Role Shock and First Year University English Classes in Japan

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INTRODUCTION

For students, beginning university studies involves entering a new educational culture, and new 'ways of being' (Jackson, 2008, p. 36). Most students will use their accumulated experience as a guide for what is expected. For university language teachers new to Japan or unfamiliar with the educational culture, especially at the secondary level from which most newly arrived university students have come, this paper may perhaps help teachers to understand their students' past experiences in a general way, and have a positive influence on syllabi development and classroom practice.

The purpose of this article is to answer the question, "What are ways in which role shock and otherness may impact Japanese students entering university?" It is concerned with the dominant educational culture at the secondary level and why it seems that when beginning English studies at the tertiary level, some students have problems adjusting to the expectations of language teaching at the university level, particularly by foreign-trained teachers. It is in part a discussion of the dominant culture in Japan, in particular the way in which secondary schools commonly treat people who stand out in some way. It begins with defining 'otherness' and 'role shock' before moving on to the phenomenon of describing Japanese culture

as a whole from within Japan for a Japanese audience, as well as brief descriptions of specific aspects of Japanese culture for an outside audience, including elements of its education system and work culture. This article will then describe Japan's traditional method of language teaching with which most students entering universities in Japan are familiar. It will conclude with issues faced by groups of people who are ethnically Japanese but may not be considered part of the norm, and they are othered in Japan. Student worry about being othered in their new educational setting is a major challenge for language teachers trained in English speaking countries.

Otherness and Role Shock

All cultures include ingrouping and outgrouping. Ting Toomey and Chung (as cited in Jackson, 2014) define the former as "people with whom you feel connected to or owe a sense of loyalty and allegiance" (Jackson, 2014, p. 159) and Ting Toomey and Chung (as cited in Jackson, 2014) define the latter as "those with whom one feels emotionally and psychologically detached" (Jackson, 2014, p. 159). Entering a new educational culture necessitates that students evaluate what is important not only for themselves, but for the culture in which they study. This constitutes role shock, which Brynes (as cited in Jackson 2014) describe as being "characterized by lack of knowledge and confusion about the norms of behaviour in a new culture (e.g. the social 'rules' of politeness, business etiquette)" (Jackson, 2014, p. 190). Jackson clarifies this by stating, "When you enter a new, unfamiliar situation you are apt to be exposed to roles and responsibilities that diverge from what you are used to in your home environment" (Jackson, 2014, pp. 190-191). Foreign language teachers at universities in Japan may be surprised at hesitance on the part of some students to become actively involved in class, if these teachers have no experience with the secondary

education system in Japan.

In Japan, otherness is considered important and problematic because of the "theme of the homogeneity of Japan's people" (Yamagami and Tollefson, p. 28). Interculturalists describe cultures as falling somewhere along a continuum between high-context cultures, in which "most of the information is communicated through indirect and nonverbal means with a reliance on mutually shared knowledge" (Jackson, 2014, p. 94), and low-context cultures, which Hall (as cited by Jackson, 2014) describes as cultures in which "[m]ost of the information must be in the transmitted message in order to make up for what is missing in the context" (Jackson, 2014, p. 95), meaning that "explicit verbal messages are the norm" (Jackson, 2014 p. 94). Japan is commonly referred to as having a high-context culture, while the US, Anglo Canada and the UK have low-context cultures. In high-context cultures such as Japan, people are not accustomed to asking questions about expectations because members of high-context cultures are assumed to have knowledge of that culture. Not having this knowledge would mark someone as an outsider, or 'other'. In *Introducing Language and Intercultural Communication,* Jane Jackson uses other writers to help describe the phenomenon of otherization or othering. It is described by Abdallah-Pretceille (as cited in Jackson, 2014) as "the objectification of another person or group" (Jackson, 2014, p. 158). According to Holliday, Dervin and Virkama (as cited in Jackson, 2014), "culture is used to account for all of the views and behaviours of 'the other', largely ignoring the complexity and diversity of individual characteristics (e.g. thoughts, emotions, actions)" (Jackson, 2014, pp. 158-159). Abdallah-Pretceille (as cited in Jackson, 2014) writes that "This leads to reductionalism or essentialism, that is 'pretending that knowing the other takes place though knowing her culture as a static object" (Jackson, 2014, p. 159). Jackson

sums up this information with

> Instead of seeing people from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds as individuals, in the eyes of an ethnocentric person, they are merely representatives of a particular culture, and tied to a rigid set of characteristics and behaviours. (Jackson, 2014, p. 159)

