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3. JAPANESE STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES OF THE INTERNATIONALIZATION OF EDUCATION IN JAPAN

Being Regarded

INTRODUCTION

Individual pedagogical experiences can shape how learners regard themselves and their place within the world. When this process is enacted within a critical framework, a pedagogical awakening is possible. We are particularly interested in how this awakened state is a potent moment for change within all students. Japan's present public policy outlook is clearly concerned with developing or acquiring a robust international focus. As Yashima (2009) describes this is beyond a simplistic view of integration, cultural readiness or awareness but rather an 'international posture' (p. 57). Developing positive attitudes and openness to difference is seen as a crucial aspect of this outlook. The trend toward global experience, international cross campus study options and cultural exchange programs would suggest that higher education providers have embraced the Japanese government's internationalization agenda. Preparation for such experiences is often procedural with some attention to obvious cultural pitfalls. There is a lot of talk about the invaluable nature of such experience, but the potential value of interculturality is often left to chance. Without some understanding about how to explicitly learn from cultural experience and exchange, learners may (at the least) miss rich pedagogical moments or (more gravely) acquire or reinforce attitudes contrary to a positive international posture. We argue that there is a pressing need to explore how and when such learning experiences take place. We also wonder if the current approaches could be improved by closely attending to the narratives of individual students. In this chapter, we argue that powerful sources of learning arise in the awkward or fraught exchanges brought about by Japan's internationalization agenda. The simple act of travel or exchange itself does not provide an environment for learning about diversity unless it is accompanied by genuine curiosity and a capacity for reflexivity.

The act of communicating in English is not without its complications for "the relationship between English and Japan [… It] involves implicit or explicit consideration of the relationships that the English language and the Japanese nation have towards current social and political developments that are motivated by the forces of globalization" (Seargeant, 2011, p. 2). The capacity to critically understand the

socio-political and economic forces at play within the learning and use of English may also provide surprising moments to reflect upon identity formation. Building upon Dörnyei's (2005) work of possible, ideal and out-to-be self, we are interested in how identity emerges from within the hierarchical relationship between English language and Japan. In this sense, in this era of globalization and the acute push towards an international posture, English is positioned as more linguistically and economically desirable within Japan. This is a common nationwide view where Japanese people from the very young to the elderly tend to envy anyone who they perceive to be fluent in English. Celebrities and media commentators with high English language fluency are regarded with almost unqualified approbation as more 'worldly' or 'internationalized'. In schools, students who can comfortably communicate in English with non-Japanese English language teaching assistants are admired by those who are less confident. It is little wonder that parents endeavor to enroll their children, including infants, in private English conversation classes in the hope that this may be a successful course to their children's acquisition of high English proficiency. This in turn has led to a situation where those who feel less confident or struggle with second language acquisition keep experiencing feelings of discontent and anxiety. From the center of attention for assessment at schools to the current employer calls for higher TOFEL performances by employees, English language proficiency has grown to become a dominating cultural force in Japan. In the zero sum game of global neo-liberalism, Japanese people's English language proficiency creates an immediate division between 'winners' or 'losers'. The niceties of possible or ideal identity construction in second language acquisition have taken on a serious 'must have' quality.

This chapter presents an analytical discussion of the previous two chapters with a specific pedagogical focus upon individual 'lived experiences' (van Manen, 2015). There are two imperatives at the heart of this approach. Firstly, we are driven by the nature of the narrative data in both chapters: we are reading across language, places and events bringing a 'connoisseurship' (Eisner, 1998, p. 63) to 'see' data as multifacetedly as possible. We are also placing these individual narratives within the wider context of English language education in Japan and student understandings of diversity. By taking a nuanced understanding and knowledge of pedagogy, our intent is to make a sensitive contribution to an important national discussion in Japan. It is our hope that through exploring individual learners' processes to forging identity and making sense of their immediate and larger worlds, individuals may reveal a way to respect and honour others.

