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A transformative approach to developing global human resources: An interdisciplinary framework for promoting personalised learning in Japanese universities

Abstract

Japanese government internationalisation initiatives in recent years have aimed to create undergraduate courses that nurture "global human resources". These initiatives involve objectives associated with developing skills, attitudes, and knowledge related to foreign language skills and intercultural understanding. However, educators at Japanese universities responsible for their development and implementation often lack adequate guidance to achieve such objectives. To address this gap, the author employed an interdisciplinary approach to establish a framework for cultivating global human resources, by means of a qualitative inquiry involving visual and narrative methods carried out over a one-semester period. The study's results emphasise the transformative and personal relationships that learners establish when engaging in the development of global human resources, a perspective that is mostly absent in the intercultural competence literature. Moreover, this study underlines the importance of producing and implementing interdisciplinary educational solutions that encourage university students to become personally invested in developing global human resources, contributing to the advancement of knowledge in the field.

Keywords: global human resources, transformative learning, personalised learning, foreign language and intercultural development, curriculum design

Introduction

The challenges of the 21st century have uniquely impacted Japan, including globalisation, a declining population, and reduced competitiveness, leading to economic stagnation (Qiu et al., 2023; Yonezawa, 2020). To address these issues, the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT) has initiated several university initiatives aimed at cultivating global human resources. However, educators tasked with implementing these initiatives have pointed out the lack of an adequate description of what the concept of global human resources entails, as well as how they could be developed in the classroom (Fritz & Sandu, 2020; Hofmeyr, 2023). This paper addresses the gap by introducing an interdisciplinary foreign language and intercultural development (FL & ID) framework. Drawing from foreign language education, intercultural education, second language motivation, and transformative learning theory, this framework emphasises holistic development, including skills, attitudes, knowledge and experiences, viewing development as an internal, transformative process influenced by individual experiences and perceptions.

To assess the framework's impact on nurturing global human resources and identifying inner shifts in participants, the one-semester study involved twelve Japanese undergraduate students. The research questions: 1. What are the participants' perceptions and experience of FL & ID before and after the intervention? and 2. What are the shifts in the participants' perceptions and experience of FL & ID during the intervention? This study contributes to the literature by providing educators with

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a structured approach to understanding the personal and transformative aspects of foreign language and intercultural development while aligning with government initiative objectives.

Background of the study

In recent years, MEXT has promoted the internationalisation of its universities through several initiatives aimed at "cultivat[ing] the ability of students to deal with globalization" (MEXT, 2023). These initiatives advocate the cultivation of "global human resources", which the Council on Promotion of Human Resource for Globalization Development (CPHRGD) defined as individuals who possess (i) linguistic and communication skills; (ii) self-direction and positiveness, a spirit for challenge, cooperativeness and flexibility, a sense of responsibility and mission; and (iii) understanding of other cultures (CPHRGD, 2011). However, an obstacle hindering these initiatives in Japan is the promotion of English-medium programmes and the misconception that proficiency in the English language alone determines the ability to act on a global scale (Bradford, 2019; Sakamoto & Roger, 2023). The author also shares this perspective, and emphasises that communicating and collaborating with individuals or organisations on a global scale is essentially a transformative experience, one that requires a 'cognitive, emotional, and cultural shift' (Leaver et al., 2021, p. 2). Hence, this study takes a holistic approach by adopting an interdisciplinary stance that recognises the diverse skills, attitudes, and knowledge that collectively shape individual learners in response to the multifaceted nature of the global human resources development challenge.

Overview of the study

The study was conducted at a Japanese national university over a single semester, comprising sixteen 90-minute English-medium instruction sessions. This elective course was part of an undergraduate programme designated by the university to cultivate global human resources, and was advertised as a personalised approach to acquiring the skills, attitudes, and knowledge necessary for global human resource development through foreign language and intercultural development. Convenience sampling was employed to recruit participants, and written instructions in Japanese and English outlined participants' roles, assuring them of anonymity in future publications and offering the option to withdraw without affecting course credit. Twelve second-year undergraduate students (five male and seven female), aged nineteen to twenty-two, enrolled in the course, and all agreed to participate.