There is a great deal of difference in the roles and expectations of both students and teachers when the secondary education system is compared with tertiary systems, at least as far as English education is concerned, and an aspect of Japanese culture is to be aware of fitting in, of never being different. In English education, the secondary school system and the university systems are often not highly compatible and this, along with a low-context culture, may increase the duration of role shock that students experience.

The next section will explore attempts to define what it means to be Japanese. All education systems attempt to instil the values of a culture, though the individual family may play a greater role in doing this. Japanese culture seems to be particularly interested in defining Japanese-ness.

DESCRIPTIONS OF JAPANESE CULTURE
Nihonjinron- Description of Japanese culture for a Japanese audience

The body of work written by Japanese people about what it means to be Japanese is called nihonjinron. 'Nihon' means 'Japan', 'jin" when attached to a country name means 'person from that country' and 'ron' means '1. theory; 2. opinion, argument' (Naoko, 1995, p. 185). Nihonjinron is described in Anthony J. Liddicoat's, *The ideology of interculturality in Japanese language-in-education policy* as

> A key dimension of Japanese ideologies of identity is ... Nihonjinron,

literally 'the question of the Japanese people ... [it] can be seen as an attempt to construct the parameters of a distinctive Japanese cultural and national identity. (Liddicoat, 2007, p. 4)

Japan is not the only country to try to define what it means *to be* part of the culture of the country. For example, degrees in Canadian Studies offered by Canadian universities have a similar goal, although these degrees tend to be interdisciplinary majors, which look at literature, art and history among other things to enable learners to come to their own understanding. Nihonjinron, which Liddicoat translates as "the question of the Japanese people" (Liddicoat, 2007, p. 4) is popularly thought of as a set of rules and

[a] core element in Nihonjinron is that Japan is linguistically and culturally homogenous; that is, the Japanese are a homogenous people who constitute a racially unified nation ... [t]his claim to singularity is manifested through comparative generalization between 'Westerners' and the 'Japanese', with special properties being attributed to the Japanese brain, social customs and language. (Liddicoat, 2007, p. 4)

This greatly lowers the possibility of people risking embarrassment through expressing ideas that have not already been approved by someone seen to be an authority figure. However, that risk taking is what communicative language teaching demands, and that is the approach emphasized in graduate qualifications in English Language Teaching in English speaking countries. It is therefore the approach most familiar to the majority of foreign English language teachers at the tertiary level.

In *Language, Identity and Study Abroad*, Jane Jackson writes

social identity accounts for 'how different groups perceive their own and others' group membership identity issues. It is also about marking ingroup/outgroup boundaries as well as majority/minority group relations issues. (Jackson, 2008, p. 8)

Part of the issue with 'otherness' among Japanese people in Japan seems to be a fear of tainting Japanese-ness with an outside culture, resulting not in an additional culture, but a *loss of the Japanese culture* because being Japanese means being mono-cultural.

Attempts have been made to portray nihonjinron less negatively. Chizu Sato translates nihonjinron as "Discussion of the Japanese" (Sato, 2004, p. 212) and defines it as "the study or discussion of the nature of Japanese culture, society and national character" (Sato, 2004, p. 212). She goes on to explain that nihonjinron is a category under which "an enormous volume of books and articles" falls under, that the sheer size of it indicates the extent to which the Japanese population appreciates that nihonjinron is "not only an area of study but also a social phenomenon" and that nihonjinron "are certainly diverse in content and argument" (Sato, 2004, p. 212). Similar to Liddicoat, she writes, "The message of most *nihonjinron* has been that Japanese people, culture and society are unique in the world" (Sato, 2002, p. 212). She goes on to review writers about nihonjinron who have looked at it as an evolving story, akin to a historiography of it. This is an interesting way to approach the term because it shows changes occurring in the Japanese national identity through time.

