

# REINTERPRETING INTERCULTURAL LANGUAGE LEARNING: JAPANESE LANGUAGE EDUCATION AND JAPANESE STUDIES IN AN ERA OF MULTI/PLURICULTURALISM

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**Abstract:** In this paper, the author first gives an overview of ILL, which has been strongly advocated in Australian language education and language learning since the 1990s, and prove that the “third place” that was the goal at that time has now become a reality, using the relationship between Indonesia and Japan as an example. However, the author also criticizes the fact that traditional ILL viewed culture as static and fixed and point out that culture in modern society is inherently more dynamic and complex. As a result, the author proposes a new model for ILL incorporating the concepts of multi/plurilingualism and multi/pluriculturalism, not as a flat, two-dimensional framework, which was used before but as a more three-dimensional, holistic approach. The author also emphasizes that to realize this vision, it is essential to integrate language and culture in education, as ILL has consistently advocated. Specifically, the need for Japanese language education and Japanese cultural studies to advance in tandem.

**Keywords:** Intercultural Language Learning, Japanese Studies, The Third Place, The Fourth Place, Multiculturalism, Pluriculturalism

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## INTRODUCTION

This paper introduces the concept of Intercultural Language Learning (ILL), advocated in Australian language education and foreign language education since the late 1990s, and examines its contemporary significance. Furthermore, it re-examines the relationship between Japanese Studies and Japanese language education.

Nearly thirty years have passed since ILL was first proposed. some may say its role has been fulfilled. However, to state the conclusion upfront: while its original aims may have been realized, its fundamental principles deserve renewed attention precisely in this current era, where social fragmentation is a pressing issue. The author argues that a contemporary version of ILL is necessary for today's world. This paper briefly introduces the ILL concept in Chapter 2. Chapter 3 confirms that ILL's original objectives have been largely achieved, using examples from Indonesia and Japan. However, achieving the objectives does not mean the end of the story. From chapter 4, the author examines, using Japanese case studies, how the era has already progressed to the next stage, necessitating a new understanding of ILL. Chapter 7 presents what

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might be called a modern version of the ILL concept in the form of a model diagram. Finally, Chapter 8 discusses how Japanese studies and Japanese language education relate from this perspective.

Thus, while this study incorporates several case examples as data, it centers on theoretical analysis. In this sense, it differs somewhat from traditional Japanese studies based on a sociological approach that uses cases as data to uncover underlying principles and mechanisms. Some readers may find this approach jarring, but it also serves as a message from the author, a researcher in language education, to the field of Japanese studies. Language education research includes a genre called practice-based research, and the style of this thesis is grounded in that approach. Practical research, in a nutshell, is a type of study that seeks to develop principles, albeit hypothetical, from classroom teaching practices. Its goal is to improve classroom activities and, more broadly, the society behind them through this practice. In this sense, practical research can be described as hypothesis-generating research and participatory research. The author believes Japanese studies should also follow this approach. This stems from the idea that researchers should not merely analyze Japan from an objective standpoint but should actively engage with the underlying social issues themselves.

## **WHAT IS ILL (INTERCULTURAL LANGUAGE LEARNING)?**

ILL stands for “Intercultural Language Learning,” an approach that has been actively promoted in Australian foreign language education since the 1990s. The term “approach” is used here because ILL refers not to a specific syllabus or teaching method, but to an attitude toward foreign language education. ILL is based on the understanding that “language and culture are inextricably intertwined. Culture shapes language structure and language use.” Based on this understanding, cultural learning, language learning, and linguistic learning are integrated and taught as a unified whole.

The emphasis on culture in language learning stems from Australia's shift in the 1970s away from the so-called “White Australia Policy” and towards actively welcoming immigrants, transforming it into a multilingual and multicultural nation. Consequently, the goals of language education and learning were set towards realizing a multilingual and multicultural society, leading to the adoption of the ILL philosophy. A key concept emerging here is “the third place.” “The third place” is described as “the ability to create a comfortable space for learners rather than imposing one's own culture as ‘the first place’ or imitating the target culture as ‘the second place’” (Lo Bianco, Liddicoat & Crozet, 1999). In other words, the aim here is to prevent conflicts and friction between languages and cultures by having each individual create this “third place” through language education and learning, thereby building multilingual and multicultural societies.

