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English language learning in the Japanese higher education sector: Towards internationalisation.

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Abstract

The graduate attribute ‘global competence’ is increasingly viewed as a significant learning outcome of a tertiary education. In Japanese higher education, global competence appears to be a lesser priority despite Japan becoming an increasingly pluralistic. This article explores how adjunct foreign English language teachers (AFELT) encourage global competency in their classes. Data was drawn from 43 participants across 66 Japanese universities through focus groups and interviews. The research revealed that the positionality of AFELT on the margins institutionally had both affordances and constraints. First, being on the margins meant that AFELT had significantly lower status both institutionally and in student’s eyes, and AFELT were consequently constrained by these views. Second however, and paradoxically, distance from University hegemonic practices also provided affordances for AFELT in disrupting them. AFELT highlight that their pedagogical practices, while constrained, are both subversive and necessary in achieving student’s intercultural and global competencies.

Key Words: internationalisation; intercultural education; global competence; Japanese higher education; graduate attributes

Introduction

Globalisation and a changing demographic profile are challenging Japan socially and politically. Its demographic and social landscapes are changing and growing migrant numbers, declining birth rates, and an aging society have resulted in new transcultural realities and challenges (Willis and Murphy-Shigematsu 2008). One contentious strategy adopted amidst these changes has been to purposefully increase migration (Willis and Murphy-Shigematsu 2008). It is estimated that by 2050 the population of foreign residents in Japan will have increased to between 14 – 33 million with a declining domestic population (Willis and Murphy-Shigematsu 2008). In a country that conceives of itself as largely homogenous (Befu 2001), such an influx presents serious social and political challenges. Consequently, in order to maintain social stability, an education that is socially inclusive becomes increasingly important for this ‘new’ multi-cultural reality. This form of education has the potential to be particularly effective within the Japanese higher education sector as it provides almost universal access (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology here after MEXT 2009); in this sense, the sector is ideally placed to act as an ‘incubator of (inter)cultural change’ (Otten 2009).

This approach, while pursued at a policy level (MEXT 2009), is not universally or consistently enacted and has drawn its critics. Kim (2009, 395), for example, writes: 'The official role of internationalisation [in the Japanese higher education sector] may sound as if it is for international understanding and the development of interculturality, but it is not'. One way that this can be understood is through the range of meanings attributed to the term 'internationalisation'. Goodman (2007), for example, highlights the plurality of meanings associated with internationalisation (*kokusaika*) as it is applied across the Japanese higher education context ranging from status raising, thereby potentially reinforcing cultural stereotypes, to income generation.

To illustrate, Hashimoto (2009) argues internationalisation in the Japanese context is understood as a series of pragmatic activities that do little to challenge the established hegemony of dominant nationalistic views that prioritises the maintenance of Japanese 'cultural independence'. Additionally, Yonezawa (2010) links internationalisation in the Japanese context to global rankings of higher education and highlights the lack of 'cosmopolitanism'. However, this is not unique to Japan, though it is salient, and is also considered a feature of internationalisation in countries such as the United Kingdom (Kim 2009) and Australia (Marginson, Nyland, Sawir, and Forbes-Mewett 2010).

It has also been the case, as Turner and Robson (2008) note, that internationalization is sometimes pursued for commercial rather than altruistic reasons. For example, in the Japanese context some national and private universities pursue an internationalisation agenda in order to appear attractive in the market place and as such, are about revenue generation and status building (Goodman 2007). What this can mean is that there is less emphasis placed on the development of all students' intercultural and global competencies aimed at reducing distance between themselves and cultural 'Others' (Turner and Robson 2008), or in other words, the transformative dimensions of education (Robson 2011).