While both Liddicoat and Sato refer to the importance or interest in nihonjinron, Masamichi Sasaki (2004), concludes that Japan does not have a strong national identity. Sasaki concludes from surveys that important criteria to make a person Japanese are "having Japanese citizenship" and to "regard oneself as Japanese". The writer comments, "these responses reflect more civic-type attitudes than ethnic-type attitudes" (Sasaki, 2004, p. 83). A basic problem with this survey is that Japanese citizenship is based on ethnic rather than civic qualities, as shown in the introduction to *Blood Relatives: Language, Immigration and Education of Ethnic Returnees*

in Germany and Japan by Debora Hinterliter Ortloff and Christopher J. Frey with,

> These countries' immigration and citizenship policies have traditionally been based on jus sanguinis, the principle that one's nationality at birth is the same as that of one's biological parents. These boundaries of nationality and citizenship close the door to many long-term non-national residents ... but create openings for "ethnic" immigrants whose ancestors may have left hundreds of years ago ... [such as] the return of large numbers of *Aussiedler* and *Nikkeijin* to Germany and Japan, respectively. (Ortloff & Frey, 2007, pp. 447-448)

Although identification with a nationality and citizenship seem to naturally go together, and this would make Sato's survey innocuous, the Ortloff and Frey article shows that this is not necessarily the case.

Descriptions of the work culture and education of Japan for an outside audience

International trade and competition created a need to understand Japan. A business journal that publishes articles in business areas such as marketing, sums up the particular interest in Japan in the article, *Japanese National Culture as a Basis for Understanding Japanese Business Practices*:

> To understand Japanese competitors, Western managers must closely examine the basic national culture of Japan. When this is accomplished, actions of Japanese competitors become clearer, and the appropriate responses to these actions become more evident. (Ford & Honeycutt, 1992, p. 33)

As a business article aimed at American managers, it concludes with recommendations for working with Japanese people which come from "four basic cultural elements" (Ford & Honeycutt, 1992, p. 33). The first of these is

"Process is often more important to the Japanese than end results." (Ford & Honeycutt, 1992, p. 33). The second is, "The Japanese organization is more important than the individual. Don't push" (Ford & Honeycutt, 1992, p. 33). The third is, "Structure, status and harmony are all extremely important. In Japan, there is a well-defined chain of command" (Ford & Honeycutt, 1992, p. 33). Finally, the fourth is "Japanese firms are committed for the long term" (Ford & Honeycutt, 1992, p. 33). The dominant culture of any country informs its business culture. This article is by non-Japanese people and targeted at a non-Japanese audience with the goal of helping the readership understand, and possibly work with, Japanese companies.

Ford and Honeycutt's "four basic cultural elements" do not seem to diverge from descriptions of the Japanese education system. In an article describing Japan and its education system in business terms, Yoshiaki Obara, Vice-President of Tamagawa University in Tokyo describes the education system in Japan as being based on three elements. The first is, "Schools are known for producing uniform and norm-conforming adults" (Desjardins and Obara, 1993, p. 69). The second is "Schools teach the value of competition, or the fear of losing to ones' rivals" (Desjardins and Obara, 1993, p. 69). The third is "Japan is a society based on seniority or authoritarianism; so is school operation" (Desjardins and Obara, 1993, p. 69). Education systems instill values that individuals bring with them out into the world. In the case of secondary school graduates, that world may be the workforce or it may be the tertiary education system. Obara's elements of the Japanese education system can be viewed as the training people receive to enable them succeed in the work culture and environment described by Ford and Honeycutt's four basic cultural elements.