Although ILL is not syllabus nor teaching method, but rather a stance (position/approach) toward foreign language education, which proposes five principles to be considered when conducting ILL. The first is “Active Construction,” which refers to “encouraging learners to actively participate in knowledge-building activities within a socio-cultural context, and structuring lessons in such a way.” The second is “Making Connections,” which refers to “connecting (or guiding learners to connect) the knowledge they already have with the knowledge they have newly acquired, the knowledge written in multiple texts, and the knowledge they have learned in different subjects.” The third is “Social Interaction,” which refers to “assigning tasks that involve interaction between different languages and cultures.” The fourth is “Reflection,” which involves guiding learners toward deeper meta-level consideration of ‘language’ and “culture” through awareness and discussion of linguistic and

cultural similarities and differences between their native language/culture and the target language/culture. The fifth is “Responsibility,” which involves cultivating an attitude of taking responsibility for goals.

However, these explanations may be a bit abstract, so it would be easier to understand with a concrete example. The author was dispatched as a Japanese language education expert to the Japan Foundation Sydney Japanese Cultural Center in Sydney, Australia, from 2007 to 2010, and one example of a lesson incorporating the ILL approach developed during that time is shown in Table 1 below.

This was created with the assumption that it would be used by students learning Japanese in junior high school and senior high school, and linguistically, it focuses on reviewing katakana. However, the main focus of this activity is Japanese food culture and comparing it with their own countries and cultures (as mentioned earlier, Australia has a large immigrant population, and many people do not speak English as their first language).

Table 1: Example of a lesson incorporating the ILL approach  
(Jonak, Negishi, and Matsumoto, 2008)

<p>Objectives:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Become familiar with katakana.</li> <li>2. Be able to write about popular foods in Australia using katakana.</li> <li>3. Learn about Western-style foods that are popular in Japan.</li> <li>4. Think about Australian cuisine in the context of Japanese culture.</li> </ol>
<p>Lesson Flow</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Practice katakana using flashcards, pictures, and photographs. Pay particular attention to how the pronunciation changes when translating English into katakana and how it is written.</li> <li>2. Show students an actual menu written in Japanese and ask them to think about what the foods written in katakana are in English.</li> <li>3. Discuss what kind of restaurant the menu is from and what kind of customers frequent the restaurant based on the content and design of the menu.</li> <li>4. Discuss the differences between Australian and Japanese menus. Discuss what can be inferred from the menu about the differences between Australian cafes/restaurants and Japanese ones.</li> <li>5. Check the contents written in katakana on the menu. If students do not know what the dish is, have them look it up on the internet. After checking the contents, have them discuss what their favorite dishes are and what they dislike.</li> <li>6. Students will be divided into groups to carry out the following project activities. “Let's create a menu for an Australian restaurant in Tokyo. Think of dishes that Japanese people would like or be interested in.”</li> <li>7. Once the menu is complete, conduct a role-play conversation the restaurant in Japan.</li> </ol>

## HAS “THE THIRD PLACE” BEEN REALIZED? EXAMPLES FROM INDONESIA AND JAPAN

### The influence of Japanese city pop on the Indonesian music band “Ikkubaru”

It is now 2025, nearly 30 years since the ILL concept was proposed in Australia, and a quarter of a century since it was adopted in foreign language education also in other countries. As previously cited from Lo Bianco, Liddicoat & Crozet (1999), the cultivation of the ability to create a “the third place”- a place that is neither fixated on the learner's own culture (“the first

place”) nor imitative of the target culture (“the second place”), but rather a comfortable place for the learner - is emphasized in ILL. This fact implies that such a “third place” had not yet been realized at that time, which is precisely why its necessity and importance were advocated.” However, how about now? Has the creation of a “the third place” as a “comfortable place for learners themselves” become a relatively common phenomenon?