Some recent expressions of a shift in the commercial focus in the Australian and British internationalisation discourse is reflected in moves towards an increased attention on graduate attributes for 'responsible global citizenship' (Clifford and Montgomery 2011) in an attempt to ensure that these competencies are developed. This means, approaches to internationalisation that do not intentionally and systematically build into the formal and informal curriculum opportunities to foster intercultural communication competencies and global perspectives are increasingly criticized (DeVita 2007; Leaske 2009). Otten (2009, 409) notes that:

the simple presence of international students and international colleagues on campus is not enough to turn an academic programme into an intercultural experience or an entire university into an intercultural community, either for students or for academic staff.

To date, in the Japanese higher education context, there is little to suggest that the transformative dimensions of internationalisation such as, the development of intercultural and global competencies as graduate attributes in domestic students is an explicit priority. Moreover, nor have these goals been explicitly communicated to teachers at the institutional level. While there is a focus on growing international student numbers to 'internationalise' the sector, what has not been considered has been the success or otherwise of these strategies and the impact of increasing diversity on domestic students themselves. Furthermore, there is little known about the degree of influence that those intentionally employed to help internationalise the curriculum, such as adjunct foreign English language teachers (AFELT) or other foreign teachers have in promoting domestic students' global competencies. Consequently this research

considers the influence that these AEFLT have, the meanings that they attribute to their work, and the social ecology in which they find themselves in.

The research was framed through a constructivist, sociocultural cognitive-situative perspective and considers these AFELT as a previously undocumented point of influence in Japan's efforts to internationalise its higher education sector. AFELT, for example, have been specifically employed to provide an international dimension to English Language education—this 'education' being promoted as a critical strategy in a time of globalization (MEXT 2003). Specifically, AFELT pedagogy potentially contributes to and influences the development of attributes related to the intercultural aspects of internationalisation in this context. For example, in addition to providing English language education, AFELT also provide Japanese students opportunities to interact with foreigners over a period through their classroom interactions. As such, AFELT are well positioned to facilitate environments that can potentially promote intercultural and global competencies—both features of an internationalized curriculum—where 'intercultural competency' is understood as the ability to interact with people of other cultures and:

to understand and accept people [them] as individuals with other distinctive perspectives, values and behaviors; and to... see that such interaction is an enriching experience (Byram, Gribkova and Starkey 2002, 6).

In addition, this research is situated in a context where most universities in Japan employ AFELT (Poole 2005). However, this does not imply that opportunities for such learning do not occur in Japanese taught classes, nor that the students themselves contribute nothing to these processes. In short, AFELT are in a unique position to potentially develop intercultural and global competencies and knowing what AFELT say and do develops a better understanding of the ways that these competencies in students might be developed.

English language education: an internationalisation priority?

English is a key element in Japan's internationalisation strategies (Hashimoto 2009). This is reflected in the range of initiatives directed at supporting English language learning. For example, the Japan Exchange and Teaching Program (Council of Local Authorities for International Relations - CLAIR 2006), and the requirement that all elementary school introduce compulsory English lessons for fifth and sixth graders (see, Fennelly and Luxton 2011 for an overview). Consequently, increasing the number of Japanese who can use English is a MEXT priority is reflected in two documents: *Developing a Strategic Plan to Cultivate 'Japanese with English Abilities'* (MEXT 2002); and, *Regarding the Establishment of an Action Plan to Cultivate 'Japanese with English Abilities'* (MEXT 2003). These initiatives and policies have been widely critiqued in and outside of Japan. For example, Hashimoto (2009) maintains that the phrase 'Japanese with English abilities' is actually better translated as 'Japanese who can use English'. This means, according to Hashimoto (2009), that an emphasis is placed on the pragmatic manipulation of the English language to achieve functional outcomes, rather than the development of intercultural communication competencies themselves.