It is obvious that being different would be problematic in such a system, one that actively maintains a hierarchal system and in which the creation of

individual ideas may not be emphasized. This system can lead to difficulties in university classrooms for teachers not familiar with the Japanese education system. Students would be expected to function in English language classes in a manner expected of language teaching methodology textbooks, which seem to assume that each learner is highly autonomous. However, both Obara and Ford and Honeycutts' elements seem to be opposed to this and as will be seen in the next section, the majority of Japanese students in high schools are accustomed to a teacher-centered class.

JAPAN'S TRADITIONAL METHOD OF LANGUAGE TEACHING

The traditional method of language instruction in Japan is called *yakudoku*. *Yaku* means 'translation' and *doku* means 'reading' (Norris, 1994, p. 25). Norris cites Hino (1988) in defining *yakudoku* as

> a technique or a mental process for reading a foreign language in which the target language sentence is first translated word by word, and the resulting translation reordered to match Japanese word order as part of the process of reading comprehension. (Norris, 1994, p. 25)

This is usually what foreigners see when they are in Japanese secondary classrooms. In *Japanese EFL Teachers' Perceptions of Communicative, Audiolingual and Yakudoku Activities: the Plan Versus the Reality*, Greta Gorsuch explains that in post-war Japan of the late 1940's and early 1950's, there were very few English language teachers in Japan:

> As a result of post-war teacher education policies designed to quickly increase the number of certified teachers in all fields, large numbers of college graduates who were not proficient in spoken English were made English teachers at secondary schools as a 'stop gap' measure. (Gorsuch, 2001, p. 4)

Japan's education system is marked by a training method where new

teachers do what the more experienced teachers tell them to, which is the method they themselves learned when they were new teachers. So it could be said that language teaching in Japan is reliant on a behaviorism in language teaching philosophy that is implemented through yakudoku and audiolingualism. It is structuralist as opposed to functionalist in its view of language. It is a system that is highly resistant to change from within and seems highly consistent with the elements described by both Ford and Honeycutt, and Desjardins and Obara.

Japan, as well as other Asian countries, has a Confucian tradition in education that makes it very different in fundamental approach than that of western countries. As with teacher training itself, the emphasis is on repeating what those higher up in the hierarchy (such as a teacher or a work superior) have said as opposed to developing an individual thinking style and argumentation. In *Confucian and Socratic discourse in the tertiary classroom*, Scollon (1999) points out that in Confucian education systems, "Students most often expect a teacher to answer her own questions, and it may feel like pulling teeth to get a student to answer a question unless he really believes it is an open question" (Scollon, 1999, p. 19). This is an accurate description of teaching in a Japanese high school. Scollon continues,

> Rather than a midwife who helps give birth to a truth that lies within, he [Confucius] is a messenger who transmits the wisdom of the ancients. Instead of invoking an internal authority, he has been seen as providing his students with an external authority, though he frequently tells them to think for themselves. (Scollon, 1999, p. 20)

In describing the role of the teacher, Scollon paraphrases Chen (1990) writing,

> The role of the teacher is to serve as a role model, to perfect virtue and assist in the development of talent, to answer questions, and to

> cultivate his own virtue and learning while encouraging students to
> do the same. (Scollon, 1990, p. 20)

In this kind of situation, the teacher can never be unsure, and therefore must always be in complete control of the class so as to never stray into unfamiliar territory. The view of language and learning is very traditional and it is teacher-led because student-led classes are much more likely to stray into unfamiliar territory.

