



ICT-Mediated Kaiwa Learning for Intercultural Communication: A Literature Review

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Abstract

As Japanese is increasingly used a medium of communication among non-native speakers, often referred to as Japanese as a Lingua Franca (JLF), Japanese language education must respond to the growing need for both linguistic and intercultural competence. This is particularly relevant in Southeast Asian contexts, including Indonesia, Vietnam, Thailand, and the Philippines, where Japanese is learned as a foreign language rather than used as an official language. This article presents a literature review of ICT-based kaiwa (conversation) learning in intercultural exchange settings. By examining previous studies on telecollaboration and other forms of ICT-mediated interaction, the review identifies the pedagogical potential of combining synchronous web conferencing with asynchronous digital platforms. The findings suggest that such practices can strengthen learner motivation, foster cultural awareness, and support the negotiation of meaning in intercultural communication. Moreover, ICT enables authentic interactional opportunities that transcend geographical limitations. These findings offer an important basis for designing Japanese language instruction that integrates intercultural understanding and promotes more effective communication among learners in Southeast Asia.

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, Japanese language education has been increasingly shaped by the integration of information and communication technology (ICT). A wide range of digital resources, including online learning platforms and synchronous communication tools such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams, and Google Meet, has expanded the possibilities for language instruction and learner interaction. This development accelerated markedly during the COVID-19 pandemic, which normalized technology-mediated teaching across educational contexts. Within Japanese language pedagogy, these changes have been particularly significant for *kaiwa* (conversation), as ICT has enabled more flexible, accessible, and interactive forms of spoken communication practice. As a result, the teaching of Japanese conversation is no longer confined to traditional classroom settings, but is increasingly embedded in digitally mediated environments that support real-time participation and interaction (Durbidge & McClellan, 2022).

Recent academic observations (Freiermuth & Tomida, 2022; Rakhshandehroo, 2025; Hamada & Iwasaki, 2024) indicate that numerous educational institutions have effectively integrated Zoom into *kaiwa* (conversation) and intercultural understanding curricula through collaborative cultural exchange programs. These initiatives connect learners with native Japanese students from higher education institutions in Japan, illustrating how ICT significantly streamlines the acquisition of conversational fluency. By supporting these digital tools, Japanese language learners in Indonesia can engage in authentic, face-to-face discourse without the logistical necessity of physical travel or formal invitations to the host country. Consequently, ICT serves as a vital bridge, overcoming geographical barriers to facilitate real-time, interactive learning experiences.

The integration of ICT facilitates the design of highly practical *kaiwa* curricula by enabling implementative activities where learners can directly apply their linguistic knowledge in real-time interactions with native speakers.

However, since conversation is a fundamental act of communication—particularly when involving participants from diverse cultural backgrounds—linguistic proficiency alone is insufficient. Consequently, it is imperative to incorporate pedagogical materials and activities specifically designed to enhance intercultural communicative competence. In this context, learners must not only master the mechanics of Japanese conversation but also develop a deep understanding of the cultural norms and social expectations inherent in Japanese-speaking communities.

Based on the preceding analysis, it is evident that Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) is a critical component of Japanese language mastery. Beyond linguistic proficiency, an in-depth understanding of the interlocutor's cultural background facilitates more seamless communication and fosters the development of positive interpersonal relationships. This perspective is strictly aligned with the JF Standard for Japanese-Language Education (2017), which advocates for a holistic approach to language acquisition that incorporates both sociolinguistic and pragmatic competencies.

Within this framework, sociolinguistic competence requires learners to employ Japanese appropriately by adhering to specific interactional norms, while carefully considering the social hierarchy, the nature of the relationship with the interlocutor, and the situational context. Furthermore, pragmatic competence is divided into two distinct sub-competencies: discourse competence, defined as the ability to logically structure and sustain a conversation, and functional competence, which refers to the capacity to use language effectively to achieve specific communicative goals (The Japan Foundation, 2017). By synthesizing these sociolinguistic and pragmatic skills, learners can navigate diverse social environments with the necessary sensitivity to both the interlocutor's expectations and the communicative objective.

