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・ 教員研究論文：

"Global Talent", Intercultural Understanding, and "Englishization":

A Preliminary View

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Introduction

League tables on international tests such as OECD’s Programme for International Student Achievement (PISA), and the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement at the secondary school level are now all too famous around the globe. The results of such international tests are often seen as holding serious implications for policy reform; for example, Germany experienced the so-called “PISA shock” after it discovered that its students were not achieving as predicted, and the Japanese government promoted what came to be called “PISA-style” reading as it was discovered that the reading scores of Japanese students were falling short of expectations in PISA 2003 (Waldow, 2009; Nihon Hikaku Kyoiku Gakkai, 2003). The assumption seems to be that such scores are an indicator of educational quality, or at least, educational competitiveness.

The situation in higher education is very similar, as international rankings of

universities often hold grave implications for policy-makers (Salmi, 2009, p.1; Liu & Cheng, 2011). However, unlike the international tests for school education in which students from high-achieving Asian countries/cities such as Singapore, Japan, and Shanghai, do well, league tables of higher education are conventionally led by western, especially American universities. For example, according to major world university rankings such as the Academic Ranking of World Universities by Shanghai Jiao Tong University, the QS World University Rankings, and the Times Higher Education World University Rankings, American universities dominate the list of the world-class universities. In the Academic Ranking of World Universities 2014, of the top 26, only two were Asian (both Japanese, University of Tokyo and Kyoto). In the Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2014-2015, the first non-western university came in at rank 23 (the University of Tokyo), and the QS World University Rankings showed only four Asian universities within the top 31 rankings (the National University of Singapore, the University of Hong Kong, the University of Tokyo, and Seoul National University) ⁽¹⁾.

Though periodically, there are criticisms as to the culture-biased nature of the indicators used, such rankings are cited by various policy-makers and university faculty around the world. Indeed, as “higher education has assumed unprecedented importance as an educator of people for the new economy and as a creator of new knowledge” (Altbach, 2005, p. 64), the international league tables enjoy increasing publicity. In Japan’s case, a major cause of concern in regards to its “world-class universities” is insufficient internationalization, or should we say, internationalization as measured by certain numerical indicators. Even popular magazine reviews of the University of Tokyo - the leading Japanese university on such international rankings--lament that internationalization (e.g., low percentage of foreign faculty) pulled down the international

ranking figures (Toyo Keizai editorial staff, 2012). Such concerns are mainly based on the breakdowns of how international rankings are calculated. For example, in the Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2014-2015, of the categories used (overall, teaching, international outlook, industry income, research, citations), all but two, industry income (51.2) and international outlook (32.4) were over 74⁽²⁾.

Globalization is one of the most overarching processes of our era, and no country is totally exempt from its influence. Though globalization can actually be discussed in multiple and contradictory ways, in actuality, the response to globalization in education is looking very similar in many countries as they adopt parallel language and reform strategies. In countries east and west, for example, we see the rise of policies which increase privatization, choice, accountability, competition and other market-oriented behavior. Included in the discussions of globalization is the need to develop “global talent” (Brown & Tannock, 2009).

Now, the rhetoric of the need to develop global talent has been quite prominent in governmental policies in many countries. However, in the Japanese case, one feature sets it apart from English-speaking countries, and even the European countries--the emphasis placed on English. Why has English gained such prominence in the discourse of human globalization in Japan? What are the implications? This paper will address such questions.

“Global Talent” and English

Now, the Japanese government’s response to the development of "global talent" is not that different from policy-makers around the globe. According to various governmental documents, the new global knowledge-based economy requires “global talent” (*gurobaru zinzai*). Naturally, being global, “global talent” have to be recruited globally, from both within and without Japan.

The discussion of recruitment from within Japan is twofold. One the one hand, it is

closely linked to the need to internationalize Japanese higher education (and somewhat school education) so that students (at least a significant segment of them) may develop into “global talent,” and on the other hand, the discussion is also linked to educating and hiring qualified foreigners (including foreign students). Since “global talent” are dispersed globally, hiring “global talent” also necessitates global recruitment.

For example, the “new strategy for development” (*shin seicho senryaku*) agreed on by the cabinet on June 18th, 2012 (Kantei, 2010), included the call to (1) educate global talent and (2) to incorporate highly skilled international human resources. Higher education in Japan was to internationalize, strategically accepting foreign students, providing international experience for Japanese students, and strengthening foreign language education. By 2020, the goal was not only to accept 300,000 qualified foreign students, but also to send as many Japanese students abroad. Immigration policies were altered in order to give preferential treatment (points system) to highly skilled foreigners starting in 2012--a common strategy adopted by OECD countries today to attract “global talent.”