By contrast, language-teaching professionals trained in inner circle English speaking countries (defined as "the traditional basis of English – the regions where it is the primary language – The USA ... the UK ... Canada ... Australia ... and New Zealand" (Kachru, 2006, p. 242)) are taught to teach in a largely communicative manner, which can be quite different than traditional views on language and learning. In a section titled 'Communicative Language Teaching', Nunan and Lamb (2001) point out the "difference [between 'traditional' and 'communicative' classrooms] lies not in the rigid adherence to one particular approach or the other, but in the basic orientation" (Nunan and Lamb, 2001, p. 32). These authors juxtapose 'traditionalism' and 'communicative language' approaches to teaching in eight different categories: i) theory of language; ii) theory of learning; iii) objectives; iv) syllabus; v) activities; vi) role of learner; vii) role of teacher, and viii) role of materials. In the first of these, theory of language, the traditional view is of language as "a system of rule-governed structures hierarchically arranged" (Nunan and Lamb, 2001, p. 31) whereas communicative language teaching views language as "a system for the expression of meaning [its] primary function [is] interaction" (Nunan and Lamb, 2001, p. 31). In the second category, theory of learning, the traditional view is of learning as "habit formation" whereas in communicative language teaching uses "activities [that] involve real communication" (Nunan and Lamb, 2001,

p. 31). In the third category, objectives, the traditional view is that the learners attempt to gain "control of the structures of sound, form and order [as well as] mastery over symbols of the language" (Nunan and Lamb, 2001, p. 31) so as to eventually gain "native speaker mastery" (Nunan and Lamb, 2001, p. 31), whereas the objectives of communicative language teaching "will reflect the needs of the learner" (Nunan and Lamb, 2001, p. 31) and "will include functional skills as well as linguistic objectives" (Nunan and Lamb, 2001, p. 31). In the fourth category, syllabus, the traditional approach is to have a "graded syllabus of phonology, morphology, and syntax" (Nunan and Lamb, 2001, p. 31) whereas the approach from communicative language teachers is to have "some or all of the following: structures, functions, notions, themes and tasks" (Nunan and Lamb, 2001, p. 31). The writers go on to say that the ordering of the syllabus "will be guided by learner needs" (Nunan and Lamb, 2001, p. 31). In the fifth category, activities, traditionalists use "dialogues and drills" (Nunan and Lamb, 2001, p. 31), emphasizing "repetition and memorization [as well as] pattern practice" (Nunan and Lamb, 2001, p. 31), whereas activities by communicative language teachers "engage learners in communication" (Nunan and Lamb, 2001, p. 31), and "involve processes such as information sharing, negotiation of meaning and interaction" (Nunan and Lamb, 2001, p. 31). In the sixth category, role of learner, the traditional view is one of the leaner as an "organism that can be directed by skilled training techniques to produce correct responses" whereas for communicative language teachers, the learner is seen as a "negotiator [and] interactor [who] giv[es] as well as tak[es]" (Nunan and Lamb, 2001, p. 31). In the seventh category, role of teacher, the traditional view is that the teacher is "central and active [with a] teacher dominated method" (Nunan and Lamb, 2001, p. 31). The teacher "provides [the] model [and] controls direction and pace" (Nunan

and Lamb, 2001, p. 31) whereas in communicative language teaching, the teacher's role is one of "facilitator of the communication process, needs analyst, counselor [and] process manager" (Nunan and Lamb, 2001, p. 31). In the final category, role of materials, the traditional view is that materials are "primarily teacher oriented" (Nunan and Lamb, 2001, p. 31) while in communicative language teaching, "[the] primary role [of materials is in] promoting communicative language use" (Nunan and Lamb, 2001, p. 31). From this, it can be seen that there is a difference in the fundamental approach to education in western countries when compared to places where traditional teaching methods are still common, such as in Japanese high schools. This difference contributes greatly to the experience of role shock that freshmen English majors encounter when they begin university studies, especially since for many Japanese students, it may be the first time they have had courses taught entirely by foreign teachers.

