

Multicultural Coexistence in Japan-- Japanese Filipino Students and Overcoming Their Difficulties

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1. Introduction

In this globalized society, more and more people move across the borders. More than 13.4 million people visited Japan last year, according to JNTO and more than 2 million foreigners live in Japan, according to MOJ. Thus, it becomes difficult to put them in one nation state. Such people are treated in the perspectives of “transnationalism”, “circular migration”, or “shuttling”. This situation means, at the same time, more and more people cannot be captured in the existing frame of nation state. In this sense, they are treated as “marginal” from the nation state and have many problems with such a solid framework of “nation state”. In Japan, the number of the “marginalized” people is increasing. Not only adults but also children move across the borders. These children are called “Children who have foreign roots”, “Children who link to foreign countries” or “multicultural children” (Kyoto prefectural international centre 2015).

Due to decreasing birthrates and the economic needs, the demand for foreign labor forces becomes strong. The discussion for accepting migrant workers has become popular among the public. When we think about accepting foreigners into the country in the future, it is important to consider the situation of the foreigners who live in Japan today. We have a long history of study about the “old comers” such as Koreans and Chinese. A lot of researches on the “new comers” who came to Japan after 1990 have been conducted, especially about Japanese Brazilians and Peruvians. On the other hand, Filipino migrants are not well-covered because of their various backgrounds and widely dispersed in Japan.

In this paper, by analyzing Japanese-Filipino Children or JFC, who have Japanese fathers and Filipina mothers, I would like to discuss the following questions:

- 1: What kind of difficulties do marginalized people (JFC) have?
- 2: How does the Japanese institutional system (school system) support marginalized people (JFC)?

In the future paper, I also would like to discuss JFC’s personal solutions or strategies in

their daily lives.

First, I will provide the methodology and the background of my informants, as well as introducing the current situation in Japan. Next, I will discuss the problems facing JFC students, namely, family issues, language issues, and unstable identity. Then, I will address Japanese school system. I will focus on several trends for inclusion of JFC or other students who have foreign roots, and will discuss whether they work well. Finally, I will recapture all the discussions and indicate the issues, which this paper was not able to cover, and prospects for future research.

2. Methodology and Background

2-1. Methodology

This paper mainly use the data obtained through participatory observation in an ordinary junior high school in Kyoto city (School K), where I work as a volunteer study support for JFC since October 2013. I will also use the written reports by other student volunteers worked in School K and an elementary school in the same area (School H). Interviews with Japanese language teachers in both schools and with JFC living in Manila will be applied to support the discussions.

2-2. Demographic Data of Kyoto city

First, for the demographic data of Kyoto city, Table 1 shows the number of foreign residents in Basic Resident Registration System in December 2014. As you can see from this table, Filipino migrants are the eighth largest group in Kyoto city, which is not big enough. On the other hand, table 2 gives the number of the students who have roots in foreign countries in January 2013. Kyoto City Board of Education defined the “students who have roots in foreign countries” as the students whose mother or/and father has/have a foreign nationality. Children who have Filipino roots are the third largest group, following Korean and Chinese. The characteristic of the Filipino roots is the high rate of Japanese Nationality. Among Filipino roots, 60% of them have Japanese nationality, but less than 10 % of Korean roots and about 40% of Chinese roots have Japanese Nationality.

Rank	Nationality	Registrants
1	South Korea	21,139
2	China	9,501
3	Korea(朝鮮)	1,693
4	USA	970
5	Taiwan	886
6	Philippines	880
:	:	:
Total	144	40,565

[Table 1: The number of foreign residents in Basic Resident Registration System (December, 2014)]

Countries	Students
Korea (韓国朝鮮)	609 (549)
China	278 (159)
Philippines	163 (66)
Others	451 (108)
Total	1501 (882)

[Table 2: The number of students who have roots in foreign countries (January, 2013)¹]

