

EPOK

Exchange Program Okayama

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Research Essay Collection

About EPOK Research Project

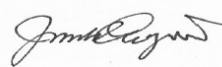
EPOK リサーチプロジェクトは、岡山大学の交換留学 EPOK 生の個別研究科目です。日本の社会や文化を探求する視野から自由に個々の課題を設定し、約5カ月間とくに日本でのフィールドワークを活かしたリサーチを行い、成果を小論文にまとめました。未だコロナ禍中の2022年春期、約2年ぶりに学生は来岡し、このリサーチにもフィールドから取り組むことができました。しかし、昨今では多くのデータを集めるためにもオンラインで顔を見ないアンケートという調査方法をとる手法に偏りがちです。他者について知るフィールドワークの今日のあり方についてこれからも学生達と模索していきたいと思います。2022年度春期の文集には、11名のリサーチプロジェクトを掲載しています。学期末には、恒例の研究発表会を行いました。

The EPOK Research Project is an individual research course for EPOK exchange students at Okayama University. In 2022 spring eleven students worked on the individual set their own research topics in exploring Japanese culture and society, conducted the research for about 5 months. The variety of their interest stretches from Japan's language education, political interest of young generations, to contemporary and traditional art scenes. The compilation of the EPOK research essay shows the final product of their exploration and discovery.

In the spring of 2022, still under the influence of the Covid-19, students were able to come and live on the soil of Okayama for the first time in about two years, and thus to work on this research from the field. There were still restriction and difficulty to conduct fieldwork, which the course requires to include in terms of the method of learning on a place and its people through the first-hand, interactive experience. Whether in or out of the "field," however, students today nowadays tend to use online, faceless questionnaires in order to collect data efficiently. This brings up a question of what a field work should be in contemporary area study, which we will continue to explore with our students.

This collection demonstrates the vigorous interest, effort and contribution of the students in pursuing the topics on Japan. At the end of the semester the students presented the paper and finalized the course with good applause.

2022年8月



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The Japanese?
English Education in Japan?
Japan's social issues?
Art, History and Tradition?
 and more ...

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The influence of English on the Japanese language

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抄録: 英語は私たちの社会の共通語です。何千人もの日本人がそれを話し、日本語の単語はそれから適応されました。ただ、問い合わせは多いです。どうして英語が日本語なの？英語は日本でどのような役割を果たしていますか？これらおよびその他のトピックについては、このエッセイで説明します。中国語、韓国語に次ぐ日本で4番目に話されている言語ですが、英語はあまり重要視されていません。英語の標識、パンフレット、道順は、全国どこでも入手できます。人口の大部分が英語で生活しているため、翻訳者のすべての助けとサポートに加えて。しかし、日本語の多くの単語は英語からの借用語です。このエッセイでは、日本の大学生が回答した Google フォームを通じて、これについて調査します。

Methodology: This essay is focused on learning about the influence the English language has on the Japanese language. Its aim is to demonstrate both linguistic and cultural impacts the English language creates on the Japanese language. In order to understand all the context of this matter, we will look at the issue from different points of view. By doing brief research with the help of a Google Form aimed at Japanese university students, we will attempt to answer the question "Why are English loanwords used so often in Japanese songs?" as well as help us to understand the issue from a wider perspective.

Languages have always been in contact with other languages, and the Japanese language is no different. Throughout centuries, languages evolve and are then influenced and connected through multiple ways, such as loanwords. For many, Japanese it is still a language considered to be unaffected by outer influences due to its grammatical complexity and geographical origin. But it's quite the opposite. Japanese culture and language comprise an abundance of English or foreign expressions, known as "Gairaigo" which means loanword in Japanese and denotes a translation into Japanese. The word usually refers to a Japanese word of foreign origin that were taken notably from English, Portuguese, Dutch, and modern Standard Chinese and Cantonese, rather than in ancient times from Old or Middle Chinese- Most of them are written in the katakana, which is the Japanese language's phonetic script for foreign words. Although many loan words from Chinese are found in Japanese, accounting for a significant portion of the language, these words were borrowed during ancient times and are written in kanji.

In many East Asian nations, including Korea, Malaysia, and Japan, English is considered the de facto second language. For example, English is increasingly used in Asian arts, music and literature. Even though Japan has never actually been colonized, its geography makes it difficult for it to easily access to Western influences, English has been a widespread language. English was initially introduced to Japan more than 500 years ago, since the Meiji period (1868–1912), and it has become increasingly prominent after World War II, it has been the country's most important foreign language. Many of the modern Japanese loanwords are derived from languages such as English. Words are taken from foreign concepts that do not exist in Japanese, and these loanwords are mostly used to express concepts or things for which there is no original Japanese equivalent. Sometimes, they are used to be fashionable, or to follow a trend, however many of these loanwords have Japanese near-synonyms.

As monolingual as Japanese society may in a sense be, the English language has now come to feature extensively in the lives of modern-day Japanese people. Nowadays, it has become nearly impossible to have a conversation without using English loanwords. Along with the role of English becoming increasingly significant in many global contexts (business and diplomacy among others), Japanese have begun to assess the knowledge of English as 'modern'. English has secured a permanent place in Japanese linguistics. The presence of English in the many forms of Japanese modern culture, music

among them, has at least one big and clear reason behind it: the strong influence of American culture in Japan after the Second World War.

Although Japanese society can be described as a monolingual one since the Japanese language is used by almost all native citizens of Japan, two small ethnic groups (Ryukyuan and Ainu) speak languages related to Japanese, but mutually unintelligible. Foreigners residing in Japan also speak their native languages, such as Korean, Chinese, Thai, or English. It is important to mention that “for everyday life, there is no need to know any language other than Japanese (Tukahara, N. 2011).

In this project, through very thorough research using articles, research projects, interviewing Japanese students and reviewing different Japanese artists’ songs, as well as proposing various examples, such as the usage of English in modern Japanese music, we aim to understand why there’s such a big influence of English in the Japanese language.

The topic for this project resulted from my own experience learning Japanese. When learning Japanese, I noticed many words came from English such as “トイレ、アイスクリーム”, or other languages, such as “アルバイト、パン”. This is as a result of the economic, political, and cultural influence of the UK and the US, and the emergence of English as an international language, many world languages have absorbed loanwords from English. There are reportedly over 45,000 loanwords in the Japanese language, 90 percent of which have come from English (Chavez, A., 2009). So, it’s not surprising that the majority of current “gairaigo”, or loanwords, have English roots. For concepts that do not exist in Japanese, as well as for other reasons like a preference for English phrases – many loanwords have Japanese near-synonyms from the words borrowed from the English language. Since Japanese contains thousands of such borrowings, many are well-established and in universal use today. A phonetic script is available to both represent and distinguish non-native sounds, that is the Katakana alphabet.

With that in mind, let’s begin analysing the Google Form answered by Japanese university students. We must note that most of the students who took the form, were undergraduate students, in their third year studying an Environmental and Life Science degree. In total 43 students replied to this questions and through a variety of 11 questions in total of questions, we got the following results.