Methodology

The framework embraces an interpretivist perspective rooted in social constructivist epistemology, informing theory and concept selection in the interdisciplinary framework. Consequently, this study emphasises the importance of comprehending individual subjective meanings and experiences in their social and cultural contexts, aligning with human capital development. To explore these nuances, a phenomenological approach, as described by Ros & Solé (2016), was chosen, highlighting personal and reflective aspects, providing an emic perspective to extract participant meanings (Miles et al., 2014), and recognising the coexistence of valid accounts of the world, as well as also acknowledging learners' diverse constructions of FL & ID. The study thus prioritises customised solutions for educators in their unique contexts rather than seeking generalisability or transferability.
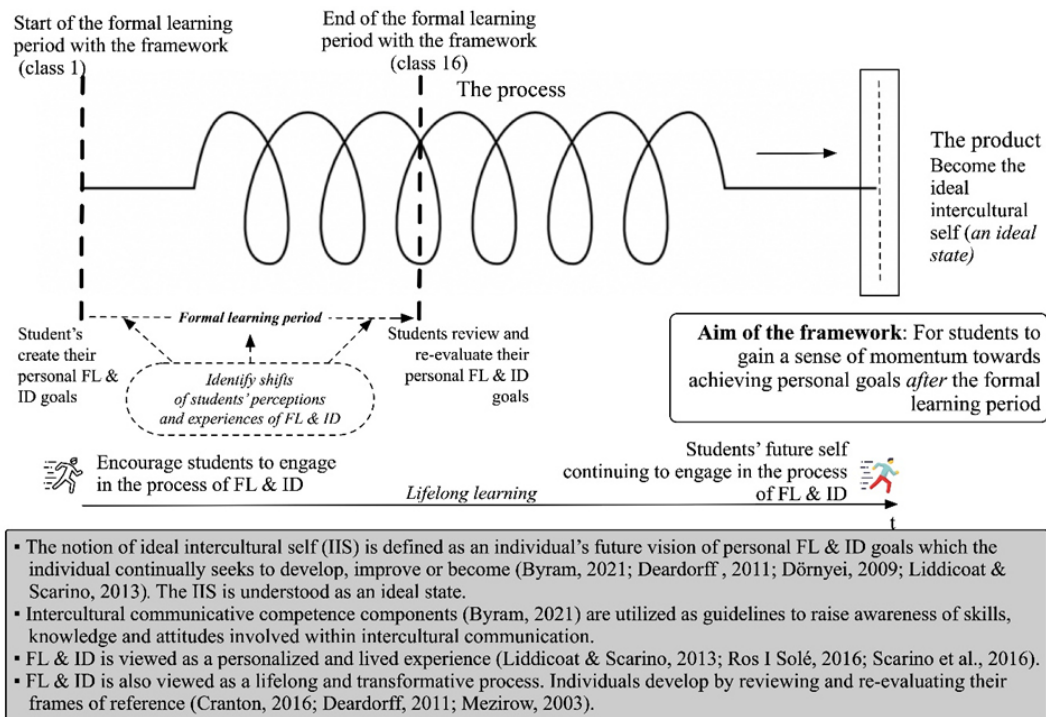
The Ideal Intercultural Self framework

The study presented in this paper is a continuation of previous research carried out by the author using the same framework (Fritz & Sandu, 2020). As previously described in that article, the author developed the framework, known as "The Ideal Intercultural Self" (henceforth IIS), as a context-specific solution for the development of global human resources. The framework consists of four components: 1) conceptualisation of FL & ID; 2) a classroom approach; 3) a syllabus; and 4) an assessment method. A visual representation of the IIS framework is shown in Figure 1 below.

The framework aims to utilise a single semester, consisting of sixteen 90-minute classes, to assist students in advancing towards their post-semester FL & ID goals. It achieves this by promoting active engagement in FL & ID through a motivating and personalised classroom approach. At the semester's outset, students visualise and establish their ideal intercultural self, reflecting their FL & ID aspirations, while throughout the term they develop awareness of how to progress toward their IIS using the framework's transformative and personal approach. Narrative data is collected to monitor shifts in students' perceptions and experiences of FL & ID, aiming to evaluate transformation. By the semester's conclusion, students review and reassess their initial IIS. Becoming the ideal intercultural self is seen as an ongoing journey involving continuous self-review and re-evaluation, a process actively encouraged during the semester's classroom approach.