2-3. School K and the current situation in Japanese schools

Next, let's move on to the overview of School K and its Japanese Language Class. School K has 435 students in 2014. According to the MEXT "School Basic Survey" in 2014, the average size of one Japanese junior high school is 332 people. School K is, thus, a larger school. In its Japanese Language Class for students who have roots in foreign countries, there are only 4 students (3 boys and 1 girl) now, and all of them have Filipino roots. It is about 1% in this school, but 75.2% of all the junior schools have no student who need to take Japanese Language Classes, according to "School Basic Survey" and "Survey on Student who need Japanese Language Class" in 2014. In School K, there are 9 students (6 boys and 3 girls) in the Japanese Language Class in total from October 2013 to now.

All the students in the Japanese Language Class of school K are JFC, with Japanese father and Filipina mother. Now all of them are from one parent family. The reason why School K has JFC students is related to their mothers' job. Almost all their mothers work in an elderly care center in the school area and many of them live in the dormitory, which is located next to the elderly care center. Even the mother was already left the care center still live in School K area.

JFC students come to Japan at different ages. One student came to Japan when he was 5 years old, which is the youngest among nine students while the oldest student came to Japan at the age of 14; however, all of them came to Japan after 2009 except one student came Japan in 2006.

One of the characteristics of JFC students in School K is that they often move their houses. 4 out of the 9 students have moved more than twice within Japan. Some moved to other city because their mothers changed their jobs and others moved to the public housing complex outside the school area because the dormitory's room is too small for them to live.

2-4 Historical and institutional background of JFC

From the late 1980s to the early 2000s, a lot of Filipina women came to Japan as entertainers. More than 83,000 Filipina with the entertainer visa entered Japan in 2004, according to MOFA "Statistical Survey on Legal Migrants". This is because the Filipino government took a policy encouraging immigrants to work outside the country and the Japanese government accept legally foreign entertainers most of which are Filipina. On their work conditions, many Filipina entertainers developed a close relationship with Japanese men. Some of them got married and their children have grown up in Japan. However, others broke up their marriage at the early days or did not marry. They went back to the Philippines and brought up their children in the Philippines. The children who were born between unmarried couple could not acquire Japanese Nationality because the Nationality Act did not allow it. There is no public statistics because of the children across two countries, but it is said that more than 100 thousand JFC were born at that time (Hashimoto 2009).

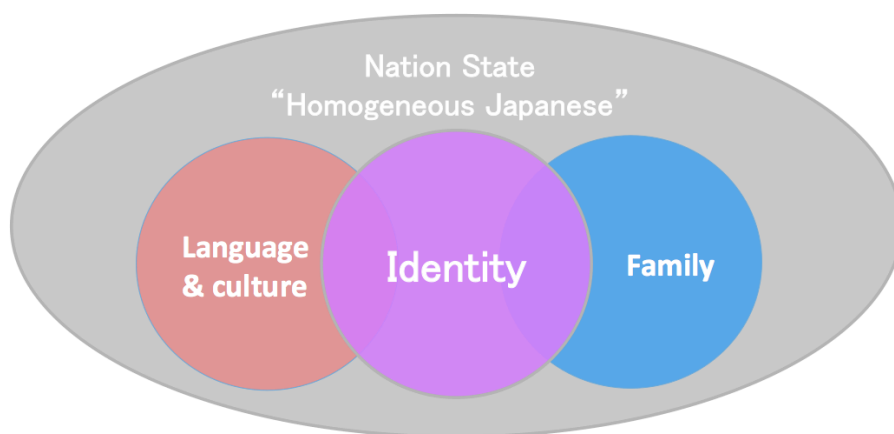
In the end of 2008, Japanese Supreme Court pronounced that the Nationality Act was unconstitutional. Therefore, in 2009, Reformed Nationality Act was enforced, which enables JFC among unmarried couples to obtain Japanese citizenship if they are under 20. Furthermore, Filipina mothers can get a "Long Term Residents Visa" as a custodial parent of the Japanese minors, namely, their children. Thus, after 2009, JFC under 18 years old and their mothers or JFC over 18 themselves come to Japan in order to live and work here. This is why most JFC in School K came to Japan after 2009.