When asked how often they used “Katakana words” in their daily lives, 90.7% answered that they “Often used” those words in their day to day, while 9.1% said they “Occasionally used” them. These results didn’t surpass my expectation since there are over 45.000 English loanwords in Japanese.

The next question is related to the use of English words in Japanese artists songs. Since a large part of our lives is related to music, from hearing it in adverts, grocery stores to listening the artists we live, I wanted to get their opinions on “What do you think of the frequent use of katakana words by Japanese singers?” to which 88.4% expressed that they didn’t have a problem at all, and only 11.6% said that “it bothered them a little, but it was basically not a problem”.

However, when asked “What do you think about the fact that Japanese singers often use English phrases in their songs?” 72.1% replied saying they didn’t have a problem at all, however, 20.9% expressed that they were slightly uncomfortable with it. I believe this big difference from the use of “katakana words” and English sentences is because in Japan, English is often used as a decoration. English is often used in music, written on t-shirts, store fronts, and products. So, it’s no surprise that some people are slightly uncomfortable with the use of English sentences often found in Japanese song lyrics, especially since in Japan, there are significant issues with their English education. The most notable one being Japanese people’s weak English communication skills. At least six years are spent studying English in Japanese schools, however most Japanese students still struggle to use English as they would like to even after receiving a lengthy English education. It could also be because Japanese people don’t often understand the meaning of said sentences or would prefer to listen to only Japanese songs.

When asked “Do you know any Japanese singers who often use katakana words?” they replied with a variety of artists, such as Lisa, Official HigeDandism, ONE OK ROCK, and EXILE, amongst others. So, we can see that Japanese artists often use English sentences, or words, in their songs. This made me wonder about the words and sentences those Japanese artists were using in their songs, so the next question asked in the form was “What katakana words do you think are often used in songs?”, in which they had around 40 words in Katakana to choose from.

It seems that most of the words used relate to love, with words such as “ラブストーリー、キス、ハグ、ラブソング”, holidays and seasons, such as “クリスマス、サマー、ウィンター”, drinks, such as “コーヒー、カプチーノ” and even technology related with words such as “メッセージ、メール、スマートフォン”.

However, since those choices were written by me, I decided to also ask, “What other katakana words do you think are often used in songs?” to which they replied with words such as “ラブ、ダンス、ガール、グッド、ハッピーエンド、アルバム、ロック、マイウェイ、フライ”. From what we can see, many English words are used in Japanese songs, but why are these words and sentences used instead of their Japanese counterpart?

Wanting to know the opinions from the participants, I asked, “Why do you think Japanese singers use so many such katakana words in their songs?” to which I got surprising results. 54.5% noted that “It’s common and normal for these words to be used.”, since Katakana is Japanese it’s understandable to think using these loanwords is normal. Another 20% thought they were used “Because it sounds cool.”. Another 27.3% thought it was because “Katakana makes songs sound brighter or lighter.”

When it comes to music, I believe Japanese singers use English for many reasons. Firstly, English is our lingua franca, which is a language that is adopted as a common language between speakers whose native languages are different. For example, when people from two different countries try to communicate with each other, the language they’ll most likely use is English, so the use of English in Japanese songs could be due to English being a “global language”. The inclusion of the English words or sentences helps Japanese songs reach across a further distance. It also makes the song easier to sing along to, especially for foreign listeners.

Japan is a small market and since Japanese is not an international language, by using English in their songs, Japanese musicians can reach a much larger market around the world. For the same reason, some Japanese musicians record versions of their songs in Korean and Chinese.

For that reason, I believe Japanese pop artists include words in English in their songs, sometimes in surprising or confusing ways. However, nowadays every single Japanese person studies English in school, they’re likely to understand those phrases. Also, English has a “cool” factor in Japanese culture.

If we compare that same logic with English-speaking musicians, they don’t often translate and record their songs in Japanese, since they’re already reaching a wide, international audience. However, some artists do record their songs in Spanish or French if they have fans among those communities, but Japanese is rare because hardly anyone speaks Japanese outside Japan—Spanish and French are much more international.

English is the most used foreign language in J-pop music. Although English is a foreign language in Japan, a lot of words in the lyrics are English, and not another foreign language. Performers can convey messages in English due to the general knowledge of English by the Japanese public. However, Japanese performers, especially younger male performers, are also able to convey a unique performative image through their use of English. The diverse set of applications, including expression of emotions, language play, and code ambiguation, further

emphasize the attractiveness of English for Japanese performers. However, the use of English is, and seems likely to continue to be, a significant feature in J-pop music

After these results, we can see one way English is used in Japanese people's day to day live without even realising. However, English is not only used in Japanese musician's songs, but also in advertisements. When it comes to Japanese, the motive for the immense number of borrowings is that English words seem to have a more sophisticated air to them, especially the English loanwords in Japanese advertising. The borrowed words display the products in a new light that appeals to the customers.

The aim of this study was to look at the influence of the English language in the Japanese language as well as popular music. Not only is the influence of English on the Japanese language broader than I previously thought, but it's also the most used language, other than Japanese, in Japanese songs. Thanks to this research project, not only have I found that the English language has more of an influence in the Japanese language and music, but also English has also helped Japanese music become more popular and international due to the use of English phrases in them. From the huge number of English loanwords incorporated into the language as well as the use of English words and phrases in Japanese songs and advertisements, we can conclude that English has a large influence on the Japanese language in our modern days.

Reference:

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- (The problem of loanwords in Japan, and returning them Chavez, A., 2009) [Internet]. <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/community/2009/11/28/our-lives/the-problem-of-loanwords-in-japan-and-returning-them/>
- (My Google Form) The influence of English on the Japanese language <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1GddNU3AdmTtS-yc5bwtcXchADYpw4HXy2CsbMhubO0M/edit#responses>

English Language Proficiency in Japanese High Schools

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概要： この研究に日本人の高校生の英語力について質問を聞きました。研究のために調査を使いました。研究の準備のために何かの科学雑誌記事を探して、読みました。現在の学生の英語力はどうですかがこの研究の目的です。「英語は毎週何時間ぐらいを勉強しますか」や「両親と英語を話しますか」とかを聞きました。CEFR のガイドラインに沿って、高校生の英語力を推定してみました。そうすることで、客観的な情報を得ることができました。先生のおかげで、アンケート 45 件を戻りました。この 45 のアンケートを見ると、実にさまざまな回答があることがわかります。また、生徒間の違いもはっきりと見ることができます。例えば、たくさん英語を勉強するの学生の方がいい英語力あります。留学したい人も、そうでない人よりも英語力が高いです。また、この調査では、学生は英語を話すよりも聞く方が得意であることがわかりました。リーディングとライティングはほぼ同じレベルだった。この調査に参加したほとんどの日本の高校生の英語のレベルは、許容範囲内であると言えるでしょう。しかし、これが日本のすべての高校生に一般化できるものかどうかは言い切れません。そのためには、さらに研究を進める必要があります。(509字)

Summary: For my EPOK research I wanted to do research about something that was really interesting to me. The subject that spoke to me the most was the subject of languages. Since I have always been surrounded by many languages, growing up in Belgium, I have a high interest in this. I wanted to do research into whether or not it is true that the knowledge of the English language in Japan is actually as bad as people tend to say. I found some proposed reasons as to why this would be the case with some sources blaming the way kids learn the language in school. Therefore I took a deeper look into the proficiency of High school students in the English language with the help of surveys.