Students first entering university in Japan are often expected to freely express their opinions about many different subjects in English classes, especially those conducted by foreign trained language teaching professionals. This can be problematic for many students in part because expressing an opinion that is different than what is expected could mark them as other. They do not know what the expected answer is because they are in an entirely new situation. Hiding opinions, or even culture, that does not match that of seemingly everybody else is a concept known as *honne* and *tatemae* (private versus public stance),

> For many people, one's words and actual intentions do not always agree; in these situations in Japan, one's superficial words and called *tatemae* while one's actual intentions are called *honne* ... the Japanese people make use of it extensively, taking *honne* and *tatemae* for granted because it is considered a virtue not to directly express one's

real feelings and intentions. (Davies & Ikeno, 2002, pp. 115-116) One of the themes of communicative language teaching is for students to talk about their opinions and feeling because content material may be difficult for students and it is assumed that discussing themselves is easier than content for students. The idea is that teachers are therefore able to concentrate on language instead of content teaching. Honne and tatamae shows that discussing their own opinions is not necessarily easy for students new to university studies in Japan because their own opinion may be different from that of others and that could be a threat to their ability to fit in. As this article has shown, being different and therefore not fitting in is particularly problematic in Japanese culture.

As examples of difference in Japan, the next section will show people who are ethnically Japanese, but who have significant experience outside of Japan, ranging from a protracted stay while children to having been born outside of Japan to parents who were also born outside of Japan. These people may or may not be "uniform and norm-conforming" (Desjardin & Obara, 1993, p. 69) when compared with Japanese people without extensive experience overseas. Reactions to these groups, unfortunately, show a tendency towards making assumptions, which was noted earlier in describing otherization and othering as a situation in which "[people] are merely representatives of a particular culture, and tied to a rigid set of characteristics and behaviours" (Jackson, 2014, p. 159). On the other hand, Japan was also seen to have a high-context culture, in which "most of the information is communicated through indirect and nonverbal means with a reliance on mutually-shared knowledge" (Jackson, 2014, p. 94). Japan was also seen to value "structure, status and harmony" (Ford & Honeycutt, 1992, p. 33) and to have "a society based on seniority or authoritarianism" (Desjardins & Obara, 1993, p. 69). Japan was shown to educate people in

a Confucian system in which teachers "serve as ... role model[s]" (Scollon, 1990, p. 20) and so it is a situation in which authority figures are reluctant to stray into unknown territory. Avoidance of dealing with the unfamiliar, in this case the 'other', is a face-saving tactic.

The following section attempts to show through example why Japanese freshmen university students worry about not integrating with the scholastic culture of university English classes, particularly those by foreign instructors. It exemplifies a problem that language instructors face: although there is a high level of anxiety about difference in Japanese culture, the tertiary study of English- and particularly in classes taught by professionals trained in inner-circle English speaking countries- pays particular attention to difference and learning "new ways of being" (Jackson, 2008, p. 36).

JAPANESE RETURNEES
Nikkeijin

Nikkeijin means "Japanese descendant born and raised outside of Japan" (Tsuda, 2003, p. 289). Tsuda notes that "the Japanese media exoticize the nikkeijin as ethnic curiosities who do not fit the Japanese notion that those of Japanese descent should be culturally Japanese as well" (Tsuda, 2003, p. 289). As mentioned earlier, "boundaries of nationality and citizenship ... create openings for "ethnic" immigrants whose ancestors may have left hundreds of years ago ... [such as] the return of large numbers of ... Nikkeijin to ... Japan" (Ortloff & Frey, 2007, p. 448). Tsuda points out, however,

> Most of the Japanese Brazilian return migrants are second and third generation (nisei and sansei) and no longer culturally Japanese. Therefore, despite their Japanese descent, they are treated as foreigners in Japan because of the narrow definition of what constitutes being Japanese. (p. 289)

Tsuda later writes, "[b]ecause many nikkeijin are unable to meet Japanese ethnic expectation ... they are stigmatized as 'inadequate Japanese'" (Tsuda, 2003, p. 293). Asakura, Gee, Nakayama and Niwa (2008) describe media portrayals of Japanese Brazilians in Japan as follows:

> [t]hey are often stereotyped as ignorant, dirty, and culturally inferior and seen as failures for emigrating from Japan. Many are even seen as double failures (regardless of whether they were first- or later-generation emigrants) for migrating back to Japan as laborers. (Asakura, Gee, Nakayama & Niwa, 2008, p. 743)

