

Enhancing International Mindset in English Classes at a Japanese Music College: Impact of Integrating Documentary Photography and Piano Performance

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the impact of an innovative Japanese music college workshop incorporating documentary photography and piano performance to foster the students' international mindset. In today's globalized society, it is becoming increasingly crucial to facilitate intercultural exchange and mutual understanding. Harnessing the power of music presents an opportunity to bridge cultural divides, and this approach may be particularly beneficial within the unique cultural context of Japan. In high-context cultures like Japan, students may not always recognize the potential information gap between themselves and others. This information gap can lead to implicit communication, obstructing a comprehensive understanding of conveyed messages. Although previous research offers models and theories regarding intercultural receptivity and communication skills, there is a lack of studies focusing on the effects and methodologies of workshops blending documentary photography and piano performance, specifically within Japanese music colleges. Therefore, the present study conducts such a workshop and assesses its effectiveness by analyzing English reports from second-year students participating in the mandatory English class at a Japanese music college. The students' level of English proficiency is CEFR A2. The assessment focuses on whether participants, from a low-context cultural perspective, can effectively express their individuality through originality by recognizing the differences in their information compared to others based on the information they acquire during the workshop. The results demonstrate an overall increase in students' international awareness, with particularly high-performing students showcasing a deep understanding and insightful perspectives on the situation in Ukraine. This research aims to provide practical insights and directions for educators at Japanese music colleges to more meaningfully and effectively incorporate such workshops within their English curriculum.

Keywords: Music students, international mindset, Workshop, Documentary photography, Piano performance.

RESEARCH BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

In today's increasingly globalized society, intercultural interaction and mutual understanding are increasingly important (Yashiro et al., 2009) [1]. Music can connect people across borders by bridging communication and sharing between cultures (Masuda, 2017) [2]. Nevertheless, opportunities to broaden an international perspective and social understanding are limited at Japanese music colleges, as the emphasis is predominantly on deepening musical specialization. Many music college students in Japan devote themselves to mastering performance skills and studying music-related subjects. However, they often lack experience in English communication and direct interaction with foreigners. Consequently, they face challenges such as low English proficiency and difficulties in fostering an understanding of different cultures or a global mindset (Nakanishi, 2023) [3]. Therefore, cultivating a rich international mindset through dialogues and empathy with different cultures, in addition to English study, is crucial for their growth as musicians and societal contributors.

Similarly, Taiwanese music college students face parallel challenges regarding English language proficiency and active participation in English classes. Despite recognizing the importance of English in a globalized world, many of the Taiwanese music college students need more confidence in speaking and engaging with the language. This shared struggle highlights a universal need to address these issues across cultural contexts (Tseng, 2014) [4].

This paper aims to address this issue of developing a global mindset by investigating the impact of a workshop that integrates documentary photography and piano performance. This workshop was implemented in English classes at a Japanese music college in June 2023, aiming to promote an international mindset. Documentary photography visually communicates different cultures, and piano performance serves as a means to express emotions and thoughts through the language of music.

Building upon the studies of Fleming (1997) [5], Morgan, Holmes, and Bundy (1963) [6], and Sork (1984) [7], Brooks-Harris and Stock-Ward (1999) [8] identified the key characteristics of a successful workshop. These include "Short-Term Intensive Learning, Small Group Interaction, Active Involvement, Development of Competence, Problem Solving, Behavior Change as an Outcome and Application of New Learning" (Brooks-Harris & Stock-Ward, 1999, p.3) [8]. They also clarified the focus of workshops such as "Problem Solving, Skill Building, Increasing Knowledge, Systemic Change, Personal Awareness/Self-Improvement" (p.4).

According to Brooks-Harris and Stock-Ward [8], "Increasing Knowledge" means transmitting knowledge and providing participants with opportunities to utilize what they have learned. This active learning approach distinguishes a workshop from a lecture. "Self-recognition/Self-improvement" involves forming a positive self-image and outlook through understanding one's thoughts, emotions, or attitudes. This understanding promotes positive changes in the participants' lives.