English is the second language for most of the world's population. However according to some surveys only 30% of the Japanese population can speak English (E. Margolis, 2020). This raises the question as to why this is the case, considering that English is the most important language used for things like international politics and international trade. This however, is not a recent phenomenon and has been going on for several decades, if not centuries. At the Washington Naval Convention in 1921, for example, it was highlighted that Japan needed to have people who could speak English in order to increase foreign trade following the first world war (W.C. Bryant, 1956). The Japanese delegation also stated that their lack of English made them look bad compared to the Chinese delegation. So why is it that after all those years Japan seemingly hasn't kept up with most of the world's developed countries? It certainly cannot be said that it is because of a lack of trying. When looking at the streets signs in most populated areas almost all the signs have either English translations or the names of cities written in the roman alphabet. In most places these days it's possible to find some type of English translation of signs, menus or tourist pamphlets, most of which are understandable even though in some cases the translation was clearly not done by a paid professional. Although most of this is done with the goal of attracting foreign tourists, or in the government's case attracting a foreign labour force, it still shows a clear sign that effort is being put in to make things easier for foreigners to find their way in a country with a very unique language system. According to Anthony Scarangelo there are multiple reasons, number one being the lack of any similar or familiar languages connecting English and Japanese. Since Japanese and English don't have any common predating language it's hard to find similarities that make it easier for people to pick up on a language. Another reason could be the difference in sounds used in both languages. Japanese lacks a lot of sounds used by English speakers. Because of this Japanese native speakers often tend to have problems pronouncing and distinguishing sounds like *r* and *l* or *w* and *v*. This is also not taking into account the unpredictable spelling and pronunciation of a good amount of words in the

English language that make it all the harder to learn how to speak fluently. Scarangelo also brings up the way that Japanese kids get taught English as a possible cause for the problem. The main focus in a lot of schools is put on grammar, writing and reading but not on using the language. The same can be said about the university entrance exams in Japan, and because of this strong focus on the theoretical side, most students never get to use the language often enough in order to learn it. This reason, to me, seemed like the one which would have the most impact on students' English ability. But even with all these challenges there are Japanese natives that speak English, some of which with a high proficiency. Is this thanks to the more globalised world we live in? Or is it thanks to the internet that some people can more independently learn or be exposed to English? This is something that I was asking myself when starting on this research. The easiest way to find out if the modern developments such as the internet and smartphones made a difference is by looking at the people that grew up with these things, the youth. That's why I decided to conduct my research with high school aged kids, where chances are pretty high that they come into contact with English on an almost daily basis.

In order to conduct this research I had to use a way in order to collect a big amount of data over a relative short period of time. Interviews were not a good option since I did not have the relevant training and time in order to collect enough objective data. After a few weeks of thinking on how to collect the data we landed on using a system of self-surveys. These self-surveys consisted of 2 main type of questions, type 1 were more open questions and more subjective while type 2 were objective questions using the CEFR requirements in order to make sure the data collected was as objective as it could be. This made it possible to collect data on what levels of English the students possessed using the CEFR data, making for an objective result, and it became possible to find some of the underlying reasons why students might have the level that they do. With help of my research adviser the self-surveys were sent to two high school classes in the Okayama area. Two weeks later we had 45 self-surveys filled in as our data pool. One class consisted of first year high school kids and the second class was made up of second year high school students. The hypothesis which I came up with was that I expected most students to have a level that sits in between CEFR level A1 to B2. I also stated that if the students were to have parents with whom they spoke English or a background in English schooling, such as international schools, that I expected the level to be between C1 and C2. However none of the students had any of these prerequisites. One of the final questions asked in the survey is also whether or not the students want to improve their English skills or not. I expect most students saying they want to improve their English.

When sifting through the data I noticed that some students had apparently mistaken themselves and thought of the C-level as the lowest and A-level as the highest, however since this was only a small part of the students I still had sufficient date for the research. In the first half of the survey I asked about things in their personal life, such as "do you watch English movies" or "do you listen to English music, if yes how often?". I also asked the students how long they have been studying English for and how often they study it. These questions were designed to give me a better view on why the students might have a good level of English. Aside from these questions I also asked the students to make a self-assessment on a five point scale, ranging from very bad to very good, for every English ability. This made it possible for me to look back at the CEFR-scaled answers and compare how good the students' ability to assess themselves was. After that question I put in a couple more open questions about the students' motivation to get better at English. I asked if they wanted to improve their English and, if so, why exactly they wanted to improve. All of these questions had the goal to help me better understand and asses the students' English ability. However do take into account that this research was conducted by means of self-assessment, ergo the results will never be as accurate as research conducted by English language researchers who conduct individual oral interviews.

The results were as follows. It became clear to me from the start that in the self-assessment without CEFR guidelines some students had overestimated their own abilities. It was also very clear that the older students had a more realistic view of their own abilities compared to the younger students. This first self-assessment already gave me some idea of what was to come in the following questions, and since none of the students had an English speaking background I expected my hypothesis to be on the good side. Going through the answers there were only a handful of students that didn't want to improve,

often not stating a proper reason as to why. However these were the clear exception, most kids wanted to improve their English because they want to be able to talk to foreigners or go on trips abroad or even exchanges abroad. The amount of students that said they often listened to English music or watched English speaking movies or series was a surprisingly a little on the small side. Almost 85% of the students answered that they occasionally listened to English music but only about 30% of the students said they watched English movies. I had expected the latter to be at least over 50% considering how widely spread streaming services like Netflix, Disney+ or Amazon prime are, or video platforms like Youtube. This conclusion already gives a little insight as to why some of the Japanese youth just aren't interested in learning the language, all may it be only a small percentage of them. Especially if I compare this to kids with the same age in Europe where probably everyone who has access to the internet watches something in English at least once in every while. This might be because of the high amount of domestic entertainment that Japanese kids can enjoy. After all it is anime that gets translated into English and other languages and not the other way around. All of this probably has some effect on the amount of English Japanese kids get exposed to, in turn affecting how easy it will eventually be for them to pick up on the language. However this is only helps improve your language skills and will not be the reason as to why you didn't learn it.

When asking how much time the students spent studying English the answers varied greatly. Some students wrote down that they spend as much as two hours every day studying English, some of them spend extra time studying English while attending cram school, whilst others only studied occasionally for tests or homework. As is to be expected, the students that studied less clearly scored lower on the CEFR part of the questionnaire. This, however, doesn't mean that the students that did study a lot scored unexpectedly high. Although students that studied more didn't score that much higher than students who, it was very clear that the students who studied more often showed a greater interest and motivation to learn and master the English language. Some of those students seemingly understanding the great importance of English in business life and the many benefits that come with knowing the language.