In the contemporary global context, the use of the Japanese language has expanded beyond the traditional dyad of native and non-

native speakers. Increasingly, Japanese serves as a Lingua Franca (JLF) among non-native speakers from diverse national backgrounds (Yamada, 2021; Takei et al, 2021). Empirical observations indicate that Japanese is frequently used as a primary medium of communication by foreign nationals residing, studying, or working in Japan, including those from Indonesia, Vietnam, Thailand, the Philippines, etc. (Southeast Asian countries) to interact with one another. This shift signifies that Japanese is no longer merely an instructional target or a bridge to native speakers, but a vital tool for intra-community communication among learners worldwide.

Furthermore, the potential for Japanese to be used as a shared language between learners from different countries, especially from Southeast Asian countries is growing, even among those who have never visited Japan. This is reflected in the contributions of Southeast Asian countries such as Indonesia, Vietnam, and Thailand, which are among the regions with the highest number of Japanese language learners in the world (The Japan Foundation, 2026). Furthermore, the increasing number of workers as nurses in Japan from Indonesia, Vietnam, and the Philippines enables them to communicate using Japanese as a lingua franca (Japan International Cooperation Agency, 2023). Consequently, the scope of intercultural communicative competence must be broadened; it is no longer sufficient to focus solely on the native-to-non-native dynamic. Instead, fostering intercultural understanding is equally essential for facilitating effective and harmonious communication among diverse groups of Japanese learners, such as those in Southeast Asian countries, who utilize the language as a common communicative platform.

ICT-mediated cultural exchange offers considerable potential for *kaiwa* (conversation) learning among non-native speakers, including learners in Southeast Asian contexts who use Japanese as a shared communicative resource. Compared with conventional face-to-face exchange programs, this approach broadens access to interaction by reducing the logistical

and financial constraints associated with mobility and international travel. Existing studies have shown that ICT can support spoken interaction, learner engagement, and intercultural exchange in a range of foreign language settings. However, scholarship specifically addressing *kaiwa* learning among non-native speakers of Japanese, particularly in relation to intercultural communication through ICT, remains limited.

This gap is especially important in light of the growing role of Japanese as a lingua franca (JLF) among learners from different national and linguistic backgrounds. While previous research has largely focused on interaction between native and non-native speakers, less attention has been paid to how Japanese may function as a medium of intercultural communication among non-native speakers themselves, including learners in Southeast Asia. A clearer understanding of how ICT-mediated *kaiwa* learning has been conceptualized and implemented in existing studies is therefore needed in order to identify prevailing themes, pedagogical tendencies, and areas that remain underexplored.

Against this background, the present article offers a literature review of research on ICT-based *kaiwa* learning in intercultural communication contexts, with particular attention to studies relevant to Japanese language education. The review brings together scholarship on telecollaboration, digital intercultural exchange, and conversation-oriented language learning in order to examine how ICT has been used to support intercultural communicative competence. By mapping the characteristics, tendencies, and limitations of previous studies, this article aims to provide a conceptual and pedagogical foundation for future work on Japanese language learning in digitally mediated intercultural settings.

METHOD

A literature review is fundamental across all academic disciplines and research projects. By delineating relevant previous studies, researchers can effectively map and assess the existing research landscape, thereby refining study objectives and providing a strong justification for

the problem formulation and hypotheses (Snyder, 2019).

In this study, the literature review was conducted through a systematic search for scholarly articles addressing the intersections of ICT and foreign language pedagogy—specifically Japanese—as well as ICT-mediated intercultural communication and conversational learning. The search strategy involved utilizing targeted keywords across prominent research portals, including JSTOR and CiNii, in addition to academic search engines such as Google Scholar. From the initial pool of results, a rigorous filtering process was applied to distinguish between relevant and irrelevant literature. This selection process yielded 15 key studies that directly inform the connection of ICT, Japanese *kaiwa* instruction, and the development of intercultural communicative competence.