Similarly, Kubota (2002) argues in Japan the widespread assumption that learning English leads to the development of intercultural understanding is untenable. This is especially the case, Kubota (2002) suggests, when the focus in English language education is purely on American or British English. This essentialized focus of English 'promote[s] a narrow view of world cultures and, furthermore, produce[s] essentialized

images of both Inner Circle countries [such as Australia, England, and the United States] and Japan' (Kubota 2002, 22). Illustratively, Kubota writes, exemplars used in English lessons tend to stress cultural differences and do not promote 'international understanding' in the sense of cosmopolitan pluralism or critical multiculturalism' (2002, 22). Instead English education, 'reinforces cultural nationalism through constructing a rigid cultural boundary between *Us* and *Them*' (Kubota 2002, 23). Thus, English language teaching in the Japanese context fails 'to give a serious consideration to multiculturalism, multilingualism, and multiethnic populations that currently exist in Japan as well in global communities' (Kubota 2002, 23).

This form of English language education has implications for AFELT and for full-time foreign teachers of English equally. Author/s (2011a) (2011b) have reported numerous constraints, actual and perceived that impede AFELT pedagogy such they feel they are not able to teach English in the manner they expected. Additionally, many AFELT reported according to Author/s (2011a) a desire to inject more meaning into their teaching by trying to influence the development of intercultural competencies and global perspectives in their students, or what have come to be seen as generic graduate attributes.

AFELT: teaching to develop intercultural and global competencies

One key way of understanding the discontinuity between policy and practice in the Japanese higher education context is through explicating the difference between communicative English language teaching and the long-standing approach to English language teaching with its emphasis on grammar and translation generally employed by Japanese English language teachers. Communicative English language learning, in contrast to the latter approach that stresses grammar and translation for exam preparation, does not focus on the functional aspects of language learning. In contrast, communicative English language classes are 'organized on the basis of communicative functions (e.g. apologizing, describing, inviting, promising) that a given learner or group of learners needs to know and emphasizes the ways in which particular grammatical forms may be used to express these functions appropriately' (Canale and Swain 1980, 2). While almost all universities employ AFELT to teach predominately 'oral/communicative English' to almost all freshmen and sophomores irrespective of program of study (in many instances it is mandatory), it is reported that communicative English language learning does not appear to be genuinely supported (see, Authors 2011b; McVeigh 2002; Poole 2005 for additional information concerning FELT roles, duties and integration at the institutional level). For example, Author/s (2011a) note that AFELT report many universities in which they work fail to adequately structure syllabi and courses to maximize any significant communicative language learning outcomes, and AFELT report a 'culture of indifference' across all levels of the university towards their discipline area that envelops them.

Interestingly, in addition to functional linguistic capability building, while AFELT do not claim to be highly sophisticated intercultural educators, they do report a responsibility to facilitate intercultural learning. A notion encapsulated in one participant's comments when discussing this facet of AFELT teaching stated 'I see it as my belief to show them [students] that English is not only about testing, it is about a whole world of culture, life and interaction' (Int. 15). Drawing on Hunter (2004), Leask (2001, 2008) and the University of South Australia's statement of graduate qualities AFELT may be understood as striving to encourage their students to value diversity of language and culture thus respect and value multicultural and diverse contexts - hence Otherness - and to effect attitudinal changes toward English as an international

language; to think globally and to consider issues from a variety of perspectives; to think inclusively and develop an awareness of their own cultural perspectives and of Japan's place in the global community. In other words, attributes required of 'globally competent citizens' (Hunter, White and Gobey 2006). Thus, while Hashimoto (2009) and Kubota (2002) maintain there is little in MEXT English language policy that explicitly promotes intercultural competencies and global perspectives in language learning, AFELT nevertheless appear to support the develop of students' intercultural communication competencies and global perspectives. Hence, the curriculum delivered to Japanese domestic students and the attributes AFELT aspire to encourage is significantly linked to the implementation of an intercultural education. This can be further understood through a consideration of internationalisation of the curriculum and what is commonly understood as generic graduate attributes (Barrie 2007).