A partial explanation for this stigmatization may be the "narrow definition of what constitutes being Japanese" (Tsuda, 2003, p. 289), the high-context culture based on a rigid hierarchy, and

> In Japan, racial descent is of primary importance in the definition of Japanese ethnic and national identity ... and takes precedence over culture as the foremost criterion determining who is Japanese because those who "look Japanese" are assumed to be culturally Japanese as well ... Japanese culture is assumed to be transmitted through family socialization to those of Japanese descent regardless of national boundaries. (Tsuda, 2003, p. 292)

Just as the educational culture and work culture were shown to be resistant to change, the assumption of Japanese culture being "transmitted through family socialization" is an assumption that peoples' individual and familial cultures do not change. It seems related to the Confucian education system described earlier. Language teachers trained in sociolinguistics are usually well aware of the connection between language and culture. However,

> returnees' inability to speak their ancestral language is consistently offered as the primary reason for their lack of integration ... this narrow focus on language emerges as the premiere means of distanc-

ing the ethnic returnees from the "real" natives. (Ortloff and Frey, 2007, p. 448)

With no language policy specifically for nikkeijin (Ortloff & Frey, 2007, p. 448) despite Latin American nikkeijin having "become the second largest group of foreigners in Japan after the Korean Japanese" (Tsuda, 2003, p. 289), it is difficult not to view the focus on linguistics as merely an excuse.

All of this relates to the earlier discussion of nihonjinron. It is relevant to role shock in Japanese university freshmen because of the public interest in 'others'. In pluralistic societies such as those in the inner circle English speaking countries, difference is taken for granted and the Socratic systems of education emphasize individual expression and argumentation. Expectations of new students and teachers who are new to Japan will differ enormously.

This article will conclude with kikokushijo, students in the k-12 sector who spent a significant amount of time outside of Japan because of the work requirements of their parents, and issues that they face. For many language teachers, the goal of communicative language teaching is for learners to be able to go overseas and thrive in another language and culture. It is a goal of helping instil internationalism. Although younger than freshmen university students, kikokushijo have achieved that, to varying levels, albeit from outside of Japan through a total immersion style of learning. While they were in secondary school, some university freshmen may have personally observed issues that kikokushijo face, or they may have simply heard through others.

Kikokushijo

The issues that kikokushijo (boys and girls returning to Japan) face is summed up in a magazine article from *The Economist*,

> Internationalisation, or 'kokusaika,' as the Japanese call it, is claiming some innocent victims: Japanese children who live abroad because their parents work there, and who then become too gaijin, too foreign, to be accepted back home ... [teachers and employers] tend to shun them as potential troublemakers, outspoken individuals just like the genuine gaijin. (*The Economist*, 1992, p. 33)

The article concludes with a common approach to remedying the issue of the kikokushijo,

> The Hinoki company, which runs juku [cram schools] in New York, Singapore, Hong Kong and London, tries to instil properly Japanese virtue, advising the pupil who returns to Japan to be "quiet and calm, eating rice cakes with his family and not going to noisy parties with drinks and music". (*The Economist*, 1992, p. 33)

Being outspoken, or at least willing to share one's opinion, is often thought of as an important aspect in successful language learning. Given the source, a popular magazine about Economics, part of the reason for the interest in this subject, at least from non-Japanese sources, is apparent- when this article was published, Japan was seen as a powerful economy.

The kikokushijo are perceived as being too direct. It seems that concern about the kikokushijo is related to a loss of honne and tatamae, hiding their true opinions. Their ability to integrate with the mainstream society is the greatest concern because of the strict hierarchal structures in Japan. It is not their ability in Japanese language, but the manner in which they use the language. It is about their appropriate use of register in a socially conservative and hierarchal country.

