Abstract

Globalization has resulted in the increased movement of people, goods, services and ideas around the world. Albrow (1990) (cited in Freeman et. al. 2009) states that “the peoples of the world have been incorporated into a single world society.” As such, Japanese language instructors have become responsible, not only for their students’ growth as speakers of a second language, but also for their development as human beings who can adjust to the rapidly changing and increasingly globalized society they live in. In response to this, current objectives of Japanese Language Education at the secondary level have expanded to include the development of students’ intercultural and interpersonal skills, aside from their original objective, which was simply to raise students’ linguistic and communicative skills. This holds true for Japanese language education in the Philippines, as conducted in public schools at the secondary level, as well as in other countries such as Malaysia, Thailand, United States, etc.

“enTree - Halina! Be a NIHONGOJIN!! -” is a unique resource type teaching material, developed by the Japan Foundation, Manila, that aims to answer the need to raise interculturally competent individuals with the ability to communicate in Japanese. Features of this teaching material include an assessment kit which attempts to measure students’ growth in the area of intercultural competence together with their linguistic performance, in line with the teaching material’s main objective of developing students’ “curiosity towards the world and one’s self” along with their desire for “self-improvement” in order to help them “discover and fulfill their respective mission/s in life”. A major issue though is whether intercultural competence can indeed be assessed, and, if so, whether “enTree’s” existing assessment tools are actually able to bring about the desired developmental changes in students.

This paper presents an overview of the assessment tools developed for “enTree - Halina! Be a NIHONGOJIN!! -”, summarizes related literature on “intercultural competence” and attempts to analyze “enTree’s” assessment tools from this standpoint with the use of Deardorff’s Pyramid model of Intercultural competence (Deardorff 2006).
レベルの日本語教育は、ただ単に言語能力やコミュニケーション能力を伸ばすだけでなく、異文化間能力及び対人関係構築スキルの育成をも目指すようになってきている。この現象は、マレーシアやタイ、米国などの多くの国で見られるほか、フィリピンで始めた公立高校における日本語教育においても見られる。

『enTree - Halina! Be a NIHONGOJIN!!-』は国際交流基金マニラ日本文化センターが開発したリソース型教材で、日本語のコミュニケーション能力を持ち合わせたグローバル人材育成の必要性に応えるために開発されたものである。この教材は、学習者が世界及び自分自身に興味関心を持ち、自己成長を遂げながら、自分自身のゴールを見つけ、それを実現していくことを目指しているもので、一つの特徴は学習者の言語能力に加え、異文化間能力の成長を測ることを試みた評価キットを内包していることである。だが、異文化間能力は評価できるものなのか、評価可能である場合、『enTree』の評価ツールは果たして学習者にプラスの変化をもたらすことができているのかという疑問が残る。

そこで本稿では、まず『enTree』について概観し、異文化間能力に関する先行研究をまとめる。その上で、開発した評価ツールをDeardorff（2006）の「ピラミッドモデル」を用いて評価することを試みる。

Keywords: secondary education, intercultural competence, teaching material, assessment tools, pyramid model

1. Introduction

Globalization has resulted in the increased movement of people, goods, services and ideas around the world. Albrow (1990) (cited in Freeman et. al. 2009) states that “the peoples of the world have been incorporated into a single world society.” As such, foreign language instructors are now expected to raise individuals who can cope with the demands of globalization by being able to interact with people from cultural backgrounds other than their own, aside from their original task of developing students’ linguistic and communicative skills. This means that they need to find effective means to raise learners’ levels of intercultural and interpersonal competency. This holds true for Japanese language education at the secondary level in the Philippines, as well as in other countries such as Malaysia, Thailand, United States, etc.1

Japanese language education in public high schools in the Philippines officially began on June 2009, following the issuance of the Philippine Department of Education (DepEd) Memorandum No.560, s. 2008 in December of the previous year. This memorandum was followed by DepEd Order No. 55 s. 2009 which details the guidelines and objectives for carrying out their Special Program in Foreign Language (SPFL) on a pilot basis. Objectives of

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1A panel session was presented to discuss principles and goals of Japanese education in primary and secondary level and concluded that it is commonly listed on objectives in many countries that developing learners’ interpersonal and intercultural competencies, problem-solving abilities at International Conference on Japanese Language Education in 2008 in Pusan, Korea.
this program include: (1) the development of students’ skills in listening, reading, writing, speaking and viewing as fundamental to acquiring communicative competence in a foreign language; (2) the preparation of students for meaningful interaction in a linguistically diverse global workplace; and (3) the development of students’ understanding and appreciation of other peoples’ culture.

