

Cultural Environment for Social Learning and Adaptation in Different Countries - A Comparison of Minority Foreigners and Majority Foreigners

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Abstract. Before WWII, number of foreign people was not large in Japan. But after the war, it grew larger and now we have total of 2,011,555 foreigners (in 2005). There are some majority groups such as Koren (598,687), Chinese (519,561), Brazilian (302,080), and Filipinos (187,261). At the same time, there are minority groups such as Bangladeshi (9,707) and Iranian (5,769). Organizing local communities of such people and those of them with Japanese people plays important roles for their life in Japan. Information systems and communication devices such as the PC and the cell phone may play one of the key roles for maintaining such communities. Some people think that the use of such devices and systems may differ for majorities and minorities. Majorities can organize a local community far easily than minorities and will have more chances to meet friends face-to-face. They also have chances of getting information on their own country via the satellite TV, newspapers and magazines and other media. On the other hand, minorities may have only a small linkage with people from the same country. In such a case, the website on the internet or the cell phone may be important for them. Based on this hypothesis, we conducted interviews with and did research among Japanese Brazilians as the majority and Iranians as the minority to specify how the information system can serve a useful tool for their life and their social learning to adapt to the target society.

1 Introduction

Japanese people has been considering itself as a single ethnic group country despite the fact that there are Ainu-people, Koreans, Chinese and others who has the nationality of Japan. It was thus not easy for foreigners to adapt to Japanese society as its members. They tend to be regarded as foreigners almost always. This is quite different from such country as the U.S.

Authors are interested in how they are going to adapt to Japanese society, and how Japanese society is treating them, especially in terms of the social networking. And for organizing the social networking, authors are interested in the effective use of the ICT, i.e. the use of the cell phone and the internet.

Table 1. Statistics on total number of foreigners based on their capacity (from Morris)

	2000	2004	2005
Total	1,686,444	1,973,747	2,011,555
University	6,744	8,153	8,406
Religion	4,976	4,699	4,588
Education	8,375	9,393	9,449
Technology		23,210	29,044
International business	34,739	47,682	55,276
Entertainment	53,847	64,742	36,376
Special skills		13,373	15,112
Short stay	68,045	72,446	68,747
Student	76,980	129,873	129,568
Temporary student	37,781	43,208	28,147
Short Student	36,199	54,317	54,107
Family Member	72,878	81,919	86,055
Specific Activity		63,310	87,324
Permanent Resident	145,336	312,964	349,804
Spouse to Japanese	279,625	257,292	259,656
Resident	237,607	250,734	265,639
Special Resident	512,269	465,619	451,909

Table 2. Statistics on foreigners staying in Japan based on their home country

Korea	598,687
China	519,561
Brazil	302,080
Philippines	187,261
Peru	57,728
USA	49,390
Thailand	36,347
Vietnam	26,018
Indonesia	23,890
UK	18,082

As shown in Table 1, there are 2,011,555 foreigners in Japan in 2005. It is 1.57% to the Table 1. Statistics on total number of foreigners based on their capacity (from Morris) total population of Japan of 127,756,815. There are various categories to some extent due to the historical reason.

The classification based on their home countries is shown in Tab. 2 and it can be seen that the majorities are Koreans, Chinese, Brazilian and Philipinos. People from such countries as Bangladesh, Iran, Nigeria, etc. can be categorized as minorities. Out approach is to survey the networking to and among majority / minority foreigners by taking Brazilians (Japanese Brazilians) as an example of the majority and Bangladeshi as an example of the minority.

2 Research and Its Results

Authors have been conducting the interview research for more than 5 years, Kurosu for Japanese Brazilian and Morishita for Bangladeshi, Iranian, etc. Based on those researches, results and findings are summarized in Tab. 3.

