



Title	Cultural Exchange : Exploring the process of international exchange between Japanese students and International students
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Citation	平成28年度学部学生による自主研究奨励事業研究成果報告書. 2017
Version Type	VoR
URL	https://hdl.handle.net/11094/60338
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平成 28 年度学部学生による自主研究奨励事業研究成果報告書

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研究課題名	Cultural Exchange: Exploring the process of international exchange between Japanese students and International students				
研究成果の概要	研究目的、研究計画、研究方法、研究経過、研究成果等について記述すること。必要に応じて用紙を追加してもよい。				

Research Aim

The aim of the research is to provide an initial study on the processes by which international students and Japanese students at Japanese Universities with G30 programs interact to share their experiences and unique backgrounds. Specifically, the researchers are interested in how the courses of cultural dialect in verbal communication are constructed between the two groups of students. Participants were interviewed with the purpose of discovering and analyzing the precise motivations, emotions, difficulties, obstacles, enjoyments, and experiences which shaped the process of building cultural dialects in verbal exchange. Using this information, the researcher's goal is threefold: firstly, to pinpoint the degree to which cultural exchange is fluid between international and Japanese students in an University environment; secondly, to determine the main cultural and structural-physical obstacles hindering cultural exchange; and thirdly, to suggest a number of improvements to increase the flow and construction of dialogues between the two groups of students.

Research Plan

The outcomes after reviewing the literature regarding the ways in which international students and Japanese students interact are two-fold. First, the majority of research regarding international students is conducted from the perspective of Japanese Universities and the Japanese government (Hammond; 2012). Moreover, the conclusions highlight the dearth of academic exploration from the point of view of the processes in which students behave towards each other in a global environment (52). Insofar, this study focuses on research detailing the dialects of exchange between international students and regular Japanese students, and more specifically, develops a qualitative framework to pinpoint the

exact processes that characterize these interactions. In this regard, the researchers hope to capture a wide spectrum of experiences - including motivations for beginning discussions; second thoughts about engaging with a student from a different background; mental and physical obstacles standing in the way of cultural exchange: the enjoyments and perhaps, regrets obtained from those meetings; to name a few. Overall, the researchers utilized in - depth interviews with 6 students (3 international, and 3 Japanese) from University of Tokyo and Doshisha University; and 4 students (2 international, and 2 Japanese) from Osaka University. Then, the obtained results were also compared with an online questionnaire survey, which was conducted on 5 international students from the University of Tokyo (2), Osaka University (2) and Doshisha University (1). These data provided the framework from which a conclusion about the integration of international students can be drawn: whether or not cultural exchange is fluid or stagnant within major Japanese Universities. Ultimately, the answer will determine the competence of Japanese Universities in accommodating globalization, which is consequently important to the world rankings of Japanese Universities, building a more competent labour force, and competing on a global economic level.

Research Methodology

The research utilizes a mixed-method approach. First, a number of surveys were created online and posted for Osaka University, University of Tokyo and Doshisha University students to answer. The surveys asked a majority of close - ended questions and short open - ended questions, which produced quantifiable results in the form of charts and tables. For example, students were asked on the questionnaire about cross-cultural communication services that had the purpose to encourage cross-cultural engagement and social environment which their University provided them with. Afterwards, the researchers interviewed students at Osaka University, University of Tokyo and Doshisha University in order to conduct qualitative interviews with consenting participants. All participants were either G30 or international students or a regular Japanese student. The questions in the interviews were qualitative open ended questions that were aimed at gathering elaborated responses and specific details in as much depth as possible, in order to capture the full spectrum of the experience and the participants' mentality and emotions while building cultural exchange with another of different background. Together, the researchers sought to analyze the charts and code the interviews to provide a full range of understanding in the process of building cultural exchanges between international students and regular Japanese students.

Background

The value and importance of international student mobility has taken a turn in the Japanese higher education sector, which once was notoriously known for its rigid set of rules concerning the admittance of international students (Ninomiya, Knite, Watanabe; 2009:117-124). Contemporary Japanese political economy has embodied the notion that international students hold a significant, albeit indeterminate, position in the durability and competitiveness of Japanese higher education system and subsequently Japan's place in the global economy (Breaden and Steele; 2014: 23). For the Japanese government, the intake of international students is a manifestation of liability, in which the strength of Japanese political

economy is measured (Breaden and Steele, 2014: 19). In a narrower sense, the admittance of international students is seen as a promise for a promotion in mutual understanding and international friendship between Japan and foreign countries; furthermore, it brings foreign-born skilled workers into the declining Japanese labor force (Breaden and Steele, 2014: 23). The convergence of all these factors are expected to “reflect Japan’s capacity to respond effectively to global trends” (Breaden and Steele, 2014: 23).

However, despite an increase in strategic policies to boost the number of international students, and to promote internationalization of the Japanese higher education, such as an increase in financial aid for foreign students, such policies did not ameliorate the socio-cultural problems that undermined the efforts to promote international cultural exchange (Passaporn; 2011: 40-44). Indeed, there has been a stark increase in the number of foreign students over the years in large part due to the policies and Japan’s economic performance, but the researchers argue that the number does not represent the limited positive impact of the policies on international students’ quality of life in Japan. What is meant by “quality of life” here is the opportunities for interaction with Japanese cultural institutions, in particular Japanese students. Our research demonstrates this argument.

Results

It has been found that there are ample opportunities provided by all the universities involved in the interview and by clubs/organizations outside. For example, as an effort to promote cultural understanding and English language skills, Doshisha University, Tokyo University and Osaka University conduct daily cultural exchange lunch sessions wherein foreign students and Japanese students would gather to talk, mainly in English, about their culture. Furthermore, the international College of Osaka University regularly holds small parties to encourage the participation of Japanese and foreign students.