The subsequent phase of the review involved extracting key information from each selected article, followed by a synthesis of findings to derive comprehensive conclusions. To ensure a systematic and rigorous analysis, the data from the selected studies were organized into a comparative framework, adapting the

methodological approach proposed by Dewanty, Kusriani, and Putri (2022).

This modified analytical matrix includes specific categories: research title and year, methodology, objectives, activity participant, languages used, digital media employed, and key research outcomes. This structured categorization allows for a clear comparison of variables across the 15 studies. Following the tabulation, the contents are synthesized narratively to highlight trends, gaps, and pedagogical implications for ICT-based *kaiwa* learning.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Following the established selection criteria, 15 peer-reviewed papers were systematically analyzed. From these documents, the researcher extracted and synthesized critical data points to provide a comprehensive overview of the current research landscape. The essential findings and structural characteristics of these studies are detailed in Table 1.

Table 1. Summary of Identified Literature and Research Characteristics

No	Research Title (Author & Year)	Research Methods	Activity Objectives	Activity Participants	Language Used	Media Employed	Research Outcomes
1	Further Student Perceptions of Online Intercultural Collaborations in the IVEProject (Edo Forsythe, 2025)	Grounded theory was used to analyze the oral reflections of 59 participants.	To share and learn other cultures through online collaboration during one semester	59 students of English language department at universities in Japan	English	IVEProject online collaboration platform	Students have positive attitude to online collaboration and feel improvement in their language skills
2	Culture, confidence and connections : Telecollaboration as a	Questionnaire and telecollaboration activities	To enhance cultural awareness, to increase L2 learning motivation, and to	53 Thai students and four Japanese students	Japanese	Zoom	Cultural awareness, Japanese as L2 learning motivation improved, and the

	springboard for successful JFL learning (Mark R. Freiermuth & Ikuko Tomida, 2022)		evaluate the use of Zoom				telecollaborative activity using Zoom was effective
3	Intercultural Communicative Competence in Higher Education through Telecollaboration: Typology and Development (E. Gutiérrez-Santiuste & M. Ritacco-Real, 2023)	Content analysis of communication between university colleagues using frequency and percentage indices.	To evaluate the evolution of communication and the influence of discussion topics on students' competence	Students in Spain and partners international	English	VC. Direct	The results show domination communication behavioral, followed by affective and cognitive, which develop along time
4	Online Conversation Project Between Universities in Japan and the US: Its Rationale and Design for Integrating Research and Pedagogy (Mitsuo Takei, Miho Fujiwara & Mitsuaki Shimojo, 2021)	Likert-scale questionnaire, semi-structured interviews	To enable both L1 speakers and L2 learners of Japanese to engage in JLF interactions and learn from each other through actual language use and cultural exchange experiences	10 Japanese undergraduates and 15 undergraduate and graduate students (Japanese learners)	Japanese	Zoom, Google Forms, Slack	The type of exchange project proved promising as an internationalization effort and in local corpus research and pedagogy
5	Intercultural Learning Through a Telecollaboration project during three month with	Telecollaboration project during three month with	To facilitate intercultural interaction and	17 Taiwanese students and	English	Online video conferencing, LINE	Sensitivity culture and appreciation to the culture