Table 3. Findings from interview researches for Japanese Brazilian and Bangladesh informants

		Majority	Minority
		Japanese Brazilian	Bangladeshi
Life	Stay in Japan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Short stay (3-5 yrs.) > Goal is to earn money and send/bring back it to their homeland > Working in physical labor or simple work of which Japanese do not tend to work > Living in their own community (e.g. Hamamatsu, Ohta, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Rather long stay (more than 10 yrs.) > Working as engineers, salespersons, actors, etc. > Do not have specific local community, hence living among Japanese community
	Motivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Less motivated to adapt to Japanese society because they can live in their own community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > They have motivations to adapt to Japanese society and have been making efforts to contribute to the local Japanese community
	Information Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Brazilian satellite TV and radio available > Portuguese magazines, newspapers, CDs, DVDs, Videos available > Can easily call to Brazil by the cellphone > Frequently communicate among them using cellphones > If PC is available, they can get information from Brazilian website quite easily > Many shops owned by Japanese Brazilian that have many kinds of products from their homeland 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Almost no information is available by their mother language > They are motivated to learn Japanese and English to communicate with them and get necessary information
	Japanese Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Less motivated to learn Japanese language and there are quite many who cannot talk/hear/read/write Japanese > For kids, there are Brazilian schools where Japanese is taught to them 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Less opportunity to learn Japanese in any formal organization > They are trying to get opportunities wherever and whenever it is possible by using the TV programs, by talking to Japanese colleagues, by attending the party, etc.

Table 3. (continued)

		Majority	Minority
		Japanese Brazilian	Bangladeshi
	Networking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Though they form Brazilian local communities, the cohesive force among them seems not strong > But there are couples between Japanese Brazilian people, and sometimes they get married > Let their friends and family members come to Japan not just for pleasure but for providing them the job opportunity > Small sized networking among Japanese Brazilian is for certain extent necessary and it functions rather well as such > But large sized networking in the local community as a whole is not necessary be required and is not functioning enough 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Less frequent to form the local community of those who coming from Bangladesh > Trying to expand the network by making friends including Japanese and other foreign people > They are hosting the party, inviting friends to their home for the purpose of establishing the network > There are some who got married with Japanese > Many of them wish to live in Japan for a long time > Some of them have wishes to let their family members come to Japan, but actually it is rather difficult
	Participation to Society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > They came to Japan with the support of family members or friends already living in Japan, got job positions by their introduction > After several years when they think they got enough money, most of them go back to Brazil 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > After getting the job in Japan, they settle down in Japan > Many of them have experience of working in other foreign countries
Local Community	Local Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > The policy is to support their life with satisfaction as much as possible by providing the website in Portuguese and publishing the newspaper in Portuguese > The language support is for Japanese, English and Portuguese 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Almost no service is provided in their native language > But such activity as to hold the foreigners society and to open the portal site for such foreigners has just begun
	Volunteer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Supporting the Japanese language learning and the everyday issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Volunteers are not so much motivated to support foreign people but to enjoy the communication with foreigners
	Problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Sometimes the goal of activity is not clear whether they are intending to really support the life of Japanese Brazilian > Establishing a well disciplined and well organized symbiosis is still a goal that has not yet reached 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Opportunities for learning Japanese language are provided but just for primers and not for advanced level
Significance	Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Just a simple Japanese is needed in their workplace 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > For the introductory level, most of them have already achieved their language skill

Table 3. (continued)

		Majority	Minority
		Japanese Brazilian	Bangladeshi
	Relationship	> Less motivated to establish a good relationship with Japanese people	> Motivated to support other foreigners based on their own experience
	Career Plan	> Short termed	> Motivated to live in Japan for a long time and is making efforts to establish a good relationship in their workplace and local community
	Problem	> Many conflicts exists based on the difference of living habits (e.g. how to separate trashes, how to entertain in the middle of night)	> Feels many kinds of barriers in the local community > Almost no opportunities for such foreigners to participate in the local community activity > Sometimes a good will based consideration is accepted as not treating them as a formal community member
Necessary Future Activity		> Understand more of their needs, necessity and expectation by using the depth interview, for example. > Consider a better solution for the networking among their community and between Japanese community > Find out the key person > Understand the individual differences	> Understand their situation and problems to adapt to Japanese society by tracing their human network > Mutual community activity is necessary than the one way support and Japanese people should consider more on how to establish such relationship with them

3 Discussion

In terms of the use of ICT to support the networking to and among foreigners, it could be summarized as follows.

