The Role of a Self-Access Learning Center in Japan: Accommodation of Translingual Practice amidst International Educational Reform

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Author Biography

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Abstract

In recent years, Japanese higher education has seen drastic reforms to accommodate the rapid changes of social structure and economic order in light of globalization. The government has promoted a policy of educating university students to become active participants in the future global society. Although the government has financially supported these university reformations, mainly neoliberal procedures have been employed; universities have been held responsible for their own reformation, while accountability has been ensured using numerical data, such as the number of international students or taught English taught courses. As for language education, universities have tended to use language test scores, such as TOEFL and IELTS to evaluate outcomes. However, the knowledge assessed in these language tests is fragmented, regulating learners' diverse language use. Thus, research in applied linguistics has recently begun to critically evaluate such neoliberal measures of reform. The present case study aimed to qualitatively assess how a Japanese university's globalization policy has influenced the development of translingual agency in two students working as peer advisors at the university's Self-Access Learning Center (SALC). The results indicated that the neoliberal reformation of language education could influence the natural language activities of translingual language learners, but that the SALC could be an important place for learners to explore their translingual identities and engage in diverse language activities.

近年グローバル化の最中、日本の高等教育は社会構造や経済秩序の急速な変化に対応するため劇的な改革を進めてきた。政府は将来グローバルに活躍できる人材を育てるため、大学生の教育に関して変化を求めてきた。しかし、政府は財政的に大学の改革を支えてきたものの、それらの多くは新自由主義的方策が採用されてきた。すなわち、大学はその改革に責任を持つと同時に、説明責任として数値的データを用いて外部に示してきた。例えば、留学生の数や英語の試験の点数といったものである。言語教育については、大学は教育成果を評価するために、TOEFL や IELTS のスコアを使用する傾向にある。しかし、これらのテストで評価される知識は断片化されたものであり、学習者の多様な言語使用を制限してきた。したがって、近年の応用言語学の領域では新自由主義的改革について批判的に評価されている。本研究は、二人のピーアアドバイザーとして大学の自律学習センターで働いていた学生に対し質的な調査を行った。調査では主に、日本の大学のグローバル化政策が、2 人の学生のトランスリンガルなエージェンシーを発揮するにあたりどのように影響を与えてきたのかを検証した。

Keywords: translanguaging, language learner identity, language learner agency, McDonaldization, neoliberalism

Accompanying the progression of globalization, a radical reformation of university education has begun in Japan, with the central aim of developing university students to be active participants in the new global society. Although the Project for Promotion of Global Human Resource Development in 2012 and the Top Global University (TGU) Project in 2014, led by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), has financially supported this reformation, with regards to actual policy-making and implementation, largely neoliberal measures have been employed. Individual universities have been expected to reform their curricula and to demonstrate outcomes by reporting numerical data, such as improved test scores and numbers of students joining study abroad programs. These neoliberal reformation procedures have been subject to scrutiny within applied linguistics (e.g., Block, 2018; Holborow, 2013; Kubota, 2014, 2016) because of the test-based evaluations of linguistic and cultural knowledge. It is widely argued that aspects of language and culture are inseparable and thus cannot be individually measured through tests such as the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) or International English Language Testing System (IELTS).

Although these neoliberal education reformation projects have tended to focus on fragmented knowledge, which is standardized for equal evaluation of English ability, the nature of language use in an international context is more complex. Applied linguists have explored the nature of international communication practices and labeled them as *translanguaging* (García & Li Wei, 2014). Foreign language learners who engage in translanguaging can integrate various languages into one system and choose different resources to communicate with others depending on the context. In translingualism (Canagarajah, 2013), which is an umbrella term encompassing superdiversity (Blommarert & Rampton, 2012), metorolingualism (Pennycook & Otsuji, 2015), and translanguaging (García & Li Wei, 2014), it is vital to consider the contradiction between monolithic standards in

neoliberal reformation and the complex nature of international communication or language learning in translingual speakers.

Furthermore, universities in Japan have focused on improvement of language ability of students in the TGU project implementation. However, they have paid less attention to the educational efficacy of Self-Access Learning Centers (SALCs), even though SALCs enable learners to realize their own personally designed language learning through engagement with various resources, teachers, and other learners (Gardner & Miller, 1999). Thus, in order to explore how neoliberal reformation affects students' language learning experiences at a SALC, we report on a qualitative case study of two translingual students at a Japanese university. The following sections will review the relevant theoretical background, describe the methods, and summarize the results of the present study. Finally, the effects of the institution's neoliberal policies on translingual language learning and activities will be discussed.