NARRATIVE FOR PEDAGOGICAL ANALYSIS

Narratives are not simply telling personal stories. The narratives in the previous chapters offer two unique insights into individual journey's of coming to English language learning and consequent events. Complex individual experiences are reflected within each narrative. Sato (undergraduate student) and Wada (post-graduate student) are both Japanese natives who studied English as well as studied

in English. Upon graduation, they both aspire to become English language teachers in Japan. Initially we used a socio-linguistic approach (Labov & Waletzky, 1997; Paterson, 2008) to analyse the structure of each narrative and how each writer chose to communicate meaning. This included the particular choice of words and turn of phrase used in both English and Japanese. However, such analysis alone gives only a singular dimension to the complex nature of social worlds and human experience. For these experiences are not just personal but a window into the social world in which they are entwined. Analysis in this chapter, whilst drawing upon our understandings and experience of both Japanese and English langauges as well as language learning, is therefore concerned with a pedagogical rather than a linguistic focus. Pedagogical regard, as van Manen (2015) elucidates, can help "to discern the complex and subtle nature of experience when we speak of student experience" (p. 168). Stories of learning are the distinct professional arena of educators and so our discussions of the complicating actions naturally flowed onto broader socio-cultural concerns. We also found that being attentive to those moments when Sato and Wada, alluded to their interpretative viewpoints were rich sources of data for our analysis. We open the discussion section of this chapter with a brief summary of Sato (see Chapter 1) and Wada's (see Chapter 2) narratives.

The Makings of a 'Non-Junjapa' and 'Junjapa'

Chapter 1 describes Sato's experience in Japan and the USA. The first ten years of her life was spent in Japan; later she moved to the USA with her mother and brother due to her mother's aspiration to study further in that country. Sato struggled with the difference in classroom expectations. To be forthright with her personal opinions and expression was an unfamiliar experience for a young Japanese girl brought up by her mother to be quiet and obedient. As time went by, she adapted herself to the new learning environment and developed her English language fluency. After studying in the USA for fourteen years, she returned to Japan where she faced issues of re-acculturation to her native culture. At times, she found traveling back to Japan akin to a foreign country. Sato's narrative is one of a constant struggle with difference and categorization, isolation and often frustration with the preformative expectations of those around her. Applying to study at a university in Japan that used English as the medium of instruction made sense to her given her specific background. It was here that she experienced a new label – 'non-*junjapa*'. Sato later became a tutor at an on-campus student support center assisting *junjapa* peers with assignments. Through these interactions she learnt more about the complex relationship other students had with communicating in English but she also came to further understand her own relationship with cultural and linguistic identity.

Wada (see Chapter 2) chose to write her narrative in both English and Japanese. Wada was born in a small regional city in Japan. She reveals that due to economic hardship her family could not afford to offer her extra English language lessons outside of school. During the early years of her university life, she believed all

students who had greater English language proficiency must have had 'rich' parents. She believed that her peers were more fortunate as they had the opportunities of extra tuition and/or opportunities to study or travel outside Japan. She chose to apply to her university as English is the medium of instruction and because of its international educational focus. Once at university she quickly fell into the practice of comparing her English language proficiency and confidence with her peers. As a *junjapa* student, she describes herself as a less confident English language learner and having low self-esteem. Studying at a university in Norway for a one year mid-course exchange offered numerous opportunities to reflect upon herself as a language learner. She traveled to Denmark during the summer of her exchange and met a Nepalese student who played a major role in Wada's understanding of difference and cultural stereotyping. The duplicitous nature of categorization became more apparent and challenged her to question simplistic notions of identity.

Both autobiographical narratives illustrate the creation and recreation of identity work. They also provide an insight into Sato and Wada's relationships with others and the world: "the life story provides the compass for the delineation of our courses of action throughout life and hence…autobiographical memory is a crucial lynch pin for human action and human agency" (Goodson & Gill, 2014, p. 125). The making of a 'non-*junjapa*' and a '*junjapa*' brings analytical attention to the early pedagogical traces that may have influenced the ways in which Sato and Wada encountered and chose to internalize those terms at the university. For this delineation of who or what it is to be 'pure Japanese' is crude given the reality of 21st century life and lives. Furthermore, such labeling is inexplicably tied up with complex issues related to linguistic, economic, cultural and educational positioning in a globalizing Japan.

An early pedagogical experience that is fundamental to Sato's emergent understanding of identity and agency is an exchange with her father after she was discovered reading manga at her Japanese primary school:

> I remember a day when my father was called to school because I was reading a book in class. After a meeting with my teacher, he took me to a *manga kissa* (漫画喫茶) and told me that I should be proud to be passionate about something that I love. Years later he told me that he wanted us to nurture latent personality and potential we are born with and not to live by the expectations forced upon us by society.

Sato's teachers believed that her reading in class time warranted calling in her parents. Significantly Sato's father then took her to a manga café directly following the meeting. This action is in direct defiance of the message that her teacher's probably wanted her to receive. Their intention was probably to 'shame' both Sato and her parents, shame her into conforming with the expected norms of student behavior and shame her parents to ensure they reinforce the school's pedagogical approach. By taking her to a manga café Sato's father marked the incident with an alternate pedagogical perspective. He sees this as an opportunity to encourage a love of reading perhaps even an important moment to enact a divergent view regarding

social compliance. Despite these conflicting messages, the young Sato seems to have drawn valuable lessons about agency and identity.

