learned how language can help connect you to other cultures, which in return helps to **promote equality and fairness**.
- We realized the importance of **Interculturality** when we studied abroad and wanted to know more about what **type of education** you received in America and Japan
- We would like to apply what we learn from our research to teaching.

# Research Questions

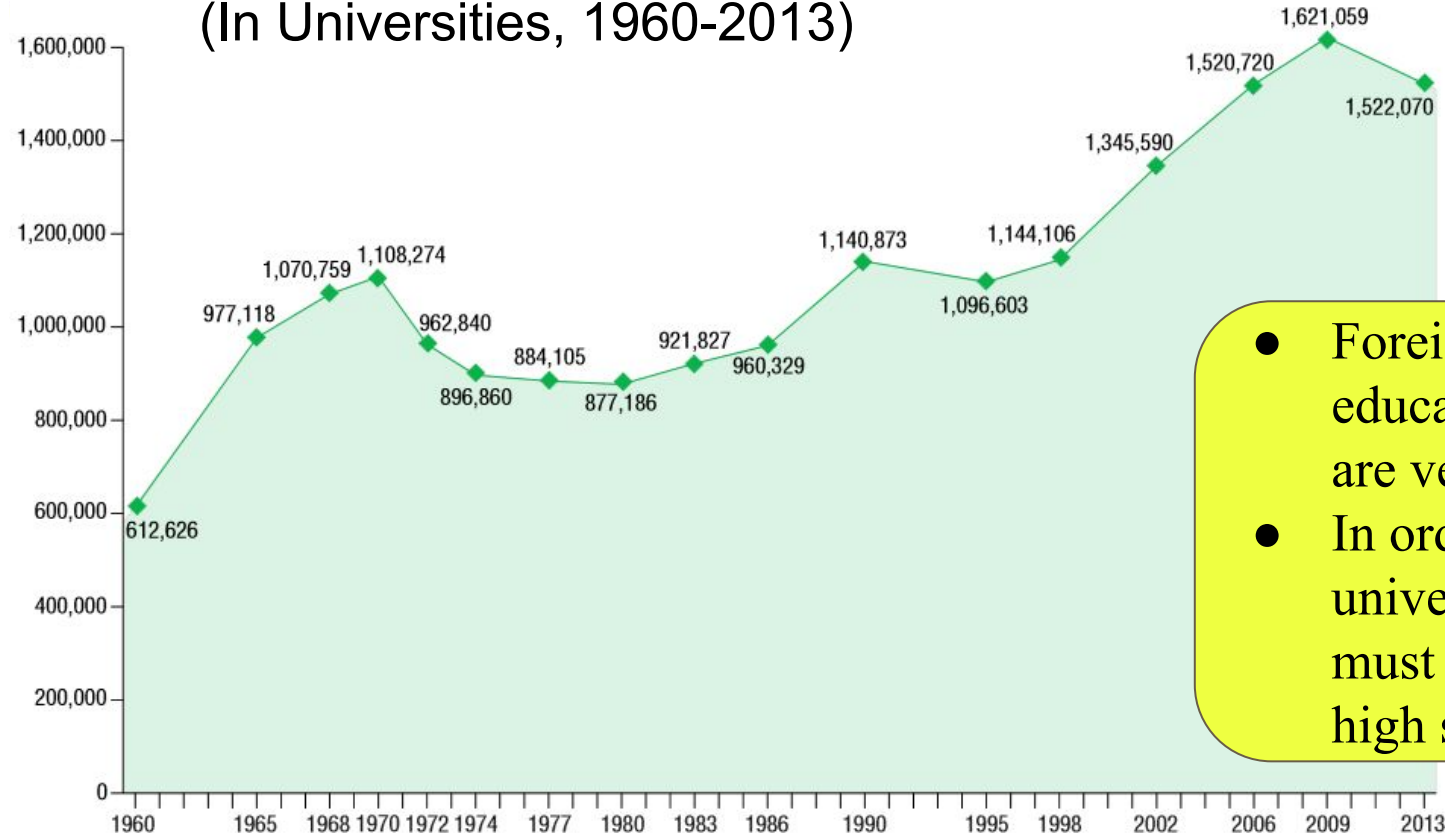
1. What are students' experiences with foreign language education?
2. To what extent are students gaining interculturality from foreign language education?
3. What role does foreign language education play in creating connections between students and multicultural/multilingual communities?

# Research Background Outline

- Foreign Language Enrollment Trends
- Study Abroad Trends
- Foreign Language Education Awareness
- Grammar Towards Communication
- Foreign Language Education (U.S. and Japan)
  - U.S. - World Readiness Standards
  - Japan - MEXT Action Plan
- Student Experiences
  - Anxiety
- Interculturality
  - Importance
  - In Foreign Language Classrooms

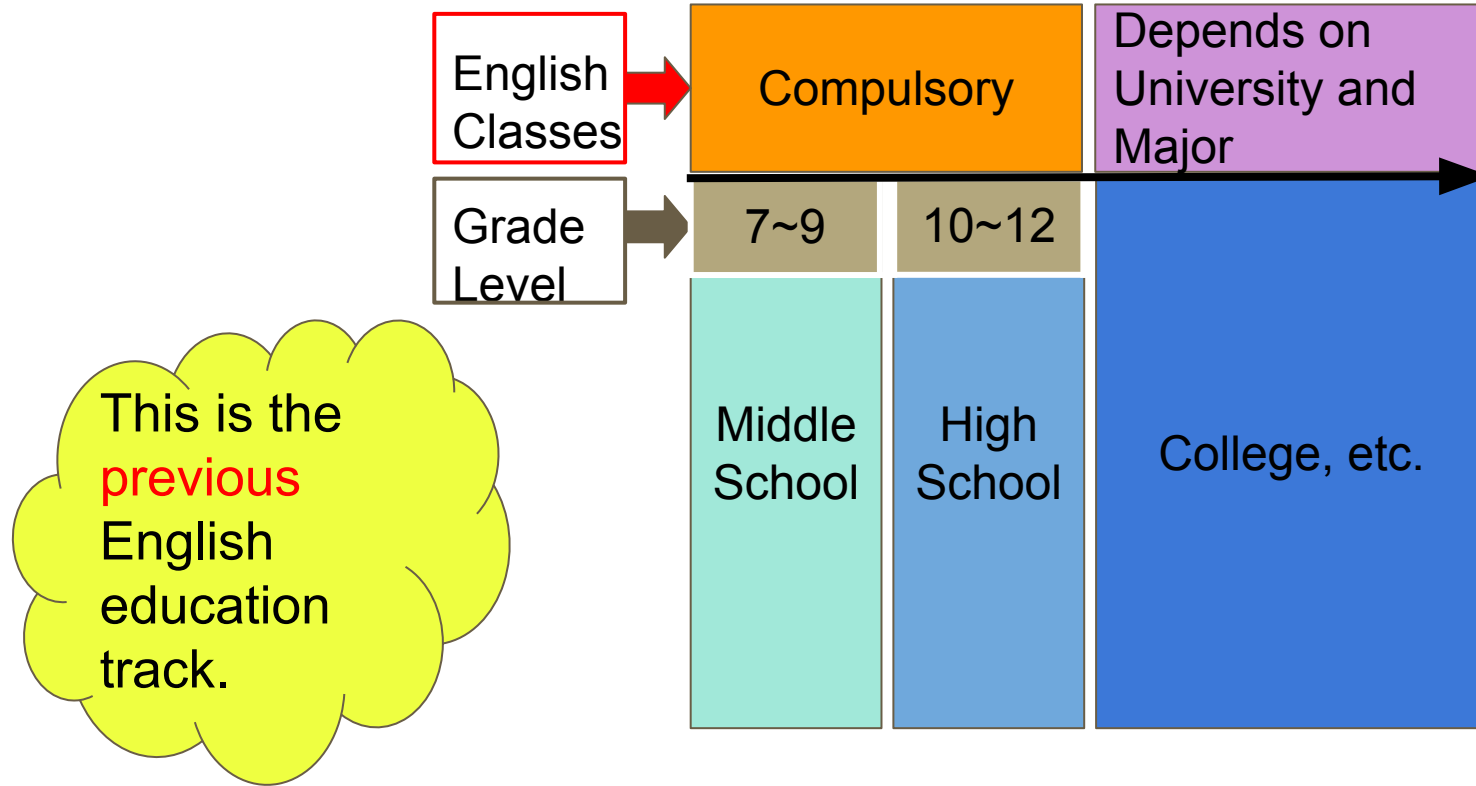
# Foreign Language Enrollment Trends - U.S.

(In Universities, 1960-2013)



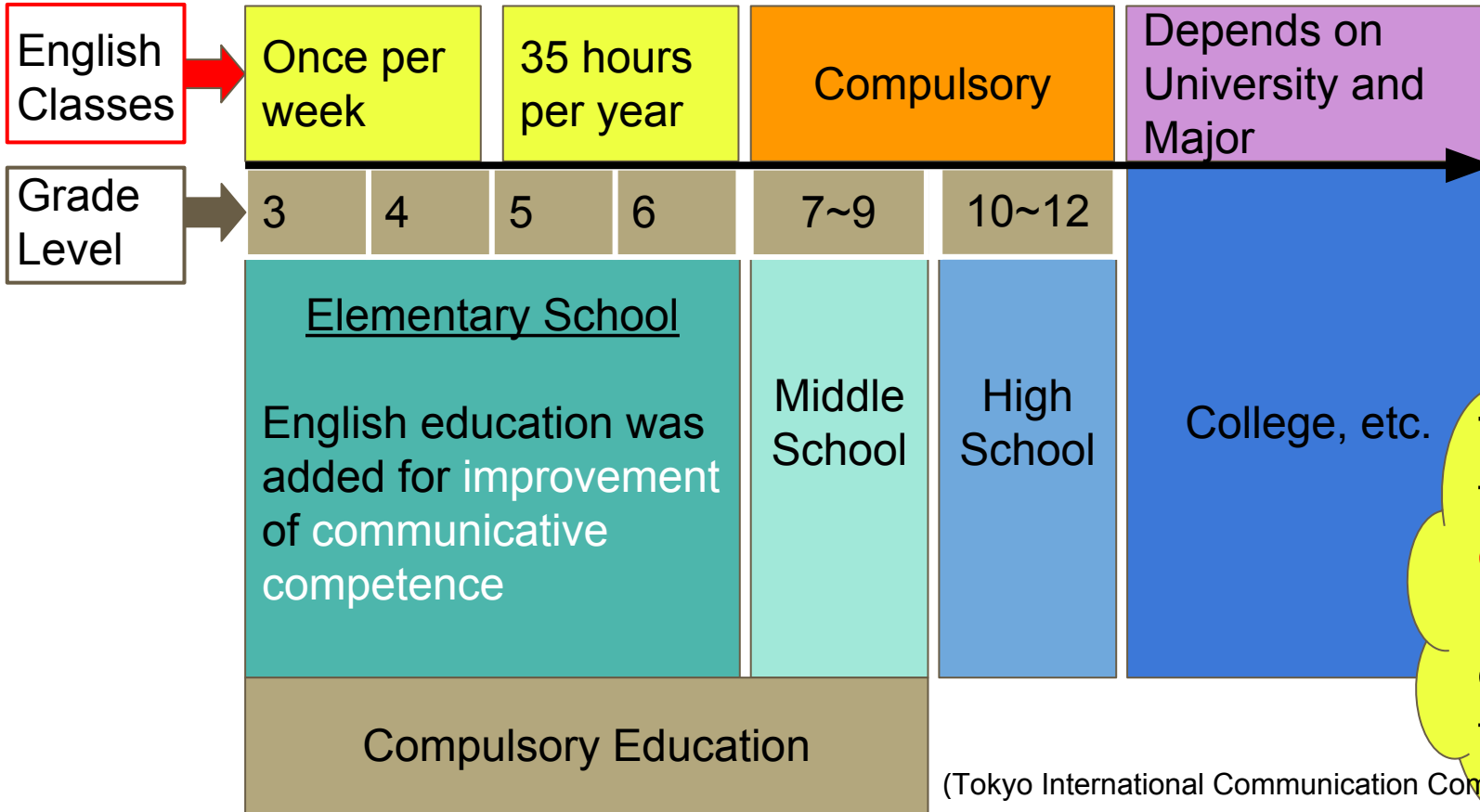
- Foreign language education requirements are very open ended
- In order to enter university, typically you must take 2 years in high school