Here, the author would like to examine these questions using examples from Indonesia and Japan. Indonesia is, so to speak, Australia's neighbor country, and had already been adopted to a certain extent by the 2000s. The author was also dispatched to Indonesia as a senior Japanese language education expert by the Japan Foundation from 2011 to 2014, where he actively conducted Japanese language teacher training incorporating ILL-based concepts. At that time, Indonesia had the second-largest number of Japanese language learners in the world (previously, Australia had held that position), and a kind of Japanese language learning boom was spreading. Although at that time, most Japanese language learners and fans of Japanese culture simply enjoyed Japanese culture as it was. In terms of ILL, they were still confined to the “second place.”<sup>2</sup>

However, changes began to appear in the late 2010s. In the author’s personal experience, while listening to a radio program while driving, he heard a melody that was both nostalgic and new. The author learned that it was a song by an Indonesian band called Ikkbaru. Upon further investigation, the author found out that they had signed a contract with a Japanese record company and were also providing songs to Japanese idol groups. According to a website article written in 2019 (Miyuchi, 2016), “ Ikkbaru, formed on Christmas Eve 2011 in Bandung (a city on the western part of Java Island, about 200 km from Jakarta), was influenced by Japanese pop music with funk and soul grooves, such as Tatsuro Yamashita and Toshiki Kadomatsu, and began their activities. In addition to original songs, they have released numerous covers of Japanese pop songs online. They have taken songs by musicians such as Tatsuro Yamashita, Yumi Matsutoya, Minako Yoshida, Denki Groove, and Kirinji, updated them in their own style, and incorporated them into their songs. This must be an example of creating a “third place” that is neither clinging to one's own culture as the “first place” nor imitating the target culture as the “second place,” but rather a place that is comfortable for oneself. In fact, in a 2020 interview (Shibasaki, 2020), the following exchange took place between Muhammad Ikkbaru, the leader of Ikkbaru, and the interviewer. (The original text is in Japanese. The translation is by the author.)

*—On the other hand, I feel that the quality of Japanese city pop-style songs has improved even further. Do you still listen to them as enthusiastically as before?*

M: Not as enthusiastically as before, but I listen to them whenever I want to indulge in nostalgia or sing alone. These days, I rarely listen to city pop like Tatsuro Yamashita, but his approach to melody and harmony will continue to be useful when writing and producing songs.

*—In recent years, city pop seems to have spread to include Japanese casual users and Western audiences. What do you think of this situation?*

M: We believe we were the first to bring city pop to Indonesia, so it’s very exciting! Of course, other Indonesian city pop bands might think the same way... (laughs).

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<sup>2</sup> One example of this is JKT48, the Indonesian version of AKB48. Although they sang some original songs, they mainly covered AKB48 songs, and fans enjoyed feeling the presence of AKB48 behind JKT48.

—*What is the current state of city pop popularity in Indonesia?*

M: Recently, city pop listeners have gradually begun to emerge, and I'm really happy that many local fans are getting to know Ikkbaru.

—*Can you tell us about any movements or artists you're paying attention to in the Indonesian music scene these days?*

M: Blue House, CSCD, Olive Tree... There are so many great musicians out there. I think they all have the potential to gain huge popularity.

—*Do you get inspired by these up-and-coming artists?*

M: Yes, I do. But in terms of direct influence on us, I'd say it's the artists who have been around for a long time, especially Maliq & D'essentials, Sore, and Santamonica.

Here, it is mentioned that they have been greatly influenced by what is known as Japanese “city pop,” represented by Tatsuro Yamashita, but at the same time, it is also mentioned that they have been significantly influenced by Indonesian music bands like Maliq & D'essentials, Sore, and Santamonica, as well as by their contemporaries like Blue House, CSCD, and Olive Tree, with whom they mutually influence each other. This is an example of how the Indonesian music scene as “the first place,” and the Japanese music scene as “the second place,” have been fused together to create “the third place” with their own unique originality.