Literature Review

Neoliberalism and Language Education

Neoliberalism is a politico-economic body of thought, which, according to Kubota (2014), encourages "privatizing public services, creating a flexible workforce, and increasing individual and institutional accountability for economic success" (p. 485). Due to the reduction of public services provided by the welfare system, neoliberalism can potentially generate or widen economics gaps between the upper and lower classes.

With regard to language education, neoliberalism has been found to largely influence the English language teaching (ELT) industry. Due to the nature of neoliberalism, individual accountability plays a greater role in decision-making. As quantified results are preferred to measure success, the focus on improvements in scores on tests such as TOEFL or IELTS places pressures on educators and students. This is evidenced in language school

advertisements that claim that by attending their schools, students could improve their TOEFL scores. In Japan, most students must study English as a required subject for university entrance exams, and thus are drawn to books designed specifically for entrance exam preparation and cram schools (Tsuneyoshi, 2013). It seems that this trend in language education could be influenced by the commercialization of education.

Ritzer (2011) developed the concept of McDonaldization, which refers to the phenomenon of various industries and sectors, such as education, operating in ways that resemble fast-food restaurants. It is characterized by efficiency, calculability, predictability, and control (Ritzer, 2011). Gray and Block (2012) criticized the scientific management and tailor-made system of teacher education in ELT industries, which they argue applied these four characteristics. Seargeant (2009) also warned that McDonaldized language education tended to employ widely-used standardized textbooks and teaching methods, aimed at more economical and systematic efficacy rather than promoting the diverse identities and incarnations of the language.

Furthermore, De Costa and Norton (2017) argued that these result-oriented quantitative outcomes largely resembled neoliberalism in that competent teachers focused their teaching on improving students' language test scores. In addition, in spite of the fact that language knowledge is not divisible into discrete fragments, in order to quantitatively evaluate students' learning outcomes, the language has been fragmented and teachers have become a pedagogical tool for inputting fragmented knowledge into students' brains. De Costa and Norton (2017) problematized this tendency for quantification and fragmentation of education and its outcomes, arguing that the nature of education was more dynamic and complex. While the effectiveness of standardized tests for objectively and quickly evaluating English ability should be acknowledged, the diversified and practical language use and learning achieved through SALCs cannot always be applied to language tests, posing a challenge for students who must prioritize studies that directly impact their futures.

Translingualism and Autonomous Language Learning

As mentioned above, neoliberal language education has focused on quantitatively measurable knowledge due to institutional accountability. Kubota (2016) argued that neoliberalism in language education tended to ignore the historical aspects of humanity, culture, and subjective experience in language learning. Throughout the continuous expansion of globalization, international communication styles have also diversified considerably. In particular, English has become a lingua franca in the global community, and international communication in English amongst non-native English speakers has spread. Thus, the nature of international communication practices has become increasingly complex.

Many scholars, such as Blommarert and Rampton (2012), have discussed how to interpret the nature of international communication in modern society. Blommarert and Rampton (2012) introduced the term *superdiversity*, which describes the dramatic increase in migrations, resulting in migrants losing sociocultural features, such as their nationality, ethnicity, language, and religion. Because of superdiversity, languages have become mixed and methods of communication have become complex. Furthermore, many scholars (e.g., Canagarajah, 2011; Creese & Blackledge, 2010; García & Li Wei, 2014) have discussed these international communication practices in terms of translanguaging, or "the ability of multilingual speakers to shuttle between languages, treating the diverse languages that form their repertoire as an integrated system" (Canagarajah, 2011, p. 401).

In translingualism, continuous changes in languages similar to the transformations of the world due to the globalization can be observed. According to Canagarajah (2013), although certain features of English may be undeniably helpful in international communication, English cannot be an absolute norm to guarantee successful meaning-making activities in communication. Pennycook (2010) also mentioned that the language systems of each individual are always re-localized with new meanings and values depending on the situation. Thus, a new indexicality of vocabulary and syntax is continuously being generated

in the language system. In other words, the system can persistently be in the state of becoming.