Internationalisation and the generic attribute 'global competency'

Higher education internationalisation is increasingly conceptualized as aimed at fostering the development of the intercultural dimensions in domestic students such as 'global competence' (Mok 2007; Leask 2008; Bourn 2011). For example, according to Knight and de Wit (1995, 13):

the primary reason for internationalizing universities is to increase international and intercultural knowledge and skills of students and to promote research which addresses interdependence (cultural, economic, environmental, political) among nations. [Such]... an international approach attempts to avoid parochialism in scholarship and research and to stimulate critical thinking and inquiry about the complexity of issues and interests that bear on the relations among nations, regions and interest groups.

Furthermore, this means, 'universities are thus increasingly focused on developing international perspectives in all students' (Leask 2008, 90). Consequently, an internationalised curriculum would have some of the following attributes: generic indicators of a graduate as a global citizen who demonstrates international perspectives (Leask 2008); focus on transformative aspects of learning (Turner and Robson, 2008); prepare students to be globally competent (Hunter, White, and Godbey 2006); value diversity and inclusivity (Mestenhauser 1998); and finally, be taught by cosmopolitan academics (Sanderson 2008). It is this notion of 'cosmopolitan' that adequately describes AFELT in the Japanese context.

Recent scholarship links graduate attributes with internationalised curricula and intercultural learning and perspectives (Leask 2001, 2008). For example, Leask (2001, 106) maintains that an 'internationalized curriculum emphasizes a wide range of teaching and learning strategies designed to develop graduates who demonstrate *international perspectives* as professionals and as citizens'. This is accomplished by widening the focus of subjects to include international content and/or contact and 'approaches to teaching and learning that assist in the development of cross-cultural communication skills' (Leask 2001, 106). In other words facilitating a 'transformative counter-hegemonic' learning environment (Bourn 2011). A consideration of these characteristics reveals how AFELT promote these attributes in their students.

Methodology

Participants

Forty-three teachers employed across 66 universities in the *Kansai* region of Japan participated in this research. The teachers were from America, Australia, Britain, Canada or New Zealand. To ensure breadth and depth, typical case sampling (Patton 2002) on the basis of three main criteria was employed. The first was 'years of experience' teaching in the sector. Of the participants (n=43) five had 1-5, nineteen 6-10, and fifteen 10-25 years experience working as English language teachers in Japanese universities. The second criterion was Japanese language ability and relationship status. These were considered important attributes because they indicated a level of interaction and engagement within Japanese society, the university and classroom environments. Across the 43 participants, 3 rated their Japanese proficiency as fluent, 3 as beginners and 37 between low to upper intermediate. The majority of participants were either married to, or in long-term relationships with Japanese spouses or partners. This is significant because participants reported their relationship status as a major contributing factor underpinning decisions to reside as permanent residents in Japan and therefore pursue employment in the university sector. Periods of residency in Japan varied from 2.5 years to 27 years with an average of 14 years. This means that the participants in most cases possessed a sophisticated understanding of Japanese society and culture. Importantly, this also provided an emic perspective and understanding.

The third criterion was the number of universities that participants taught across and the number of classes taught each week. Specifically, participants were selected to reflect a range of teaching commitments from only two classes at one university a week to 21 classes over five days across five different universities. This criterion revealed a breadth of experience across a range of universities.

Data collection and analysis

This research employed two methods of data collection: focus groups and one-to-one, semi-structured open-ended in-depth interviews all of which were conducted in English, the respondent's first language. The interview questions asked about participant's perceptions and experiences as teachers of English in the Japanese university sector. Probes to these questions included Japanese higher education and universities, English language education, the role and status of the participants, classroom experiences, and pedagogical aims and goals. In addition, the first author was a privileged participant observer (Ely 1991) with seven years experience as an AFELT. Data was collected over three iterative rounds with each phase of research informing the next. The first phase utilized two focus groups with six participants in each and was used to help 'scope' the research. The second round utilized one-to-one, semi-structured, open-ended in-depth interviews (Miller and Crabtree 2004) with twenty-four AFELT providing depth to themes as they were identified. The third round of data collection consisted of two focus groups, each comprised of six participants and was confirmatory in that participants were able to comment and reflect on the emergent themes and the researcher's interpretations of these (Vaughn, Schumm, and Sinagub 1996). To close the research loop, and ensure 'credibility and trustworthiness' (Schram 2003), each of these two groups were comprised of the same participants as in round one.