The IIS framework: The conceptualisation of foreign language and intercultural development

The IIS framework emerged by aligning FL & ID with the aforementioned definition of global human resources provided by the CPHRGD (2011). The author believes that the mindset described by the CPHRGD transcends language competency and necessitates shifts in awareness, attitude, behaviour, and perception. Drawing from Byram's (2021) intercultural speaker notion and Liddicoat and Scarino's (2013) intercultural orientation to language learning, the framework encompasses skills, attitudes,

Figure 1

A visual representation of the Ideal Intercultural Self framework

- The notion of ideal intercultural self (IIS) is defined as an individual's future vision of personal FL & ID goals which the individual continually seeks to develop, improve or become (Byram, 2021; Deardorff , 2011; Dörnyei, 2009; Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013). The IIS is understood as an ideal state.
- Intercultural communicative competence components (Byram, 2021) are utilized as guidelines to raise awareness of skills, knowledge and attitudes involved within intercultural communication.
- FL & ID is viewed as a personalized and lived experience (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013; Ros I Solé, 2016; Scarino et al., 2016).
- FL & ID is also viewed as a lifelong and transformative process. Individuals develop by reviewing and re-evaluating their frames of reference (Cranton, 2016; Deardorff, 2011; Mezirow, 2003).

Source: author's own work.

and knowledge beyond language competence. To address the lack of clarity in explaining the process of becoming an intercultural speaker, the framework incorporates constructivist and phenomenological approaches, prioritising personal experiences and insights into transformative development (Ros & Solé, 2016).

This process integrates transformative learning theory, influenced by Mezirow (2003), identifying shifts in learners' perceptions and experiences of FL & ID. Mezirow (2003) suggests that adults' knowledge and experiences shape their perceptions, requiring shifts in thoughts, feelings, and actions for worldview alteration (Cranton, 2016). Shaules (2023) describes the transformative process as reacting to adaptive demands, indicating that foreign language learning initiates inner change by compelling learners to respond to foreign language and cultural patterns. Thus, this study views the development of global human resources as a process-oriented and adaptive approach.

The framework intends not to indoctrinate learners but foster long-term transformative change, acknowledging the transformational challenges that Japanese university students face. While previous research identified transformative outcomes, such as deeper cultural understanding (Crane & Sosulki, 2020; Deveci, 2014), this study aims to identify shifts during formal learning, offering pedagogical insights for educators fostering global human resources through personalised curricula and learner-centered methods.

The IIS framework: classroom approach and syllabus

The IIS framework's classroom approach and syllabus were tailored for a one-semester course, aimed at bridging theory and practice to nurture global human resources. Initially inspired by Dörnyei's (2009) work on motivating language learners, the L2 Motivational Self System was adapted within the IIS framework to encompass the (inter)cultural dimension. This adaptation encouraged learners to envision their ideal future selves, align with intercultural speaker qualities, and actively engage in bridging the gap. The framework, known as the 'Ideal Intercultural Self,' thus defines an individual's envisioned future self with FL & ID goals.

The classroom approach prioritised promoting active engagement with the FL & ID process, and facilitating the transformation of participants' perceptions and experiences. To achieve this, the study draws from Scarino et al. (2016) six language characteristics, informing a phenomenological and transformative pedagogical approach. Personalisation is emphasised, recognising subjectivity and encouraging awareness of FL & ID perceptions through group and pair work. FL & ID is viewed as a multilingual experience, prompting learners to explore language and culture features in authentic English and Japanese sources (e.g. YouTube videos, internet articles), and facilitating reflection, discussion, and exploring hidden perceptions related to FL & ID. Teaching and learning extend beyond acquiring language skills, and the classroom approach emphasises intercultural understanding through transformative pedagogy. Further, reflection and

Table 1

Syllabus table

Class and topic	
1. Introductions	9. (class 8 continued)
2. First Ideal Intercultural Self (IIS)	10. What is flexibility?
3. About the intercultural speaker	11. About flexibility and empathy
4. Macrofactors influencing your IIS	12. (class 11 continued)
5. (class 4 continued)	13. Role models: meet senior students who are becoming their own IIS (part 1)
6. Microfactors influencing your IIS part 1	14. (class 13 continued)
7. (class 6 continued)	15. Review your first IIS
8. Attitudes to become an intercultural speaker part 1	16. Course review and the next steps to become your IIS

Source: author's own work.

reflexivity are encouraged, allowing learners to engage in a lifelong developmental process. Classroom materials, homework, and assessments address these facets, enhancing learners' development in aesthetic, emotional, attitudinal, linguistic, meta-linguistic and reflective aspects. The syllabus remains unchanged from a previous study (Fritz & Sandu, 2020), as it effectively achieved MEXT's global human resources objectives.