Looking at the questions using CEFR guidelines for each ability in English we can see a clear difference which was also one of the problems brought up in the journal article written by Scarangelo. One of the skills where the least students marked the lowest possible level, A1, was listening. For listening there wasn't even one student that marked the level A1, with A2 being the lowest level marked by students. We could be able to see a link here between the journal article where mister Scarangelo describes how Japanese English education tends to focus more on aspects like grammar, reading and writing rather than putting the focus on the actual usage of the language. This division, perhaps caused by the tendency to focus on passing entrance exams rather than mastering the language, was clearly visible in the students' answers. However the proposed problems in the article don't fully comply with the answers given since the skill where A1 was the most marked was writing and not speaking. Speaking had about the same amount of students marking A1 as students that marked A1 for reading. Of course it should be taken into account that an actual oral examination of the students would have resulted in a more accurate assessment than a survey, but there is still a big difference of the levels between speaking, reading, listening on one hand and writing on the other. This does show that at least part of the active skills are below the average level of the passive skills according to the students' answers.

When questioned about how students studied the English language various answers came up. Some students answered that they just write down lots of words, similar to the way Japanese students study kanji. Others answered that they used systems such as flash cards to study their vocabulary. Making English exercises and translating texts or reading English books also came up quite often. The study method that surprised me the most however was students listening to English language radio in order to further their understanding of the English language. When looking more closely into the way that some students study and at the same time looking at the levels they marked in their answers it becomes clear that the students who use more active ways of studying like reading books or listening to the radio have a way better understanding of the English language, often answering the open questions in English instead of in Japanese. These study methods are things these students do in their own time and not in the

classroom. Most students with levels on the high end of the spectrum clearly practiced English often outside of the classroom and to these on their own initiative. One could even say that the motivation of travelling abroad for fun or planning to go on an exchange can also be a big help when students study English, perhaps because they have a goal and a possible use for it later in their lives. This begs the question of how much the students actually learn in the classroom and whether or not the way of teaching has changed from focus on passing entrance exams rather than focussing on the language. This research doesn't give us a very good view on how English is being taught in the classrooms but the students' answers can give us some clues. Judging by the students' answers however, it doesn't seem like the way of teaching in the classroom has changed all that much, with passing the entrance exams still seemingly being the main goal of the class, as stated in the article by mister Scarangelo.

After analysing most of the data and comparing it to the information I found in my preliminary research there were a few things that started to stand out. It seems to me that the way in which English is taught in Japanese high schools hasn't changed that much throughout the years, or at least not in the high school where I conducted my own research. However it does seem that the amount of English that students are exposed to in their personal time seems to be pretty high considering some students even listen to English radio programs or read books written in English to practice the language. This exposure seems to make up for some of the things that are lacking in the current way of teaching English in Japan.

When taking a look at all the data collected during this research answers can be found to some of the questions and hypotheses that I stated before starting the research. First of all the level of the students seems to sit mostly in between the level A2 and the level B1, with some cases being as low as the level A1 or being as high as the level B2. Since no students answer that they had had an English speaking educational or personal background no one marked the levels C1 or C2 in any of the questions asked in the survey. All but one student said that they wanted to improve their English with students giving reasons such as wanting to communicate with foreigners, wanting to visit foreign countries or wanting to go on an exchange being some of the more common answers given. Depending on the level the students possessed at the time of the survey students stated that they wanted to improve their English level to B1 or B2, in some cases even C1 or C2. With this we can say that most of my guesses were quite close to the answers of the students. This research made it possible for me to take a closer look into the English level possessed by Japanese high school students. I am glad that I had the opportunity to conduct a research in my field of interest and I am thankful for the amazing advice I got during the research process from my EPOK research advisor Mohri sensei. (2740 words)

Reference:

Reference 1 (English teaching in Japan, Anthony Scarangelo) [Internet]. at <https://www.jstor.org/stable/809406> [Last accessed: august 1, 2022]

Reference 2 (Japan Doesn't Want to Become Another Casualty of English, Eric Margolis) [Internet]. at: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/05/26/japan-doesnt-want-to-become-another-casualty-of-english/#:~:text=Yet%20despite%20this%20growth%2C%20studies,2%20percent%20speak%20English%20fluently.> [Last accessed: august 1, 2022]

Reference 3 (English language teaching in Japan, William Cullen Bryant) [Internet]. at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2699042> [Last accessed: august 1, 2022]

East vs. West- Japan vs US College Edition

Kirsten Little

University of North Carolina at Greensboro (United States)

Summary:

The point of the EPOK essay is to state what the topic of our research was over the course of this semester, as well as to present our research in the classroom. Over the course of this essay, there is going to be an analysis of culture, specifically Japanese culture versus the United States. The concept that is going to be compared is how students learn at two vastly different universities. These two universities that are going to be compared are: Okayama University (also referred to as Okadai), and the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (which will be abbreviated hereafter as UNCG). This essay will demonstrate the knowledge that I have gained as an EPOK study abroad student.

It will also show insight into how the two previously mentioned Universities from two opposite corners of the world differ in student-teacher relationships, campus size, and how international students enjoy their time with friends as well as classmates. The sources that will be referenced in the essay will also show how Japanese culture can impact foreigners as a whole (specifically myself as a young black woman from the United States). We will all be better global citizens by the end of this essay.

Background

Over the course of this project, I have taken a deeper look into how college students go about their classes at my home university, as well as Okayama University. Since this essay is supposed to be a sort of summary of my research during the course, I will try to make this background short. While in Japan, I took notice of how students interact with professors, classmates, and friends. There is an unspoken level of politeness that is used in Japan based on a hierarchy that revolves around certain relationships (i.e.- student to teacher, teacher to student, and casual conversation between friends, to name a few).

As a black woman from the United States, there were some challenges that I knew I was going to face while being abroad. From what I have observed, local Japanese students are interested in talking with foreigners about how they like Japanese culture. It may have taken a while, but there were some interesting conversations that happened in the classroom as well. However, more of the conversation happened outside of the classroom when both international and Japanese students went out and spent time together. I noticed that when I was traveling around town in Okayama, many Japanese locals would not stare at me because I was a black woman, but because I was a foreigner. They were really understanding towards foreigners to the point that I feel confident enough to ask someone for direction in Japanese after I had gotten lost. Overall, Japan has a variety of education styles, classroom norms, and mannerisms and teachers that I enjoy seeing. One such mannerism is the fact that they allow more students to ask questions than at my home university.

The motivation behind why I chose this topic to research and write about is to explore how to become a better global citizen. One of the ways someone can become a better global citizen is to immerse themselves in another culture. It also helps to have a desire to travel to new locales. The purpose of this essay is to give a written insight to the topic I chose to discuss.

Objective

The overall objective that I had set for myself in order to write this extensive essay is to find the

similarities and differences between Okayama university and the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Japan and the US are two different countries on opposite sides of the world with different cultural, as well as societal customs, norms, and behaviors. Some practices that would be “normal” in the United States would be considered extremely rude in Japan. An example of this could be as simple as leaving a tip at a restaurant. In the United States, it is basic decency to leave a tip after you finish a meal at a restaurant.