The authors of this paper, who are also the developers of the Japanese teaching materials used in Philippine public high schools, utilized the concept of “key competences” as defined in the OECD/DeSeCo project (Rychen & Salganic et. Al 2003), the Common European Framework of Reference of Languages (Council of Europe 2001), and Japan Foundation’s Japanese Language Education Standard (The Japan Foundation 2009) as a reference for listing down the type of competences and abilities students need to attain in order to meet the program objectives set by DepED and conceptualize methods for their development and growth. The developers of “enTree” also listed down societal problems affecting public high school students in the Philippines (problems such as poverty, materialism, a strong desire to work abroad due to a sense of hopelessness towards their current situation, regionalism, Filipinos’ lack of knowledge about their country and its culture leading to a lack of confidence concerning their identity, a lack of interpersonal skills among the youth, a lack of skills related to autonomous learning, and “crab mentality”) and decided to consider these issues in the development of their teaching materials. The core concept of this teaching material is to help high school students “Discover and Fulfill One’s MISSION” through “curiosity towards the world (people and culture of the Philippines and the world) and one’s self” leading to continuous “self-improvement”. Topics, goals, activities and the material’s assessment kit have been created for the purpose of fulfilling “enTree’s” objectives. Although this teaching material is currently used in Philippine high schools, no efforts have yet been made to evaluate “enTree” and its assessment tools. As stated above, considering the objectives of present-day foreign language education at the secondary level, learners now need to acquire intercultural, aside from linguistic competence. This paper provides readers with an overview of the development of “enTree,” summarizes related literature on “intercultural competence,” and attempts to examine assessment tools used in “enTree” from this particular standpoint.

2. Overview of “enTree” and its Assessment tools

“enTree” includes lesson plans/teacher’s reference (30 units in total for 2 years), worksheets, and other supplementary materials such as photo panels, flashcards, realia, etc. In order to meet the objectives issued by DepED and carry out the concept of the materials,

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2 The following 3 categories are enumerated as competencies for those who live in global society need for their successful life and well-functioning society: (1) Use tools interactively, (2) Interact in heterogeneous groups, and (3) Act autonomously.
“enTree” makes use of a topic syllabus that covers a wide array of themes that are relevant to students. It also integrates language and culture, recognizing them as inseparable constructs, and encourages students to compare their own culture with other cultures, noticing the similarities and differences between them, reflecting on their own culture and deepening their understanding of it. As a result, aside from activities which are conducted with the use of Japanese expressions learned in class in order to develop their linguistic competence, students are encouraged to participate in numerous discussion activities conducted in English or in the students’ mother tongue in order to help them gain a desire for self-improvement, raise their level of curiosity towards the world, and eventually discover and fulfill their respective mission/s in life. These activities are also expected to raise students’ level of “intercultural competence,” a concept which will be discussed in the following chapter. Challenges related to incorporating this type of competence into the objectives of “enTree” presented the developers of this teaching material with the dilemma of finding a way to assess students’ growth in this area.

Materials developed for “enTree” include an assessment kit which makes use of multiple tools, namely the (1) “enTree book” or student’s portfolio, (2) “J-Tree,” (3) Language Biography, (4) evaluation sheets for “enTree book” and “J-Tree” (rubric) and (5) samples of written exams. Below is a diagram that presents the relationship and use of the said assessment tools. In order to fulfill “enTree’s” objectives as stated in its core concept, these assessment tools attempt to evaluate not only students’ “Japanese language ability,” but also their ability to reflect, monitor their learning and manage their own materials.

![Diagram of Evaluation tools and Measurability](image)

Figure 1: Evaluation tools and Measurability

Please refer to Ofune et.al. (2011) for further details.
As shown in the figure above, the “enTree book”, is used for assessing students’ ability to manage their materials. “enTree books” contain students’ course materials such as handouts, evaluation sheets and “J-Trees.” The “J-Tree” is divided into several parts, namely, “leaves” which assess students’ ability to reflect, the “trunk” and “roots”, which assess students’ ability to monitor their learning, and “fruits” which assess students’ ability to reflect, as well as their ability to monitor their own learning. The Language Biography is also used to assess students’ ability to monitor their learning. Evaluation sheets refer to a set of rubrics used in the assessment of the “enTree book” and various parts of the “J-Tree.” Samples of written exams are used to assess students’ Japanese language proficiency. As “enTree” views language and culture as an integrated constructs that cannot be taught separately, the developers of this teaching material have made a particular effort to ensure that its assessment tools are able to evaluate students’ progress in both areas.