All interviews and focus groups were recorded and transcribed. Drawing on the conceptual work of Hunter et al (2006) and Leask (2001), the analysis focused on identifying instances of AFELT pedagogy that were directed toward facilitating

opportunities for students to develop intercultural capabilities, as outlined in the preceding (see Leask 2001, 2008), and to develop a broader global perspective. The analyses employed a bricolage approach where one ‘moves freely between different analytic techniques and theories’ (Kvale 2007, 146) and Miles and Huberman’s (1994) framework informed the analysis. A constant comparison method of data analysis was applied (Glaser and Strauss 1967), and so the data were coded, themed, and categorised in light of these perspectives and framing devices.

Findings and discussion

Two key findings emerged from the research. First, and grounded in participant’s lived experiences was the way that internationalisation in the Japanese university sector was employed as a force for ‘containing’ and ‘controlling the world’, in other words maintaining ‘cultural independence’ (Hashimoto 2009). Second, was the finding that the pedagogical practices AFELT employed were grounded in a belief that these were critical in order for students to further develop their global perspectives, consider issues from multiple perspectives, critically reflect on their own culture, value linguistic and cultural diversity, and see value in English as a language and cultural artifact—all key to internationalization processes (Hunter et al. 2006). Hence, in the context of internationalisation of Japanese higher education, internationalisation as a concept was perceived by AFELT to be ‘basically for show’. As a consequence, what AFELT do in the classroom is a response to this perceived constraint and as such they intentionally use opportunities to encourage their students to question what AFELT consider to be the prevalent hegemonic normalizing tendencies (Grant 1997). AFELT, therefore, consider much of what they do in the classroom as a largely subversive, albeit vital activity informed through a belief in the transformative power of education. As one participant reported, and a view echoed across the data, was that teaching is ‘like table setting for the future’ or ‘laying the foundations’ for change and a broader world view (Int. 9). It is also the case that not all experiences were perceived to be negative, and that self-reported data can also be partial and incomplete. For example, several participants spoke positively of their experiences as AFELT and students. The caveat is that these positive comments are largely inconsistent with what the research revealed.

Internationalisation? AFELT positioned outside of the ‘system’

As AFELT were ‘positioned on the margins’ of the system, they were in a position to ‘speak back to it’. Participants typified internationalisation, particularly in the private Japanese university sector, as focused on revenue creation and creating an image of the universities in which they work as international in character (Author/s 2011c). AFELT understood these universities to be underpinned by hegemonic structures and practices that maintain dichotomous ‘power relations’ (Foucault 1986) such as ‘us/them’, and ‘in/out’. In this context, and because of their position and status, participants report a wide range of constraints that constrain their professional practice, such as arbitrarily imposed and inappropriate textbooks, overly large classes, exclusion from academic meetings, and a ‘system’ that does not support them or their activities; these observations being consistent with others previously reported (Poole 2005; Rivers 2010).