Reminiscent of the situation in many other countries, education is increasingly discussed in terms of market-oriented competition. To compete globally, research universities are to become centers of “excellence.” Universities not only compete to produce cutting-edge knowledge, they also compete globally for the best staff and students. Indeed, “attracting the best—students, scholars, and research partners—from anywhere they can be found has become the modus operandi of the world’s best institutions” (Salmi, 2009, p. 64).

Now, the Japanese language is a minority language in the world, not spoken outside of Japan. Thus, it comes as no surprise that the Japanese language proves to be a language barrier when trying to attract students and staff from different linguistic backgrounds.

Therefore, a popular strategy to internationalize organizations in Japan is what the author has previously called internationalization using “Englishization” strategies (Tsuneyoshi, 2005). In higher education, this consists most notably in the usage of English as a medium of instruction. Whenever the topic is about internationalizing higher education, Englishization, accepting foreign students, and study abroad are routinely mentioned in Japan, to which we will now turn.

English as a Means of Internationalization

Providing more opportunities for international students to come to Japan and encouraging Japanese students to study abroad is hardly controversial, the use of English as a medium of instruction is. English, despite its popularity as the language of the global economy and the Internet, has also frequently been the target of criticisms; notably, it is criticized as the central tool of language imperialism, of Americanization, and a means by which the centrality of English-speaking countries in the global map of power is sustained (Crystal, 2003; Altbach, 2011, p.207; Phillipson, 1992).

This has not stopped the Japanese government from adopting this strategy, and in the mid 1990s, supported by governmental funding, national universities such as Kyushu University and the University of Tokyo started undergraduate exchange programs in English, followed by other national universities. Private universities had adopted the strategy decades before, for example, Waseda University has accepted undergraduate students (American study abroad students, etc.) in English from as early as the 1960s (Shirai, 2012).

In attempting to produce world-class universities that can compete globally, the Japanese government launched the 21st Century COE (Center of Excellence) program in 2002, followed by the Global COE program in 2007. In 2008, the government issued the International Student 300,000 plan to bring the number of international students to

that number by 2020. The Global 30 project chose 13 universities as target institutions: Tohoku, Tsukuba, Tokyo, Nagoya, Kyoto, Osaka, Kyushu, which are all national, and Keio, Waseda, Sophia, Meiji, Doshisha and Ritsumeikan which are all private. The motive of Global COE was that “as rapid globalization and the competition between world-class universities worldwide increases,” it is “urgent” for Japanese universities to strengthen their global competitiveness and to attract qualified international students, and to enable students to become global, through providing an environment in which Japanese and international students can interact and grow together (Monbukagakusho, 2009).

The government has used funding such as those stated above to promote the goals of certain forms of internationalization. For example, Global 30 asked applying institutions to erect courses in which students could graduate using only English. There were only 5 universities and 6 departments, 68 graduate schools and 124 graduate school departments in which students could earn a degree taking courses exclusively in English when the program started (Naikakufu et al., 2009, p.7), but with the Global 30 Initiative, 33 undergraduate departments and 124 graduate school courses opened in English in 2009. The English-medium courses totaled to about 300 as of 2012 in the 13 target universities⁽³⁾. In its homepage invitation in English, the project describes why English courses were necessary:

With the introduction of the “Global 30” Project, the best universities in Japan are now offering degree programs in English. By doing this, these universities have *broken down the language barrier* which was one of the obstacles preventing international students from studying in Japan. A range of courses in a number of fields are offered in English at the universities under the “Global 30” Project

(<http://www.uni.international.mext.go.jp/global30/>, retrieved August, 2012, italic by author).

Other measures for Global 30 approval included providing more information to foreign students and promoting strategic international liaisons, and opening common facilities abroad to assist international student to study in Japan; thus offices were opened in Tunisia, Egypt, Germany, Russia, India, Uzbekistan, and Vietnam.

In 2012, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (which will be shortened as MEXT from here on) solicited applications for a new five-year project called the “project for promotion of global human resource development” for the FY 2012 (scheduled to start in 2013). The project targeted the education of “global talent” and in its application, the sense of crisis that reverberates throughout various governmental and corporate documents on the subject were repeated: Japanese youth are becoming inner-looking, young employees no longer want to be stationed abroad, the society is aging, while as the world economy is globalizing and corporate Japan needs to move out into the emerging economies. More recently, in 2014, there has also been funding for universities aspiring to become Super Global Universities.