In the initial class, the syllabus outlined course objectives and themes, promoting group cohesion by encouraging participants to share their current FL & ID perceptions and experiences. Course learning outcomes included: 1) setting personal FL & ID goals; 2) identifying gaps in present and future FL & ID skills, knowledge and attitudes; 3) creating a plan to achieve personal goals. Teaching methods, materials, and homework assignments were aligned with the earlier-discussed classroom approach. In the second class, participants started developing their Ideal Intercultural Self (IIS), and in the third class, the concept of the intercultural speaker was introduced. Classes four to fourteen aimed to raise participants' awareness of the gap between their current selves and their envisioned IIS, fostering transformative reflection and evaluation guided by the revised FL & ID conceptualisation. In sessions 13 and 14, senior students who had previously participated in the study and returned from studying abroad shared their experiences, linking them to their previously created IIS. Course grades were determined based on class involvement, homework completion, and the submission of the first and second IIS. To ensure fairness, full marks were given for both IIS submissions, regardless of their quality. However, participants were encouraged not to submit subpar work, as this could hinder their own developmental progress.

Data collection methods

Three different qualitative research methods were employed to explore the participants' FL & ID perceptions and experiences pre-intervention, during, and post-intervention, following literature recommendations (Dörnyei & Kubanyiova, 2014; Hadfield & Dörnyei, 2013; Melo-Pfeifer, 2015). Data triangulation was used to enhance the accuracy and credibility of the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

1. A web-based Questionnaire: This was administered after the first class via Google Forms to capture pre-intervention FL & ID perceptions and experiences, and provide support in answering the first research question. This open-ended questionnaire aimed to collect insider interpretations (Punch, 2005) and complement visual/narrative data, enhancing triangulation.

2. Ideal Intercultural Self (IIS) Visualisation: Participants created their IIS vision before and after the intervention, guided by Deardorff's (2011) learning contracts concept. Visualisation techniques inspired by sports psychology (Paivio, 1985) were used during the second class by the author to guide the participants in visualising their IIS and submitting their vision. Visualisation methods are supported in the literature, particularly for language learners (Fukuda et al., 2011; Magid & Chan, 2012). By comparing the themes and patterns from each participant's first and second IIS, the focus was on identifying shifts in the participants' perceptions and experiences of FL & ID. This helped find evidence of the framework encouraging development in terms of transformative learning.

3. Narrative Writing: Participants submitted written paragraphs after the ninth class, providing insights into their evolving perspectives on recent intercultural experiences, and supporting the exploration of the second research question. Written narratives were chosen over interviews to facilitate effective English expression, aligning with literature and favouring written narratives in exploring subjective language learning and intercultural understanding aspects (Rudolph, 2016).

Ethical considerations

Despite the research's low-risk nature, ethical considerations, particularly the author's dual role as a practitioner, were addressed, as the teacher's authority in the classroom can influence student participation (Esmaeili et al., 2015). To address this, verbal explanations clarified that participation wouldn't affect grades, with an ethics committee-approved document in English and Japanese reiterating this assurance. Also, framing FL & ID as an interpretive and personal endeavor faced challenges within the traditional Japanese classroom culture, which is typically teacher-centered. Therefore, trust-building and creating a safe environment for open expression were crucial. Learner-centered pedagogy, aligned with Dörnyei and Murphy (2003) and Dörnyei and Kubanyiova (2014), was adopted to encourage collaboration, student empowerment, and open dialogue.

Results and discussion

The analysis and findings for each data collection method are introduced in the following sections. For anonymity, participants are referenced with random numbers (e.g. 4A, 4B). Due to space limitations, a curated dataset is presented here; supplementary data can be found in the appendix. Additionally, the pre-intervention questionnaire items and results are detailed in appendix A.