3.1 For the Majority (Japanese Brazilian)

1. Communication using the cell phone is quite active among Japanese Brazilian. Most of the use is not by the calling but by the email in English. Although most of them are not fluent in English, they are using Japanese cell phone in English mode. Contents of emails among them are quite short and trivial, for example, “Hi what are you doing now?”, “When are you coming here?”, etc (of course, they are written in Portuguese). They exchange such emails during any time of the day even in working hours. In other words, their use of the cell phone is just like the everyday conversation. Based on such email communication, they are tightening their human relation.

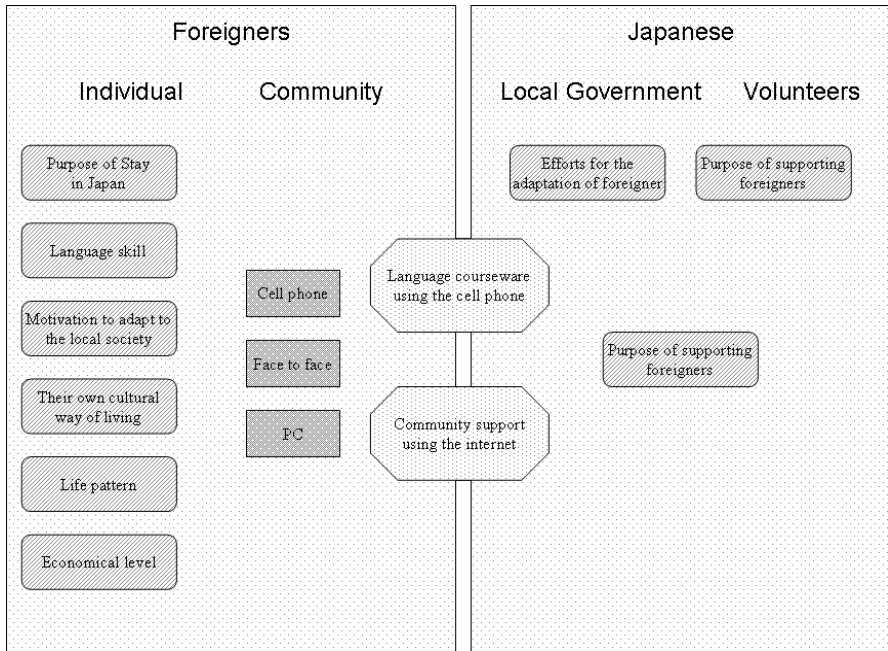


Fig. 1. Possible use of ICT to enhance the communication between Japanese and Foreigners

2. This tendency let them condense the relationship among them and put a distance from the Japanese community. This might be less problematic for Japanese Brazilian themselves at least at present. But considering the Japanese society as a whole, it might trigger some problems especially when something negative may happen. One of the worst case has happened during the big earthquake in Tokyo area in 1923 when there occurred a rumour that Koreans put some poison to the well and 233 (according to the government statistics) or 6000 (according to some private organization) Koreans were killed. The background for this incident is related to the fact that most of Koreans at that time could not speak Japanese language well and there was no good communication between Korean and Japanese.
3. Based on such fact, more effort to let Japanese Brazilian learn the Japanese language should be made, for example, by using the cell phone and the internet. Currently, the cell phone is regarded one of the effective tool for the e-learning. Besides almost all Japanese Brazilians own it.

3.2 For Minorities (Bangladeshi, for Example)

1. Because they are living in Japanese society and making efforts to establish a better communication among themselves each of which are living apart in Japan. Besides they have a motivation to be well-adapted to the Japanese society. Based on this fact, internet-based on-line community where Japanese and minority

foreigners can exchange information can be thought to be one of the good solutions to the situation.

Additional Notice. It should be noted that findings in our research can not simply be generalized to majority foreigners and minority foreigners. Many aspects in this research may be specific to Japanese Brazilian and Bangladeshi. For example, there are majorities such as Korean and Chinese who have a long history of living in Japan and generally have a good Japanese language skill. Hence, for the purpose of generalizing our hypothesis, more wide researches should be conducted.

References

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