3. Review of Related Literature

The Routledge Encyclopedia of Language Teaching and Learning defines “intercultural competence” as “the ability to interact effectively with people from cultures that we recognize as being different from our own” (Guilherme 2000, p.297). Byram (1997) states that intercultural competence consists of five elements, namely: (1) Attitudes (curiosity and openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and beliefs about one’s own), (2) Knowledge (of social groups, their products, practices, as well as general processes of societal and individual interaction), (3) Skills of interpreting and relating (the ability to interpret, explain and relate cultural products from other cultures to one’s own), (4) Skills of discovery and interaction (the ability to acquire new knowledge about cultures other than one’s own and use this information in actual communication and interaction), (5) Critical cultural awareness/political education (the ability to critically evaluate perspectives, practices and products of one’s own, as well as other cultures).

As a result of present-day attention towards intercultural competence, approaches to its description and assessment have also evolved. Spitzberg and Changnon (2009) present several models that try to explain the development of intercultural competence. Of the models presented in this study, the authors of this paper decided to use the Pyramid Model of Intercultural Competence devised by Deardorff (2006) in Figure 2 as a reference for assessing and improving their assessment tools as it enables the development of specific indicators that can be used within certain contexts while providing a basis for the general evaluation of their intercultural competence. In this model, attitudes such as respect, openness, curiosity and discovery serve as the foundation for the development of intercultural competence. Once learners are able to foster these attitudes, they can acquire knowledge and comprehension which includes the development of cultural awareness, a deep understanding and knowledge of
culture, culture-specific information, together with sociolinguistic awareness. The ability to acquire this knowledge is accompanied by the development of students’ listening, observation, evaluation, analytic, interpretive and relational skills which are necessary to produce the internal outcomes described in the following step. Internal outcomes here include (1) adaptability (to different communication styles and behaviors, new cultural environments), (2) flexibility (in the selection and use of communication styles/behaviors, cognitive flexibility), (3) an ethnorelatival view and (4) empathy. Once students achieve the desired internal outcomes, they are able to produce desired external outcomes that manifest themselves in expressed thoughts and behavior.

Means for assessing intercultural competence range from traditional methods such as written exams, short attitude and personality surveys to more complex behavioral self-assessments, detailed interviews and performance tasks (Deardorff 2006, Sinicrope et. al. 2007, Lund 2008). Byram (1997) suggests the use of portfolio assessment to estimate the dimensions of learners’ growth in the dimensions of attitude, skills of interaction/discovery and relating/interpreting, and critical awareness, but does not provide any concrete ideas or examples of methods for portfolio assessment in his study. Even CEFR which provides various scales for assessing learners’ linguistic competence fails to provide scales to assess learners’ intercultural competence despite the fact that it emphasizes the importance of socio-cultural and intercultural issues in foreign language learning (Lund 2008). This has led other researchers to recommend the use of multiple assessment tools steps that can make up for the shortcomings of individual methods (Sinicrope et. al. 2007).

Some studies have raised the question of whether intercultural competence can and should be tested explicitly. Kramsch (1993) (cited in Corbett 2003) explains the difficulty of assessing intercultural competence which is described as an intensely individual process whose value may not be realized until long after a course has ended. Despite these issues, results of Deardorff (2006) indicate that educators agree that it is possible to assess degrees of intercultural competence and recognize the value of its assessment. Barett (2011) states that although existing tools for assessing students’ intercultural competence make a valuable contribution to enhancing students’ growth, there is a need for their further development. He also adds that these assessment tools should be formally evaluated for their effectiveness in actually bringing about change in learners, “as it is one thing to develop activities, methods and resources which teachers and students find satisfying in the classroom, but another to show that these assessment tools actually bring about the desired developmental changes in learners.” This is precisely what the authors of this paper attempt to do in this study.

4. “enTree’s” assessment tools’ potential to assess intercultural competence

As seen below, Deardorff’s Pyramid Model of Intercultural Competence (2006) has four
levels containing various indicators of intercultural competence. “enTree,” on the other hand, has five assessment tools which are expected to assess particular competences as shown in Figure 1. However, as previously mentioned, although “enTree’s” assessment tools are able to assess various competences, they have not yet been tested for their ability to assess intercultural competence.