This is one practice that would be considered rude in Japan. According to The Japan Media “There is no culture of tipping in Japan. Tipping used to be a custom in some places, but now it is gone in most places.” (The Japan Media 2022). Another difference between Japanese and US culture is the way that restaurants function. Another example is the transportation culture, specifically on trains. Where the US does not mind having legs crossed on the public trains in most major US cities, there was one extremely-noticed and mentioned rule that I saw occur a lot while traveling in Japan. That rule was to not cross your legs at all while onboard the train. Even though I have done the research related to this topic I still do not understand why this is such a big deal. Whether it's because I'm a foreigner or it grew up in a western culture, I don't think I will ever understand this topic, no matter how much research I do. The topic does not even have to be EPOK related, and I still know that this will always confuse me about Japanese culture.

To stay on the topic of college students in Japan, here is an excerpt from *Guidable's* Life on Campus: University Life in Japan. “Classes are also flexible, especially for international students, and depending also on the courses you are taking. Sometimes classes are twice or thrice a week, and you can choose whether you prefer the day or night classes, depending also on the university you are enrolled in. The flexibility in schedule allows students to do other curricular activities or get part-time jobs.” (Guidable Writers 2022).

To be honest, the only downside that I can currently think of to college life in Japan is the major disadvantage of a language barrier. Well, I am sure there are many other disadvantages to college life in Japan, I will always think of the biggest one will be the language barrier. Whether that be Japanese students failing to communicate with international students or international students not knowing enough of basic Japanese in order to get by. When I started looking for colleges to study abroad for in Japan, Okayama University was one of the only ones that had a study abroad program that required you to take Japanese as a language course.

Another difference that is noticed in Japanese college is the idea of student discounts. While UNC Greensboro does have them, they are not really that great at certain times in the semester. Here is some more information the site Nippon Hippo about college student life in Japan. “student life is one of the most tiring yet exciting life phases that one can experience. However, when it ends, and your adult life begins, you'll surely look back on these days, think about all the memories you've made and miss them... n Japan, many entertainment places have special discount offers for students. You can avail these discounts by simplifying presenting your student ID at different locations such as cinemas, restaurants and karaoke places... Japanese people are known to be very accommodating and warm towards international students and other foreign expatriate.” (*Life of a student in Japan* 2022).

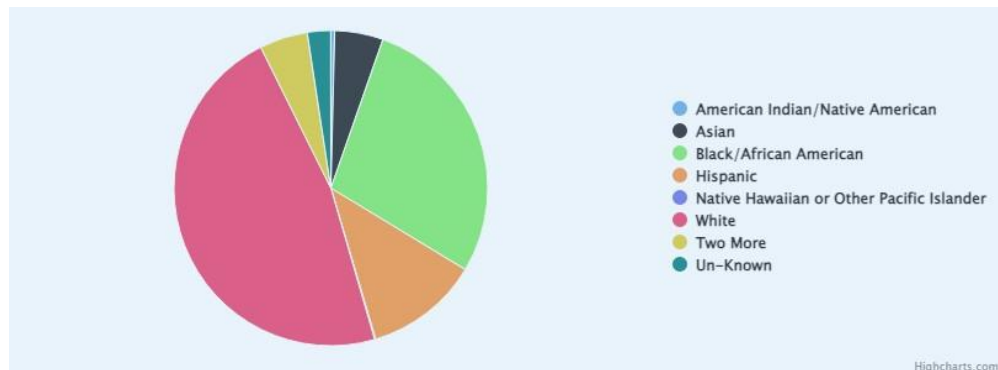
Many of the cultural differences that I have noticed in Japan not related to education are in the restaurant and service industries. A noticeable difference that I have noticed while living in Japan would absolutely be the restaurant culture. The servers at any of the restaurants I have

been to in Japan will not come over to your table unless you call them to you, unlike in Western restaurants where they come to you once they have led you over to an available table or booth. I did not figure this out until I met up with another one of my classmates, who was also a foreign student at a café that we both enjoy going to often.

It took a while for me to adjust to the cultural differences from being in a western country to being in Japan for a short period of time. I was expecting to go through a complete range of culture shock, but surprisingly I didn't experience that as much. While there were some things that I had to get used to, such as the strict rules for separating trash as well as the different grading scales between Okayama University and UNCG. UNCG operates on a 10-point grading scale, where a passing grade is considered a D. A 'D' means that even though you have passed the class you will not get credits for said course. The lowest passing grade at Okayama University is a 60 which is considered a 'C'.

To better explain the motivation behind why I had decided to research this topic, here is a quote from my EPOK Spring 2022 Presentation: "The reason why I wanted to research Japanese culture versus United States culture when it comes to college is because I wanted to study abroad for a long time now, and now I had the chance...I wanted to understand Japanese culture from a college's academic standpoint... I wanted to become a better global citizen" (Little 2022). I also wanted to expand on the advantages and disadvantages between Okayama University and the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

I have noticed the significant number of international students that are in the EPOK program at Okayama, with the majority being French or German, at least from my own personal experiences and observations. The Japanese students that I have met at Okayama University were interested in talking with me during the times that I met them (at least the ones who could understand and respond in English). There were some advantages to speaking with Japanese students at Okayama university. one such advantage was the fact that they were excited to talk to international students, seeing is how they don't really get that much experience with international people except in college or in the business world if you are going into international business relations. As previously stated, the motivation behind my topic choice was to become a better global citizen. One of the best ways to do that is to immerse yourself in another places culture, and I believe I have done just that. I have met several Japanese classmates and friends of mine that I have made that will last me a lifetime. I am a naturally introverted person, so this experience was a whole life changing event for me. it is an experience that I have thoroughly enjoyed and would do again if given the opportunity. The University of North Carolina at Greensboro does study abroad for students who can afford to, and I was one of the lucky ones that got the chance to be able to go. many other students that I know at UNCG would not have been able to go due to Covid or to finances or due to other issues.



(UNCG student population & Demographics 2022)

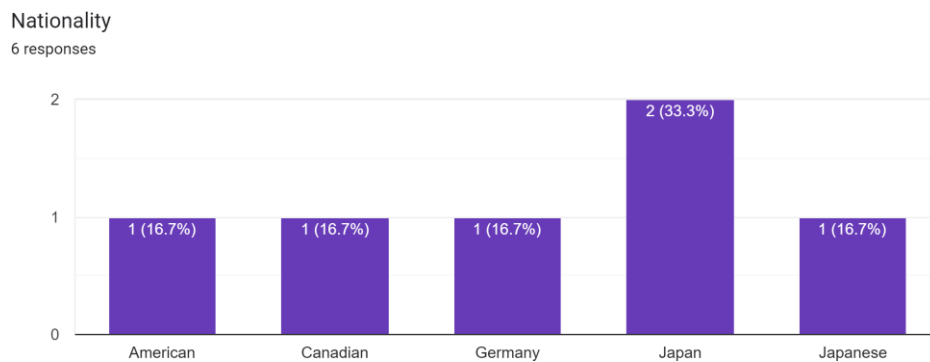
The pie chart above shows the racial distribution of students at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. While conducting the research for the number of international students at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, there were consistency issues with certain information. The percentage of international students was significantly lower than what was shown on the university's websites related to student population density. There are some international students at UNC Greensboro, but not to make a good dent in the percentage of racial distribution. The reason behind this may be to financial issues, time zone differences, etc. Most recently, however the biggest drawback would be the COVID-19 pandemic. A classmate of mine and fellow international student told me that in years prior there were a lot more American International students. As of right now, there is only myself and one other international student that comes from America (they are from Kansas to be specific).