### **The Popularity of Indonesian Dance Music “Funkot” in Japan's Club Music Scene and Its Japanese Evolution**

On the other hand, looking at the music scene in Japan, it is interesting to note that Indonesian dance music (club music) called Funkot became popular among some enthusiasts in the late 2010s. According to Mandokoro Takano aka DJ. Jet Baron, who introduced Funkot to Japan as the self-proclaimed “Funkot Goodwill Ambassador”, Funkot is described as “music born in the Kota district of Jakarta, Indonesia, which emerged in the late 1990s when house music entered Indonesia. Local DJs found playing it as-is boring, so they modified it by incorporating rhythmic patterns and elements from local popular and ethnic music and accelerated its tempo” (Takagi, 2020). Its appeal lies in the speed of the beat and the “anything goes” attitude of “if it gets you pumped up, it's a win” (ibid.). Initially, it was used in Japan's club scene as a kind of oddball music for comedic effect, but it gradually gained popularity due to its unique addictive quality.

From the perspective of “the third place,” it is interesting that Funkot evolved uniquely in Japan by incorporating Japanese anime songs (*Anison*) arranged to the Funkot rhythm. Originally, Funkot was already a “third place” in that it was an Indonesian arrangement of American or European house music, but by fusing with Japanese anime songs, it further developed into a uniquely Japanese “third place.” This movement did not fade away but has grown to the point where an annual Funkot Festival or Funkot *Matsuri* is now held in Akihabara, known as the holy land of anime (MOGURA,2024). The name “*Matsuri*(festival)” is also quintessentially Japanese.

### **DEVELOPMENTAL REINTERPRETATION OF ILL (1): FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF NECESSITY**

In these ways, we can say the concept of “the third place” have been realized to a certain extent. Of course, it cannot be said that this is solely the result of ILL (incidentally, Ikkbaru sings in Japanese and even conducted MCs in Japanese during performances in Japan, suggesting that

they have experience learning Japanese), but it is a fact that what was still an “ideal” in 1999 has now become a reality. In 1999, living interculturally was still considered an ideal, but for us in 2025, living interculturally has become a part of our daily life.

So, has ILL's way of thinking and approach become outdated and a thing of the past? Of course, such questions and doubts will arise. But the author does not think so. This is because, at present, what we call “the third place” is only being created and shared among a select group of fans of something, or in other words, only on the fan communities, which gatherings of fans with a high level of enthusiasm. Even if this “the third place” is shared among fans with such intensity or density, it has not yet spread to other people in the other areas. At this moment, “the third place” is limited to those who can share it, and it is not open to those who cannot understand it.

When looking at the current state of society from a broader perspective, this is evident. If the goal of “the third place” is to become intercultural, which means the fusion of culture and values, it must be acknowledged that the current society is moving toward division rather than fusion. Typical examples can be found in the political situation in the US and Europe. But in Japan as well, it is still fresh in our memories that in the 2025 Upper House election, political parties that hinted at anti-foreigner sentiments and those advocating Japan or Japanese people first gained momentum, even if they did not explicitly state so. Considering that ILL originally aimed for multicultural or intercultural it could be said that reality is moving in the opposite direction. Therefore, now more than ever, ILL's philosophy needs to fulfill its original meaning and purpose.

## **NEW TRENDS SEEN IN THE SUCCESS OF “GUNDAM GQUUUUUUX”**

On the previous chapter, the author mentioned that “at present, what we call “the third place” is only being created and shared among a select group of fans of something.” And in fan communities “the third place” is basically developed as so-called “secondary creations.” Although this “secondary creation” still faces numerous copyright issues, the characteristic feature of this approach is that a particular work is selected and reinterpreted from the perspective of its secondary creator, resulting in the creation of a new work unique to that creator. There, “the third place” is being created as a comfortable place for that creator. But also, these works are then circulated as products through events like Comic market. or *Comike*. So, in a way, “the third place” is no longer merely a comfortable place for oneself but has become a comfortable place for others as well.

However, the current situation is still internal consumption among those with passionate enthusiasm (i.e., “*doujin*”). The challenge for the future is how to expand this beyond the *doujin* community and how to develop it into a more open place society.

In this point, we will focus on the existence of professionals who are active beyond the *doujin* level. A prominent example of this is Mr. Hideaki Anno, who is originally known as the director of the “Neon Genesis EVANGELION” series and later created or produced “*Shin Godzilla*” “*Shin EVANGELION*,” and “*Shin Kamen Rider*.” Anno's “*Shin (new)*” series is a fusion of the original work and Anno's own talent or creativity. So, we can say these works are “the third place.” for him.