# Foreign Language Enrollment Trends - Japan I.



(Tokyo International Communication Committee, 2016)

# Foreign Language Enrollment Trends - Japan II.

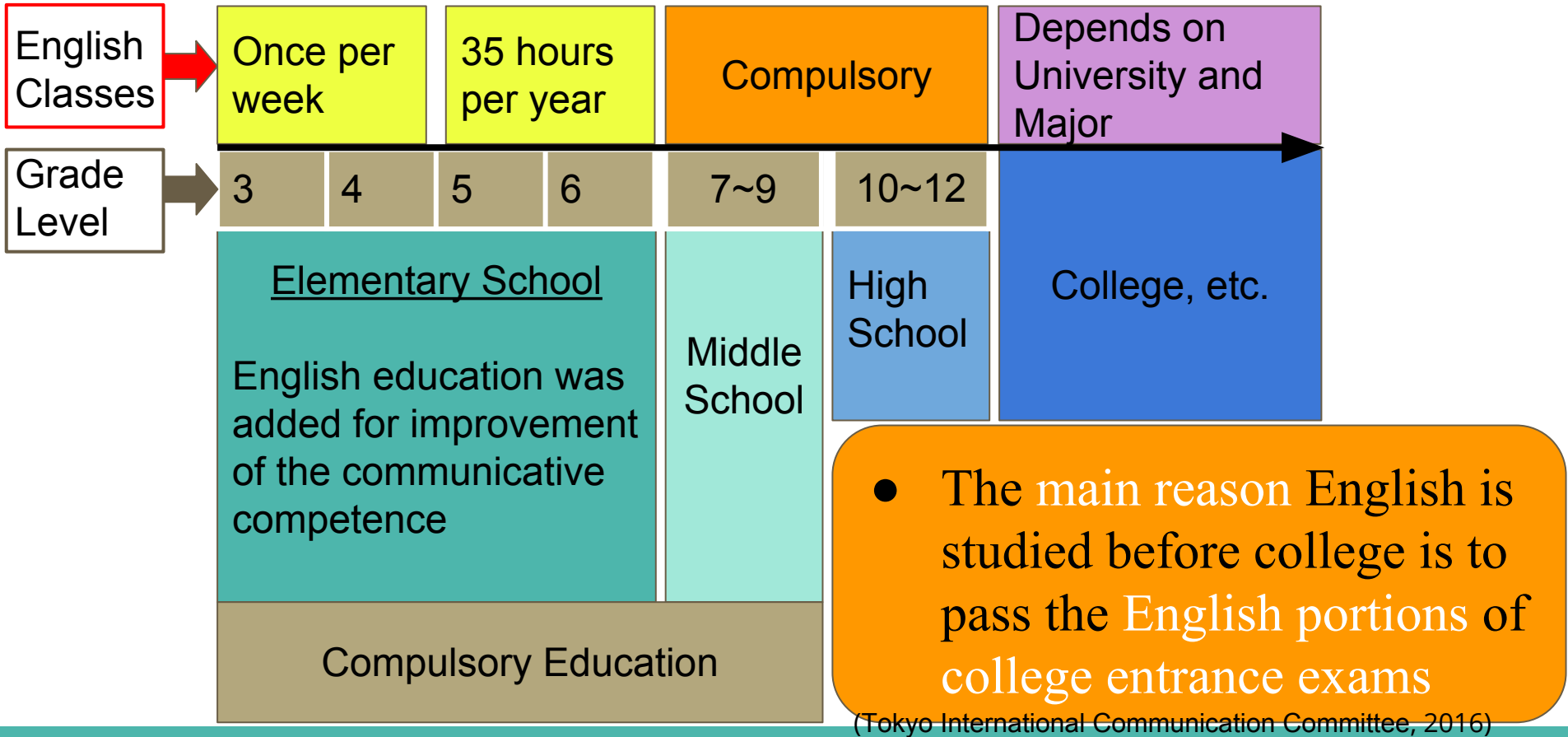


This is the **current** English education track.

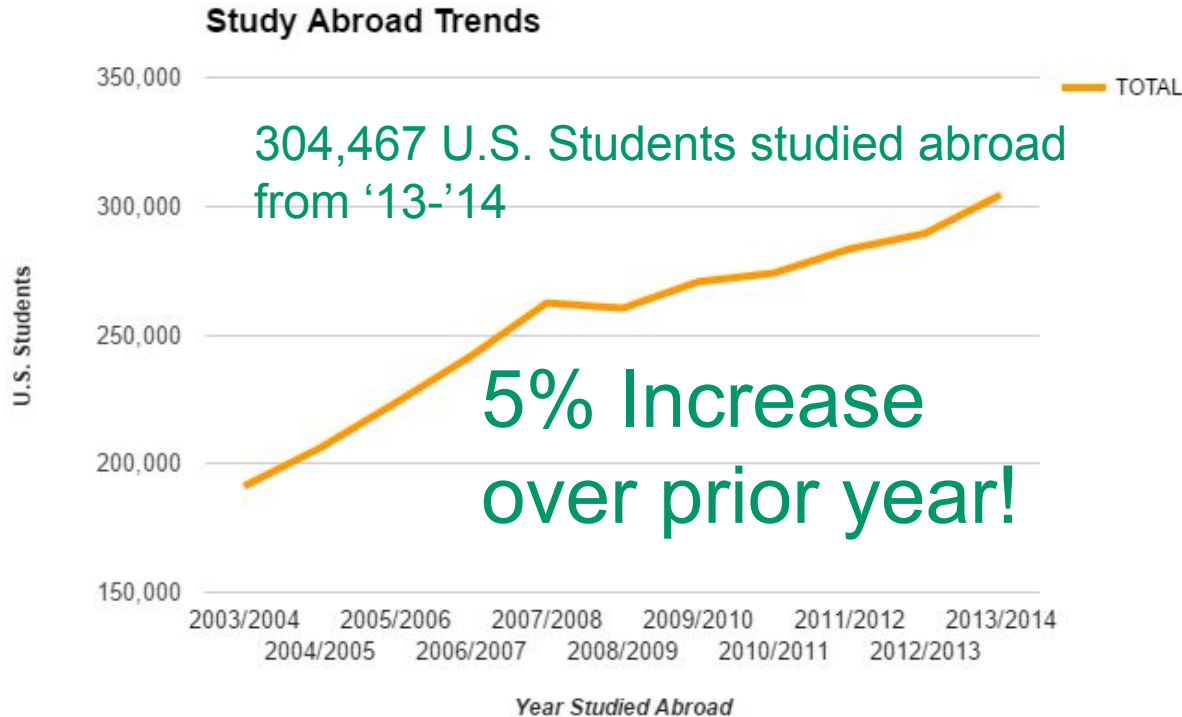
(Tokyo International Communication Committee, 2016)



# Foreign Language Enrollment Trends - Japan III.



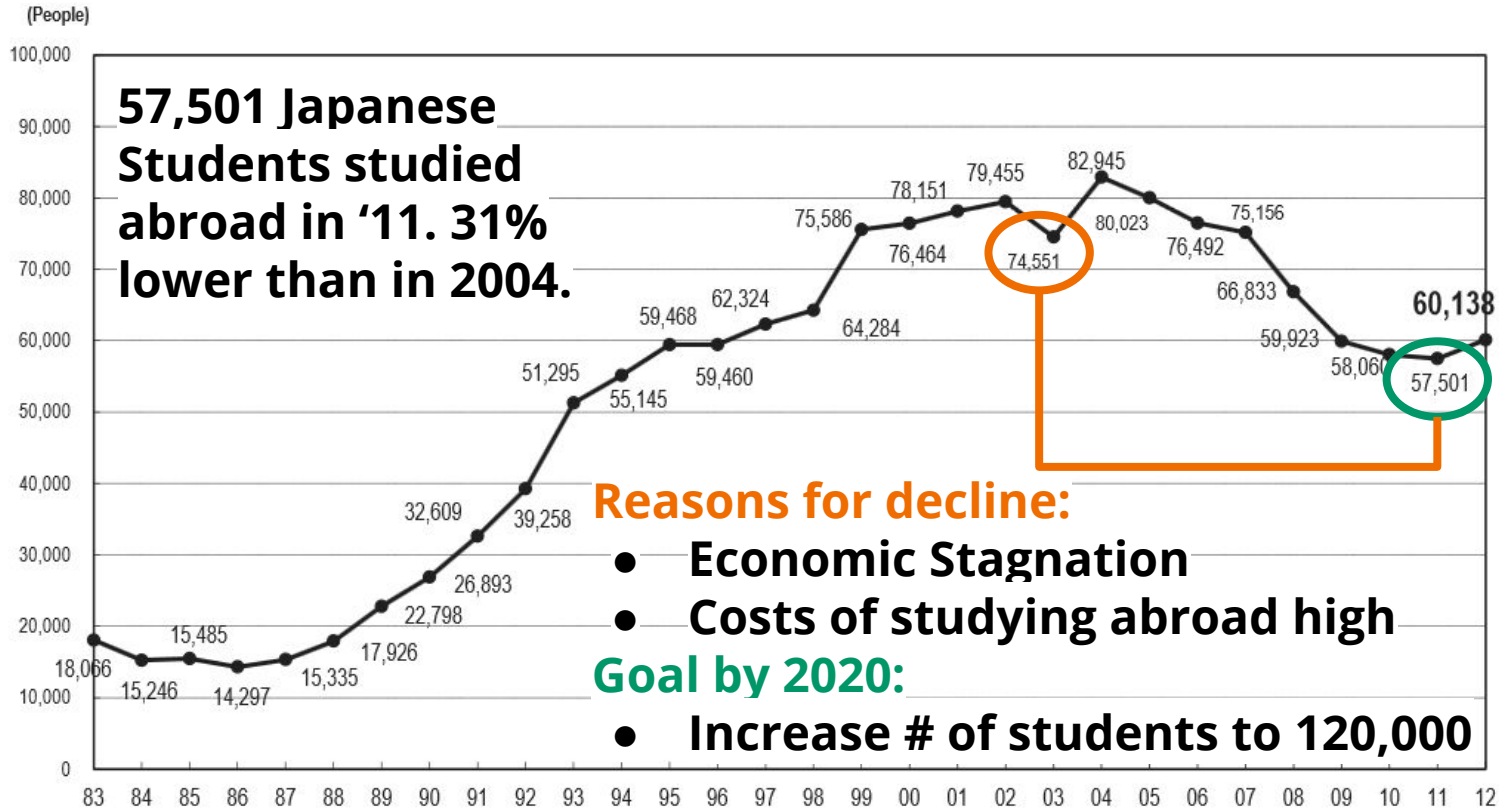
# Study Abroad Trends - U.S.