	ation Project (Eriko Katsumata & Siao-cing Guo, 2020)	survey before and after activity	exchange culture information across countries	21 students Japan		groups, and Flipgrid.	of each participant improved significantly
6	Using Telecollaboration to Connect Australian and Japanese Children: A Case Study (Shinji Okumura & Masae Uekusa, 2018)	Qualitative case study, utilizing participant and student reflection	To provide opportunities for authentic activities that stimulate intercultural language understanding from an early stage	Students in Australia and Japan	Japanese and English	Social networking sites Edmodo social	Information exchange via SNS has been shown to rise student motivation, enabling them to navigate cultural differences and engage in meaningful language acquisition
7	Creation of Media and Information Literacy Education Based on Cross-Cultural Communication (Jun Sakamoto, 2013)	Descriptive-conceptual review of media literacy education literacy practice	To develop learning community through intercultural exchange	Elementary school students in Japan, teachers in New York, USA and schools in Cambodia	Japanese and English	Skype as synchronous tool	Real-time communication enables resonance that strengthens the communication system within a learning community.
8	ICT Tools in Intercultural Communication Pedagogy: Their Impact on Speaking Competence and Students' Strategies in Negotiation Meaning (Ruslan Hasyim, Nurdin Noni, & Sahril Nur, 2026)	Qualitative case study design, utilizing classroom observation and semi-structured interviews	To enhance speaking competency and facilitate the expression of cultural identity within the context of intercultural interaction	25 students of English language education and three lecturers in Indonesia	English	Video conferencing tools and communication application supporters	ICT helps student in negotiate meaning and become an important medium in culture identity expression
9	Telecollaboration in Japanese among Spanish and Finnish Students: Its	Qualitative study through observation and student communication	To facilitate intercultural communication and mediation languages in distance	Students in Spain and Finland	Japanese language as Language foreign	Telecollaboration platforms and digital communication tools	Telecollaboration create a students' sense of challenge increase. However self confidence

	Potential for Motivation and Mediation (Kyoko Ito-Morales & Rie Fuse, 2025)	ve reflection activity					decrease because of differences in language competence levels. On the other hand, telecollaboration between students who have different competence can help development and practice of mediation competence, and contribute to the meaning construction
10	The Impact of Internet-Based International Small-Group Activities on Students in the Countryside (M. Mayuroh, et al, 2025)	Case studies on students in Thailand and Japan with skills test and registration questionnaires	To develop students' global awareness through communication with overseas colleague	12 high school students in Taiwan and one class of high school students in Japan	English	SMILE project and online test tools for participant selection	Class collaboration through the internet has an impact positive on students and provide international environment which allows communication in English, grow culture awareness in high school students
11	Oral translanguageing in Telecollaboration: Effects on EFL Learner Intercultural Awareness, Learning and Communicative Competence (Hui-Chin Yeh, et al., 2024)	Qualitative study of a five-week multimodal telecollaboration	To increase intercultural awareness and speaking ability through oral translanguageing practice	21 EFL students from Taiwan in a telecollaboration program with partners from New Zealand	English, Mandarin, and Hokkien dialects	Environment and telecollaboration program	Translanguageing as a support for oral argumentation, critical reflection, and enhanced cultural awareness

12	International Students' Experience of Learning to Speak Interculturally on an Online Platform (Nico Irawan et al, 2022)	Qualitative phenomenological research through photovoice methodology, virtual observation, and interview data	To give access language and culture learning in synchronous and asynchronous without geographical boundaries	10 students international from Cambodia, China, South Korea, and the Philippines who studied at institutions in Taiwan	English	DingTalk app.	Online platforms facilitate students' study basic needs and provide flexibility in intercultural interaction
13	Insights from the Symposium on Intercultural Classes using the ICT (Jun Iio, Shigenori Wakabayashi, & Junji Sakurai, 2021)	Descriptive-evaluative study: International high school collaboration project	To enhance international communication and global awareness through English	Students from two high schools in Japan and two high schools in Taiwan	English	Online meeting tools and learning support systems Dialogbook	This project facilitates international communication for students while streamlining data analysis for instructors
14	Telecollaboration: Fostering Foreign Language Learning at a Distance (Ayse Taskiran, 2019)	Qualitative study with questionnaire after collaboration activity for five weeks	To get understanding about experience related telecollaboration activity	100 EFL students from China and Universities in Turkey	English	WeChat	Telecollaboration believed contribute towards the language learning process, motivation, and intercultural communication skill
15	Telecollaboration for Intercultural Learning: An Overview of Projects Involving Japan (Nathaniel Carney, 2006)	Literature study (overview) of various previous telecollaborative research project	To build effective telecollaboration partnership for learning language and culture	University students in Japan and international partners	English	Email, synchronous chat, video-conference	Effective telecollaboration connect student in a cross culture through communication mediated by computer

Analysis of the synthesized data indicates that the majority of ICT-mediated activities in foreign language pedagogy—specifically those targeting oral proficiency and intercultural

communication—yield overwhelmingly positive outcomes. Regarding the technological media employed, several studies (Gutiérrez-Santiuste & Ritacco-Real, 2023; Katsumata & Guo, 2020)

demonstrate that telecollaboration via video conferencing and integrated digital platforms significantly enhances students' cultural sensitivity and awareness.