Aside from university promoted exchange sessions, student-led international exchange clubs (what Japanese call “circle”) in all three of the universities also aim to knit the relationship between international and Japanese students. These circles organize events such as welcome parties for spring and fall newcomers and trips to peripheral areas. All these events, organized by mostly Japanese students, seek to facilitate international students’ adaptation to the functioning of Japanese society. At the same time, perhaps an international exchange circle could be regarded as an instrument for shifting the confined mindset of Japanese students into a more intercultural disposition, one that would be more willing to accept the differences immanent in an international community.

The extensive efforts, however, seem ineffective as the interaction between international students and Japanese students is still severely limited. Sociocultural studies have identified several reasons, three having a reverberating impact on the interaction between the two groups of student and thus shown in our research. Firstly, the limited interaction in classes due to the unbalanced proportion of international students and Japanese students (Morita; 2012); secondly, the introspective mindset amongst Japanese youth (*naikoutekishikou* 内向的思考) (Breaden and Steele; 2014: 24) and thirdly, the lack of confidence in English skills (Hammond; 2012: 8).

English-taught courses offered by Japanese universities as a result of government incentives, such as the Global 30 program, have shown to be one of the main reasons for the limited amount of interaction

between Japanese and international students. In the 1980s, the government encouraged national universities to move away from the national language as a medium of education and to establish programmes taught in English (Ninomiya, Knite, Watanabe; 2009:117-124). This encouragement stemmed from the realization that it is impossible to attract top students if they have to bear the burden of learning Japanese (Tsuneyoshi; 2005: 65-68). Since then, there has been an increase in the number of English courses and programs offered by universities. However, although these English-taught courses may attract more international students, few Japanese students are present, and as a result depriving international students of one of the major reasons why they came to Japan – opportunities for intercultural interaction. Claire, from the University of Tokyo, says that there are very few Japanese students in her class, and most of the time, they do not make an effort to interact with international students.

Perhaps the reason for this dearth of genuine interest in foreign students by Japanese hinges on the introspective mindset put forth in a study done by Breaden and Goodman (2014). An international exchange student at Doshisha University mentions the difficulty for international students to enter a *circle* halfway through the year. She and her friend, who is a Japanese national, were interested in joining a tennis club and both applied for membership. She says with a hint of disappointment, “*the club did not accept my membership request saying that I was “late,” but they accepted my friend! Clearly, this was not a problem of lateness, but of xenophobia.*” The intrinsic narrow-mindedness in Japanese youth circumscribes the effectiveness of the opportunities created for the purpose of counteracting it. Unfortunately, such abstained mindset has been understood to be an evidence of a failure of schools and universities to prepare students for experiences beyond Japan, hence prolonging the inward tendency of the Japanese society.

On the other hand, some Japanese students are aware of the benefits of cross-cultural interaction, but are hesitant due to their lack of English and the limited opportunities. Most of the Japanese respondents express an anxiety related to insecurities about their English abilities. This is not surprising. Morita (2010) found that the limited English communicative ability is attributed to the lack of English outside the English-only classroom. English education in Japanese schools are mainly consisted of grammar and word-by-word translation, instead of a focus on communication skills. As a consequence, Japanese students are uncomfortable with their English abilities. On another note, both those who have better command of English and those who do not respond that there are little opportunities available for actual intercultural action. When asked what they mean by “limited opportunities,” surprisingly the participants did not mention the lack of events created by the university or international exchange club, but rather the limited classes available to both international students and Japanese students as the reason for the lack of interaction.

The results of our research show similar results to past researches, such as that of Jou and Fukuda (1995), Suhara (1996), and Shigematsu (2002). Jou and Fukuda (1995) show that international students experience difficulties in making Japanese friends. Suhara explains the reason for such difficulties: the lack of interaction as a result of the unwillingness of Japanese students to make friends beyond their own cultural group and the lack of Japanese language proficiency of international students. Shigematsu (2002) has attributed the unwillingness to the common perception of Japanese society: the close-minded, reserve tendency of Japanese people in maintaining emotional distance.

Conclusion

This study concludes that the degree of interaction between International students and Japanese students at University of Tokyo, University of Osaka, and Doshisha University is limited. There is a considerable number of International students studying at Japanese universities due to the help of financial aid programs and an increasing number of classes taught in English, where students are eligible to obtain a full degree under international programs such as the G30 program. The problem then lies in the process of exchange between International and Japanese students. Upon closer examination, opportunities for cultural exchange are ample through student led international exchange circles and events. However, these opportunities are enjoyed only by a small minority of the Japanese student body and is more a place of exchange amongst International students of various countries. The reluctance of Japanese students to actively partake in these types of exchange is deeply rooted in their introspective mindset and their lack of confidence in speaking English. In order to address these obstacles and facilitate interaction between International and Japanese students, not only student organizations, but university administrators themselves must step in. Universities must make an effort to redesign classes that would allow an enrollment of a proportionate number of both International and Japanese students unlike the status quo where there is a disproportionate number of International to Japanese student body in most classes. Furthermore, within these newly designed classes, professors must promote opportunities for exchange between the two groups. The interviews suggested that oftentimes, Japanese students are reluctant to initiate exchange between International students but have the will to do so. Therefore, by actively incentivizing Japanese students to interact and removing this initial obstacle of fear, students will feel confident to try again, next time perhaps on their own will. The scope of this research is limited as only three universities have been selected to conduct the study and the overall sample size is extremely small. However, at least in the cases of University of Tokyo, Osaka University and Doshisha University, the same types of obstacles to international exchange prevail with plenty of room for improvement.

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