The kikokushijo issue can be viewed as an anxiety over their ability to adapt to the environment. They may even be discouraged from using English at all. In a section called 'Interpersonal Styles' in Louise H. Kidder's

Requirements for being Japanese, she notes that

> Japanese students who live abroad learn to speak directly of their own feelings and opinions and this creates problems at home.
>
> Returnees discover either by example or through explicit instruction how unacceptable their directness is. Some describe how they learned to restrain themselves, but they retain the memory of what it was like to say what they felt. (Kidder, 1992, p. 386)

And goes on to show some of the returnees' voices:

> In New Jersey they speak out what you really think, what you like, dislike. But in Japan what I said, "I like' or "I dislike," when I spoke really clearly, they thought that is rude. They said, "you can think that in your mind, but shouldn't say that. It's rude."
>
> ...
>
> When I was in first year of high school, I was not as nice as the ordinary Japanese level ... [t]hey always say things around ... look at the other person's face and be as polite as they can ... go around. Here you have to hold down a little bit what you want to say. (Kidder, 1992, p. 387)

All of these support the notion that the kikokushijo have difficulties when they return to Japan. With "they retain the memory of what it was like to say what they felt", Kidder touches on an important issue- these students no longer see Japan the way other Japanese people do because of their experience. It is not just a matter of readjusting to a stricter society.

A study about criticism styles, *Adjustment of criticism styles in Japanese returnees to Japan*, agrees with returnees' voices,

> Japanese returnees follow Japanese cultural norms and even interacted in a more indirect manner than did Japanese, contradicting previous notions ... We interpret this over-adjustment as Japanese returnees'

> attempt at self-protection from rejection ... Though they need to reduce the gap between their style and that of other Japanese, these findings indicate that Japanese returnees gain bicultural communication skills and may even overcompensate when engaging in their home culture. (Takeuchi, Imahori & Matsumoto, 2001, p. 325)

This seems to support Yasuko Kanno's idea put forth in *Kikokushijo as Bicultural* that society's emphasis on their shortcomings contributes to the kikokushijo's alienation (Kanno, 2000, p. 362). It seems probable that they are studied more closely than other Japanese students because their different experiences mark them as the 'other'.

If the students have been gone for several years they may find that Japan itself is not the same. These returnees face an issue explained by Yasuko Kanno with,

> As the saying goes, "the nail that sticks out gets hammered down"; kikokushijo's different behaviours and ways of thinking have led to numerous incidents of ostracism and bullying in Japanese schools. (Kanno, 2000, p. 362)

Students feel pressured to fit in with the rest of the students, and the assimilation requires that they hide their differences. These students face problems because they are perceived as being different from other Japanese students. Rather than recognizing them as now having a slightly different culture and that difference as positive rather than negative, as expected in a multicultural country like Canada, the assumption is that they need to 'fit in' once again. This relates back to Obara's elements of the Japanese education system in that these people do not conform to the norm. For university English language teachers, the types of things being shown as problematic are the very traits desired in communicative language classes. This must have an effect on the affective barrier of students entering uni-

versity English studies and therefore it is a challenge for foreign language teachers in Japan who were trained to use the communicative approach in language teaching.

CONCLUSION

This article tried to answer the question "What are ways in which otherness may impact students experiencing role shock while entering English language studies at the tertiary level in Japan?" The answer is that otherness may have a huge impact on the lives of students in Japan prior, during and after arriving at the university level. Accepting difference is not seen as being necessary in Japan, although it is often emphasized in communicative language classrooms. In explaining this, this article looked first at the concept of identity within the Japanese context, and a core concept of Nihonjinron being that Japan is different than other nations. It then described Japan's education system and traditional language teaching method in relation to those of inner-circle English speaking nations. It finally used nikkeijin and kikokushijo to illustrate reactions by those in authority to difference. All of this impacts the affective barrier of students entering English studies at the tertiary level and how comfortable they may be in communicative language classrooms. As ELT professionals, we know that each of our students is different and unique. In the Japanese context, it may take a bit more patience and coaxing before students open up. The information in this article is also useful for foreign teachers interested in the rising awareness of bullying in Japan in schools and in the workplace. Those who are bullied are being othered because they stand out or are different in some way from the majority.

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