Research Methods

It took me a while to figure what the best method to organize my research would be. However, I eventually figured out that the best way to collect data was a questionnaire, thanks to the several meetings that I had with Inamori-sensei in order to discuss the timeline for the EPOK Spring 2022 Project. I talked with Inamori-sensei to figure out the best questions to put on my questionnaire in order to collect the most data within a certain period of time. It was thanks to him that I managed to figure out a simple 10 question survey to distribute to students that I knew, both classmates and regular Okadai students. When I was starting my research, I had no idea where to even begin.

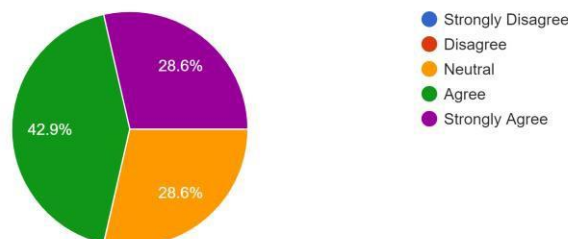
After I sent in the template to my advisor for the epoch project, I was told that it was too broad and that I needed to narrow down my topic otherwise I would not be able to complete the assignment in the best fashion. Once I got approval from my teacher to finalize my survey, all I had to do now was distribute it. So, I asked classmates that were international students as well as regular Japanese students to complete my survey and then I compiled the results. Overall, this has been one of the most labor-intensive data collections I have ever had to endure for one class that I'm taking this semester. However, the results have been worth it. I have gotten a substantial amount of data that I am going to put in pictures to demonstrate what the data represents as well as give a summary of what my data has revealed about the project.

When I first started researching, I figured that I would do a mixture of both qualitative and quantitative data collection. By the end of the project as I am writing this essay however, it turned out to be more qualitative. most of the reasons behind this were due to time constraints considering I was still in EU S when starting this research project. However, that time zone difference did not stop me from trying my best and making sure to give this project 100% of my time and effort. it was worth it in the end because I got a lot of interesting data and commentary from students who replied to my survey.



The chart above shows all the nationalities of the students that I've collected data from. It shows that the most data has been collected from Japanese students, which was the main goal of my research. I wanted to get an insight into how Japanese students liked working with foreign students. This research has been both quantitative and qualitative, especially in the number of students that I have met over the course of this study abroad program. I went through all the responses of the survey question “Write about any experiences in the classroom (good or bad) you have had with international students at Okayama University.” (Little *EPOK Spring Survey 2022*) there was a vast number of international students from France as well as Germany, but I was one of the only Americans here. Despite the fact that I did interview some local Okayama university students, there were not as many as I would have liked for an essay of this size.

At Okayama University, the coursework is easy to complete by the deadline that is given.
7 responses



While looking over some of the responses to the questions that I had posted, some of them are a lot more interesting than I expected. One of the questions that I had asked was related to the workload at Okayama. It also related to how the instructors teach their students. In order to make a valid comparison when I was collecting data. The image below shows the way

coursework is able to be completed by a certain deadline that is given.

The results that came from this question were one of the most surprising results from all of the data that I collected. Whenever I was speaking with students (both international and domestic) about their schedules, they would tell me about how flexible they were. In the case of international students, they mostly told me that their course workload was extremely lighter than at their home university. As shown in the pie chart shown above, around 42.9 % of students that responded agreed with the statement that the coursework at Okayama University is easy to complete by the given deadline. As previously mentioned, the coursework for international students did a lot more flexible in comparison to their home universities. The reason behind that maybe because these international students are not full-time students at Okayama University and as such are not fully immersed into a certain major or faculty. By the time this program is over myself and many other international students will be back at our home universities preparing for the fall semester. In any case the data that I collected was very interesting to look at after having tallied all the surveys that were collected.

I managed to pull off a fairly decent presentation in addition to the data I collected. It was only thanks to Inamori-sensei giving me great advice to complete the survey, agreeing to attend Zoom meetings when he was available for them, and being genuinely helpful that I was even able to finish this project on time. As of right now, Inamori-sensei is the greatest research professor that I have ever had the pleasure of meeting and working with. To this day one of my greatest downfalls is that I will procrastinate sometimes to the point where I will not remember to turn in certain assignments. However, I do not let that stop me from putting in my best effort and making a project for everyone to enjoy. Overall, I think that everyone enjoyed my presentation, even if they did not say it out loud.

The View of Japanese and German Students on Student Demonstrations in Japan

Luisa von Wolffersdorff

Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz Universität Hannover (Germany)

1. Summary

私のEPOKリサーチ・プロジェクトは日本の大学生のデモです。ドイツの大学生はよくかぞくと友だちとせいじを話したり、よくデモに行ったりします。日本の大学生もよくかぞくと友だちとせいじを話します。でも、ぜんぜんデモに行きません。どうしてですか。日本の大学生は私はわずらわくて、時間がないと思います。1950年代から1960年代のデモのほうが今のデモより攻撃的で、こわいです。今のデモのほうが1950年代から1960年代のデモより平和的です。私のEPOKリサーチ・プロジェクトはとてもおもしろいです。しょうらい、もっと人に話します。私の日本語が少しできます。話すのはちょっとむすかしです。

2. Introduction

Many people ask themselves why they should be interested in politics because it is connected with dishonesty, boredom, and frustration. It is important to realize that decisions made by the government impact nearly every part of our life. Power supply, health conditions, food regulations, taxes, and so on set a frame in which each person lives their life. In most democracies, each person can influence this frame through elections by choosing politicians and parties as representatives of their opinion. Nonetheless, it can happen that people are not satisfied with how politicians and parties rule the country. A way to show your opinion is not only possible in an election but also in a demonstration. In Japan, people are hesitant about joining a demonstration generally.

For many years I was not interested in politics. I did not know much about it and had the impression it needs much afford and time to gain enough knowledge to be able to form an own opinion about ongoing political processes. At the same time, it did not feel good not to be able to join conversations about politics which occurred quite often. Nowadays, I read the newspaper online every day, and listen to political podcasts when cooking or taking a walk. I feel more educated and have the impression to better understand the world I'm living in which is a satisfying feeling. In Germany, I participate in demonstrations but I do not see myself as an activist because I participate very passively. Passive means for me I join a demonstration, but I do not participate in its organization and I'm a quiet and not a loud protester. I participate peacefully and would never hurt someone or destroy something. Because of this personal change I can understand the perspective of Japanese people who are a little bit more hesitant and other people in Germany who are very motivated to go on demonstrations. That's why it is very interesting to understand more about the thoughts of Japanese students on demonstrations nowadays and in the past as well as the differences to German students.