The fact that Sato associates this incident with her father's later words about being herself suggests that this is a significant moment in her identity formation. By making this association, Sato manages to live between the expectations of her mother and her new life in the United States. She manages to transition from a strict and conservative learning environment to one that defied her acculturated view of what schooling and learning should sound and look like:

> In contrast, in the U.S. the school I went had specialized classes for ESL students. Students from different grades were assigned to classes based on their English fluency. I had older and younger classmates. Classrooms were decorated with pictures and maps of different countries, and students interacted with each other, and the teachers and students actively interacted. I remember feeling uncomfortable at first because it looked more like a kindergarten and classmates seemed less serious about learning at school than the ones I knew in Japan.

Sato continued to demonstrate a capacity to see the multiple and sometimes contradictory nature of living as a globalized citizen:

> At the International Student's Office, I remember felling awkward with filling in Japanese as my nationality when I had almost never been in Japan for the last ten years. I actually lived longer in the U.S. than Japan. I felt as if my American identity was being rejected. Even though I grew up in the same area as my American friends and studied together, I was treated as a foreigner.

> My years at the community college were filled with series of identity clashes. I did not get along with my "international" peers, who were all new to the country that I grew up in.

These clashes were a prelude to the continuing work of cultural identity that followed Sato's return to Japan. Later in the chapter we see how these struggles taught her to identify and manage feelings of ostracism when faced with the non-*junjapa* label.

In Wada's case the makings of *junjapa* identity are clearly founded in her family's financial difficulties and her feelings of being left out or left behind in an increasingly competitive educational environment. She associated other students' greater English proficiency with privilege – the constant reminder that she had not been able to travel overseas or even access private language tuition like many or most of her peers.

> Initially, I 'tolerated' the courses at the university as almost all of them were conducted in English, but I became depressed when I had to give presentations in English in front of my classmates. When thinking of why I could not speak English, I often looked for the reasons in my past. My family is not well off

and thus could not provide me with any opportunities to receive a good English education outside of that provided by my school. That made me think that those who have great English proficiency must have rich parents and the parents must have offered them more chances to hone their English proficiency. While trying to hide my low self-esteem and frustration, I did homework until dawn every day and wrote down hundreds of English words in notebooks to practice.

Her quest for English proficiency was closely tied to her anxiety about making up for her disadvantaged background. In fact this single mindedness almost blinded her to the joy of language learning and sense of language mastery. For years Wada saw herself as wanting in her 'ideal English speaking self', but an experience of working at a Norwegian fish market while on a mid-course exchange program shifted her thinking:

> Speaking English constantly reminded me of those who are more privileged. The people I met and the experiences I had during my study abroad helped me regain both self-esteem and confidence…. I slowly gained a love of using the language. I enjoyed building friendships with different people using English. In particular, the experience of doing a part-time job in Bergen during the summer vacation had a significant impact on me. Talking with tourists from all over the world, I realized how fun it was to communicate in our only mutual language of English. It impressed upon me how meaningless it was to assume that English had to be spoken perfectly or not at all. Even though my English was not perfect, many tourists thanked me and gave me kind words of encouragement…

We can assume that Wada probably received words of encouragement during her years of learning English in Japan, but these words for many reasons failed to diminish her feelings of inadequacy. After Wada began to value the function of English as a globalized means of communication rather than a positional commodity, she could regain a sense of power and achievement in her learning. For Wada, this illuminating moment led to further opportunities to see or imagine herself as agentic in her relationships with others.

Being Junjapa and Non-Junjapa

The terms *junjapa* and non-*junjapa* are not officially sanctioned or propagated terms at Sato and Wada's university. Rather, they are labels generated and perpetuated amongst the students themselves. Students who have been exclusively educated in Japan feel the need to distinguish themselves from other students as a way of explaining away perceived lower level English language proficiency or as means of seeking out a common ground with others. At a glance such a term or label may appear harmless or innocuous but labels often take on a life of their own. The conditioning of Japanese schooling in which conformity is the norm places students in a unique

pedagogical position. Those who come to a Japanese university heavily invested in an international focus almost find themselves akin to studying in an English speaking country. An unexpected consequence is that students are interculturally dislocated within their own country. Every day practices become unfamiliar, uncomfortable, and disorientating. In a small way, a sense of familiarity and stability is found and recreated through solidarity with some other students who share a similar educational background. As Wada's own narrative illustrates, she found herself living out of the constructed *junjapa* identity. Coming to her international university did not broaden her worldview or international posture but rather served to fortify her beliefs of inadequacy.