## Top 3 Goals

- Increase numbers to 600,000
- Expand Diversity
- Increase funding for scholarships

# Study Abroad Trends - Japan



(MEXT, 2015)

# Foreign Language Education Awareness - U.S.

**Opportunist**

**Dismissive**

1960s - 1980s

1980s - Present

**Recent renewed interest** in foreign language education.

Language as an opportunity to move up in the world.

Education system places little value on foreign languages and cultures.

(Ovando, 2003)

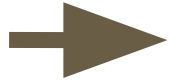
## Benefits:

- promotes tolerance and intercultural awareness.
- enhances global **economic competitiveness** and maintains national **security interests**.
- **increases** cognitive, academic, and problem-solving **abilities**.

(The Benefits of Second Language Study, 2007)

# Foreign Language Education Awareness - Japan I.

**1964**--Tokyo Olympics



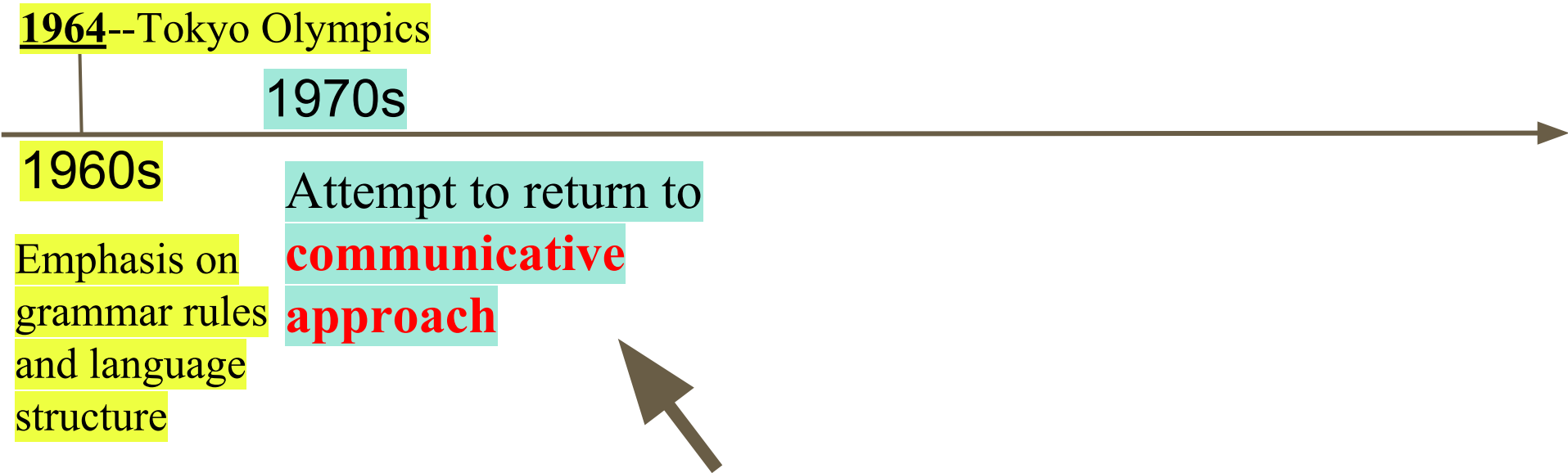
- **Lack** of Intercultural Communication
- Realization that Japanese **foreign language education** was **not working**



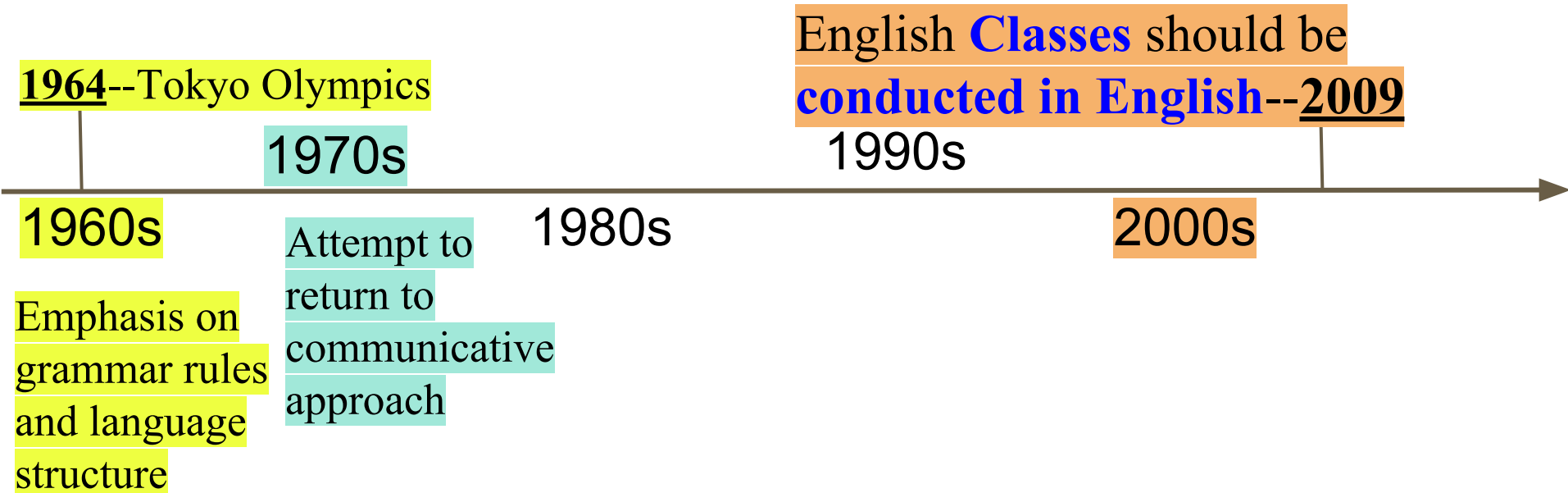
1960s

**Emphasis** on **grammar rules** and language structure

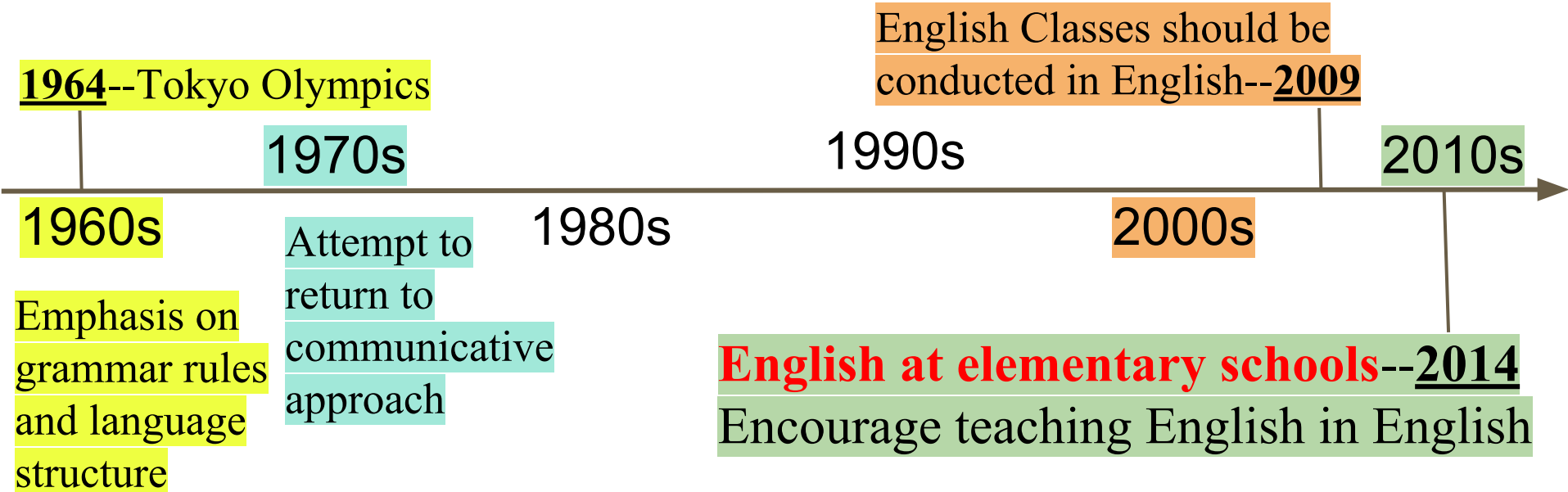
# Foreign Language Education Awareness - Japan II.