3. Methodology and Objectives

To achieve the objectives, two methodological steps were done: First, two interviews were done in person to verify the first draft of the designed questions as well as to get inspiration for other interesting questions. Second, with the results of step one, the final online questionnaire was designed. All participants were students of Japanese or German nationality. The interview with the Japanese students was done in English, the interview with the German students in German and the questionnaire was in English and Japanese. The translation of the questionnaire from English to Japanese was done by a Japanese person who can speak English very well.

Regarding the interviews, one was done with two Japanese students and one was done with two German students. In both interviews, the same questions were asked and were done in person. The questions of the

interview served as a basis for the final questionnaire. That's why the purpose of the interview was to verify its questions as well as find other interesting questions which should be added to the questionnaire. The data collected in the interview was qualitative. The online questionnaire was designed on lamapoll.de and the link and QR code were shared with Japanese students in person or online by using LINE, e-mail, and Microsoft teams. The data collected in the interview was quantitative. Both, the interview and questionnaire were divided into one section about general information about the participant, one section about the student movements in the 1950s and 1960s in Japan, and a section about student demonstrations in Japan nowadays. In the interview, there was an additional section about student demonstrations in Germany, but it was removed after the revision.

In order to compare the view of Japanese and German students on student demonstrations in Japan, three objectives were investigated. In general, Japanese students are said to be hesitant about joining demonstrations. To get a better idea why this is the case the **objective 1** is "What are the main reasons why Japanese students are hesitant about joining demonstrations?". It is also interesting to see if the image students have of the demonstration in the 1950s and 1960s differs to the image they have of demonstrations nowadays. That's why **objective 2** is "Is the impression of the student demonstrations in the 1950s and 1960s in Japan different to student demonstrations nowadays?". To understand the different behavior of Japanese and Germans students regarding demonstrations **objective 3** is "Are German students politically more active than Japanese students?".

The following table lists the three objectives of this research project and the questions which were asked in the questionnaire to investigate it.

Objective 1	
What are the main reasons why Japanese students are hesitant about joining demonstrations?	
	<p>日本の学生は、デモに参加することにためらいがあるといわれています。あなたが最も当てはまると思う理由二つを選んでください。</p> <p>Japanese students are said to be hesitant about joining a demonstration. Choose two reasons which you think are the most important.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 十分な時間がない。Not enough time. ● 周りから面倒な奴だと思われたくない。Do not want to be seen as troublesome by social environment. ● デモをしても何の効果もない。It is not likely to have any effect. ● 政治に対して責任感を感じない。政治家が何とかすべきである。I do not feel responsible for politics. Politicians have to deal with that. ● その話題について何も知らない。Do not know something about a certain topic.
Objective 2	
Is the impression of the student demonstrations in the 1950s and 1960s in Japan different to student demonstrations nowadays?	
	<p>1950年代から1960年代にかけての学生のデモについてどう思いますか。What do you think about the student demonstrations in the 1950s and 1960s? Answer each question with "Strongly Agree" (強くそう思う), "Agree" (そう思う), "Do not agree" (そう思わない), "Strongly do not agree" (強くそう思わない).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 民主主義政治のなかで自身の意見を主張する一つの方法 Important part of democracy ● 怖い Scary ● 交通妨害 Traffic obstruction ● 共同体意識 Sense of community ● デモに参加する人は押しが強い People who demonstrate have strong opinion ● 環境を乱す Disturb the environment ● 面白そう Is fun ● 変化をもたらせる強力な力を持つ Powerful

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> うるさい、迷惑 Annoying 平和的 Peaceful 攻撃的 Aggressive
<p>最近の学生のデモについて個人的にどう思いますか。What do you think about student demonstrations nowadays? Answer each question with “Strongly Agree” (強くそう思う), “Agree” (そう思う), “Do not agree” (そう思わない), “Strongly do not agree” (強くそう思わない).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 民主主義政治のなかで自身の意見を主張する一つの方法 Important part of democracy 怖い Scary 交通妨害 Traffic obstruction 共同体意識 Sense of community デモに参加する人は押しが強い People who demonstrate have strong opinion 環境を乱す Disturb the environment 面白そう Is fun 変化をもたらせる強かな力を持つ Powerful うるさい、迷惑 Annoying 平和的 Peaceful 攻撃的 Aggressive
Objective 3
Are German students politically more active than Japanese students?
デモに参加したり、主催したりする。I joined demonstrations and/or organized protests.
自分から政治について 例えば新聞、テレビなどから知識を得ようとする。I inform myself about politics. For example, reading newspaper, watching TV, or others.
友達、家族、恋人と政治の話をする。I talk about politics with friends/family/boyfriend/girlfriend.
デモに行きたくないが友達に誘われたら行く。I would not go to a demonstration myself. But, if a good friend/boyfriend/girlfriend asks me to come I would go.
あなたの友人が、平和についてのデモに参加します。その人をどう思いますか。One of your friends goes to a demonstration about peace. What would you think of that person?

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Interviews

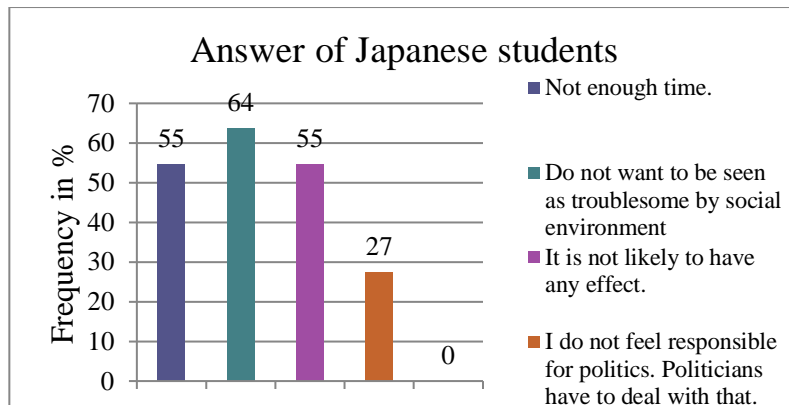
The two Japanese students in the interview are female and male, are at an age of 18 and 20 and their major is law of computer engineering. The two German students in the interview are both male, are at an age of 23 and 30 and their major is Japanese Studies.

Regarding **objective 1**, in the interviews the students were asked “What do you think are reasons that Japanese students do not want to participate in demonstrations?” but this question was not again openly asked in the questionnaire. Instead, the answers collected in the interviews were presented in the questionnaire and the participants had to choose two they think are most important. For **objective 2**, the question “Do you think students at that time participated more in demonstrations then nowadays?” was asked in the interview, but not included in the questionnaire. Also the question “What image do you have of this student movement of the 1950s/1960s?” was openly asked during the interview. For the questionnaire, the answers collected in the interviews were presented in the questionnaire and the participants had to tell if they agreed to them or not. As a result of the interview some questions asked in the interview regarding **objective 3** were not included in the questionnaire anymore. In the interview the question “What image do you have of German students and their political activism in general?” was asked but not included in the questionnaire.