Furthermore, this study refers to Bennett's Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) [9], which outlines a process for deepening cultural understanding in six stages. Each stage has different sensitivities and depths of understanding, with appropriate intercultural education methods for each stage. Considering this, educators should design educational programs according to each student's developmental stage.

Also, this study refers to Deardorff's model of intercultural competence (1993) [10], which concretely presents the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for successful intercultural communication. In her model, understanding and recognition of culture (knowledge), the ability to act or react appropriately (skills), and openness and respect for different cultures (attitudes) are key elements of intercultural communication ability.

However, concrete examples and guidelines for designing and implementing workshops integrating documentary photography and piano performance in Japanese music colleges are still scarce. Therefore, this study comprehensively describes the design, execution, and assessment of a workshop that integrates documentary photography and piano performance. It also clarifies this workshop's impact on improving the international mindset among music college students and discusses how workshops should be in English education at music colleges. Through this, it aims to provide specific hints and directions for English teachers at music colleges to introduce workshops more meaningfully and effectively in English classes.

CONTENTS OF AN INTERNATIONAL MINDSET ENHANCEMENT WORKSHOP THROUGH DOCUMENTARY PHOTOGRAPHY AND PIANO PERFORMANCE

The Japanese music college conducted a workshop to enhance the international mindset of 36 students from two "English Communication" classes (CEFR A2) for second-year students. The workshop integrated documentary photography and piano performances.

The workshop, titled "What We Can Do to Contribute to the World," aimed to have students contemplate ongoing issues, such as the continuing war in Ukraine and global refugee crises, and consider what each of us can do for the world and world peace. A piano lecturer organized the workshop, which commenced as a "Photo Exhibition with Piano Performance" intending to engage the music college students by eliciting a profound connection with the art and issue.

[Photo Exhibition "Portraits of Ukraine" with Piano Performance]

The students walked down aisles lined with ten eye-level portrait photographs recently taken in Ukraine by a Japanese documentary photographer while listening to the piano performances of works by a Ukrainian composer performed live by a Ukrainian pianist. The documentary photographer intentionally selected the portrait genre as the photos to exhibit instead of the photos of destroyed towns or buildings. This decision allowed the students to look into the eyes of those living during wartime, challenging them to confront the universal human, in contrast to the othered human often represented in the news.

The documentary photographer chose to withhold the distribution of photo descriptions, as they wished for the students to observe and emotionally respond to the photos first. Thus, after viewing the photographs, students took their seats and, for the first time, read the descriptions of each photo provided by the documentary photographer.

The introductory phase of the workshop ended with students given time to write their thoughts and opinions about the one photo that left the biggest impression on them before the lecture phase commenced.

Contents of the Ten Photos:

- 1) A woman who survived in Bucha City, which was under Russian military occupation.
- 2) A man whose relationships with his relatives living in Russia collapsed after the war started.
- 3) A man who was tortured by Russian soldiers.
- 4) A man living in his car after his home was destroyed.
- 5) Two women living in the exclusion zone of Chernobyl.
- 6) Three women making a living by selling homemade bread and vegetables.
- 7) A woman who is the director of a hospital.
- 8) A woman whose son is missing.
- 9) A teenage girl doing volunteer work.
- 10) A couple living in a city being bombed.

Explanation of the Performed Pieces

The Ukrainian pianist, who is friends with the Ukrainian composer, discussed the three piano pieces in English, and the explanations were later translated into Japanese. Among these musical pieces, there was one that he began to compose at the incipience of war and remained incomplete at the time of the workshop; the pianist suggested the incomplete piece conveyed the sentiments of Ukrainians regarding the ongoing war.

Presentation Using Slides by the Documentary Photographer

Following the lecture by the pianist, the documentary photographer introduced himself and explained his past and current activities, including videos and photos taken in Ukraine. In contrast to the exhibition portraits the students were first exposed to, the presentation contained photos of buildings destroyed by bombardment, juxtaposed with everyday scenes, such as accordion performances in the city and a child playing games in a shelter, to give a multidimensional representation of Ukrainians living in a war that is generally absent in media depictions.