For the historical and institutional background, JFC who came to Japan after 2009 have three characteristics; first, they have a Japanese Nationality or the right to acquire Japanese Nationality; second, they are from single mother family; third, they are accustomed to Filipino language and Filipino culture because they grew up in the Philippines.

3. The Difficulties JFC Have in Their Daily Lives in Japan

Here, I would like to focus on the problems JFC have experienced in their daily lives in Japan. Figure 1 illustrates the situation that the characteristics of JFC effect on their identity. The foundation of the arguments is the idea of nation state. Japan has a strong image of “homogeneous Japanese citizen”, namely, “Japanese is Japanese”. Japanese citizens are considered as people who have Japanese parents and speak Japanese. The problem of family, language, and custom is a reflection of the clash between a homogeneous Japanese citizen image with the nation state forcing them work and migrants in a globalized society. Furthermore, the identity also overlap with the family issues and the language and cultural issues.

In this chapter, I will discuss first the family issues, followed by the language issues and the identity crisis.



[Figure 1: The characteristics of JFC and their identity crisis]

3-1. Family Issues- Single Mother Family

As I mentioned earlier, because of their historical and institutional background, JFC are usually from one parent family. Absence of father leads to the lack of self-esteem and difficult transmission of Japanese culture in a family. One JFC who were born and live in Manila said, “I feel like I haven’t known half of myself, since I haven’t met my father”. JFC in School K grew up in the Philippines and they are familiar to the Filipino culture; however, Japanese schools are based on Japanese culture. As P. Bourdieu discussed the relationship between academic achievement and cultural capital, they tend to experience the difficulty in their study because they are not accustomed to Japanese culture. This tendency becomes more clear when JFC choose which courses they want to take in ninth grade.

After a mother and a child come to Japan, they tend to become isolated and rely too much on each other. In the Philippines, they live with their grandparents, their aunts, and their cousins in

the Filipino traditional “big family” which involve a lot of social networks. While the mother is working outside, her family members or neighbors can take care of the children; however, in Japan, children have to stay alone in their house even if their mothers work in the care center on the night shift. According to a Japanese language teacher, there is no active mutual help among Filipina mothers in School K, even though they work in the same care center (Interviews on 11th July, 2015).

On one hand, the children cannot construct an independent identity. In School H, children learn Shigematsu Kiyoshi’s essay “curry and rice” on the textbook of the sixth grade, which discussed the teenager’s problem, in Japanese (国語) class. Many Japanese students can sympathize with the main character’s feeling that he does not want to obey his mother; on the contrary, JFC cannot understand why the main character disobeys his mother. They said, “Mom is always right.” On the other hand, their mothers do not know how to treat their children and have no one to ask advices. For example, one Filipina mother gave ten thousand yen for her 15 years old child when the child went bowling with her friends. Some mothers also tend to rely too much on their children. One mother said “If my son wants to live in Japan in the future, I will stay with him because I am his mother and I am important for him”.

As we can see from these examples, the absence of their father brings about the lack of self-esteem, difficulty to adopt Japanese culture, and interdependent relationship between mother and child.

3-2. Language Issues- Japanese and Mother Tongue

The biggest problem in terms of language is “double limited”, which means neither mother tongue nor Japanese well-developed. Double limited children cannot establish the base language for thinking. They cannot answer clearly or explain the detail. In the case of School K, when I asked one student who have lived in Japan for 8 years about his hobby, he answered, “Playing the video games!”. Then, I asked him, “What kind of game do you like?” and he answered “Various!” When I asked him for further explanation of the game he often plays, he said, “well... I don’t remember the name... I cannot explain well in words...” They are also not good at writing an essay. When two 7th year students wrote a Japanese essay about the movie they watched in their class, one who came to Japan just 18 months ago wrote very long sentences in order to express his feelings even though he made a lot of mistakes. On the other hand, the other student who lives in Japan much longer did not come up with what he should write, because he cannot develop his language well.