Here, we will look at Anno's latest work as of 2025 (though he is participating as a screenwriter rather than a director), “Gundam GQuuuuuuX.” This work is a kind of “parallel world” story that expands on a certain scene from the original first “Mobile Suit Gundam,” in the form of “what if it had been like this instead of that at that time.” In that sense, it is naturally more enjoyable for those who are familiar with the original TV series. However, this work was

widely accepted and supported not only by fans of the original anime, but also by younger generations who were unfamiliar with it. This is an interesting phenomenon when viewed from the perspective of discussions surrounding “the third place” and secondary creation. Of course, the high level of completion as an anime work is also a factor, but traditionally, secondary creations or third-party works were enjoyable only if one could understand the first-party works, or original works.

What does this phenomenon suggest? In author’s opinion, for us, especially for the younger generation, there is no longer any need to care about what the first or original is. In other words, for them, “the third place” of the older generation has become the “first place.” This reality may also mark a significant shift in perspective for ILL. To use “Gundam” as an example, both “First Gundam” and “Gundam GQuuuuuuX” deal with the theme of a new generation individuals who has new abilities or new talent known as “Newtypes.” We might say that the era and society surrounding us is also now transitioning into an age of these “Newtypes”.

## **DEVELOPMENTAL REINTERPRETATION OF ILL (2): FROM “INTERCULTURAL” OR “CROSS-CULTURAL” PERSPECTIVE TO “MULTICULTURAL” OR “PLURICULTURAL” PERSPECTIVE**

As discussed above, using “Gundam GQuuuuuuX” as an example, we have examined how “the third place” has become “the first place” for the younger generation, or at least how the seeds of this trend can be seen. The music band Ikkbaru mentioned in Chapter 3.1 is, in the sense that they are still conscious of their musical roots, in the older generation. The next generation will likely emerge with “the third place” established by Ikkbaru as their “first place.” The same applies to Fankot mentioned in 3.2. For the next generation of Fankot players are incorporating *Anison* in their Fancot. Although from an ILL perspective, this is by no means a bad thing. Rather, it is a positive development. The problem is how to deal with and overcome the issue of division.

Before considering how to overcome this issue of division, the author tries to examine the process of how “the third place” become the “first place.” “The third place” that original ILL aimed for was, so to speak, a fusion of “the first place” and “the second place.” However, upon further reflection, this phenomenon-where the “third place” for the older generation becomes the “first place” for the younger generation-has likely been unfolding across generations for quite some time.

Here, the author would like to revisit the example of the Indonesian music band Ikkbaru. For them the “first place” was the pioneering musicians in Indonesia such as Maliq & D’essentials, Sore, and Santamonica, while the “second place” was the Japanese musicians who created the genre known as city pop, such as Tatsuro Yamashita, Yumi Matsutoya, and Minako Yoshida. However, these pioneering musicians from both Indonesia and Japan were themselves who had adapted elements of overseas music such as jazz, rock, and pop to their own circumstances. In that sense, Ikkbaru itself can be said to have used “the third place” created by its predecessors as its own “first place” and “second place.” From this perspective, we can say culture itself is not a static thing that can be simplified into Indonesian culture or Japanese culture, but rather a dynamic thing that is constantly changing through repeated contact with other cultures.

This leads to the question of whether culture should be viewed as collections of different

cultures or as multiculturalism. or what we call pluriculturalism<sup>3</sup>. If ‘culture’ is viewed as collections of different cultures, then it is possible to clearly distinguish between one's own culture and other cultures, or in other words, “the first place” and “the second place.” In that sense, this way of thinking is easy to understand and could gain support for. However, this is not the case with the concept of multiculturalism or pluriculturalism, which is the new type of viewing of culture gained attention in the CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) in early 2000's. In this new viewing of culture and language, each person as already possessing multipul/plutiful languages (not limited to foreign languages but also including regional dialects and social dialects) and cultures within themselves, and that this is a natural situation. In other words, in this point of view, what constitutes one's own culture versus another culture, or “the first place” versus “the second place,” is not fixed. In the multiculturalism or pluriculturalism, culture as always existing within everyone as a composite of multiple elements—that is, in a fused or blended state.