In addition, the concept of learner autonomy has had political and cultural implications on Western perspectives and English. Pennycook (2014) observed that the concept of learner autonomy was founded in individualism from the European Enlightenment and that its dissemination across the world coincided with that of English as an international language. Riley (1988) further critiqued the relationship between learner autonomy and culture, arguing that the definition of learner autonomy failed to include non-Western cultural and educational backgrounds. Other researchers had also tried to investigate the applicability of autonomy in Asian educational contexts (e.g., Palfreyman, 2003; Smith, 2001). However, as Benson (2013) suggested, each individual has his or her own autonomy, and even within an individual, autonomy can be manifested differently according to specific contexts. As the paradigm of translingualism does not follow the monolingual principle of one language as one culture, observing the nature of foreign language learners and learner autonomy from a monolingual perspective would not yield valid results. Thus, it is necessary to consider political and cultural factors when investigating and analyzing how students approach their learning and use languages in the translingual environment.

Research Methodology

The present research was conducted at a medium-sized international university in Japan, known for its multicultural environment and bilingual education system in which most of the undergraduate courses are held in both Japanese and English. The majority of the international students are from Asian countries and the university has been selected as one of the 24 TGU (Global Traction Type) by MEXT (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, Japan, 2019). The university also emphasizes the *globalization* of Japanese students while paying special attention to improving Japanese students' English

ability. As parts of its *global learning* plan, the university promotes high achievement in recognized English tests, such as TOEFL and IELTS, and study abroad experiences.

The SALC offers a range of language learning support to students studying English, Japanese, and Chinese outside of classrooms. Peer advisors (PAs) offer students opportunities to practice English, Japanese, and Chinese and learning advisors (LAs) provide students with advice regarding their language studies and university lifestyles. In addition, the SALC organizes a range of social and cultural events, including Japanese calligraphy lessons, guitar lessons, and movie nights. It also provides a variety of language learning materials, including games and comic books. The SALC is not only a place to study languages, but also a space to socialize with friends. This context could play a significant role in realizing the aim of this research project because it can reveal how these two translingual participants use interesting features of the SALC to design their own language learning and exercise their diverse language use.

Participants

This case study focuses on two female Japanese university students, Hanako and Yoshiko[1], who were selected as research participants because of their extensive experiences at the SALC and their abilities to use several languages in communication. The aim was to investigate how and why students' approaches to language learning and use had changed, or not changed, due to their experiences at the SALC. Thus, Hanako and Yoshiko, both of whom were fourth-year students and who had been visiting the SALC since their first year at the university were deemed suitable for the purposes of this observation. Additionally, the two participants had similar experiences, as they both worked at the SALC as PAs, had joined an overseas program at the university, and spoke a third language other than Japanese or English (see Table 1). Both agreed to participate in the study when recruited by the researchers and, following an orientation regarding the study, signed a research participation consent form.

Table 1

General Information on the Participants

	Participant 1	Participant 2
Name	Hanako	Yoshiko
Gender	Female	Female
Year	4th	4th
Languages	Japanese, English, and Indonesian	Japanese, English, and Korean
International experience	**1.** Indonesia (one-year exchange at a senior high school) **2.** Indonesia (eight-month internship as a Japanese language assistant)	**1.** United Kingdom (one-year exchange at a university)
PA experience at the SALC	3 years	0.5 year

Data Collection Methods

This study employed narrative inquiry to investigate the participants' diachronic experiences, particularly concerning foreign language learning and the use of translanguaging in the two participants. Their stories were collected in Japanese. To account for varying storytelling abilities and the subjective nature of the narratives, this study employed two different types of narrative (Flick, 2007, 2014). First, the participants were asked to write about their language learning history[2] (LLH; Barkhuizen et al., 2013) at the end of their third year at the university. Subsequently, they participated in semi-structured oral narrative interviews in Japanese when they were fourth year students.

In the LLH, they were asked to reflect on their past experiences at the SALC, explaining their language learning experiences and use. The interview questions aimed to extract more narrative from the participants to attain deeper insights into their LLHs. Considering the practical limitations (i.e., time and place) of each data collection method, this research followed Riemann's suggestion (as cited in Flick, 2014), primarily focusing on "how" questions, followed by "why" questions. In addition, in order to further triangulate the data, one of the language support sessions was recorded with an IC recorder. As both participants worked as PAs at the SALC to support international students, this data was expected to provide insight into how they actually interacted with students at the SALC.