First data collection method: Pre-intervention questionnaire

These results provided corroborating data supporting an overall understanding of each participant and substantiating whether the framework successfully encouraged FL & ID development. Analysis of the questionnaire identified common themes regarding participants' FL & ID experiences in Japan and abroad (see appendix A Table 4). The questionnaire revealed participants' limited engagement with FL & ID in both contexts. While their primary overseas intercultural experiences occurred in non-academic settings, meaningful intercultural experiences in Japan were associated with formal education. Participants predominantly associated meaningful intercultural experiences with personal relationships rather than global frameworks such as religion, economy, or politics.

Second data collection method: IIS Visualisation

Inductive content analysis was used to extract personal perceptions, beliefs, and values related to FL & ID from participants' first and second Ideal Intercultural Self (IIS) descriptions. This analysis aimed to generate themes for comparing participants' FL & ID before and after the one-semester intervention. Following Elo and Kyngäs' (2008) content analysis process, the initial step involved data preparation, where each participant's first IIS was reviewed, and codes were assigned to categorise data excerpts, facilitating subsequent analysis. Two rounds of analysis were conducted to comprehend the data and validate findings. The first round established categories like "family," "people," "career," "travel abroad," "attitudes," "skills," and "self-perceptions," while the second round aimed to generate sub-categories, refining the coding scheme. This process was repeated twice more to validate sub-categories and identify common themes for narrative interpretation, and the same content analysis process was applied to code and analyse participants' second IIS. The coding scheme and identified themes for the first and second IIS is available in appendix B.

Pre-intervention results: First Ideal Intercultural Self

All twelve participants submitted their first IIS. Table 2 below introduces the final categories of themes found in all of their first IIS, which resulted from the content analysis.

The common theme found in all the participants data was that they considered FL & ID integral to their future lives. The inductive analysis revealed personal beliefs and values often overlooked in intercultural competence literature. The "Personal Focus" theme in Table 2 emerged from central images, larger images, and written descriptions on their IIS, signifying personal significance. Themes spanned "family," "interracial marriage," "home life," and "developing humour." A common theme was that participants linked their future careers to their ideal intercultural selves. For example, participant 4B envisioned working in an international company work in Japan: "I work in a Japanese food company and my job is promoting the company's products to other countries... To achieve this goal, I go to many countries to get to know their culture, atmosphere and life" (Participant 4B).

Seven participants saw working abroad as crucial for their IIS. The second prevalent theme was the importance of future families. Eight participants referenced parents, spouses, or children, using pictures or famous people's images to represent family connections. For example: "I have a husband and two children. I am a flight attendant with ANA (All Nippon Airways) and when I was working on international flights, I met him. Now I can speak not only English, but also Korean" (Participant 4G).

A third common theme was that five participants expressed a desire to travel abroad, communicate in English and other languages, and make friends internationally, reflecting their curiosity about diverse cultures and interpersonal connections. However, corroborating with results from the pre-intervention questionnaire, themes relating to worldwide frameworks, such as politics or religion, were less prominent.

Participant 4F's first IIS is indicative of the major themes identified in all the participant pre-intervention data. Participant 4F, a 19-year-old Japanese female with around seven years of formal English learning and beginner-level Chinese proficiency, had limited foreign language and intercultural experiences. She visited two countries briefly, with more significant experiences abroad, including having a „non-native

Table 2
Participants' pre-intervention perceptions of foreign language and intercultural development

	Where						Who with?			When?	Connect to the world	Personal focus
	Study abroad	Work abroad	Work home	Travel abroad	Travel home	Family	Friends	Work colleagues	Customers			
4A		•			•	•	•	•		35YO	Using English and Chinese	Career / Family
4B		•	•			•		•	•	32YO	From career	Home life
4C		•					•			N/A	Using English and Chinese	Develop open-mindedness
4D		•	•	•		•				30YO	From career	Family / Home life
4E		•	•	•					•	31YO	From various experiences	Learn from experiences
4F	•		•	•	•	•				29YO	From various experiences / Using English, Japanese and Chinese	Develop from study abroad / Interact with others
4G	•	•				•	•		•		From career/ Using English, Korean and	Meet many people all over the world
4H		•								N/A	Interact with others	Improve self / Interact with others
4I				•			•		•	N/A	From career	Home life
4J				•	•		•	•		N/A	From career / Using English	Friends / co-workers
4K			•	•		•	•		•	N/A	From career / Using English and Chinese	Learn from travel
4L			•	•		•	•			N/A	Using English	Improve self

Source: author's own work.

friend" and engaging in „socio-cultural experiences." Her first IIS data is shown below in Figure 2. More examples of participants' first IIS data are collected in appendix C.