Paradoxically, however, participants maintained these constraints afford AFELT opportunities to teach both ‘what’ and ‘how’ they like. For example, at the curriculum level, participants regard internationalisation as a vehicle that highlights Japanese distinctiveness and a means ‘*controlling communication with the corrupting forces*

outside of Japan' (Focus group [Fg] 2). Being outside the 'system' means that AFELT have the potential to subvert the 'construction of student subjectivities' (Grant 1997, 101). One participant with 17 years experience living in Japan and married to a Japanese explained that social interaction with non-Japanese is not normalised in Japanese society because it is not the 'Japanese' thing to do. This participant elaborated:

the way they [Japanese] interact with the world is exactly the same as you would from inside a cult ... If you are Japanese any kind of interaction with the outside world is a betrayal of your religion, your Japaneseness ... (Fg. 2,)

However, while such sentiments may be considered extreme, many participants felt compelled to '*try and help them [students] out of that*' (Fg. 2) type of mindset. As such, AFELT work to challenge the notion that interaction with the outside world is not desirable, and an affordance created from being marginalized within the university and so not overly scrutinized was that:

[While] there are some institutional expectations we as professionals meet, for the most part what we try to do in the classroom is outside the system... We bring this subversive idea of what an education is supposed to be in terms of opening the mind... and it is funny that the system cooperates so well by pushing us into that situation, into that role... (Fg. 2)

Hence AFELT see this as an opportunity to encourage students' learning potential and attributes of 'global competence'. This is accomplished through the provision of learning opportunities intended to encourage students to critique cultural filters and social mores that may impede intercultural communication, social interaction and 'global competence' (Hunter et al. 2006).

Behind closed doors: Teaching to develop generic attributes and global competencies

AFELT strive to broaden students' horizons by encouraging openness. In other words, to challenge their students' worldviews, or open-mindedness thereby developing in their students more sophisticated understandings and intercultural communication competencies. One participant stated, for example:

I look to broaden my students' horizons and help them to see beyond Japan and to look at other cultures with a more open mind. (Int. 7)

This is done through introducing students to non-Japanese perspectives in textbook choice, movies and debates, and encouraging students to examine preconceptions, prejudices and cultural filters that obstruct the development of 'global competency'. Participants also reported that a significant amount of their teaching involves engaging students in activities that encourage them to consider learning English as a way to further the quality of their lives. This helps students move beyond the structured hierarchal relationships that regulate and govern much of Japanese social interaction; these structures being reinforced throughout all levels of society (Bachnik and Quinn 1994; Lebra 2004). Participants, therefore, endeavor to encourage students to be '*less Japanese*' (Fg. 3), critically examine their social identity (Tajfel 1972), and question aspects of their culture that potentially constrain their interactions with 'Others'. This was explained in the following way:

What we teach is more an alternative way of being. It is a social experience, we are pointing the way to this way of being that is less Japanese, less constricted, and more relaxed... what we are doing is subversive actually. (Fg. 3)

Further, AFELT practices can be understood as encouraging students to move beyond justifying reluctance to engage in social interaction with autostereotypical (or

nationally projected) beliefs such as shyness (Taylor 2002), and to see Japan in a broader context. In short, this aspect of AFELT pedagogy is focused on helping students develop generic attributes of global competency, such as; valuing diversity of language and culture, thinking globally and from varied perspectives and thinking inclusively. This is now elaborated.

Generic attribute: Valuing diversity of language and culture

A key aspect of global competence is valuing diversity of language and culture. However, many AFELT report students, particularly for non-language majors or students in courses where English is not regarded as necessary, as resistant to using English in classes. As one participant explained, *'We have many students, though not all, who hate English'* (Foc. 3). Therefore, a major goal for AFELT is to encourage students not to *'hate'* English. They want to effect change and *'improve their attitude towards the language'* (Int. 9). In order to achieve this aim AFELT work to build connections with them. As one participant explained, *'[we want to] empathize with them... and make it enjoyable, joke and try to be personable'* (Int. 20). In working towards this, AFELT strive to help students feel comfortable around them as foreigners. In one AFELT's words:

I try to help students feel comfortable just speaking to a foreigner and once they are comfortable speaking to you in Japanese then you can maybe make them feel comfortable speaking to you in English. (Int.13)

Participants maintained that Japanese teachers of English classes overemphasize tests performance rather than focusing on English as an authentic mode of communication. One participant noted:

From my experience, I think if Japan wants to truly use English to help their society, and more importantly, their economy to internationalise, they have to get away from that structure aimed towards the entrance exam situation. (Int. 14)

As participants explained, given the emphasis on grammar/translation approaches used throughout high schools, it is hardly surprising many students are not motivated to participate in their English classes. As one AFELT observed:

The internal [motivation] to use the language for fun, to communicate, to make friends is not there. I mean that just completely disappears in junior high school and there really is so little emphasis on using language as a communication tool. They teach it more like a science, and I think that is a fundamental flaw with the system. (Int. 9)

Consequently, a key AFELT objective is to encourage students to consider English from a broader cultural context and to value diversity of language and culture. This means that AFELT endeavor to motivate their students to view learning English as something meaningful and relevant socially, personally, and professionally: goals that are consistent with the outcomes of an internationalised curriculum aimed at fostering global competence. For example, as one participant highlighted:

Historically, English has been a language associated with democracy, with freedom of expression; I mean that is part of the product we are selling. If you can teach these students these two and at the same time create the association in their minds ... I don't think that is so bad. (Int. 13)

Generic attribute: Thinking globally and from varied perspectives

In addition to effecting change in students' attitudes towards English, AFELT also attempt to facilitate students' willingness to 'think globally and consider issues from a variety of perspectives', a view encapsulated in the following statement:

[A]nother objective is to show how students' daily lives are connected to global issues that affect everyone, so I think that in learning English they need to talk and think about a world that is changing dramatically. (Int. 18)

One pedagogical practice participants employ, consistent with the literature, is encouraging students to consider issues from other cultural perspectives. For example, Haig (2002, 53) maintains a graduate from an international curriculum should be aware of 'their cultural tradition and its perspectives in relation to other cultures and their perspectives.' One participant explained:

Japanese students tend to be very singular in their vision. Japan and only Japan... I think giving them some cultural wherewithal, some sort of tools for critical thinking for what is around them and enabling them to look at Japan more critically and openly is important. (Int. 17)

By way of elaboration:

[Students] don't watch the news; they have no idea what is going on in the world. Japan is the centre of the world and I try [to] get them to do research on the internet about different cultures, cultural things, historical things, watch the news ... I just think they are not really interested in what is going on outside of their little world. (Int. 1)

Consequently, AFELT express concerns about students' willingness to recognize and reflect on attitudes such as autostereotypes (Taylor 2002), ethnocentrism (Befu 2001), and the degree to which these act as 'cultural filters' and consequently influence cognitions and social interaction (Inglehart 1997). Therefore, AFELT pedagogy encourages students to be culturally reflexive and consider how culturally mediated attitudes and values influence their perceptions of 'reality' (Inglehart 1997). One example of this is the notion of 'shyness' which extended into AFELT classes where students are required to interact. Students explain their reluctance to participate and interact by justifying a Japanese disposition towards shyness. Therefore, participants maintained that the interaction students have with them is significant in that it first: provides students with opportunities to reflect on autostereotypical attitudes and behaviors; and second, it helps students to be more comfortable interacting with 'Others'. In one participant's words:

I probably am the only American or one of two Americans most of my students will ever meet... In fact most of these kids will never meet another *gaijin* [foreigner]... I mean they will spend 45 hours with me they will probably not spend 45 hours with an other *gaijin*... (Foc.1)

Generic attribute: Thinking inclusively

A further attribute of global competence is thinking inclusively. For example, it is held that a university graduate ought to be able and willing 'to think globally and inclusively' and to 'understand the basic tenets of different worldviews and be able to see the world as others conceive of it' (Haig 2002, 53). This attribute is demonstrated through attitudes and behaviors directed towards cultural 'Others' and, a significant influencing factor in the formation of attitudes and behaviors towards 'Others' is stereotypes (Smith and Mackie 2000).