Data Analysis

The purpose of this research was to understand the SALC's role in foreign language learning and its use by describing and analyzing two translingual students' experience at the SALC. In Strauss's (1987) thematical coding, researchers are required to generate short descriptions about cases in order to decide on the rules for coding. To do this, all of the audio data from the oral narrative interviews and support sessions were transcribed. Next, each of the researchers independently analyzed the data from the LLH and the interviews to find possible themes and generate codes for the data. These were discussed and consolidated (see Table 2 for a sample of the coding).

Table 2

Example of coding in narrative data analysis

Time	Narrative	Codes	Source
1st semester	[…] I explained how to cook my	1. FAMILIAR TOPICS	LLH

favorite meal[1]. […] John sent me a text with a picture showing that he actually used my recipe, which we had talked about in the session when we discussed him cooking by himself[2]. After that, I went to the SALC every day and the SALC became one of the most comfortable places[3] for me.	2. 3.	EXCHANGE MESSAGES COMFORTABLE PLACE

Findings

Hanako's Story

Hanako had initially been influenced by the image of the ideal Japanese university student, which entailed being proficient at English, going to a university in an English-speaking country as an exchange student, and becoming a successful *global* person. She felt the need to improve her TOEFL scores and pursue an exchange program because she was a student at an international university and because most of her fellow Japanese students would be held to similar expectations. She also believed that she had to speak *perfect* English in order to interact with international students. These factors restricted her language activities.

Although she struggled to improve her English, she felt comfortable at the SALC, due to the friendly support she received from the PAs and LAs. As a result, she aspired to become a Japanese PA to support international students studying Japanese at the SALC, which she was able to do beginning in her second year at university. Because she worked as a PA, the SALC changed from a place to study English to a place to work and support other students. In using English, Japanese, and Indonesian to communicate with other PAs and students, she came to realize the importance of conveying her message, rather than speaking

each language perfectly. Meanwhile, she also became interested in Southeast Asian culture and people, eventually joining a Japanese teaching assistant program in Indonesia. Her SALC experience empowered her to find unique language activities and gave her opportunities to develop her translingual identity as well as explore her own interest. Thus, the SALC became the most important place for her during her university life.

Transition in Hanako's Approach to Language Learning and Use

Hanako began with negative feelings towards English because she compared herself to her friends who were better at English. This motivated her to visit the SALC, which was introduced to her in an English class during her first semester. At the SALC, she focused on studying English for improving her tests results and coursework through support provided by English PAs and LAs. However, as she struggled to improve her English, her negative emotions toward English remained.

After becoming a Japanese PA, she had increased opportunities to communicate with other PAs and international students. She used English, Japanese, and Indonesian to interact with them and was able to build strong relationships. Because of her need to communicate with such a diverse group, she became less focused on speaking *perfect* English and began to mix languages to convey her meaning (see the Appendix for an example of how she interacted with students at the SALC). Her thoughts and approach to language learning and use changed into a more translingual perspective. Table 3 illustrates the change in her notion of language learning and use.

Table 3

Coding in Narrative Data Analysis of Hanako's Approaches to Language Learning and Use

Time	Narrative	Codes	Source
1st semester	Four of my friends were good at English, as they were placed in the Intermediate and Advanced English classes[1]. I started to visit the SALC because I was not good at English and didn't like English[2], so I wanted to improve my English. I thought I had to work hard since I was at this university […] I mainly practiced speaking with a PA at the SALC. In particular, I intensively practiced test topics before English speaking exams[3].	1. COMPARISON 2. NEGATIVE FEELING TOWARD ENGLISH 3. STUDY FOR TESTS AND CLASSES	LLH
3rd–4th semester	In the SALC, I became friends[1] [with international students] because I could communicate[2] with them without speaking perfect English[3]. Thus, I no longer paid attention to "language" [how fluently or perfectly I spoke each language] much.	1. FRIENDS 2. COMMUNICATION 3. PERFECT ENGLISH	LLH