In 2011, May, a governmental committee to promote the development of global talent was established and in its report, global talent was seen to have the following characteristics.

Component 1: language ability, communication skills

Component 2: self-initiated stance and positive attitude, pioneering spirit, cooperativeness, flexibility, responsibility, a sense of mission

Component 3: understanding of other cultures, identity as a Japanese

In addition, the committee added the following as desirable traits regardless of whether one was global or not: “being cultured in a multifaceted manner, as well as having an in-depth knowledge of a special area, the ability to find and solve problems, the ability to work in teams, and the ability to lead (in bringing together people from different backgrounds), promoting the public good, having sound moral values, and media literacy, etc.” (Gurobaru Zinzai Ikusei Suishin Kaigi, 2012, p.8). Now, if components 1 and 3 were dropped, the above-stated description would sound like a regular list of leadership traits desirable for anyone in any Japanese organization. Thus, what signals the “global” nature in the list are components 1 and 3: basically, communicative language skills and an understanding of other cultures with a secure “national identity.”

It is safe to say that given the national discussions on language in this context, 1 refers mostly to English and to a lesser degree, Chinese or other strategic languages. Emphasizing communicative English, and communicating with speakers of English (e.g., assistant English teachers in English activities and English classes, the JET program) have been the focus of language education reform in Japan for decades (Tsuneyoshi, 2013). The MEXT action plan to educate “Japanese who can use English” (Monbukagakusho, 2003) supported English as a means of communication, emphasized verbal communication in the initial stages and a balanced development of the four core abilities of listening, speaking, reading and writing. The lack of equity language is problematic from a liberal view, as is the emphasis on a secure "Japanese identity." However, unlike topics in which we witness a relatively clear clash of ideologies, “cooperativeness,” “pioneering spirit,” “a sense of mission,” are all goals which would be supported by various camps. Moreover, unlike levels of English language, such traits are difficult to measure. Since the trend in Japan, like other countries, is for institutions to provide

accountability measures, improvement tends to be expressed numerically.

In this context, since acquiring working language (basically English) skills is a major and measurable component of what it means to be a “global talent,” liberal critics have been quick to respond that overemphasis on English implies giving in to language imperialism and indicates an English and western-centered bias, or is actually ineffective and does not bring about the desired results (cf. below). However, such voices are overridden by the scramble for "global talent".

The Language of “Crisis”

Now, the language behind English promotion is one of crisis: the world has globalized and Japanese corporations are facing intense global competition from rising economic powers such as China. To make matters worse, in this period when Japanese need to be outward looking, Japanese youth are becoming increasingly inner-looking. The sense of crisis reverberates throughout government documents and accumulates in the call for the corporate world and higher education, not just the government, to come together (Sangaku Renkei ni yoru Gurobaru Jinzai Ikusei Suishin Kaigi, 2011, p. 5). Since rising to meet the challenges of global competition means moving out into the world where English has become the global language, English is seen as crucial.

As the reasoning goes, for Japanese companies to operate in these new markets, they need to flexibly meet customer needs, and communicate with necessary actors; in other words, corporate Japan needs “global talent.” The “Garapagosization” (garapagosuka) of Japanese society became a buzz word, signifying that Japan is at risk of being left behind of the evolution of the times, like Garapagos Island, which might have benefitted Darwin’s theory of evolution, but is certainly not in the national interests of Japan. In a global knowledge-based society, the recruitment of global talent, whether Japanese or non-Japanese, is seen as a matter of national interest.

In April, 2012, after two preparatory years, in a symbolic move, a large online retailer, Rakuten, made an announcement to make English the lingua franca of the company, inviting widespread publicity and controversy. The use of English as the official language within the company was justified as facilitating the company to go global (Neeley, 2011, 2012). UNIQLO was reported to have adopted a similar policy. In response, a scholar well-known for his writings on English imperialism, sent letters of protest to both Rakuten and UNIQLO (Tsuda, 2011). This yes or no debate extended to whether English should start from elementary school or not. There is thus controversy over how far Englishization should be taken (Funabashi, 2000; Otsu & Torikai, 2002; Torikai, 2010).

The sense of crisis abounds in government and corporate documents. The rising consensus seems to be that something should be done or else risk the danger of losing the global competition. The survey showing that “acquiring and training personnel within Japan who can promote globalization” was by far the highest concerns of Japanese companies planning to increase overseas operations, has been repeatedly quoted in various governmental and university reform committees (Keizai Sangyosho, 2010). Similarly, the low TOEFL scores of Japanese, one of the lowest in Asia, or that the number of Japanese studying abroad is dropping while as the numbers for China and India are growing, were also widely publicized.