Explanation of Photos Taken by the Ukrainian Pianist

In addition to the documentary photographer's work, the Ukrainian pianist shared bucolic photos of their hometown and the Crimean Peninsula before the war, followed by an explanation that this region is now under Russian occupation and inaccessible.

Questions from Students about the Performance, Photos, and Presentation

There were questions from the students, such as how much money is needed to volunteer internationally in Ukraine and how the documentary photographer raises money to fund his freelance work. There were also questions about what kinds of support for Ukraine the students themselves could do.

Presentations in English about Photos Prepared by the Students, and Comments about the Exhibition Photos, Each Around 30 Seconds to 1 Minute

The photos prepared by the students beforehand predominantly consisted of their personal memories, such as friends, family, pets, and scenery. There were also photos that raised social issues such as food waste. Each photo had a message, and the students were able to present that in English. The photo from the exhibition that left the biggest impression varied among students, with nearly all ten photos receiving mention. However, photos 2) and 9) stood out to many students. In the case of photo 2), students described it as portraying the grief caused by

the destruction of family relationships and connections through war. As for photo 9), students discussed the young woman's resilience and the underlying sadness implied by her comment, 'I'm used to the sound of gunfire now.'"

Feedback from the Pianist and Documentary Photographer

Since there was not enough time for the pianist and documentary photographer to give feedback to all the students, a few students received comments. One student showed a photo of a rainbow and said, "I found a rainbow while taking a walk, thinking that I should sometimes leave my smartphone and go for a walk because I'm always looking at it," and "I thought it is important to take my eyes off my smartphone and look outside." The documentary photographer commented, "That was a very memorable presentation. I'm always looking at my smartphone too. By having time away from the smartphone, various things become visible."

Conclusion

In this workshop, the students learned about each Ukrainian person depicted in the exhibited photos, their thoughts and experiences, and the conditions of the people and towns in Ukraine, as introduced in the presentation. Students demonstrated in their reflections that acknowledging the existence of individuals living under harsh conditions and experiencing empathy during the session made the conflict in Ukraine a more tangible issue for them, reducing the tendency to other those affected by the war. The question of "What can we do for the people of Ukraine and world peace?" is complex, requiring careful consideration and thoughtful action. It is essential to recognize that individuals living amid these challenges have families and daily lives similar to ours. The documentary photographer concluded the workshop by introducing various initiatives, including fundraising activities for Ukraine, organizing photo exhibitions, and promoting Ukrainian restaurants in Japan.

REPORT ASSIGNMENT AND EVALUATION RUBRIC

Report Assignment

The assignment required students to capture photographs during the workshop, select one of their best photos from the session, upload it onto the class presentation slides, and compose a letter in English using a format of 5 to 10 sentences (refer to the Appendix). Students had the freedom to select the recipient of their letter, which could include individuals such as a pianist, a photographer, a friend, or a family member. The key requirement was that the letter effectively convey the workshop's content to the reader through the selected photograph. Additionally, students were tasked with clearly articulating what insights they gained from the photograph and the development of their mindset due to their participation in the workshop.

Evaluation Rubric for the Report Assignment

Out of the 36 participants in the workshop, 27 submitted their report assignments, which were subsequently assessed using a rubric. This assessment was based on two distinct perspectives. The first perspective evaluated whether the students demonstrated an understanding of "internationality," while the second perspective assessed their ability to convey their thoughts with originality.

Understanding internationality, the first perspective is critical when judging the effects of a workshop aimed at fostering an international mindset. According to Norman (2022) [11], this concept helps to cultivate an international perspective, intercultural interaction skills,

adaptability, and resilience towards international environments. Japanese students need to be made aware that they come from a high-context culture. Their way of expressing things is understood when the counterpart is Japanese or is from a high-context culture, but it may not always be understood by people from low-context cultures (Nam, 2015) [12]. To understand internationality, students are required to perceive, understand, and express what they have seen and heard in the workshop, not only from their own perspective but also from the perspective of a low-context culture. In other words, they must learn to explain background information and details directly. Therefore, when evaluating the report assignment, it is crucial to check whether the students are conveying information directly from the perspective of a low-context culture.