4th–5th semester	I was shy and didn't want to talk in English [laugh], and I just didn't like [to speak English]. But the idea came to me that I could mix languages[1]. I completely become like… as long as I can convey my messages, it's OK [to talk using mixed languages][2]. […] I think this was quite a big change[3] for me.	1. MIXED LANGUAGES 2. TRANSLANGUAGING 3. CHANGE IN LANGUAGE USE	Interview

Discovering an Interest in Southeast Asia

Because the university promoted globalization based on English, many Japanese students felt the need to improve their English and participate in an exchange program to become a successful member of the global society. In her first year, Hanako had also perceived English skills to coincide with *success* and *global competence*. However, through her interactions with Southeast Asian students inside and outside of the SALC, as well as outside the university (i.e., her part-time job at a Vietnamese restaurant), she developed an interest in Southeast Asia. In addition to studying English, she also enrolled in Indonesian language classes and eventually became fluent in Indonesian. In her third year, connecting her interests in Southeast Asia and her Japanese PA experience at the SALC, she joined a Japanese teaching assistantship program in Indonesia for eight months. Table 4 describes the analysis of how her goals had changed since the first semester.

Table 4

Coding in Narrative Data Analysis of Hanako's Goals

Time	Narrative	Codes	Source
1st semester	At the time [1st year], I had a goal, which was similar[1] to other Japanese students. Because I entered this international university[2], I thought I had to improve my English … and then I could become a successful [global] person[3].	1. COMMON GOAL 3. EXPECTATION (TOP-DOWN) 4. ENGLISH = SUCCESS AND GLOBAL	Interview
4th–5th semester	I was thinking that it would be good if I could go to an English-speaking country using an exchange program at the university or joining a study abroad program at my own expense because my English would be improved a lot, but I realized that I actually liked the atmosphere of Southeast Asia[1] […] and the people there. So, my idea changed[2] to, if I had a	1. SOUTHEAST ASIA 2. CHANGE IN GOAL 4. FINIDING OWN INTEREST (BOTTOM-UP)	Interview

	chance, wanting to challenge myself[3] in Southeast Asia without sticking to English.

Development of Meaning and Value at the SALC

As described above, for Hanako, in the beginning the SALC was a place to study English. However, because of her role as a PA, the SALC was no longer only a place to study English, but also a place to work and support other students. As a result of her experiences at the SALC, Hanako was empowered to explore her translingual identity and discover her interest in Southeast Asia. In her third year, Hanako became the leader of the Japanese PAs, and her commitment to the SALC increased. She made a considerable effort to improve the SALC and her contribution was recognized by many of the other PAs, LAs, and coordinators at the SALC. Thus, the SALC became the most important place for her in her university life as Table 5 exemplifies.

Table 5

Coding in Narrative Data Analysis of Hanako's Development of Meaning and Value at The SALC

Time	Narrative	Codes	Source
7th semester	I am a fourth-year student now, but the SALC has been a very, very important place[1] for me, when I look back on my university life […] As other students have a	1. IMPORTANT PLACE 2. SPENDING TIME AND	Interview

passion for their club activities and student organizations, I have spent my time and energy[2] most on the SALC.	ENERGY

Yoshiko's Story

According to Yoshiko, when she entered the university, she was eager to enjoy international communication, but she struggled because she compared herself with other students and felt inferior to them, particularly in her English ability. At this time, the SALC helped relieve her stress and anxiety. She could speak openly with teachers and senior friends about her anxieties concerning her English language learning, and she could enjoy casual conversation with PAs in English. Also, she began to learn Korean and made Korean friends. Later, she became interested in studying abroad and studied intensively to raise her IELTS score, practicing the speaking portion with the PAs. When she passed the exam for the exchange program, she became a PA because she wanted to contribute to the SALC and support Japanese language learning for international students. Although her experiences were different from Hanako's, they eventually led to a similar result, with the SALC becoming the most important place for her in her university life.

Complex relation between language and surroundings

Based on Yoshiko's narrative, two points of contrast were evident in how she had learned and used languages at the beginning of her university life: English and Korean languages, and classroom studies and SALC. For her, English was perceived as a challenge invoking negative emotions, such as inferiority or anxiety. To cope with this, she required a comfortable place to release her negative emotions and to be reminded of her original goal of getting involved in international communication. In contrast, she had more positive views of

the Korean language and voluntarily spent time with Korean students. She did not seem to alter her behavior according to the context or environment. When she was with Korean students, she did not restrict herself solely to Korean. Rather, she chose to use the full capacity of her language resources from Japanese, English, and Korean, mixing the languages and communicating meaning using the most efficient methods possible. Table 6 contains translated excerpts from Yoshiko's written LLH and interview that illustrate her attitudes towards English and Korean.