Participant 4F embodies the two of the three main pre-intervention themes. She wants to work "on some kind of position related to international business". Also, she mentions that she is aiming to travel within Japan and abroad to connect with people from different backgrounds. 4F values English, Chinese and Japanese as tools for engaging locally and globally. Her forthcoming overseas study experience is expected to boost her confidence, allowing her to speak English effortlessly and nurture self-love. On the one hand, 4F reveals a self-critical narrative, but shows a central and prominent image of a future self, radiating positivity and confidence, implying her aspiration for self-transformation.

Post-intervention results: Second Ideal Intercultural Self

Post-intervention results for the second IIS addressed the first research question: What are the participants' perceptions and experience of FL & ID before and after the intervention? An inductive analy-

sis, guided by Elo and Kyngäs's (2008) content analysis process, focused on identifying new goals, attitudes, and skills in participants' second IIS. A deductive analysis, following Liddicoat and Scarino's intercultural learning process (2013), examined FL & ID changes through interaction, reflection, noticing and comparison. The inductive analysis revealed increased self-awareness among participants, along with a desire for personal growth and changes in attitudes and skills. Deductive analysis identified two common themes within the participants' second IIS:

Theme #1) Enhanced self-reflection: Participants expressed greater self-awareness and recognised the need for attitude, skill, and behavior changes on their journey to becoming ideal intercultural selves. For instance, participant 4A acknowledged rejecting new and strange things, but highlighted self-improvement and newfound self-efficacy:

> I am still not open-minded and flexible. I [have] realised that I am rejecting new things or strange things subconsciously. This problem [has] influenced my attitude to learn about foreign countries and culture…[however] I learned

Figure 2
Participant 4F's First IIS

My Ideal Intercultural Self

-CARACTOR & ABILITY-

I am extremely confident in myself through the experience of studying abroad, talking to many people who have cultural diversity and understanding myself. I love myself more than anyone else in the world, even my mother. I sometimes feel down, but I am fine because I have overcome many difficulties. I can speak English without any problems as if English is my first language. I feel stupid about me at age 20 who was really distressed at my English. Also, I can speak Chinese well. This is because of my Taiwanese friend who I met when I am studying abroad in Taiwan. She(he?) is so kind to me and taught me Chinese.
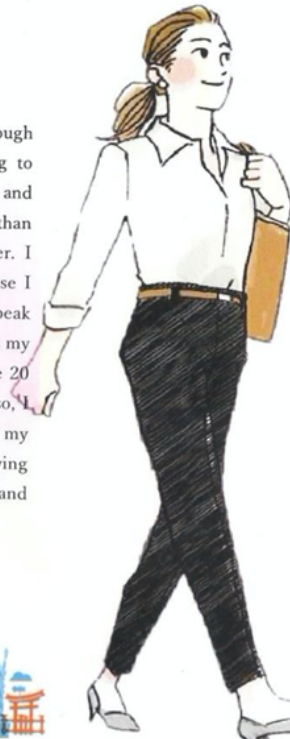
-LIFE-

7 years ago, I went back to my hometown, Kumamoto and now I am 29 years old. I work as some kind of job related to international business (I haven't decided specifically yet) with my economical knowledge and enjoy working every day. Whether I have my husband and children, keep it a secret. I just paid off my scholarship, at last, I can afford sparing for a little luxury. My hobby is watching baseball games as usual. I always appreciate people around me, I enjoy my life!

-FURTHER GOAL-

I want to travel a lot of places around the world with the money that I hardly earned by myself. At least, until I die, I want to go to all prefectures in Japan and some foreign countries. I enjoy communication with local people there in Japanese, English, Chinese or another language. The more I go to another place, the more I realize how beautiful this world is. Actually, I don't become completely my IIS yet. So, I want to see people more, learn and experience many things more. And I want to give back to people who are involved with me, especially my mother.