One of the reason why they cannot become bilingual is they often change the languages in each situation. For example, one student speaks in Japanese in the school, she communicates in

Bisayan with her mother at home, and she talks with other Filipino students in Tagalog. Moreover, as I mentioned above, she has few chances to talk with her mother because her mother also works on the night shift. Such a situation prevents JFC from establishing one language.

It is said that daily communication (BICS, Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills) costs one year to master, but it takes 5 to 7 years for one to master formal academic language (CALP, Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency). A student can speak very fluent Japanese in half a year to one year, and the teachers and the friends tend to think that he/she already masters Japanese. Nevertheless, it is very difficult for them to keep up with the classes. Many JFC students can read aloud relatively smoothly, but cannot summarize the sentences. Understanding abstract concepts requires high language skills. Moreover, written Japanese or academic Japanese is far different from spoken Japanese. Kanji (Chinese letters) also makes it more difficult.

Seen above, the limited usage of mother language has great impacts on children's logical thinking, learning, and communication. Children thus have difficulties in self-expression and self-actualization.

3-3. Instability of Identity

From these two issues, JFC have difficulty in establishing neither national identity nor personal identity. The word "identity" has a lot of arguments, especially whether we have one constant identity or not. Here, I would like to treat "identity" based on Hall and Butler's identity theory. Identity is not an "essential" existence but a process of social construction. Furthermore, I will not treat "identity" not as singular, but as plural/ multiple.

In terms of national identity, JFC are torn apart between Japanese and Filipino or both. One student used to conceal his Filipino roots because his mother thought that he would be bullied if Japanese children realize he is Filipino. Other student once said, "If I don't say anything, no one think I am a half Filipina?" Actually, it seems difficult to distinguish them from Japanese students only from their appearance. Many of JFC students have their own Japanese name with Kanji. On the other hand, they are familiar with the Filipino culture.

Regarding personal identity, they seem difficult to have self-confidence. When the Special Japanese Language Class finished, one student said, "I don't want to leave school now, because it is time when many other students leave school. They will stare at us". Even if JFC students have many friends at school, they are sensitive about how people look at them. Another student often asks me "how do you think about me?" They need a place they are evaluated.

The difficulty to build a future plan is also a cause of their unstable identity. JFC came to

Japan not by their will but their family reasons. They cannot concentrate on their studies and cannot find the meaning since they have no clear vision to live in Japan.

As we see the difficult situation of JFC, they have advantages as “double” and, at the same time, disadvantages as “half”. They know two different cultures, but they conceal their Filipino roots or they do not know Japanese culture well. They can speak several languages, but it is difficult to be “bilingual” or “trilingual” and they remain “semi-lingual” or “double limited”.

In the next section, I would like to focus on the official supports for them in the school system and examine whether it works well or not.

4. JFC and Japanese School System

In this section, as one of the solutions to solve the difficulties JFC face, I would like to discuss the school system in Japan. There are two trends supposed to include JFC, “equality” and “diversity”, but they actually do not work well.

4-1. School System- Exclusion in the Name of “Equality”

First, there are many rules, applying “equally” to all students. The Japanese educational system is corresponding to the age, and all the same year-old students are put in the same grade. However, it causes two problems for JFC. The first problem is the problem of the difference of the learning contents between Japan and the Philippines. For example, almost all the Filipino students are not good at four basic arithmetic operations. A 13 years old JFC student does not remember multiplication table, which Japanese students have to master in the second grade of the elementary school; however, he has to take a class in the seventh grade for 13 year-old students because the Japanese school system is not correspond to the learning achievement. The second problem is the age limitation. In Japan, children over 16 are not included in the compulsory education. Furthermore, 15 year-old children born between January 1 and April 1 are under compulsory education in the Philippines but it does not apply to Japan, since the Japanese school starts from 2nd April. Ota (2000) and IOM (2015) also pointed out this problem.