Table 6

Coding in Narrative Data Analysis of Yoshiko's Relation between Language and Surroundings

Time	Narrative	Codes	Source
1st semester	I was suddenly placed into the higher-level class. In that class, one student had studied abroad, and, well, the other students spoke very well with our teacher[1] […] I didn't have a chance to talk much in class […] So, I was very nervous[2] and I couldn't say anything. […] I used the SALC not as a place for studying, but as a place for enjoying	1. INFERIOR FEELING 2. ANXIETY 3. ENJOY CONVERSATION IN ENGLISH	LLH

	conversations with international students[3].		
3rd semester	[…] I don't say this in Japanese, but I can say it in Korean. They are slightly similar. I sometimes say Korean words when I'm speaking in Japanese, unintentionally[1, 2]. […] Well, sometimes, if I'm more fluent in Korean, I have difficulty accessing my English […].	1. MIXED LANGUAGE 2. TRANSLANGUAGING	Interview

Conflicts between Yoshiko's Motivation and the School's Policy

Yoshiko was initially interested in studying abroad in Korea for one year because she had enjoyed learning Korean and had made lasting friendships with Korean students. However, due to the university's exchange program system, she was also forced to consider her TOEFL scores when applying for the program. Although she had initially been internally motivated to study in Korea, the TOEFL score-based criteria for study abroad brought about external pressures, particularly due to the unofficial ranking of countries that had arisen from differences in TOEFL score requirements. Her reason to choose Korea changed from an eagerness to experience the language and culture she loved to the fact that it was possible for her to apply with her current TOEFL score, which was not high.

In addition to her motivation to study abroad, her motivation to study English had also changed, and she spent more time practicing for the speaking section of the IELTS with the PAs. Although her natural interactions with the international students at SALC did not

completely disappear, they had tapered and her language use and intercultural experiences became less diverse. The following extract demonstrates Yoshiko's test-based motivations to pursue Korea for her study abroad experience.

Table 7

Coding in Narrative Data Analysis of Conflicts between Yoshiko's Motivation and The School's Policy

Time	Narrative	Codes	Source
3rd semester	If I want to go to Asian countries, I don't need a higher score in TOEFL compared with European countries[1]. Also, I heard it's not likely to be competitive[2].	1 LOWER LANGUAGE REQUIREMENT 2 LESS COMPETITIVE	Interview
3rd semester	Now I have this sort of score in TOEFL and Korea can be a possible choice[3]. I didn't have many choices.	3 POSSIBLE CHOICE	Interview

Entanglement of the Self, Languages, and the Environment

By her third year at university, the borders between Yoshiko's Japanese, Korean, and English language resources had begun to fade. As a result, her rich language resources and natural ability to use translanguaging as a pedagogy enhanced her work as a PA. Not only had the borders between her language resources faded, but the borders between her and other PAs and the places for learning and international communication also began to blur.

Various aspects of her university life merged to allow her to experience more natural international exchanges and international communication. The following excerpts from her interview and written LLH illustrate this transition.

Table 8

Coding in Narrative Data Analysis of Yoshiko's Notion of The Self, Languages, and The Environment

Time	Narrative	Codes	Source
5th semester	[…] for example, I changed the pronunciation of Chinese characters (*kanji*) from Japanese to Korean because it's easier for Korean students to understand[1]. If they talked to me in English, I answered in English.	1. CHANGE LANGUAGE FLEXIBLY	Interview
4th semester	The relationship between me and the PAs[1] was kind of like that of student and teacher, so I felt a borderline between us. […] But two SALC PAs invited me into the community. Then, the borderline[2] between me and the other PAs began to fade out. […] I could have nice friendships[3] not	1. TEACHER- STUDENT RELATIONSHIP 2. FADING OUT BORDER 3. EXPANSION OF	LLH