# Foreign Language Education Awareness - Japan IV.



# Foreign Language Education Awareness - Japan V.





# Grammar towards Communication - U.S. I.

1800-1960	1940-1960	1986	1960-2000	1996	2015-Present
Grammar Translation	Audio-Lingual	ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines	Communicative	National Standards	World Readiness Standards
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>-Memorization</li><li>-Translation</li><li>-<b>Grammar focused</b></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>-Pronunciation</li><li>-Memorization</li><li>-<b>Repetition</b></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>-<b>Proficiency Focused</b></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>-<b>Real-Life Tasks</b></li><li>-Authenticity</li><li>-Appeal to various learning styles</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>-<b>Communication</b></li><li>-Cultures</li><li>-Connections</li><li>-Comparisons</li><li>-Communities</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>-<b>Global Competency</b></li><li>-Common Core</li><li>-21st Century Skills</li><li>-Interculturality</li></ul>

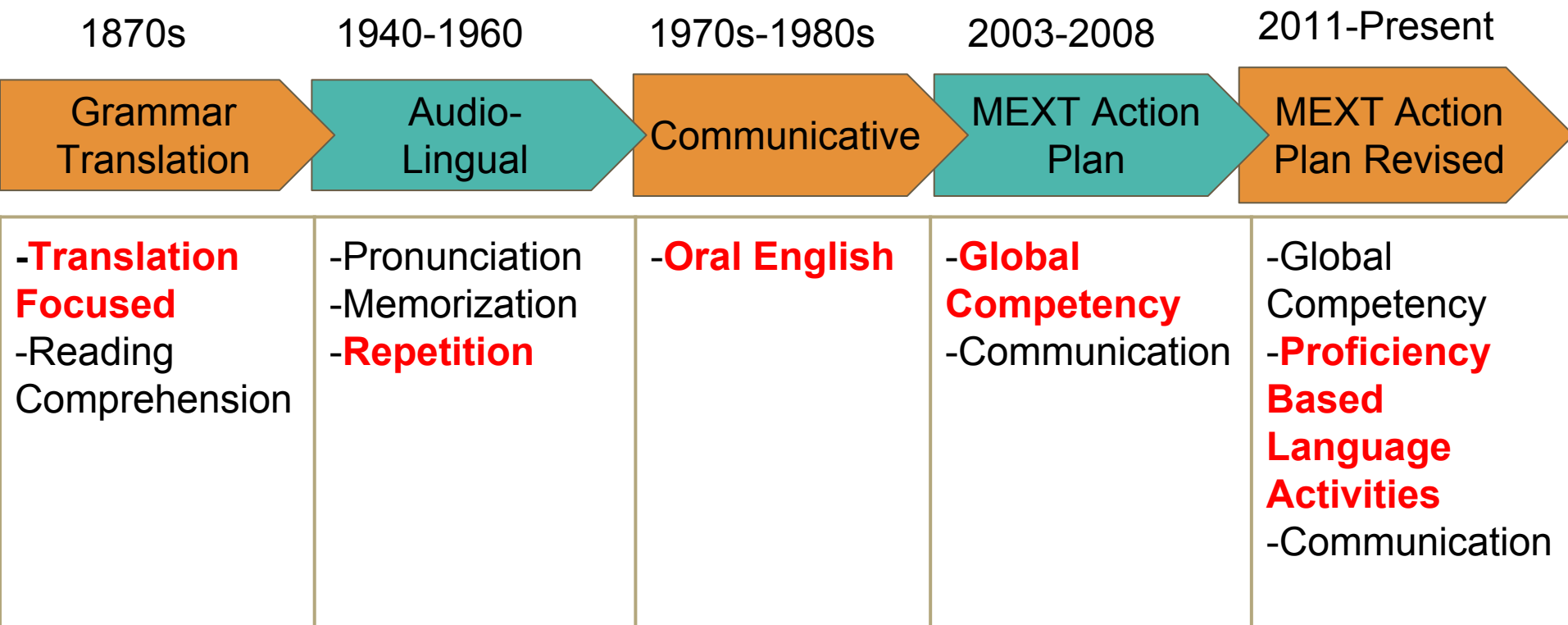
(Wells et al., 2013)

# Grammar towards Communication - U.S. II.

1800-1960	1940-1960	1986	1960-2000	1996	2015-Present
<b>Grammar Translation</b>	<b>Audio-Lingual</b>	<b>ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines</b>	<b>Communicative</b>	<b>National Standards</b>	<b>World Readiness Standards</b>
-Memorization -Translation -Grammar focused	-Pronunciation -Memorization -Repetition	-Proficiency Focused	-Real-Life Tasks -Authenticity -Appeal to various learning styles	-Communication -Cultures -Connections -Comparisons -Communities	-Global Competency -Common Core -21st Century Skills -Interculturality

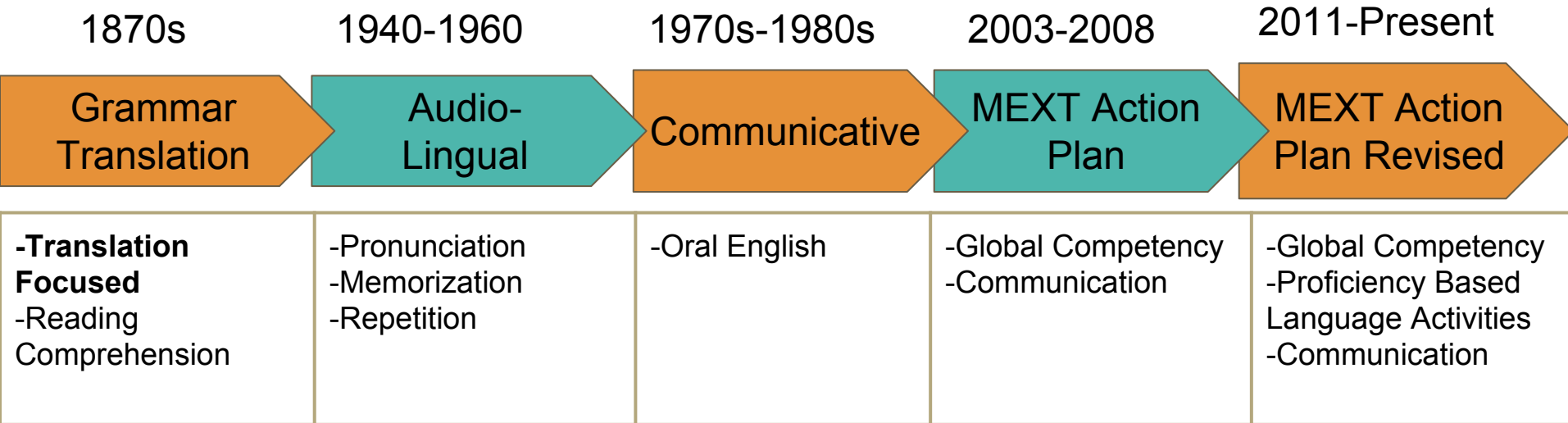
- Advanced Placement Testing (AP)
  - **Global Perspectives & Competencies**
  - Includes speaking and listening portions
  - Given to high schoolers who take it voluntarily

# Grammar towards Communication - Japan I.



(Shimizu, 2010)

# Grammar towards Communication - Japan II.



Still focus on....

- 4 Skills: Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking
- **College Entrance Exams**

# Foreign Language Education Standards - U.S.

## World Readiness Standards

Goal: To prepare learners to apply the skills and understandings measured by the standards to bring a **global competence** to their future careers and experiences.

(World Readiness Standards 2014)

- **Three Modes of Communication**
  - Interpersonal, Interpretive and Presentational
- **Common Core Standards**
  - Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking
- **ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines**
  - Novice, Intermediate, and Advanced
- **21st Century Skills**
- **Interculturality**

(The National Standards Collaborative Board 2015)

# World Readiness National Standards - U.S.



## The 5 Cs:

**Communication-** **Communicate effectively** in Language other than English

**Cultures-** Interact with **cultural competence** and understanding

**Connections-**Acquiring information and **diverse perspectives**

**Comparisons** – **Develop Insight** into the Nature of Language and Culture

**Communities** – **Participate in Multilingual communities** at Home and Around the World

(The National Standards Collaborative Board, 2015)

# Foreign Language Education Standards - Japan

- **MEXT Strategic Action Plan**

- Objective: **Obtain** the **world's understanding** and **trust**, while enhancing our **international presence** and further **develop our nation**.

(MEXT 2003)

- Guidelines:

- **Compulsory** Foreign Language **Communication Activities**
  - Taught by Homeroom teacher
- Increased classroom hours
  - 105 to 140 hours
- Four Skills
  - Reading, Writing, Listening, and Speaking
- **Immersion classes** in High School

(Tahira, 2012)

# Student Experiences - Anxiety

- **Communication Apprehension**
  - Type of shyness characterized by **fear of** or **anxiety** about **communicating with people**
- **Test Anxiety**
  - Type of performance anxiety stemming from **fear of failure**
- **Fear of Negative Evaluation**
  - Apprehension about **others' evaluations**



# Student Experiences - Anxiety in the U.S. & Japan

These are the **most common anxiety experiences** American and Japanese students deal with.

## America

- Making **errors** in **pronunciation**
- Certain **tests** are viewed differently
- **Speaking in front of peers**

## Japan

- **Misunderstand Cultural Rules**
- Pressure to do well on **tests**
- **Making mistakes in front of peers**

# Importance of Interculturality I.

“Interculturality is the **interaction** of people from **different cultural backgrounds** using **authentic language** appropriately in a way that **demonstrates knowledge** and **understanding** of the cultures.”

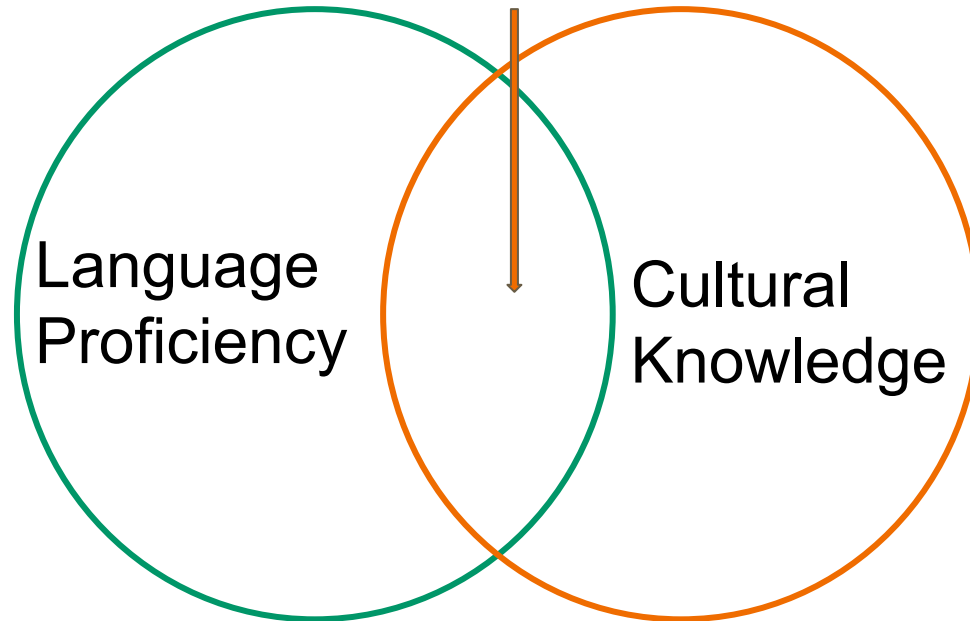
(Rollings-Carter, 2010)



(Terrill, 2014)

# Interculturality

Interculturality



# Interculturality in Foreign Language Classrooms

- Teaching interculturality in the classroom is good. However...