Beyond mere linguistic acquisition, students develop an appreciation for cultural diversity through direct interaction with both native speakers and international peers. Furthermore, the diverse application of tools such as Zoom, Flipgrid, WeChat, and the Dialogbook system has been shown to facilitate more fluid interactional patterns. The findings suggest that a combination of synchronous video interactions and asynchronous text or recorded video messaging provides learners with the necessary flexibility to effectively negotiate meaning and reflect critically on their own cultural identities.

Regarding participant motivation and engagement, empirical findings from Forsythe (2025) and Taskiran (2019) underscore a significant increase in learner motivation and the development of consistently positive attitudes. These studies suggest that language acquisition becomes profoundly more meaningful when the target language serves as a vehicle for sharing authentic cultural narratives, rather than being confined to the rote practice of grammatical structures within a traditional classroom setting.

The various activities reviewed in the articles above demonstrate positive results. However, they also highlight the importance of structured task design. Without teacher guidance and clear objectives, online collaboration risks becoming shallow conversations. Furthermore, internet infrastructure remains a critical success factor, particularly in projects involving schools in rural areas (Mayuroh et al., 2025).

The literature reviewed above indicates that the majority of telecollaboration activities utilize English. Among the 15 activities described, only four (Sakamoto, 2013; Takei et al, 2021; Freiermuth & Tomida, 2022; Ito-Morales & Fuse, 2025) employ Japanese. Notably, Ito-Morales and Fuse (2025) demonstrate the use of Japanese as a lingua franca (JLF) among foreign language speakers, specifically students in Spain and Finland. This suggests that telecollaboration can effectively enhance Japanese speaking and

conversational competence, if participants possess comparable levels of language proficiency.

CONCLUSION

Recent advances in ICT have reshaped Japanese language pedagogy from a relatively static and classroom-bound model into a more dynamic and flexible form of learning. Within this development, telecollaboration has emerged as a particularly important approach, as the studies reviewed consistently show its potential to enhance cultural sensitivity, intercultural awareness, and learners' pragmatic ability to negotiate meaning. By engaging in authentic interaction with speakers from diverse backgrounds, learners move beyond the memorization of linguistic forms and begin to develop a more active understanding of cultural differences while also reflecting on their own identities.

The literature further indicates that the integration of authentic cultural content into digitally mediated interaction increases the relevance and perceived value of language learning. In this sense, ICT-based *kaiwa* learning does not simply support speaking practice, but also contributes to stronger learner motivation and more active engagement than grammar-centered classroom approaches alone. At the same time, the success of such learning depends heavily on how interaction is designed and guided pedagogically.

As the reviewed studies suggest, online exchange does not automatically lead to meaningful intercultural learning. Without clearly structured tasks, careful scaffolding, and explicit instructional objectives, interaction may remain superficial and limited to small talk. In addition, technical factors, especially the reliability of internet infrastructure, continue to shape the quality and sustainability of ICT-mediated collaboration. These findings indicate that the educational value of telecollaboration depends not only on access to technology, but also on thoughtful instructional design.

Taken together, the findings of this literature review suggest that ICT should be

directed not merely toward efficiency in language instruction, but toward the development of relationship-building and intercultural understanding among non-native speakers of Japanese, including learners in Southeast Asia. In this context, Japanese can function as a *lingua franca* that supports mutual understanding and cooperation across national and cultural boundaries. From this perspective, ICT should be understood not only as a technical medium for language learning, but as a pedagogical space in which learners from different backgrounds can negotiate meaning and build cross-cultural connections.

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