only with English PAs, but also Japanese PAs.	FRIENDSHIP

Discussion

Many Japanese universities use *globalization* and *international university* as key terms to advertise and receive funding from the government in such initiatives as the TGU Project. However, due to the associations within Japanese society between such keywords and the English language, universities instinctively strive to improve students' English abilities. There is a focus on English test scores (e.g., TOEFL and IELTS), which are thought to have clear criteria to judge students' English ability, to demonstrate degrees of globalization. In addition, it is also easier for universities to use standardized test scores to gauge achievement rather than assessing each individual student's language competency when competing with other countries in the international context. Thus, universities have employed quantitative measures and a standardized *ideal global human resource* norm[3] influenced by McDonaldization instead of emphasizing individual students' agency and diversity in communication styles such as translanguaging. In other words, students and teachers have become part of a McDonaldized language education system (Gray & Block, 2012; Ritzer, 2011).

English is a *lingua franca* and it is important to learn in order to communicate with various people in international situations, even amongst non-native English speakers. Also, given the current political climate, there is clearly a need for accountability in English language education, and English tests can be important tools to show students' English proficiencies. However, imposing strict top-down policies[4] of *globalization* on university students due to business concerns can distract from the key role of the university as an educational institution.

Japanese universities emphasize English as one of the main criteria to judge the degree of the globalization of their students, despite the fact that the majority of their international students are from Asian countries[5]（Japan Student Services Organization, 2020）. In this study, Hanako studied and spoke Indonesian and Yoshiko studied and spoke Korean. As with Hanako and Yoshiko, students at international universities may benefit from opportunities to learn Asian languages to communicate with others in those languages. In fact, Hanako and Yoshiko show that learning languages outside of Japanese and English has been a significant factor in expanding their language activities and international relationships. However, the value of learning and using Asian languages as well as the concept of translanguaging are being overshadowed by the idea that English ability is a central factor in globalization. As De Costa and Norton (2017) indicated, the emphasis on result-oriented quantitative outcomes is related to a neoliberalism perspective. According to this view, the university in this study prioritized and standardized what language students should learn (i.e., English) and how the language should be learned (i.e., test-oriented studies). As a result, in spite of being in a very unique environment within Japan where they could explore diversity in language learning and use, students have often followed the norms set by the university.

The policies and systems emphasizing English and test scores can potentially limit language education, as was evidenced by Hanako and Yoshiko's cases. Both participants showed that their language learning and use were limited when they attempted to follow the norms imposed by the university. McDonaldization of education usually involves the use of standardized teaching methods and a disregard for diversity in education (Seargeant, 2009). Thus, the policies and educational practices set by the university, prominently focusing on English and test scores, have restrained the students' agency in language learning and use.

As an educational institution, the university should create an environment to support each student in finding his or her own way to learn and use languages. Hanako and Yoshiko also demonstrated that students had the ability to express their agency in language learning

and use if there was an environment that supported them. Both of them experienced a period during their university lives in which they struggled to find their aims at the university. However, while changing their roles at the SALC and cultivating relationships with PAs, LAs, and friends, they developed their own understanding of language learning and use and have led a fulfilling university life. This is in accordance with Pennycook's (2010) statement that the language system of each person is re-localized with new meanings and values depending on the situation. One of the most important roles of SALCs is empowering students by offering them a variety of resources (both material and human) so that each student may individually explore language learning and use as well as construct individualized identities and relationships with others. At the university in this study, the SALC played one of the most important roles in not only supporting the students' exploration and achievement of their goals, but also advocating the importance of diversity in language learning to the university as a whole.

Many Japanese universities have become *McUniversities* in the name of globalization (Gray & Block, 2012; Ritzer, 1996). The standardization of English language education based on numbers and statistics may be a means for universities to achieve globalization in Japan. However, such a method is accompanied by the risk of students losing their agency in language learning and use because of the focus on language (e.g., perfect English in Hanako's story) rather than communication (e.g., translanguaging among students). Universities should offer SALCs as a place for students and universities to achieve a diverse perspective on language learning beyond the traditional concepts of bi- and multilingualism. A continuous reexamination and redefinition of the role of SALCs is imperative for supporting individual students in their expressions of agency in language learning and use and their engagements in *languaging*[6] (García, 2014).