The “Crisis” of Higher Education

Just as the corporate world is pressured to meet the “crisis” and recruit globally and provide its employees with international experience, higher education is encouraged to employ more foreign faculty, recruit international students, and emphasize English that can be used in the real world (the use of TOEIC and TOEFL are routinely cited in this context) (Sangaku Jinzai Ikusei Partnership, 2010).

The “crisis” is not only associated with the handful of “world-class” universities,

many of which are national. Just as elite national research universities are pushed to compete globally, the diminishing youth population, the recession, etc. have pushed private universities to pursue aggressive marketing strategies to attract students (Goodman, 2009, p. 23). Internationalization, especially offering courses in English and attracting students from foreign countries, or providing various opportunities to study abroad for Japanese students, are among the popular strategies. Indeed, private universities are pioneers in offering lectures in English, or adopting Englishization for internationalization.

There are now well-publicized universities or departments which are known to conduct their courses largely or totally in English. Examples include School of International Liberal Studies at Waseda University, the Faculty of Liberal Arts at Sophia, the public Akita International University (Kokusai Kyoyo Daigaku), and Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University (APU, Ajia Taiheiyo Daigaku) among others. Using English as a medium of instruction makes it possible to accept students from many different countries, and also has its practical appeal. The employability of the students tend to be emphasized by the media. In a Japan Economic Newspaper (Nikkei) survey of corporate personnel as to which university interested them, the Akita International University came in first, APU third, with the University of Tokyo at second⁽⁴⁾.

"Global Talent" as Global Citizens

The promotion of English as the core of global talent in Japan is, in one aspect, a reflection of its dilemma as a non-English speaking country. Unlike in countries which were colonized by an English-speaking power, Japan is one of the few countries which was not a colony in Asia--in fact, it was a colonizer. No other language than Japanese is required in everyday life. In addition, though political and corporate leaders may talk about the need for English, it is not a reality for students on the job market. They are not

competing globally, but are competing in a domestic market shielded by the Japanese language and customs (Yonezawa, 2014). The Japanese labor market is characterized by recruiting customs, language, and recruitment style in which students start their job-hunting during their junior and senior year, and effectively end their job-hunting before graduation. No matter how much talk there is about "global talent", shielded from the outside, the Japanese graduates are hardly competing with job-hunters from other countries directly.

Now, one of the criticisms waged against the emphasis on English is that other traits, such as leadership, integrity, and thinking skills, are much more fundamental to a healthy human character than English is. It is difficult to conceive that this would be disputed at a general level. Very few would argue that English is necessary *at the expense of* other desirable character traits (e.g., being able to cooperate with others, communication skills, and self-motivation). Corporate leaders would undoubtedly also agree that having working skills in multiple languages, given that English is included and all else is equal, is even better than just English.

It is also true, however, that it is extremely difficult to acquire a certain level of English when the only time one really needs it is for examinations. Indeed, English is taught in Japanese schools, tested in high school and university exams, and eventually, it is the foreign language most required by Japanese companies in the form of TOEIC scores. However, it is hardly necessary in everyday life. The most pressing need for English is, therefore, for most Japanese, getting high scores on tests. This also means that the student will most likely have to go out of his/her way to acquire a working level of communicative English (or any language other than Japanese), if he/she is unable to go abroad. It also means that mastering a certain level of English takes time for those in Japan, and may very well take time away from other activities that the student might have engaged in.

The problem, from an intercultural, multicultural perspective, is thus more in the ends and process than in the act of learning English in and of itself. Is the goal to primarily score high on the TOIEC, in other words, has testing become an end in itself? Is English assumed to be superior to other languages? Is a student studying English at the expense of other more important activities? Is the student's understanding of why a communication tool is necessary (which happens to be English in many international contexts in our era), simply pragmatic, without knowledge and commitment to the ideas of multicultural diversity and equity? If students answer “yes” to such questions, there is an educational problem.

Compared to mathematical reasoning, programming, etc. which are cited alongside language skills as internationally in demand (Carnoy, 2000, p. 52), language tends to be more tightly bound with a certain culture and ethnicity. This is quite understandable, given that the history of language cannot be separated from conquest and domination. Before English, there was French and Latin, and colonization has often been accompanied by the cultural domination (including language) of the colonizer, especially for the local elite.