Originality, the second perspective, evaluates the ability of students to digest and understand the information obtained in the workshop, embody it as their own, and interpret it from a new perspective. It measures the ability of students to reflect on the learning from the workshop from their unique perspective and express their thoughts. This perspective is important in demonstrating a student's unique perspective, critical thinking, creativity, and a deep understanding and application of learning. These skills are capabilities needed in the 21st-century global society, and they help students form their identity as learners. Therefore, originality is an important element in evaluating the learning process and outcomes.

The evaluation rubric is shown below.

Perspective 1: Evaluation criteria of Understanding of Internationality through the Workshop

Points	Evaluation criteria of Understanding of Internationality through the Workshop
5 points	Demonstrates an understanding of internationality through the workshop experience and expresses a specific understanding effectively.
4 points	Demonstrates a certain understanding of internationality from the workshop experience and expresses a specific understanding to some extent.
3 points	Demonstrates a basic understanding of internationality from the workshop experience but lacks specific understanding.
2 points	The understanding of internationality based on the workshop experience is limited, and there is a lack of specific understanding.
1 point	Almost no, or no understanding of internationality is seen through the workshop experience, and there is a lack of specific understanding.

Perspective 2: Evaluation criteria of Expression of One's Thoughts and Originality

Points	Evaluation criteria of Understanding of Internationality through the Workshop
5 points	Expresses personal thoughts concretely, and the originality and unique viewpoint are prominent.
4 points	Expresses some personal thoughts concretely, and a certain degree of originality and unique viewpoint can be seen.
3 points	Basically, expresses personal thoughts, but lacks concreteness, originality, and a unique viewpoint.
2 points	Has not expressed personal thoughts very much, and lacks originality and a unique viewpoint.

1 point	Has hardly or not at all expressed personal thoughts, and there is no sign of originality or a unique viewpoint.
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Evaluation of the Report Assignment and Evaluation Results

The evaluation was conducted by two evaluators who specialize in English education, and Intercultural Communications and creative writing, each with over five years of experience teaching English at universities in Japan. The evaluators consisted of a Japanese English teacher and a native English teacher. Evaluator 1 created the evaluation rubric and presented it to Evaluator 2, after which detailed discussions were held on the perspectives and evaluation scales. To ensure the consistency of the evaluation, the evaluation of the first few students was done jointly, and discussions were repeated until the evaluation criteria were aligned. Through this process, it was possible to ensure the reliability between the evaluators. As a result, the reliability coefficient for Perspective 1 (Internationality) was 0.83, and that for Perspective 2 (Originality) was 0.88, demonstrating a very high level of agreement.

The average scores for the report assignments of the 27 students were 3.30 points for understanding internationality and 3.31 points for originality. Three students achieved full marks of 5 points for both internationality and originality, and five students achieved scores of 4 or above. This indicates that there are students who have the ability to demonstrate a high understanding of internationality and originality.

On the other hand, some students showed room for improvement. Six students received a score of 3 points, and ten students received scores of 2 points or above. One student received the lowest rating (1 point) for understanding internationality, and two students received the lowest rating (2 points) for originality. This suggests that there were students who struggled with certain aspects of the report assignment.

The evaluations were generally consistent, suggesting a close relationship between understanding internationality and the evaluation of originality. That is, it can be interpreted that reports with an international perspective often contain original ideas as well. These results are extremely useful for teachers and serve as valuable material for finding points for improvement in future educational content and teaching methods.

Let's focus on the report from a student who achieved 5 points for both their understanding of internationality and originality (Example 1). This report expressed international understanding in the form of expressing gratitude for a presentation based on a photographer's experience in Ukraine, commenting on specific volunteer activities, and providing deep consideration from the student's perspective.