The **best** ways to learn interculturality are...

Studying Abroad

Interaction with  
**multicultural/  
multilingual  
communities**

Eg.  
Volunteering,  
attending  
festivals,  
Writing to a  
pen pal

# Research Method

## Study Participants: 64 University Students

- 34 Japanese University Students
  - 16 Male, 17 Female, 1 Other
- 30 American University Students
  - 13 Male, 16 Female, 1 Other

## Research Instrument

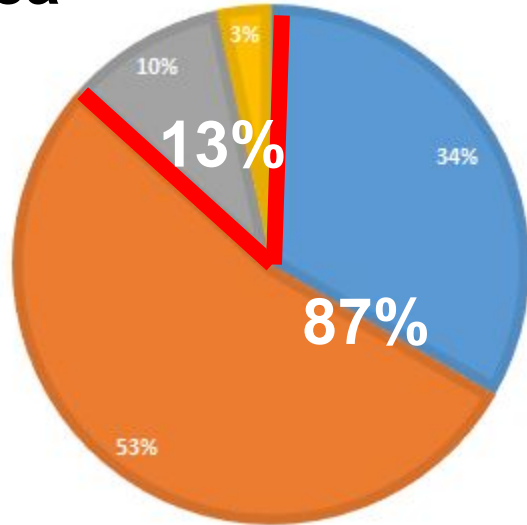
- Online Survey (English, Japanese)
  - [Google Form \(English\)](#)
  - [Google Form \(Japanese\)](#)

# Research Question 1 Findings

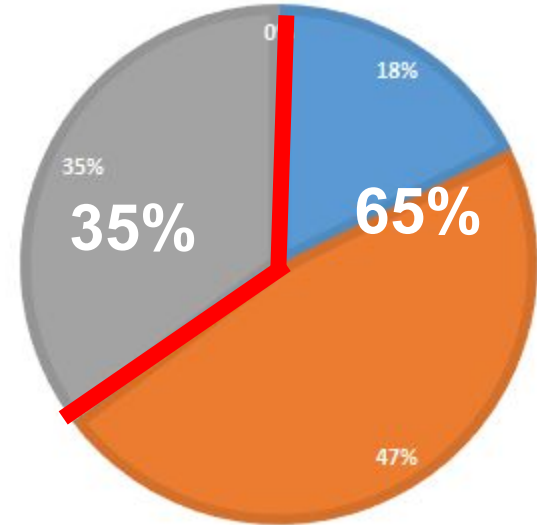
**What are students' experiences with foreign language education?**

# Experiences with Foreign Language Education

## America



## Japan



Very Positive

Positive

Negative

Very Negative

About 90% of American students and 65% of Japanese students reported a positive experience with their foreign language education. However, over 30% of Japanese students reported a negative experience.

# Responses-America

## Positive

“My **teachers** have all been genuinely **happy** to teach the language, and as a result I felt less pressure in learning. Instead of language being just another class, I actually **enjoy learning**. ”  
(Female 20-22 years old)

## Negative

“The first two years I spent learning Spanish it was **taught by people who didn't understand it** any better than I did.”  
(Male 20-22 years old)



# Responses-Japan

## Positive

“Middle and high school English class was mostly grammar and reading, it wasn't fun, but **University English class** we do **conversation**, so it is **fun/interesting**. ”

(Female 20-22 years old)

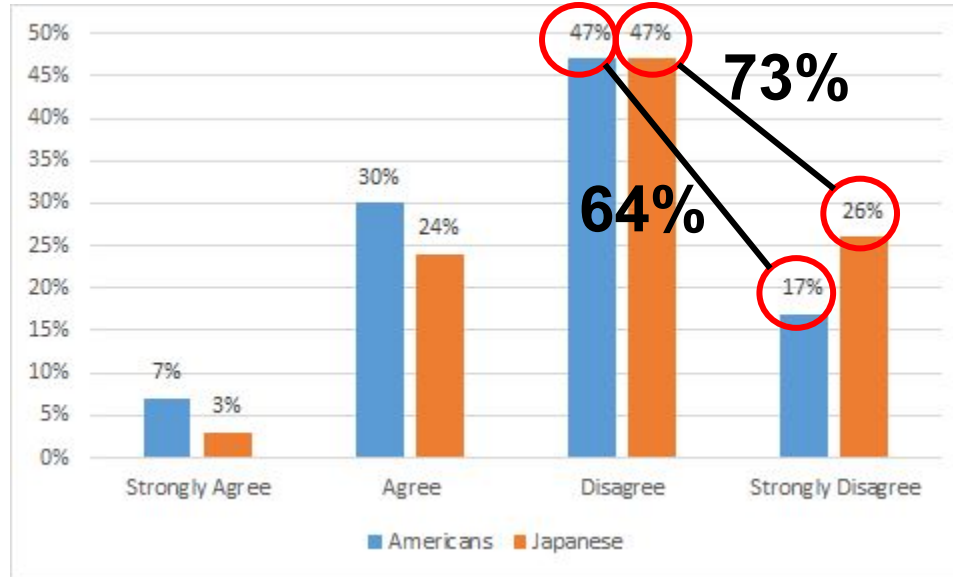
## Negative

“Boring. **Only grammar**, only **one way**-teacher **lectures** only **teacher** is bored too, not passionate, **not excited**. ”

(Female 20-22 years old)

# Fear of Negative Evaluation-Teachers

“I am afraid my language teacher will correct my mistakes.”



America

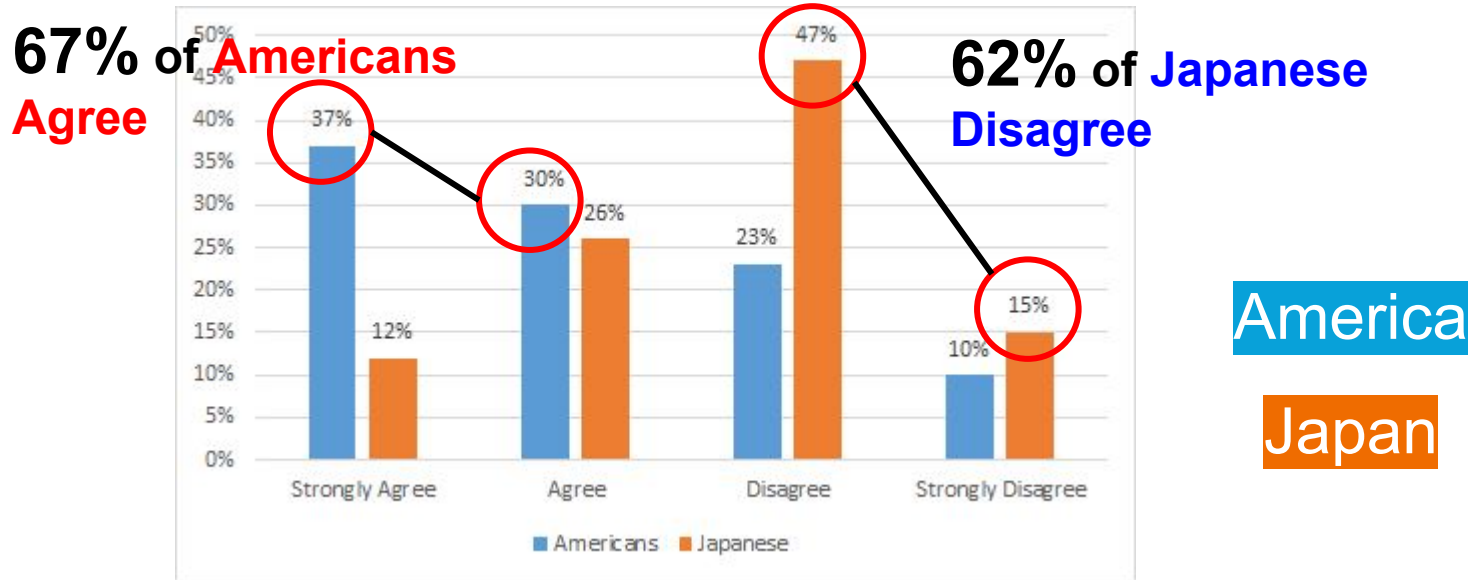
Japan

American and Japanese **equally Disagree**

In general, American and Japanese students weren't afraid of teachers correcting their mistakes.

# Fear of Negative Evaluation-Peers

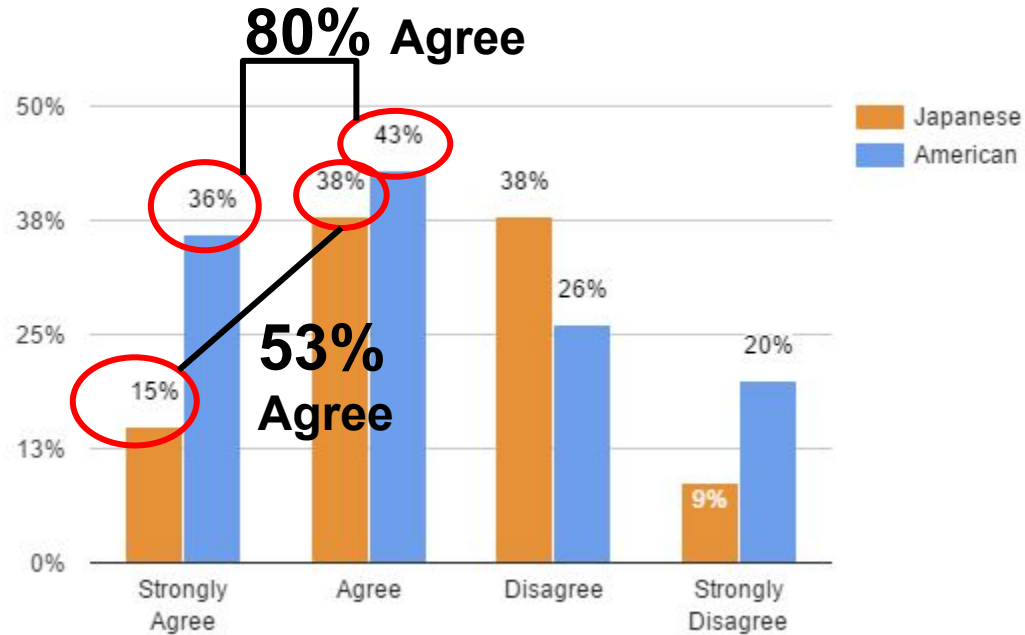
“I feel other students are always better than me.”



67% of Americans agree that they feel other students are always better than them, compared with the 62% of Japanese students who disagree.

# Test Anxiety

“I feel under a lot of pressure to get good grades on tests.”