> …in my basic academic English writing class, the lecturer gave students a writing assignment about our best memories from high school days. It was difficult for me to do this assignment, as I had not written more than 300 words in English prior to entering university. By comparison, one of my classmates, who had lived in an English speaking country for a long time, complained that the assignment was at an elementary school level. Though I realize in hindsight that her comment was completely reasonable, at that time it sounded to me like she was just showing off her high proficiency in English. In addition to this, academic scores, which were given based solely on English proficiency, gave many students the impression that those who have high English proficiency are intelligent.

A *junjapa* label offers a sense of security within a competitive learning environment. To discover that other students feel a sense of anxiety can be reassuring. But educators understand the immense power of labels in the minds and hearts of the learners. For every person who is found to be 'like me', others are by its function excluded. As Sato experienced:

> I thought the university would be more accepting of people like me, but instead who I am was categorized and became bounded tighter than before. I was categorized as non-Junjapa. I was categorized under a new term 'Skipped Program people' and was out-casted in every way by the majority, junjapa students.

> In the international university, because of this English-speaking environment, being in Skipped class is seen as a privilege by the junjapa students. I never thought that being able to speak English, by itself, was something to be proud of. Honestly, anyone would eventually have to learn to speak if you live and study in an English speaking country for over a decade! Whenever I sensed being envied by them, I wanted to tell them that 'I did not just learn to speak English through my twelve years in the United States. Language was just one of the many struggles that I have been through'. I experienced multiple culture shocks, identity crisis, discrimination, and oppression and that was what I wanted other students to acknowledge. But instead of listening to my story, they

> would often imply, 'You are privileged to be able to have had the experience speaking in English. You are different from us and you can't understand how hard it is to speak English fluently.'

The practice amongst students to reduce their on-campus to a *junjapa* and non-*junjapa* binary has serious ramifications. The opportunity to hear and learn beyond themselves and their own personal concerns, limits the potential to expand their horizons or empathize. Ironically, on a campus priding itself on preparing global citizens, students fall at the first encounter with Other. Students enroll at such university because they want to learn how to have greater access to the world in particular English speaking world. Yet, two obstacles are apparent. Firstly, the competitive nature to even make it onto such a campus renders all subsequent interactions as predominately evaluative. Secondly, students are unaware that language proficiency alone is not the defining factor in becoming or being 'internationalized'. In this case, an international posture is only a beginning. A genuine engagement with interculturality is dependent upon a considered reflexive position especially in regard to relationships or encounters with difference. Therefore, these critical intercultural moments of discord surrounding *junjapa*/non-*junjapa* labels are so immediate to student experience that they can be generative in initiating formative discussions of identity and identities. An explicit approach to such matters could then mitigate the providence of chance in later complex cultural encounters.

FROM BEING REGARDED TO REGARDING OTHER: BEYOND AN INTERNATIONALIZED OUTLOOK OR POSTURE

The narratives by Sato and Wada demonstrate how they traversed the shifting positionings and identities in a globalizing Japan. Regardless of their individual life choices, both were born and educated in a Japan where "English in some form or at some symbolic level has…become a significant part of everyday life in Japan" (Seargeant, 2011, p. 3). As Wada and Sato recount significant experiences or views in their chapters, we have attempted to be sensitive to subtle nuances in the texts while at the same time concerning ourselves with the socio-cultural and pedagogical elements within the experiences. Goodson and Gill (2014) note writing autobiographical narratives offer the narrators an opportunity of "a repositioning of the self" (p. 128). Writing narratives provided Sato and Wada an opportunity to be reflective about their learning as a language learner as well as how this may impact their work as language educators. What is particularly important to note here is that this process is more than simply gaining an appreciation of the experiences of others. A high level of self-awareness is forged through the process of learning how others are seen and known in relation to difference (Saevi, 2015, cited in van Manen, 2015).

Sato writes unambiguously about her disappointment at once again finding herself on the outer or being dismissed in some way:

> I felt constantly pressured to achieve higher grades. Even when I am struggling with classwork, I could not talk to my classmates about it. All they would

say was …but Yuko you are all ok, right because you are good at English… I couldn't ask any of my peers to help me out because all they said was that "oh, you don't need my help. You're better than me".