As mentioned above**,** this study succeeded in capturing the experiences of two Japanese students who had explored their translingual identities while actively engaging in

the SALC at a Japanese university by using the data from the retrospective narratives written by the students, and the follow-up interviews with them. The data also successfully captured the students' main experiences from their first year at university onward. However, further research through periodic observations of the two participants at the SALC and interviews could reveal more details about how and why their thoughts and approaches to language learning and use have changed. In addition, although it is difficult to argue how many participants are sufficient for qualitative research, a larger sample could help to uncover the diverse forms of language learning and roles the SALC plays in students' university lives. Data collection from a variety of students, teachers, and administrators could shed light on the varying interactions between university language education and the SALC.

Conclusion

Given the current situation of higher education in Japan, universities may have no choice but to accept the idea of *globalization* proposed by the government in order to secure funds and recognition through participation in programs such as the Project for Promotion of Global Human Resource Development and the TGU Project. One of the main consumer *goods* in Japan's globalization is English, and English language tests, such as TOEFL and IELTS. Japanese universities give high priority to English language education to promote and advertise their globalization efforts. However, this research shows the importance of offering students opportunities to explore their identities and express their agency in language learning and use. SALCs can be one of the key places to foster diversity in language learning and use as well as to initiate individualized support for students.

Notes

1. Participant names are pseudonyms.
2. The LLH was written in Japanese and the interview was also conducted in Japanese. All of the excerpts in this paper are English translations by the authors. A sample of our translations was validated by a person with no connection to the study to improve the validity of our translations.
3. This approach is related to a McDonaldized system consisting of efficiency, calculability, predictability, and control (Gray & Block, 2012; Ritzer, 2011). For example, English is considered to be a vital element in global human resources. As universities assume that globalization can be efficiently calculated using English test scores, the language education at the universities focuses more on increasing students' English abilities based on test scores and standardized teaching methods, allowing the university to maintain centralized control over the goal and content of teaching and learning. This allows the university to predict a certain level of performance from both students and teachers. With this rational system, the university can control its globalization, which is one of the key factors involved in government funding.
4. For example, all Japanese students achieve a certain score in recognized English tests such as TOEFL and IELTS.
5. In 2019, 92.7% of the international students in higher education institutions come from Asia (Japan Student Services Organization, 2020).
6. According to García (2014), "English is not a system of language structures; rather, languaging through what is called English is practicing a new way of being in the world" (p.5).

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Appendix

A Sample of the Interaction between Hanako and an Indonesian Student at the SALC

The following dialogue (Dialogue 1) is an interaction sequence between Hanako and an Indonesian student who had visited the SALC to talk to her. Hanako and the Indonesian student knew each other, as the Indonesian student had previously received Japanese learning support from Hanako at the SALC. In the dialogue, they were talking about their university lives and Hanako started to discuss the student's search for a circle (club).

Dialogue 1

Interaction between Hanako and an Indonesian Student at the SALC

H: Hanako S: Student

1) H: *うん。ほんと、よかったね。*[*Yeah. It was really good.]*

2) S: *そう。そう。そう。そう。*[*Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah*.]

3) H: *え、そうだよね。前さ、*Cari *サークルだったじゃん。*[*Oh, is that true? Before, you were looking for a circle, didn't you?*]

4) S: *ん？* Cari? [*Huh?* "Cari?"]

5) H: Cari. Cari. *探してたじゃん。*[Cari. Cari. *You were looking for, remember?*]

6) S: Cari *って?*[*What is* "Cari"?]

7) H: *インドネシア語で*「Cari」*でしょ。* [*Is it* "Cari" *in Indonesian, right?*]

8) S: ...

9) H: Mencari。

10) S: *あ、*Mencari。[*Oh*, "Mencari."] [Laugh]

11) H: Are you Indonesian?

12) S&H: [Laugh]

In this interaction sequence, Hanako spoke Japanese (written in italics), Indonesian (underlined), and English to interact with the student because both of them spoke the three languages. First, they were conversing in Japanese, but Hanako began to use Indonesian terms, “cari” and “mencari,” which mean “to look for.” Then, she spoke English, asking, “are you Indonesian,” to tease the student who could not understand the Indonesian terms. In the interview about the interaction sequence, Hanako indicated that she could demonstrate her communication abilities better and make friends with international students more easily by mixing languages.