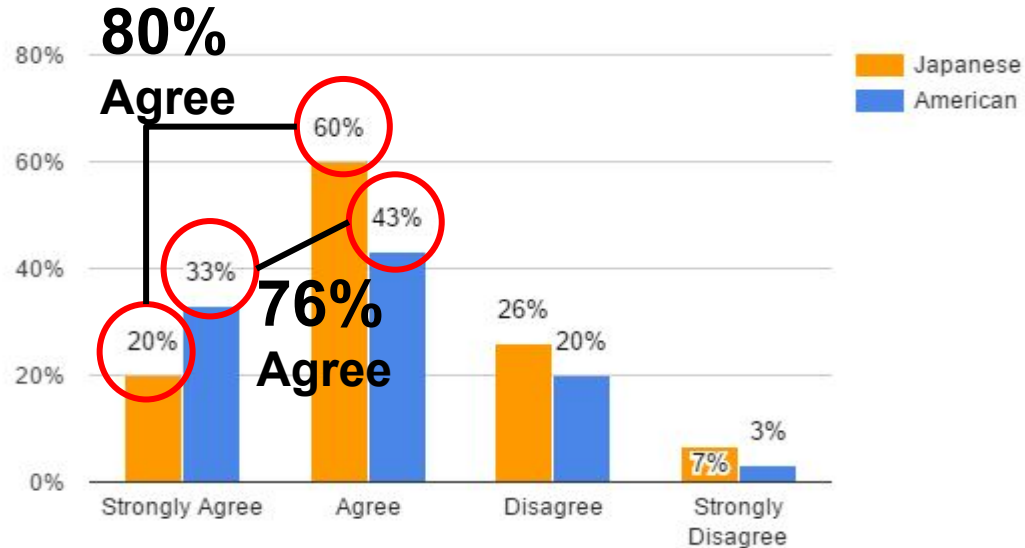
America

Japan

80% of American students feel under a lot of pressure to get good grades on tests, in comparison with 53% of Japanese students.

# Communication Apprehension

“I panic when I have to **speak** without preparation in class.”

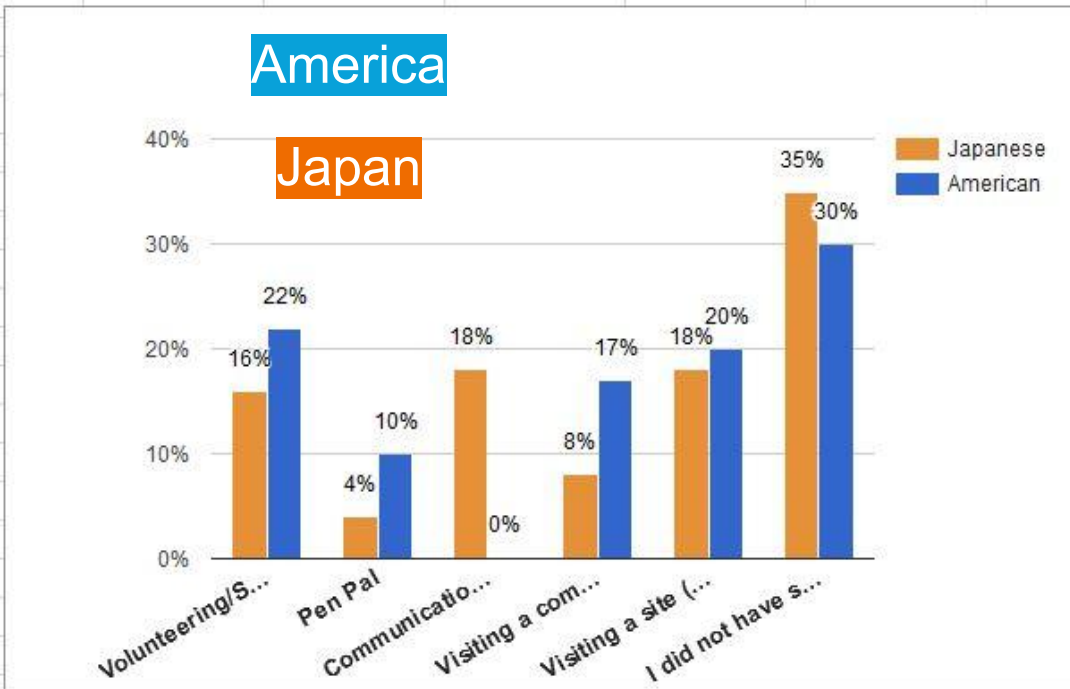


America

Japan

80% of Japanese students and 76% of American students stated they panic when they have to speak without preparation in class.

# Were there projects or experiences in your language class that connected you to a multicultural community?



Such as....

- Volunteering/Service Learning
- Pen Pal
- Communication with an international Sister-school
- Visiting a community event of target culture (ex. a festival)
- Visiting a site (ex. target culture restaurant)
- I did not have such a project/experience

70% of Americans and 65% of Japanese have participated or experienced a project that has connected them to one or more areas.

# Summary of Findings - Research Question 1

- **American students** had a **more positive experience** with learning a foreign language compared with Japanese students
  - Americans positive reason: **Good Teachers**
  - Japanese positive reason: Teachers were **native speakers** of target language; Participated in conservation activities in class
    - Japanese negative reason: Class was focused on writing, reading and listening, but **little emphasis on speaking**.
- In general, **American students** experienced **more anxiety** regarding their foreign language education than Japanese students, except in the case of speaking without preparation in class, when it was about the same.
- It is also notable, and surprising, that **Japanese and American** students reported **projects and experiences** in their foreign language classes that **connected** them to **multicultural communities** in near **equal numbers**.

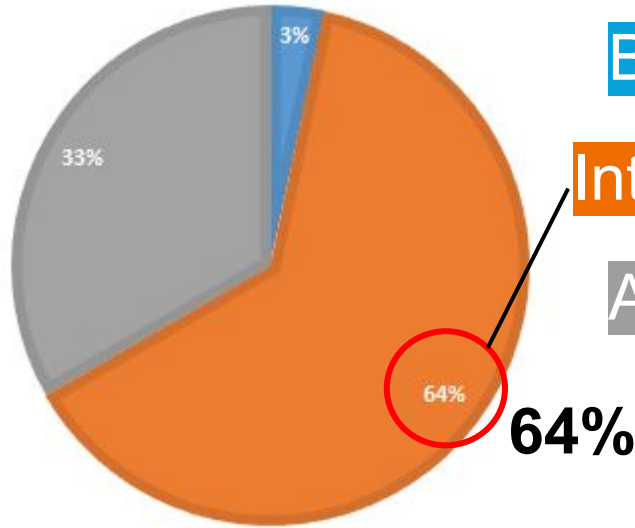
# Research Question 2 Findings

To what extent are students gaining interculturality from foreign language education?

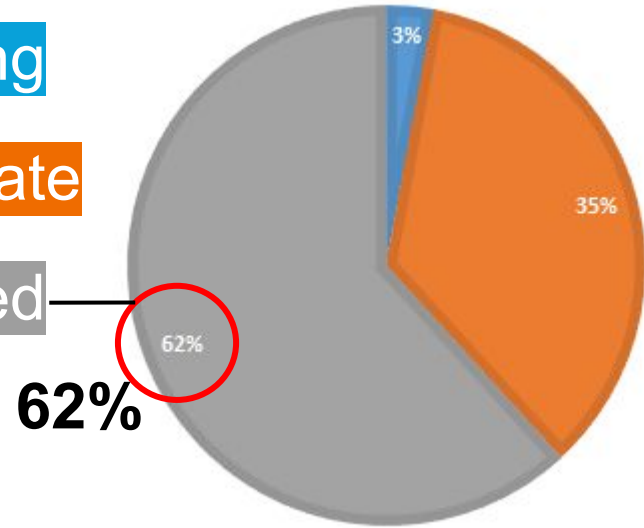


# What is the highest level of foreign language class you have taken in your home country?

## America



## Japan

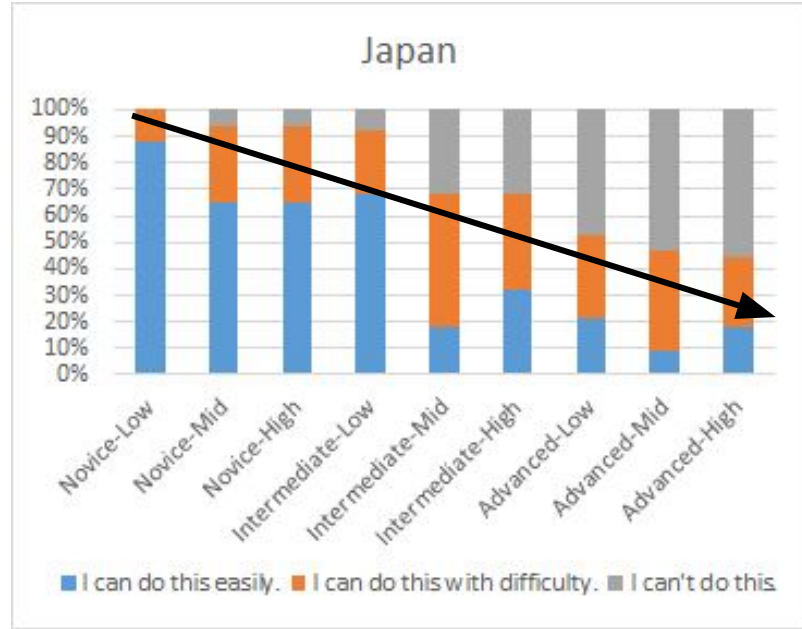
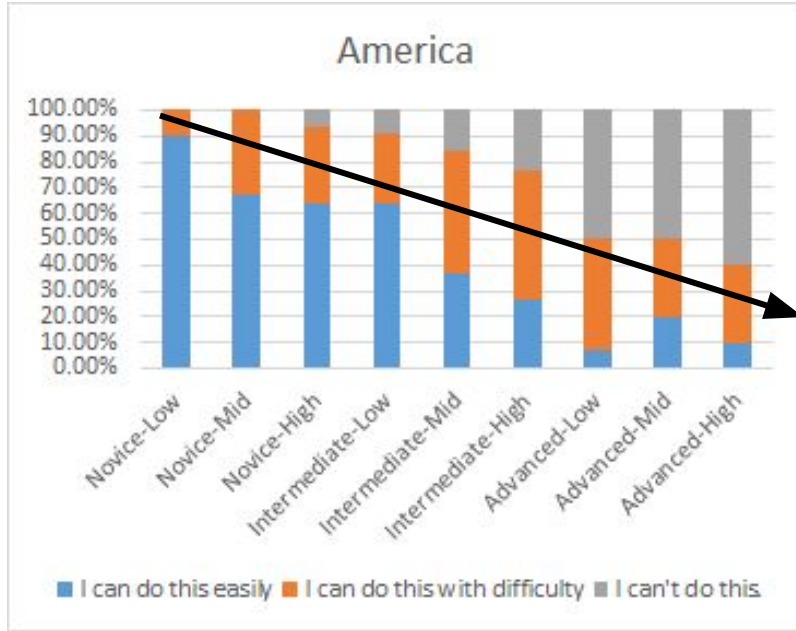


The majority of American students had taken up through Intermediate level classes, while the majority of Japanese students had taken up through Advanced level classes.