Perhaps to be more widely understood, ILL has traditionally approached “cultural” issues as intercultural or cross-cultural” issues, which represent the concept of culture as collections of different cultures. Therefore, ILL has focused on encouraging learners to reflect on the linguistic and cultural similarities and differences between their native language/culture and the language/culture they are learning, thereby promoting deeper meta-level reflection on language and culture.

However, from a multi/plurilingual and multi/pluricultural perspective, the situation is not so simple. Because “the first place” and “the second place” mentioned in ILL are already “the third place” in the multi/pluricultural sense. Many people now understand that this is the reality of the modern world which we are living in now. If that is the case, ILL needs to rethink its understanding of the concept of “the first place” and “the second place.” Both are already “the third place” created by others. To be more specific, “the first place” is “the third place” for people close to oneself, and “the second place” is “the third place” for people distant from oneself.

### **PROGRESSIVE REINTERPRETATION OF ILL (3): FROM “THE THIRD PLACE” TO “THE FOURTH PLACE”**

Here, the author would like to return to the issue of division mentioned in Chapter 4. As we pointed out, ILL originally aimed to realize a multicultural or pluricultural society instead of intercultural or cross cultural. Although at that time in 1990's the concept of multicultural or pluricultural society would not be easily accepted by society at that time. So, they choose what we call “culture as intercultural or cross-cultural approach, and at that time it was a good choice as a strategy to raise or to change the people's consciousness about culture and society.

Although the situation has changed now. When we reexamine today's society, we can say we already could gain what we call a “multicultural coexistence society” but not yet have achieved multicultural/pluricultural society. So, our next goal would be to change society from multicultural coexistence society to multicultural/pluricultural society. In multicultural coexistence society, independent or ethnic groups are still clustered or isolated from each other. If it were merely a matter of ‘hobbies’ like those within *doujin* groups, it might not be a significant issue. However, when it becomes a matter of social ideology or advocacy, it would

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<sup>3</sup> Strictly speaking, multiculturalism and pluriculturalism are slightly different concepts, but distinguishing between them is not the purpose of this paper. Therefore, this paper combines the two and uses the term “multicultural/pluricultural.”

be a major issue.

So, what can we do now? The key lies in the concept of multi/plurilingualism and multi/plurilingualism discussed in Chapter 6, as well as the phenomenon of the emergence of a new generation examined in Chapter 5. As mentioned earlier, multi/plurilingualism” and “multi/pluriculturalism is a way of viewing the individual as someone who simultaneously possesses multiple ways of thinking and multiple values. Therefore, there may be some values or ways of thinking that differ slightly from those that are most important within oneself. And it is precisely there that one can find common ground with the ways of thinking of others who are different from oneself. Even if there are significant differences in values and perspectives between / among more than the two people or groups, there may still be common ground in certain areas. While complete understanding of sharing of values and perspectives may be impossible, it is possible to understand and share certain aspects of each other, and if that is achieved, it becomes possible to understand each other's differences as well.

Here, we can find new possibilities for resolving the issue of division. What is needed here is not agreement nor approval. Rather, what is required is an understanding of the differences between oneself and others, and furthermore (if possible) an understanding of the commonalities that can be recognized within those differences and discrepancies. Although it may seem somewhat contradictory, acknowledging differences, understanding disagreements and divisions exist between oneself and others, and adopting such a stance each other is one possibility for overcoming division. This is because if one accepts the existence of division between oneself and others as a matter of course, then the division itself ceases to be a significant problem. At the same time, if one pursues multi/plurilingualism and multi/pluriculturalism, one will inevitably come to realize that within oneself and within one's heart, there exist elements that can become divisions or seeds of division” As mentioned earlier, what the author refers to as “the first place” is “the third place” created by our predecessors. It is precisely because it is the “third place,” that is, a place of fusion, that it is not statically stable but dynamically unstable, always containing elements that can be called the seeds of division or fragmentation.

The author would like to refer to this position - that is, a place that allows one to recognize disagreements and divisions between oneself and others - as “the fourth place.” Furthermore, the author would like to propose aiming for this “fourth place” as a developmental extension of the ILL concept. As mentioned earlier, the traditional purpose of ILL was to create a comfortable “third place” for oneself by merging the “first place” and the “second place,” and to cultivate the ability to create or find such a place (figure1).