Teachers also treat JFC as the same as Japanese students and sometimes ignore the handicaps JFC have. For example, in one junior high school, one teacher thought that special treatments for JFC are “reverse discrimination”. Shimizu (2006) pointed out that because the child can speak Japanese frequently, the bad scores in the exam are his/her personal problem; he/she looks as if he/she has not studied hard enough. As I already mentioned, long years are necessary to master academic Japanese. Such a language handicap should not be underestimated. Moreover, the bad

academic performance is attributed to the low rate of enrollment in high schools. According to Takaya, Omagari et al (2015), only 57% Filipino-rooted students who have lived in Japan for more than five years entered high school, while 97% Japanese students passed. The statistics shows this is not the “equality of the result”.

Now there are neither affirmative actions nor special treatment for children who have foreign roots to enter high school; however, it is not fair that JFC’s handicap are underestimated and they are treated “equally” as other Japanese students.

4-2. School System- Exclusion In the Name of “Diversity”

In Japan, in 2006, “Special Needs Education(特別支援学級)” was established instead of Special Classes (特殊学級) for the education of physically or mentally handicapped children, in order to address students’ individual differences and needs. In 2014, “Japanese Language” has become a part of Special Needs Education and students who came to Japan less than one year and who have difficulty in keeping up with the classes held in Japanese have the right to take Japanese Language classes as a subject. On the contrary, there is a possibility that such Japanese Language classes become an “enclosure of foreigners”.

Elementary and junior high schools, which have about 5 students of foreign roots, hold the Special Japanese Classes after school. School K also provides Special Japanese Classes for JFC. This is not only a place to study Japanese, but also meet other children in the same situation. On the other hand, one of the student volunteers suggests the possibility that such special classes for JFC may rob chances to play with Japanese children after school.

As an important activity for JFC, the first Tagalog mother tongue supporter was hired in Kyoto city last year. Although “mother culture study” has started in School H, there are many problems. The main problem is the various children’s language situations. In the Philippines, more than 100 local languages exist because the Philippines consists of 7000 islands (Ono, Tarada ed 2009); Tagalog is the national language in the Philippines but children who came to Japan in the very early days speak only their local language. What is worse, the level of the language acquirement also vary from each student. Some students who left the Philippines in very early age cannot speak Tagalog at all. The mother culture study first settled for Korean students who have a singular culture, but it did not reflect the diversity inside the Philippines. In this sense, the mother culture study for JFC is not truly “multicultural”.

Thus, the programs supposed to promote diversity might instead cause “blind exclusion”.

5. Conclusion

Since JFC do not match with the “homogeneous nation state image” in Japan, they become minority and have many difficulties in their daily lives, e.g. single parent issues and language issues. Because of the absence of their fathers, children feel “incompleteness” of themselves, and interdependent with their mothers. The limited usage of languages, such as “double limited” makes JFC difficult to think logically and express themselves well by words. As a result of these situations, JFC have an unstable identity.

In Japanese schools, there is a possibility that “equality” and “special support”, which look like a system for inclusion, actually do not work well and strengthen the unstableness of JFC’s identity.

It is the time to change “homogeneous citizen image”, which is the base of Japanese institutional system. JFC are also “Japanese”. As people move around more fluently and international marriage become more common, the number of the marginalized people will increase. In addition, it is necessary to provide proper official supports for children who have two different backgrounds, such as JFC who have Japanese and Filipino backgrounds, in order to take advantage of their plurality. Especially, in order to live in Japan, the enrollment to high school is crucial.

This paper dealt with the case of JFC in only one junior high school, and the number of the students is small. It may be necessary to include more cases from other schools, in order to develop the arguments. Moreover, of course, not all the JFC have been marginalized and been well integrated; however, I would like to suggest not a small number of JFC are marginalized in Japanese society. As I mentioned in section 3, there is a problem of nation state in the base of the problem of JFC. Further discussion for nation should be included in the future paper.

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Notes

¹ The numbers inside the blankets show the number of foreign nationalities.