Yet her response to this situation was to volunteer as a writing tutor to help out her *junjapa* peers. Through teaching these very students, she gained a deeper insight into the predicaments and personal struggles arising from a *junjapa* educational background. Sato theorized the links between language, culture and identity; she began to see a space between the mind and language in which thoughts and reality are shaped. She recognised that for many who strongly identify or regard themselves as *junjapa* do so from a need for comfort or security but ultimately a need that could be self defeating or illusory. As a pre-service teacher, Sato has learnt "*Education not only teaches us skills and knowledge but also helps us to realize why we think the way we do*".

Sato's observations about the *junjapa* desire for security and belonging is very clear in Wada's narrative. Something Wada sought in many of her interactions with others during her year in Scandinavia:

A Nepalese man I met there was particularly inspirational. Heartfelt conversations with him made me realize that English is not just a mere instrument of communication, but also the importance to live while accepting others and ourselves.

However, like Sato, Wada also found a space to step up to be the teacher and to deeply consider the meaning and relevance of these exchanges and what they might say about difference and diversity.

When he talked about himself or Nepal, he would add, "But Japanese people may not understand, though". Why do you tell me stories on the premise that I could not possibly understand? He seemed to believe that every Japanese led a happy life indifferent from pain or sorrow. But I felt that what he described as Japan was different from the country where I was born and raised. It is true that there are certainly very few people who starve to death in Japan, but Japan also has its problems. I wanted my friend to know that an economic and social gap does exist in Japan. I told him that many people are losing hope in life and 'the zest for living' and many of them end up committing suicide. I also told him about days when I had a hard time because my family was not well off. I spent much time doing part-time jobs while my friends studied or hanged out. I told him how I looked at other classmates with envy, as I had not received as good an English education as them. Initially I thought that he would not believe my story, but he listened attentively. After that he did not nuance his conversation with statements like "Japanese people like you would not understand" when he talked about himself or Nepal.

Wada could have remained silent instead, since she had learned so much from her friend about life in Nepal and especially about the caste system, she felt a need to be

clearly seen by her friend beyond the stereotype of 'a Japanese person'. There is an instant and a timing that is understood when an educator steps up to a pedagogical moment; not as instructor, but as a teacher. Wada took up that teacherly moment with her friend and showed strong compassionate judgement. She did not deny or belittle his hardship. She did not mollify or conciliate. Wada decided to take gentle conversation into a more vulnerable exchange. This was not a discussion about Nepal or Japan. It was an ontological discussion between two learners. Wada wished to be seen by her friend and in turn she demonstrated regard for him by challenging his assumptions. In doing so Wada has taken an important step beyond the passive *junjapa* identity into a provocateur role that seeks to question the complex web of relationships that make up ourselves (Goodson & Gill, 2014).

PEDAGOGICAL AWAKENING

Sato and Wada's narratives clearly illustrate the destructive nature of labeling. Sato felt excluded as a returnee or non-*Jyunjapa* student. Paradoxically, Wada describes her struggles with feeling left out or behind despite feeling some camaraderie with her *junjapa* peers. The danger in these simple words is that inclusion and exclusion is disguised within a new positional structure. In particular, at an international university that regards globalization-as-opportunity (Yamagami & Tollefson, 2011), *junjapa* labeling carries significance for issues of individual self-worth as well as opportunity for meaningful intercultural exchange. Universities that have embraced English as a medium for instruction are extolled by high school students and their families as a sure route to educational and vocational success in Japan. Yet, Yamagami and Tollefson (2011) stress that the relationship between "English and globalization-as-opportunity discourse is widely viewed as so commonsensical that it does not require justification. Moreover, this connection has long been promoted by the Japanese government in its English promotion policies" (p. 26). It is imperative to explore the commonsensical, as this is an essential element of the ways in which things become to be done or become part of our cultural norms. It is the very makings of a globalized Japanese cultural identity shaped by English language.

Amongst Sato and Wada's experiences, we can see real opportunity for students in Japan to be reflexive about themselves and their own learning experiences. These reflexive moments can be emergent from questioning and critiquing oppressive positional structures as Aoki (Pinar & Irwin, 2005) emphasized a significance of being a third space in between two languages that "[by] questioning [the two languages], by contrasting one with another, the resultant dialectic allows possibilities of a deeper awareness of who one is, and of a fuller understanding of the conditions shaping one's being (Pinar & Irwin, 2005, p. 243). The reflexive practice let Sato and Wada keenly take pedagogical action in their lives. When the reflexive moments are regarded as momentous by individuals, pedagogical awakening of learning for teaching becomes possible.

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