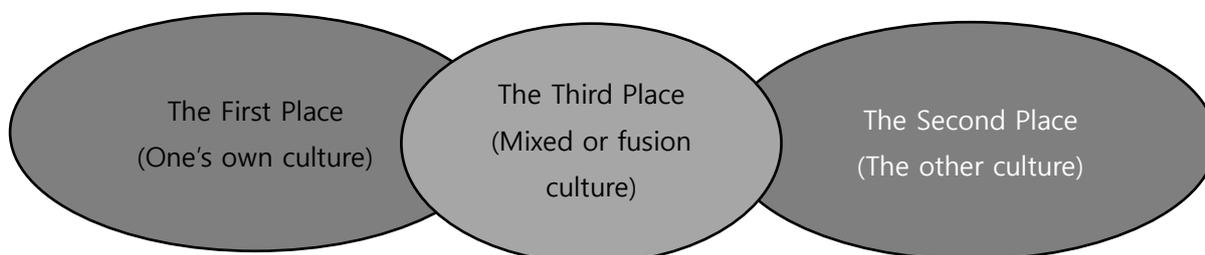


Figure 1. Relationship between the three places in the traditional ILL

However, as we have seen, more people today perceive “the third place” created by previous generations in this way as their own “the first place”. If so, we should figure it not as a 2D picture but as a 3D picture like figure 2.

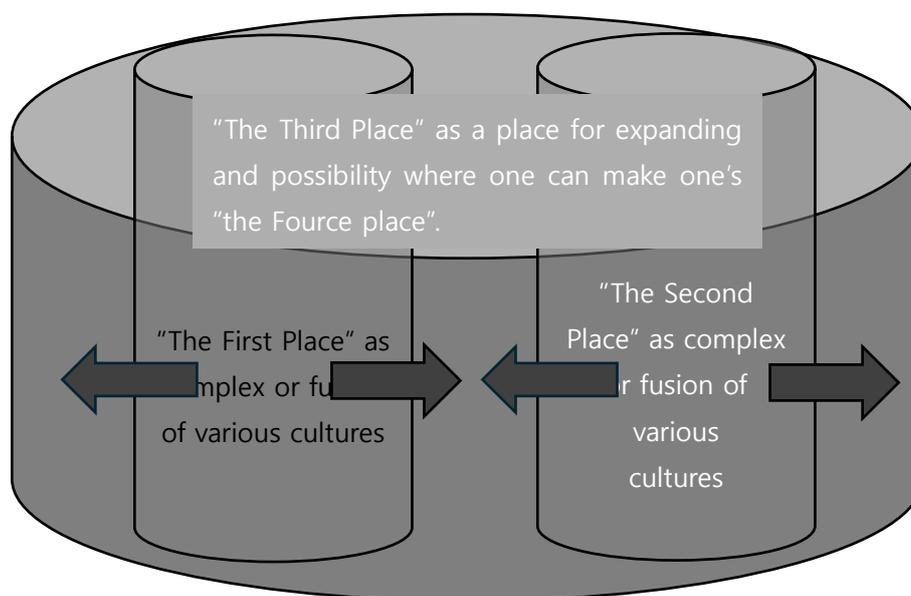


Figure 2. Relationship between the four places of the ILL in the new era.

“The Third Place” here is not just a place of mixed of fusion of “the first place” and “the second place” anymore. We can call it a place for expansion or a place of possibility. And in this “the third place”, we can make or find a place we can recognize disagreements and divisions between oneself and others, which the author named “the Fourth Place” Though somewhat of a stretch, returning to Gundam GQuuuuuuX, its appeal to generations unfamiliar with the original might stem from younger audiences sensing the work itself as an expanded space, a realm of possibility. Indeed, Gundam GQuuuuuuX was created precisely as such. Director Kazuya Tsurumaki has spoken about its production process as follows(TV Niigata, 2025). What he describes here with terms like “flow,” “thinking on the spot,” and “scrap and change” aligns precisely with what the author refers to as ‘expansion’ and “potential” within the ”Fourth Space”.