Source: author's own work.

many things from the classes about macro factors, my autopilot [and] self-efficacy. [So] my attitudes [have] changed a lot. I believe I [can be able] to find answers on my own. From now I can be a bridge person. (Participant 4A)

Theme #2) Personal engagement with foreign language and intercultural development: Several participants demonstrated engaging with FL & ID in terms of Liddicoat and Scarino's (2013) interacting process of intercultural learning, including noticing, comparing, reflecting, and interacting. Compared to their first IIS, most participants focused on interaction with others, self-analysis, and self-evaluation of their values and beliefs. They shared personal interests, hobbies and plans to engage with FL & ID, indicating a developed personal interest resulting from the intervention.

For instance, Participant 4L, a 20-year-old Japanese female with seven years of formal English learning and basic Korean proficiency, had limited FL & ID experiences, as indicated in the pre-intervention questionnaire. She had visited only one country for a one-week period, and identified her most significant overseas intercultural experience as "socio-cultural experiences," particularly enjoying the local food. For her home country intercultural experience, she mentioned a "non-native teacher." Her second IIS is shown in Figure 3.

Participant 4L embodies both main themes. Her IIS presents a self-reflective and self-critical narrative. Her recent interactions and experiences with international students at the university appear to have ignited her engagement in noticing, comparing, and reflecting. Despite her self-critical narrative, she maintains a positive outlook by setting future goals to cultivate her FL & ID, fostering the required attitudes, skills and knowledge.

Narrative writing

After the ninth class, nine out of the twelve participants submitted a written paragraph to the following prompt. There was no word limit, in order to allow free expression:

> Q. Describe an intercultural experience from the past year. Share the location and details of the experience, reflect on any lessons learned or personal development resulting from it, and discuss how this experience may have impacted you.

A deductive analysis of each participant's narrative was conducted. The first level aimed to familiarise with the data and identify factors contributing to transformative learning in FL & ID. The second level

Figure 3

Participant 4L's Second IIS

Fantastic English level

My experience now: I sometimes feel gaps between international students and my English skills

Set small goals in daily life   Ex) read/watch news in English, read books or short-theories written in English per week

Try to make chances to touch English everyday!

Be more flexible (LIFELONG goal)

My experience now: I cannot quickly adapt to international students' way of thinking

→ I STILL have "**Japaneseness**" in bad way (too humble, and I don't express my feeling ect.)

How I overcome?

Study abroad: interact many people who have different background, value and culture

 = Understand and get new/different ways of thinking, be like a chameleon and adapt.

Experience a lot & gain knowledge   Ex) When experiencing in Italy, compare with culture in Japan. Compare with my life in Japan (Be curious).

Work for our society or world (LIFELONG goal)

Future Job: related to international issues   Ex)climate change, poverty, support foreigners in Japan.

-How?

Become personally active in local and global society

Ex) find local NPOs with a focus on social responsibility in Japan or the world

[Everyday notice] observe, try new things, meet many people and experience

= This will help me to find the kind of job I want to do for the future. I know I like foreign languages and other cultures, but it is important for me to know what I am interested (or not), and know my own my strength and weaknesses

Source: author's own work.

applied Mezirow's (2003) ten phases of transformative learning to pinpoint shifts in participants' FL & ID perceptions. The identified shifts are compiled in Table 3. Due to space constraints, individual narratives are omitted, with a thematic analysis of the three common themes presented after Table 3. A sample of participant narratives is available in appendix D.

Theme #1: Participants viewed intercultural experiences as transformative dilemmas.