# Language Proficiency

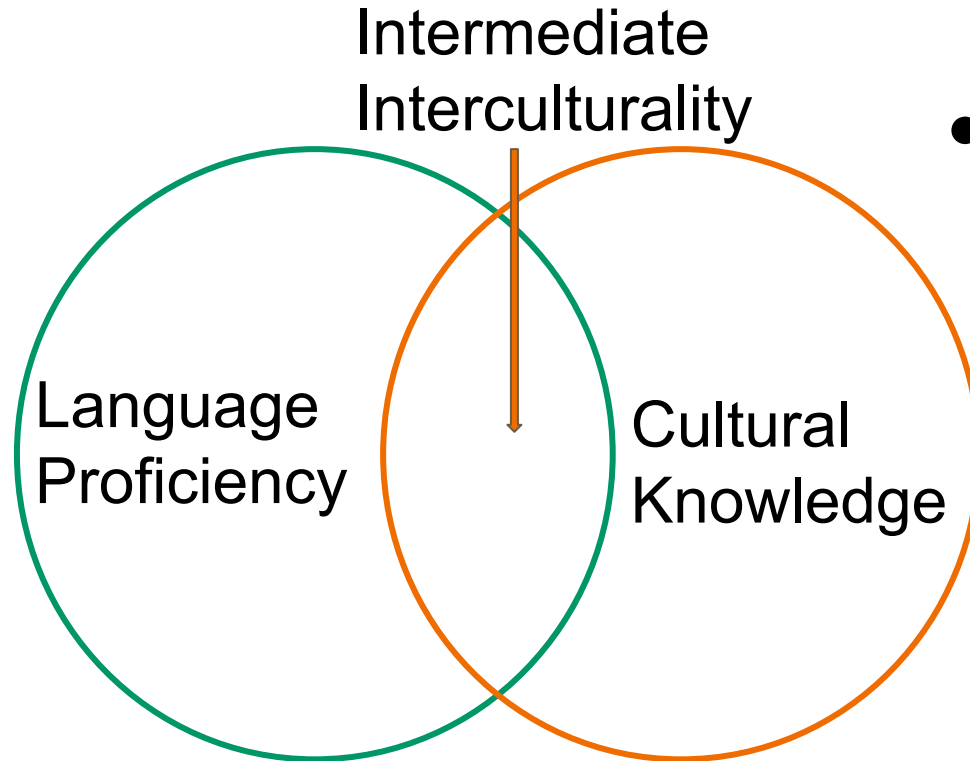
- In our survey we **only asked about interpersonal communication proficiency**.
- The question included scenarios that increased in difficulty from novice to advanced level.
- These scenarios were based on ACTFL Can-do Statements used for self evaluation
- In Japan and America, Can-do Statements are used as self-evaluation tools for students and for teachers as a checklist of skills to build upon each term.

# Language Proficiency



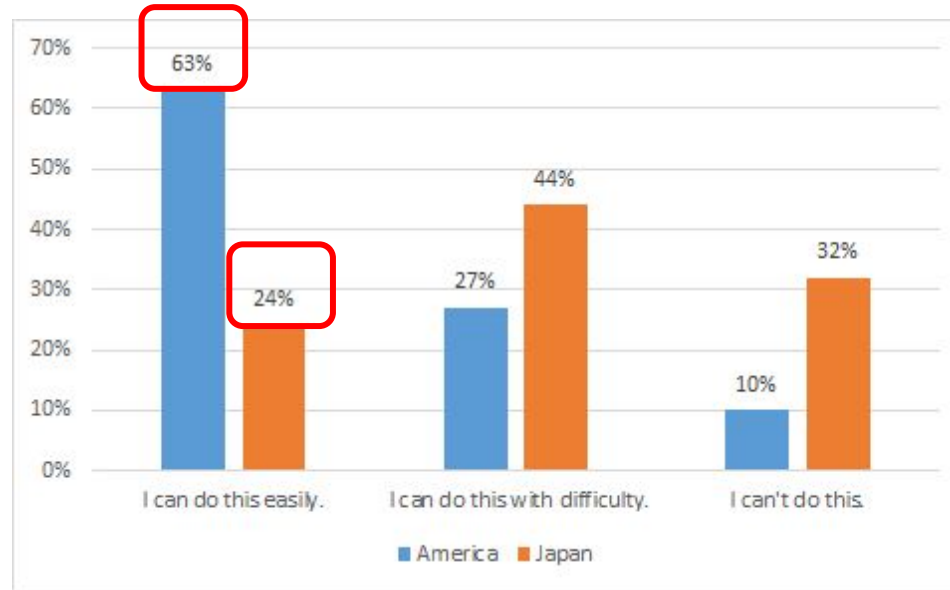
American and Japanese students showed a similar language proficiency.

# Interculturality



- We **only tested** for an **intermediate level** of interculturality.

## I can usually accept and refuse invitations in a culturally accepted way.

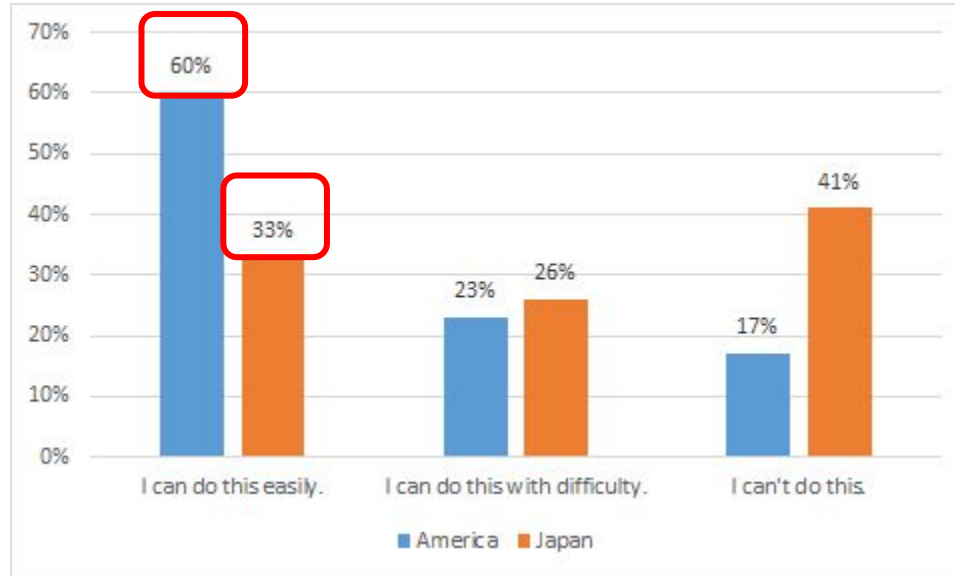


America

Japan

**Americans were much more confident** in their ability to interact with other cultures using their language abilities regarding accepting and refusing invitations.

## I can usually offer and receive gifts in a culturally accepted way.

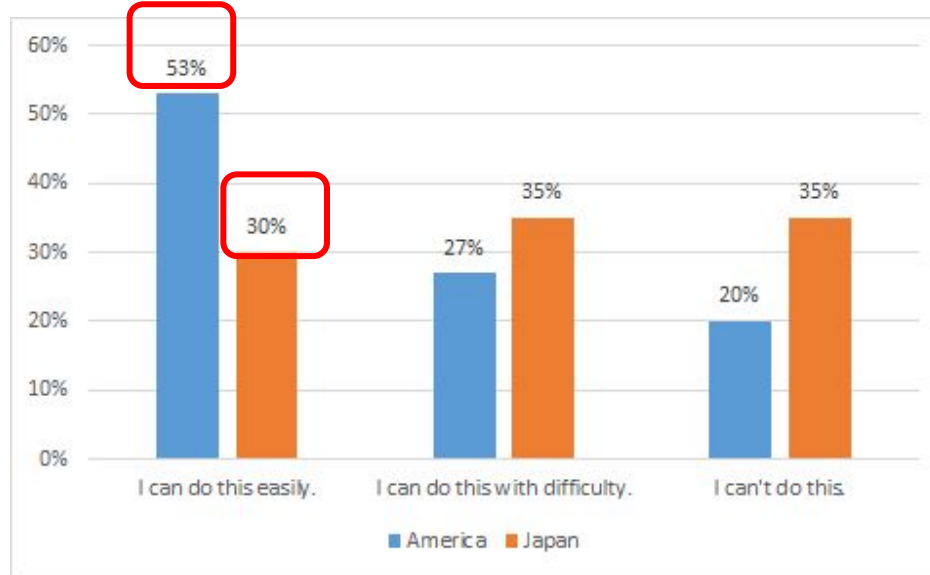


America

Japan

**Americans were much more confident** in their ability to interact with other cultures using their language abilities regarding offering and receiving gifts.

I can use some appropriate cultural conventions such as body language, turn-taking, interrupting, agreeing, etc. when talking with others.

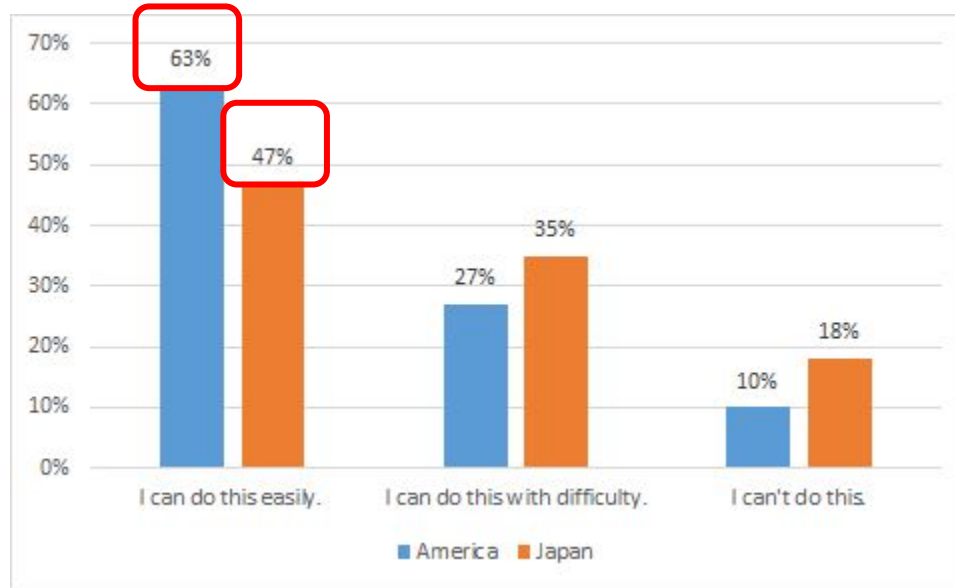


America

Japan

**Americans were much more confident** in their ability to interact with other cultures using their language abilities regarding body language, turn-taking, interrupting, agreeing, etc.