The situation is complex, however. At a certain level, like among the educated from different linguistic backgrounds, studying English today makes intercultural sense. It is the language most often used as a communication tool in such contexts. This situation may of course be linked to English imperialism, but it is also increasingly the case that once outside Japan, English enables people to communicate with those from different linguistic backgrounds more than other less spoken languages such as Japanese. Without interaction with culturally different others, international business would be difficult, but so would international exchange. English is of course not enough if one wants to talk with the local population in non-English speaking countries.

Obviously, the strategic rhetoric of the corporate world that justifies the emphasis on

English, global competitiveness, and making economic sense, is different from the liberal ideology promoting multilingualism, or the protection of minority languages and language rights. From a multilingual point of view, English would be only one language among many. From an intercultural perspective, even learning simple words in multiple languages makes a lot of sense, since it generates curiosity for that culture. Whether Japanese, living in a largely monolingual environment, will be able to master that language enough for business negotiations is another issue. The purpose is not the same.

The business perspective and intercultural perspective intertwine in reality. Chinese is the national language of a rising economic giant and is gaining popularity worldwide. Learning the language increasingly makes economic sense; China is part of BRICS and is one of Japan's largest trade partner. At the same time, learning Chinese also makes multicultural sense within Japanese society, since Chinese are now Japan's largest alien nationality. Even better would be to learn Korean as well.

It is this fuzzy area of idealism and realism that Englishization in Japan faces difficulties.

Global citizenship argues for a commitment to goals such as a common good, to diversity, and to justice. The logic is to link the awareness of interdependency with a respect for diversity and a commitment to furthering the democratic cause, rather than goals that simply increase profit or advance individual careers. The language of global citizenship is different from the language of the global market. However, educating a global citizen does not exclude the acquisition of language skills including English. In fact, learning foreign languages can be promoted by those advancing global citizenship, since it provides insights into other cultures, and can serve as the basis for intercultural communication. The divide between educating for global citizenship and global competition is thus nowhere clear if the discussion is simply about whether more or less

English education is required, without regards to how and for what purpose.

Concluding Remarks

According to Brown & Tannock (2009), the political climate these days towards equity issues tends to be dismissal: “The commitment to equality, according to the global war for talent, is an old-fashioned relic from the past, at best, and an obstacle to survival and success, at worst” (p. 383). In other words, global competition justifies the language of national crisis--everyone’s life will be worse off if we lose the global competition.

In the global arena, the rules of the game seem to be played in English in favor of English-speaking countries. Even university rankings cited above, rely heavily on articles in English in “world-class” journals predominantly situated in the western centers, thus, any country with a strong domestic language, such as Japan, is bound to face dilemmas. Regardless of how it would be in an idealized multilinguistic world, Japanese is a minority language, one that is not used outside of Japan.

English, however, is also not just something that is desirable in terms of marketability. It can also be justified on the grounds of attracting students from different linguistic backgrounds, and providing an opportunity for students in Japan to interact with people with who are different from them, outside of Japan.

Indeed, the world that the “global talent” is to compete, is far from neutral. The power structure of nations is unequal, as are the resources. Being subjected to global competition means playing the global standards game. But under whose rules? For example, the most preferred language of the global economy, as of present, is English. If Japan and other non-English speaking countries do not find a way to cope with this disadvantage, the Englishization pressure will continue—until, of course, English is replaced by another global language. This has grave consequences for Japan, which has a national language very dissimilar to English, and where English is not used in daily life. Indeed, since the

immediate need is largely exams or utility for an imagined future, this creates an artificial environment in which need is created by a sense of crisis.

Education is often asked to respond to the needs of the society, which is embedded today in the context of global competition. However, if this were the only goal of education, it would not be worth pursuing for many educators. Education is also a pursuit of a social vision, a vision of a society and world which is not yet a reality, but what should be. In this sense the students are agents of change. The second without the first is difficult to maintain in the face of real or perceived threat; in times of so-called global competition. However, the first without the second reduces the meaning of education to pragmatic issues and to educational hysteria fueled by some “crisis” or another.

Notes

- (1) <https://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/world-university-rankings>;
<http://www.shanghairanking.com/ARWU2014.html>;
<http://www.topuniversities.com/university-rankings/world-university-rankings/2014>,
retrieved June 18, 2015.
- (2) <https://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/world-university-rankings-university-of-tokyo?ranking-dataset=1083>, retrieved June 18 2015.
- (3) Global 30 homepage, <http://www.uni.international.mext.go.jp/ja-JP/global30>,
retrieved in August, 2012.
- (4) *Nihon Keizai Shinbun* , July 16th, 2012, p. 1.

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