Figure 2. Results of matching “enTree’s” assessment tools and Deardorff’s Pyramid Model of Intercultural Competence (2006)

In order to evaluate the validity and effectivity of “enTree's” assessment tools, the authors of this paper matched “enTree’s” assessment tools with the various indicators for general assessment of intercultural competence as presented in Deardorff (2006). The analysis of these assessment tools from the perspective of Deardorff’s model produced the following results: ① The “enTree book” assesses “desired external outcomes;” ② The “J-Tree’s” different parts also assess different portions of the pyramid. “Leaves” correspond to all four levels. “Roots” and “fruits” assess “desired external outcomes;” ③ The “language biography” assesses “desired external outcomes;” ④ Evaluation sheets assess all four levels since they are a set of
rubrics used for assessing the “enTree book” and the different parts of the “J-Tree.”

Assessment tools shown in Figure 2, exclude the “trunk” which is used to assess students’ ability to monitor their learning as well as their linguistic competence, and samples of written exams, which are used solely for the assessment of students’ linguistic competence. Other assessment tools, presented in octagonal boxes above, are plotted on the diagram based on developers’ expected outcomes as seen in sample reflections, etc. Raw data exists, but its detailed analysis and presentation of results will be treated as a subject for future research.

The authors of this paper observed that samples of leaves collected over a period of time reflected the growth of students in accordance to the levels shown in Figure 2. Further examination of evaluation sheets shown in Figure 3, however, showed that the criteria presented to describe each level of achievement was unclear and could benefit from further elaboration.

Looking at the result of co-referencing “enTree’s” assessment tools to Deardorff’s Pyramid Model of Competence, we can conclude that “enTree’s” assessment tools have the potential to assess students’ growth in the area of intercultural competence, particularly the “leaves” and “evaluation sheets” which assess indicators on all four levels of the model and show signs of progression as students acquire more components at each level showing a greater degree of intercultural competence.

However, as shown in Figure 2, the components in the model are assessed not only by the assessment tools, but also through the classroom activities wherein they may also be observed. One of the elements which the developers of took into special consideration when creating
“enTree” were the tasks, especially the interaction and group tasks, which they believe could raise levels of curiosity and the desire for self-improvement among students, main elements of the core concept of “enTree,” in the hope of nurturing students who can be competent in a linguistically diverse global workplace given their understanding and ability to appreciate other cultures. These “group tasks” give students a chance to get to know their classmates better and help them become comfortable when sharing their ideas and exchanging information with others.

Thus, engaging in these activities results in students having more confidence when expressing themselves, both orally and in writing. They also give students a chance to have more insight and help them compare cultures, eventually allowing them to see things from a different perspective. Students find these skills useful when reflecting and writing about what they learned in each lesson.

5. Conclusion

In this study, it was discovered that “enTree's” assessment tools, with the exception of the trunk of “J-Tree” (which was created to assess students’ ability to monitor their learning as well as their linguistic competence), correspond to different levels of intercultural competence as presented in Deardorff’s Pyramid model of Intercultural competence (Deardorff 2006). This holds true especially for the “leaves” and the evaluation sheets. Students’ reflections written on the leaves reflect requisite attitudes such as respect, openness, curiosity and discovery, knowledge and comprehension including their level of cultural self-awareness, as well as desired internal outcomes such as shifts in their perception of other cultures relative to their own, and desired external outcomes such as decisions to take on certain behaviors or create and follow through with action plans based on their realizations. However, it can be assumed that the improvement in students’ reflection writing may be attributed to the evaluation sheet/rubric given to students at the beginning of the course, acting as a guide for evaluation, and at the same time, a guide that gives students a better idea of what to write on their leaves. As mentioned above, the contents of these evaluation sheets and the “leaves” were seen to correspond to all levels of the Pyramid Model of Competence.

It was also observed that some elements of intercultural competence listed down in Deardorff’s model (2006), especially those relating to desired external outcomes such as students’ “ability to behave and communicate effectively based on their knowledge, skills and attitudes” are not measured by “enTree's” existing assessment tools. Despite this fact, we can assume that “enTree” does indeed foster intercultural competence as seen in feedback from teachers regarding students’ behavior and participation in classroom activities like discussions and tasks which are an integral part of “enTree’s” pedagogical methods. The creation of these activities and materials was the area in which the developers of “enTree” placed much
consideration and made efforts to innovate on in the hope of developing a spirit of curiosity and self-improvement among students in order for them to attain “enTree’s” main goal of “Discovering and Fulfilling One’s Mission”.

Reference