Participants maintained that many students perpetuate and naively stereotype foreigners and AFELT. Participants attribute this tendency to students' unwillingness to

think globally and to consider the world differently. Consequently, AFELT goals include facilitating reductions in levels of stereotypical thinking. To illustrate this, one participant explained that because of his physical appearance (being tall with European features), he is often subjected to ‘comments’ or ‘giggles’ from students who often remark ‘*hana ga takai*’ (‘what a big nose’). As another observed:

[T]here is an element in this society ... that perpetrates stereotypes... what I want them to understand is that, my culture is just like this culture: there is good things and bad things, good people and bad people, good ideas and bad ideas and pick and choose from those things... you are exposing students to something new and that is what makes our job important. (Int.21)

Interestingly, several participants explained that they intentionally exploited their foreignness to provoke students into confronting stereotypical attitudes and behaviours towards foreigners. For example:

Japanese students are somewhat somnambulant. They sit through lectures where they sleep most of the day and they come into a room with a foreign teacher who is interesting like they have never seen interesting before in a class. This can be marvelous. This can wake students up and not just physically... (Int. 2)

Teaching critical thinking skills (broadly defined as being ‘open’) was also an important facet of their pedagogical practice. However, this was not without its challenges. As one AFELT observed:

Students seem to be at their most uncomfortable when you ask them to discuss or to give an opinion. And they seem to be almost flabbergasted that you would ask them to question their reasons, or, like when you ask them the ‘why’ question, the usual reaction is “Why? Eh?” It is like they have never thought about it before or nobody had ever asked them that question before. (Int. 18)

Hence, AFELT see themselves as actively working to provide opportunities for students to develop competencies considered essential in a globalised environment and multicultural society such as critical/open thinking. In this regard AFELT consider themselves to be more of a ‘*coach than a teacher*’ (Int. 10), and by stressing the importance of being sensitive to culturally different ‘Others’ and encouraging students to appreciate and value other cultures, AFELT both directly and indirectly internationalise the curriculum. This has the potential to lead students into the ‘*bigger world*’.

I think part of the teachers’ job is to raise students’ awareness, to bring them into the bigger world and to point out... there is a far wider world to see and far more things to be aware of than just Japan ... [Int 12]

Conclusion

The purpose of the internationalised curriculum is ‘to create graduates who are capable of engaging in a culture of communication and work that is becoming increasingly global’ (Peterson, Ginsburge, Garcia and Lemke 2000 cited in Haigh, 2002, 52). Given the pressures on Japanese society and the university sector to accept and integrate increasingly diverse populations, education that fosters the development of intercultural communication skills and global competencies is a priority. This means that increasingly graduates will have to acquire new skills and to be ‘able to adapt to an unfamiliar culture and operate in a socially and culturally diverse environment; appreciate differences in gender, culture and customs; and be able to work effectively and sensitively within the (national) and international community’ (Haigh 2002, 52). However, AFELT, who are centrally placed in the internationalisation discourse in

Japan as teachers of communicative English, reveal a significant gap between the policy rhetoric and their own lived experiences.

AFELT regard themselves as being marginalized and constrained professionally by cultural and institutional mores, and while feeling constrained by factors such as limited institutional support and students' motivational levels towards communicative English classes, they are also afforded significant levels of autonomy to structure their teaching. The research reveals that AFELT intentionally use this autonomy to positively influence students' capacity for intercultural communication, global understanding, and competencies and hence 'speak back' to those values, mores, and practices that constrain them.

Furthermore, this research further highlights the need for ongoing research to determine student outcomes and the effect of English foreign language classes on intercultural competency and the degree to which AFELT classes are influential or not in the experience of Japanese students. It also highlights the need for further analysis that critically examines the implementation over time of intercultural education as Japan and its institutions become increasingly pluralistic. Finally, it can be concluded that AFELT play an important and unacknowledged role in the internationalisation of the Japanese higher education system that goes beyond English language teaching itself.

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