Mezirow (2003) posits that a disorienting dilemma has the potential to trigger transformative processes, fundamentally altering the self, behaviour and worldview. Hence, recognising the participants' intercultural

Table 3

The identified shifts of foreign language and intercultural development of each participant

Transformative phases	4A	4B	4C	4D	4E	4F	4G	4H	4I	4J	4K	4L
1. A disorienting dilemma	•	•	N/A	•	•	N/A	•	•	•	•	N/A	•
2. Engaging in reflection	•	•		•			•	•	•	•		•
3. Critical assessing personal assumptions	•	•		•			•	•	•		•	•
4. Relating discontent to similar experiences of others				•			•	•		•		•
5. Identifying new ways of acting within the role				•	•		•	•		•		•
6. Building personal confidence and competence					•			•		•		
7. Planning a new course of action					•							
8. Acquiring the knowledge and skills necessary to implement this new course of action												
9. Trying out the planned action												
10. Reintegrating into society with the new perspectives												

Source: author's own work.

experiences as initial dilemmas marked a crucial phase in fostering critical self-reflection and developing new perspectives. All participants who submitted paragraphs characterised their intercultural experiences as dilemmas, using terms like 'new,' 'shocking,' or 'unexpected.' Most demonstrated evidence of re-evaluating their initial perspectives. For example, participant 4A shared an experience from a university field trip to the Philippines six months prior (see appendix D), emphasising differences between Japan and the Philippines, and showcasing his ability to engage with FL & ID processes.

Theme #2 The majority of the participants re-evaluated their original perspectives.

Table 3 shows that most participants experienced the initial three phases of the transformative process, serving as catalysts for potential transformation. These phases involve recognising and examining one's assumptions (phase two), followed by critical assessment (phase three). Participant 4B's reflection on a university field trip to the Philippines (see appendix D) exemplifies this process. She engaged in self-review and re-evaluated her assumptions about Filipino attitudes toward using English. Her realisation of Filipino students using English among themselves prompted critical reflection and evaluation of her beliefs about using English, showcasing a transformed perspective.

Theme #3: Limited articulation of future FL & ID development.

Most participants didn't progress beyond the initial phases of transformative learning, as seen in Table 3. Only four (4E, 4H, 4I, 4L) expressed confidence in continuing development or detailed strategies in their narratives. For instance, participant 4J (see appendix

D) shared her experience during a university field trip to the Philippines, and proposed ideas for further development upon returning to Japan, although she didn't implement them.

Discussion and conclusion

This study offers significant insights, demonstrating the intervention's efficacy in empowering participants to develop self-sustaining attitudes, skills and knowledge towards fostering global human resources objectives. Adopting an emic perspective underscores the importance of acknowledging Japanese university students' personal interests, needs, perceptions and experiences in the pursuit of global human resource development. The framework provided a structured and safe space for participants to adapt to the challenges of cultivating global human resources, aligning with Hoggan and Kloubert's (2020) stance on transformative learning theory's potential to design adaptive support structures and pedagogies.

Findings reveal that the majority of participants experienced increased self-awareness and a strengthened sense of agency, fostering a deeper personal connection with their FL & ID pursuits. This aligns with previous research emphasising the impact of transformative pedagogies in education (Eisenchlas & Shoecraft, 2024; Fritz & Sandu, 2020). The detection of initial transformative shifts in participant data highlights the intervention's potential. However, the one-semester timeframe did not provide an opportunity to identify skills, attitudes and knowledge associated with a self-sustaining approach to transformative learning.

Furthermore, the interpretivist methodology and qualitative techniques prioritised in this study aimed to capture the nuanced experiences and perceptual shifts among participants, thereby acknowledging the constraints on the generalisability of the findings. Implementing personalised learning on a larger scale

poses limitations and challenges across educational settings, encompassing logistical issues and the demand for flexibility by policymakers or administrators familiar with standardised methods. Despite this, this study emphasises the critical role of practitioner-led, research-based interventions in addressing individual learning needs and responding to government educational initiatives, while also encouraging further exploration of the introduced themes and concepts by practitioners, administrators and policymakers alike.

In conclusion, this research contributes to both theoretical understanding and practical approaches in the development of global human resources. A phenomenological approach effectively highlighted the subjective experiences of learners undergoing foreign language and intercultural development, advocating for a curriculum that embraces learner diversity and integrates personal growth into global human resource development initiatives. Future longitudinal studies could provide additional validation of FL & ID as inherently personal, transformative and process-oriented. The collaboration among various stakeholders – educators, policymakers, administrators, and learners – is essential in fostering global human resources, underscoring the profound influence of educators on student learning outcomes. Professional learning communities play a pivotal role in promoting reflective, inclusive and growth-oriented practices, with an emphasis on interdisciplinary collaboration to enhance global human capital.

The appendices are available in the online version of the journal.

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