*Yeah, I just went with the flow. Of course, I wanted to plan out the entire structure meticulously from the start and build everything according to that, but in the end, it turned into making each episode one at a time.*

*It's not like I had absolutely no concept at all, but a significant portion of the scenes near the climax were more like things I thought of on the spot—they weren't part of the originally planned developments.*

*I think it was more like, “How can I make this more interesting?” I used to think that making a plan from the start and following it to the end like a blueprint was how you made a good work, and I wanted to do that initially. But in the end, during the creation process, I kept thinking “I want to make this more interesting”... For example, even if something was decided—like “this happens here,” “that happens next”—if I thought it could be more interesting, I'd scrap it and change it to what I thought was more interesting... So I guess that's how it ended up.*

## CONCLUSION

To reiterate, the point the author wants to emphasize here is that “the first place” should not be a static, fixed entity, but rather a dynamic place that is constantly evolving. The author has repeatedly used the English term “fusion” to explain the concept of “the third place” of ILL. Like the musical term or genre “fusion” (also called ‘crossover’), “fusion” encompasses a wide range of possibilities. For example, jazz leaning toward rock, or techno leaning toward jazz. There is even a tendency to categorize things that cannot be classified into genres as “fusion” or “crossover.” And because of this breadth of place, people can find a place that is special and comfortable for them. It is precisely because in this chaotic world that cannot be categorized into some specific genres, and a dynamic, large-scale movement, that people can find a point (place) that is comfortable for them within that place, which the author says, “the fourth place”.

Of course, people are not beings who remain fixed in one place. Everyone has experienced changes in their hobbies and preferences. Or perhaps they have experienced an increase in their hobbies and preferences. Until now, the goal of ILL has been to find a “third place” that is comfortable for oneself. However, the times have moved on to the next step. The next goal should be to avoid fixing one's own “third place.” Of course, it is fine to maintain “the third place” that one has found once. However, there should be another, or rather multiple, “the third places,” or “the fourth place” and the important thing is to maintain an attitude of continuing to search for them.

This overlaps with the idea of multi/plurilingualism and multi/pluriculturalism. To paraphrase Lo Bianco et al. (1999), the idea is not to cling to the “first place” (the “third place” for the older generation) that learners find comfortable, nor to view the “second place” (which is also the “third place” for the older generation) as an adversary or ignore it, but rather to seek out “the third place(es)” that is comfortable for oneself through contact and interaction with the “second place.” is the place, where the author call it “the fourth place(es).” The author also proposes that cultivating such ability should be the goal of ILL in the coming era, and to achieve this goal language and cultures should be taught together as ILL says. If we focus on the Japanese language and culture especially in leaning in the university, that’s why we can say it is very important to combine or connect Japanese language studies and Japanese Studies.

As the author has mentioned many times in this writing, ILL up to now has sought to bridge the gap between cultures by fusing them together. However, in the new era of ILL, the gap may not be bridged, but we must still try to continue to seek out “the fourth place(es)” that serves as new “third place(es)” for each other. Again, for today's students and universities, the goal is to cultivate such an attitude and ability. To achieve this, it is necessary to focus on the gaps or discrepancies that cannot be accepted by each other. Even if one cannot agree or accept them, one can try to understand ways of thinking behind them and Analyse the circumstances surrounding them and try to explain them to the others.

In the author’s opinion, these are the aims of Japanese studies. The purpose of Japanese studies is not just to encourage people to view the events and phenomena occurring in Japan, or Japanese culture in a broad sense, in a favorable light. Rather, its purpose lies in encouraging people to critically examine these issues, that is, to raise questions. Ultimately, Japanese studies aim to improve the current situation through critical examination. I hope that ILL and Japanese studies in the new era will serve as two wheels of a cart, enabling us to overcome this era of division.

What the author is saying here may seem like a kind of idealism to many people. However,

when Lo Bianco (1999) and others proposed the concept of ILL in the 1990s, “the third place” they envisioned was, in a sense, an ideal place at that time. If that ideal has become a reality after about 30 years, then the “fourth place,” which is currently an ideal place, may also one day become a reality and that is by no means a mere dream.

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