Example1: Mr. X, thank you for telling me so many impressive photos and stories. All the photos were thought-provoking, but most of all, Mr. X's background and lifestyle touched my heart. I think you make many times more people happy than others through volunteer work. I was very surprised by your energy and enthusiasm. I learned that it's important to work hard, regardless of profit or loss. I think the world will be peaceful if there are more people like you and the world needs you. I want to become a wonderful person who lives for people like you. (Original Text)
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Conversely, the report of a student who received 2 points for both their grasp of internationality and originality (Example 2) similarly expressed appreciation for the photographer's presentation. However, this report predominantly replicates the assignment's model sentences and lacks personal expression or insights from the student's perspective or experiences. (Example 2).

Example 2:

Mr. X, thank you for your amazing photos. This is a picture that your realistic photograph. It was very moved to see your photos. It was good to know the truth. Pray for peace. Your photos make me think about peace. I want to see more of your photos. Thank you again for your photos.

(Original Text)

From the reports written after the "Workshop for Enhancing International Mindset", several conjectures can be made about the effectiveness of the workshop.

Average Scores

The average score was 3.30 points out of 5 points for understanding internationality and 3.31 points out of 5 points for originality. This suggests that many students were able to gain some learning from the workshop and reflect it in their reports. The average score being moderate suggests that the workshop content was at an appropriate level for the students overall.

Existence of High Scorers

Three students obtained 5 points for both internationality and originality, and five students obtained more than 4 points. These high scores indicate that the workshop's content was particularly effective for some students. The high-scoring students demonstrated deep international understanding through the workshop (for example, peaceful daily life under the fires of war in Ukraine, the feelings of siblings caused by war, and free movement within Ukraine).

These students can be considered to have understood the content of the workshop at a high level and reflected it in their reports from their own unique perspectives.

Existence of Low Scorers

On the other hand, the presence of students who received 1 point for internationality and 2 points for originality indicates that some students might have found the workshop content challenging or they may have yet to grasp its significance fully.

Relation Between Understanding of Internationality and Originality

The consistency of the evaluation of understanding of internationality and originality suggests that the "Workshop for Enhancing International Mindset" may have also influenced the students' originality. Specifically, a deepening understanding of internationality may have made it easier for new perspectives and ideas to be born.

From these results, it can be said that the overall effect of the workshop was good. However, it is also suggested that further support and guidance are necessary for some students. In addition, since understanding of internationality contributes to originality, it is considered beneficial to continue implementing such workshops in the future.

Trends in Understanding of Internationality

- Scores for understanding of internationality are distributed widely from 1 to 5 points.
- High-scoring students are showing deep international understanding through the workshop (for example, peaceful daily life under the fires of war in Ukraine, feelings of siblings caused by war, free movement within Ukraine, etc.).
- On the other hand, low-scoring students seem to have limited or insufficient understanding.
- Many students are evaluated in the range of 3 to 4 points, showing basic international understanding, but a more specific understanding is required.

Trends in Originality

- Originality scores are also widely distributed from 2 to 5 points.
- High-scoring students express their thoughts in a concrete and creative way and have unique perspectives.
- Some students tend to have low scores for originality. They tend to stick to copying model sentences or superficial expressions, and there is a lack of consideration and expression.

Overall, students who achieve high scores demonstrate a remarkable performance in both their understanding of internationality and originality. For instance, one student articulated a revelation, remarking, “Even without using words, stories can be conveyed through photographs of Ukraine and piano performances,” effectively capturing the core essence of this workshop. Conversely, even among students with lower scores, many have encountered and grasped aspects of Ukraine’s conflict narrative and expressed their creative insights. Through the iterative process of the teacher providing feedback to these students, there is a prospect for cultivating a more profound comprehension of internationality and enhancing their distinctive perspectives.

DISCUSSION

The Workshop for Enhancing International Mindset, which combined documentary photography and piano performance, was a unique initiative undertaken at a Japanese music college. Overall, this endeavor was observed to enhance students’ international awareness significantly. Notably, high-scoring students demonstrated a profound understanding and insightful perspectives, particularly regarding the war situation in Ukraine, showcasing their unique viewpoints. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that not all students were equally impacted by the workshop.