“I can respond in a culturally accepted way when someone sneezes, toasts, or pays me a compliment.”



America

Japan

**Americans were much more confident** in their ability to interact with other cultures using their language abilities regarding responding to sneezes, toasts, and compliments.



# Summary of Findings - Research Question 2

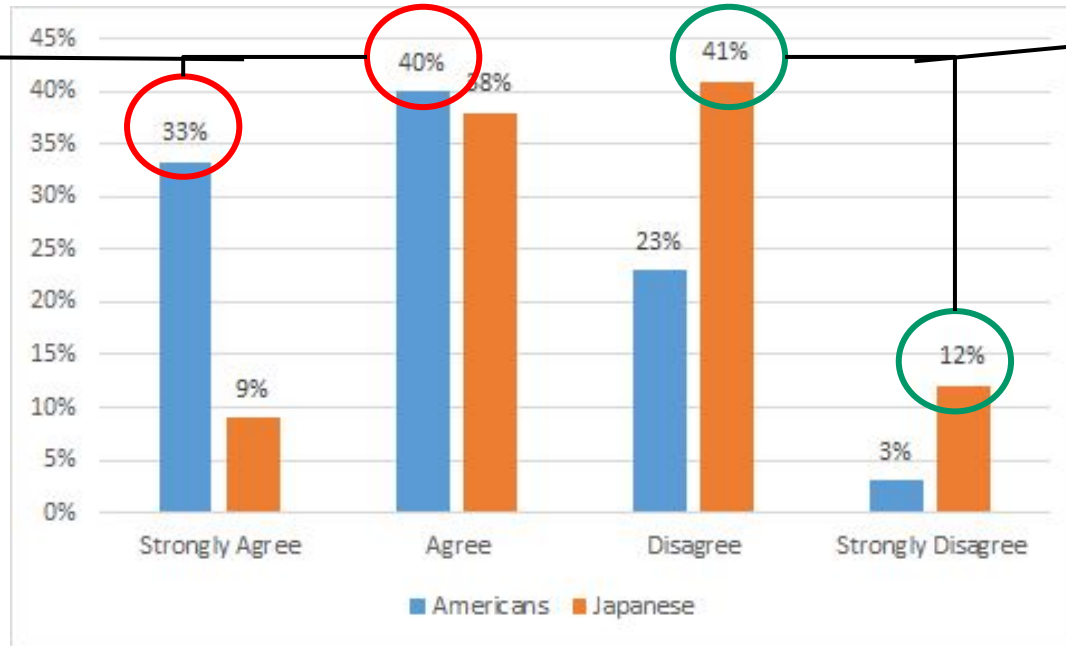
- Though the American and Japanese students showed **similar interpersonal language proficiency** the majority of **Japanese students** had taken up to **advanced level classes**, while the majority of **American students** had only taken up through **intermediate level classes**.
- This backs up our Literature Review showing that **foreign language classes in Japan** still **do not emphasize interpersonal communication** ability.
  - As we saw that **Japanese students are less confident in their interculturality**, this **lack of emphasis** likely **harms** students' **abilities to use their language** in appropriate ways **in real world settings**.

# Research Question 3 Analysis

What role does foreign language education play in creating connections between students and multicultural/multilingual communities?

# Foreign language education has connected you to a multicultural community.

**73% of American students Agree**



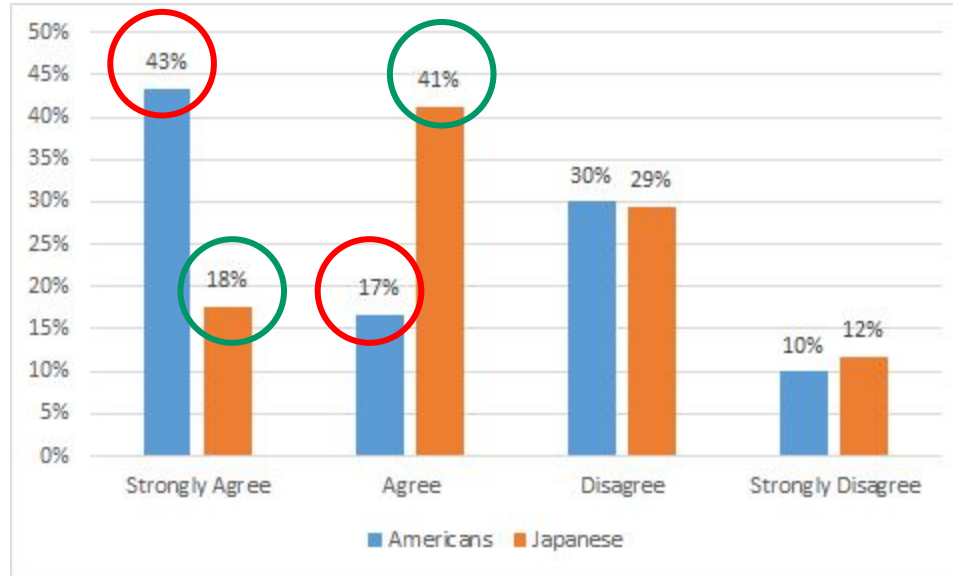
**53% of Japanese students Disagree**

**America**

**Japan**

73% of Americans agree that their foreign language education has connected them to a multicultural community, while 53% of Japanese students disagree that they have been connected to a multicultural community.

# Foreign language education has helped you create relationships with native speakers of the language.

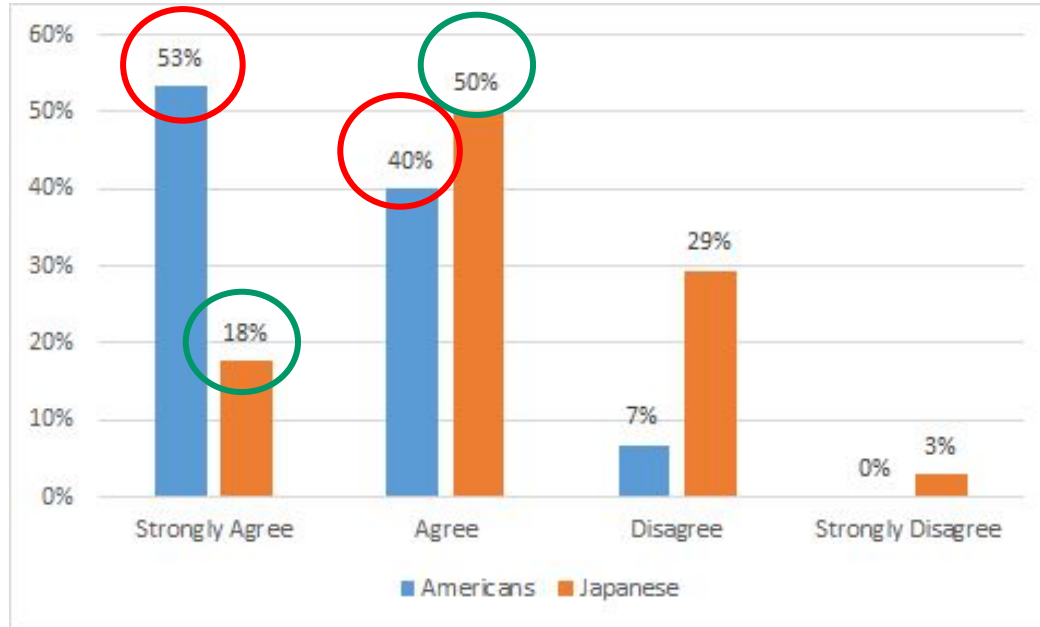


America

Japan

**60% of American students** and **59% of Japanese students agree** that foreign language education has helped them create relationships with native speakers of the language, though **American students more strongly agreed.**

# Foreign language education has made you more understanding and accepting of other people and cultures.



America

Japan

**93% of Americans agree** that foreign language education had made them more understanding and accepting of other peoples and cultures, as opposed to the **68% of Japanese who agree**.

# Summary of Findings - Research Question 3

- **Most Americans agreed** that they had been **connected** to a **multicultural community** through foreign language education, while **only half of the Japanese students agreed**.
- **Both American and Japanese** students felt they had been **able to create relationships** with **native speakers** in equal numbers, though Americans felt more strongly connected.
  - This is possibly because **foreign language** does **open** up the **door for communication**, and the students we surveyed typically attended universities with **strong study abroad programs**.
- However, while only 7% of Americans disagreed that **foreign language** education has made them **more accepting and understanding** of other cultures, **32% of Japanese disagreed**.
  - The lower level of agreement among Japanese is possibly because, as indicated in our literature review, **Japanese foreign language classes** are typically more **rigidly structured** and **grammar focused**, often **not emphasizing culture and communication**.

# Conclusion I.

- It seems that **American** students have **higher confidence** in their **interculturality** than Japanese students **due to** more **enthusiastic teachers**, a greater emphasis on **teaching culture and interpersonal communication**, and **stronger connections** with **multicultural communities** and **native speakers** of their target languages.
- We also found that **language anxiety does not** necessarily **impact** students' **overall positive or negative experience** with their foreign language education. Rather, **teachers** and **course content** are typically the **deciding factors**.

# Conclusion II.

- Though **Japanese and Americans** reported near **equal numbers of projects** and experiences that **connected** them to **multicultural communities** through their classes, **Americans** still feel **more connected** to **multicultural communities**.
  - Possibly because **America**, as a more **heterogeneous country**, has more opportunities for **immersive experiences**.
- Therefore, **class experiences** and **interculturality** can be **improved by**:
  1. Creating many **immersive opportunities** inside and outside classes to connect with **multicultural** and **multilingual communities**.
  2. Offering many opportunities to **practice real world interpersonal applications** of the target language.



# Limitations of the Study

- **Most Americans who took the survey were from California**, and many were **language majors**
  - May **not give an accurate picture** of foreign language education in the United States as a whole
- **Most Japanese who took the survey** were **our foreign exchange student friends** or students we had been friends with in Japan
  - May have **skewed** the Japanese **results**

# Future Research

- In this study, we **did not differentiate** between **foreign language courses** taken in **University** and courses taken in **high school and under**.
  - It could **yield more detailed and clear results** if experiences and interculturality gained from **University courses** and from **high school courses** were **surveyed separately**, as it was clear especially in the case of Japanese students that University and high school courses offered vastly different experiences.

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# Media Resources

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**Questions?**