It is imperative to emphasize that, in order to enhance international awareness, students must be made aware of the concepts of “high context” and “low context” communication. The Workshop for Enhancing International Mindset plays a pivotal role in raising this awareness by shedding light on the concept of implicit communication, which is prevalent in high-context cultures like Japan.

The reasons for lower scores in some students’ reports could be attributed to various factors, such as the content and methodology of the Workshop for Enhancing International Mindset not aligning with certain students’ learning styles, or a potential lack of prior knowledge or interest in international themes. In future iterations of this workshop at the Japanese music college, it

will be crucial to design it to encourage active student participation, the sharing of diverse perspectives, and the deepening of individual experiences and understanding. Early consideration of students' interests and needs during the design phase is essential, along with creating an inclusive workshop environment where active participation is encouraged and diverse perspectives and opinions are respected.

Furthermore, the workshop should actively focus on making students aware of the distinctions between high and low-context communication styles, ensuring that they recognize and understand the potential information gaps that may arise in intercultural interactions. By doing so, students will be better equipped to navigate international contexts confidently and effectively.

In the selection of workshop instructors at the Japanese music college, it is necessary for the instructor to possess not only professional knowledge and experience but also the ability to present information in an easily understandable manner for students. Instructors should also possess skills that foster active student participation and address students in a way that enables them to understand and respect different cultural backgrounds and perspectives. Encouraging students to develop their perspectives and express them confidently is equally important.

To promote and expand the Workshop for Enhancing International Mindset as part of the Japanese music college's efforts to improve students' international consciousness, the following suggestions can be made:

- Modularization and reuse: It would be beneficial to modularize the content of the workshop, making it adaptable and reusable in various educational contexts.
- Development of digital resources: Creating online educational resources, including video material presentations, video creation tools, and pre- and post-meetings using platforms like Zoom, can be highly effective. These resources eliminate geographical restrictions, are reusable, and can be accessed by a broader range of students.
- Cooperation with other schools: Collaboration with different schools, universities, and educational institutions offers the opportunity to provide the workshop to a broader range of students. Potential forms of cooperation include joint program development and establishing student exchange programs between different educational institutions.

Through these suggestions, the Workshop for Enhancing International Mindset, which combines photography and music, will become accessible to more students, contributing to the nurturing of international awareness among Japanese music colleges.

Hosting the Workshop for Enhancing International Mindset at a Japanese music college provides students with unique opportunities to understand music from other countries and cultures, and engage in meaningful dialogues with diverse perspectives. The emphasis on such workshops at Japanese music colleges not only enhances students' self-expression skills but also broadens their perspective on intercultural understanding.

While beyond the scope of this study, it is worth noting that the Ukrainian composer featured in the workshop was inspired to finish his musical composition upon learning how the students

reacted to the unfinished piece. Building upon this unintended outcome, future research might explore the association between investigating the reciprocal influence of internationalization workshops on both students and working professionals.

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Appendix

Worksheet: Workshop for Enhancing International Mindset

Documentary photography and Piano Performance (June 14, 2023)

- 1) Take photos during the workshop.
- 2) Select a scene that makes you think, "This is it!" and post it on the class slide.
- 3) Write a description of this photo.
- 4) Decide who you want to show the photo to. The content you write (description style, wording) will change depending on the recipient.
- 5) Write a letter to him / her.

Sample Letters

Example 1: For the photographer X

Dear Mr. X,

Thank you for your wonderful photos at the workshop. This is a picture that you ~~ I was very moved by your photo and presentation. The women in your picture ~~ Your photos make me think about peace. I can see ~~ It was a great chance to get to know you and to take a picture of you. Thank you again.

Signature

Example 2:

Dear mom,

I want to show this picture to my mother. Today in English class, we had a workshop with a photo exhibition and a piano performance. This is a picture of today's English class. It was in a classroom of No. 5 building. A Ukrainian pianist and a Japanese photographer came to the class. The pianist played ~~ . The photos are about ~~ I enjoyed the workshop very much. I learned ~~ Mr. X is having a photo exhibition at Kichijoji. I want to visit there.

Signature