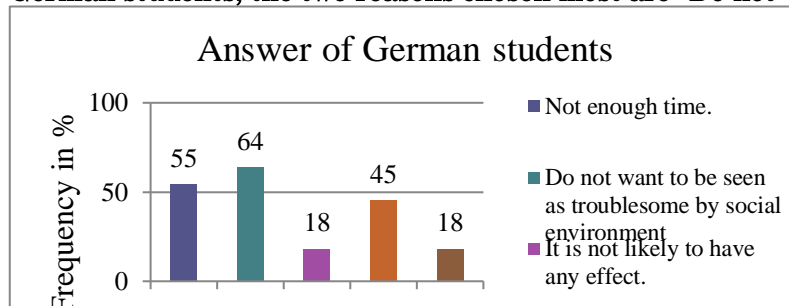
4.2 Questionnaire

The online questionnaire was answered by 22 students with 11 coming from Japan and 11 coming from Germany. The age varies between 19 and 35 with three people at 18, five people being 19 and four being 28. The other 10 people distribute evenly. 10 participants are female and 12 are male. The majors of the students are Japanese Studies, Law, Pharmacy, Engineering, Political Science, Mechanical engineering, Geoscience, Landscape architecture, Faculty of Science, Biological Sciences.

For **objective 1** “What are the main reasons why Japanese students are hesitant about joining demonstrations?” each participant chooses two of five given reasons for Japanese students being hesitant. The results can be seen in the following graphs.



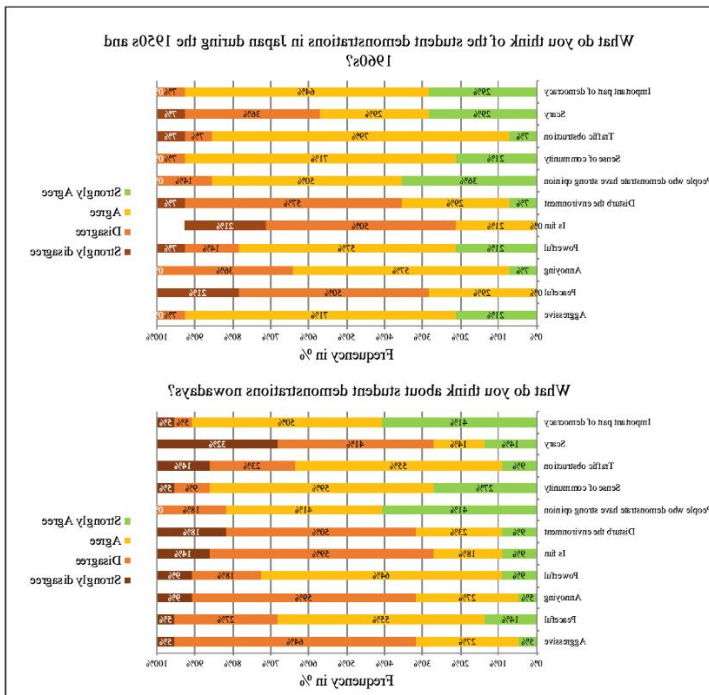
For both, Japanese and



German students, the two reasons chosen most are “Do not want to be seen as troublesome by social environment.” with 64% and “Not enough time.” with 55%. 55% of the Japanese students in contrast to 18% of the German students also think the reason “It is not likely to have any effect.” is really important. In contrast to that, 45% of German students

thought the reason “I do not feel responsible for politics. Politicians have to deal with that.” would be important but according to the Japanese students (27%) it is not. The reason “Do not know something about a certain topic” was not often chosen at all with 18% of the German students and 0% of the Japanese students choosing it. The reasons “Do not want to be seen as troublesome by social environment.”, “Not enough time.” and “It is not likely to have any effect.” were all chosen very often by Japanese students. This result is what I expected after the interviews. As the German students can only guess the reasons it is interesting to see that the trend between the two groups was similar for “Do not want to be seen as troublesome by social environment.” and “Not enough time.”. At the same time the German students seem to underestimate the reason “It is not likely to have any effect.”. The article “Why Are Japanese Youth Distancing Themselves from Social Activism?” states that only about 45% of Japanese youth believe protests are an effective means to change society for the better. This fits to the result of the questionnaire that 55% think demonstrations do not have any effect.

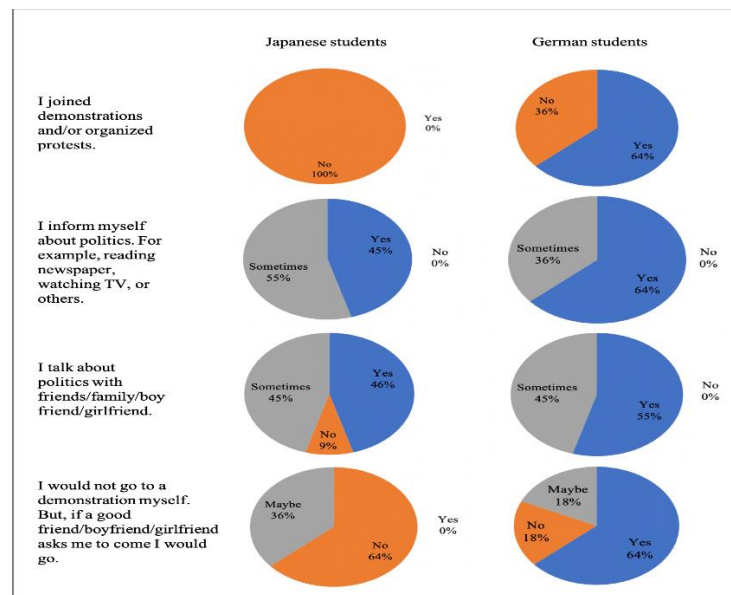
For **objective 2** “Is the impression of the student demonstrations in the 1950s and 1960s in Japan different to student demonstrations nowadays?” in the questionnaire all students were asked “Have you heard of / learned about the student movements in the 1950s/1960s in Japan?”. 64% answered this question with “Yes” and 36% with “No”. From the students who answered with “Yes”, 10 are Japanese and four are German. All German students who answered with “Yes” study Japanese studies. The following graphs results show the answers only of the students who answered this question with “Yes”.



About the demonstrations in the 1950s and 1960s, 58% of the students strongly agree or agree that demonstrations are scary, 64% that they are annoying and 92% that they are aggressive. For demonstrations nowadays 28% strongly agree or agree that they are scary, 32% that they are annoying and 32% that they are aggressive. This fits to the opinion that 29% strongly agree or agree that the demonstrations in the 1950s and 1960s are peaceful, while 69% think that about demonstrations nowadays. This shows a big difference in the image students have of these demonstrations. The image changed to a more peaceful and less scary, aggressive and annoying one. Furthermore, 86% of the students strongly agreed and agreed the demonstrations in the 1950s and 1960s are traffic obstructions while 64% strongly agree or agree to this about demonstrations nowadays. At the same time, 26% strongly agree or agree that the demonstrations in the 1950s and 1960s disturb the environment, while 32% think of that about demonstrations nowadays. This is interesting because more peaceful demonstrations could mean less people are hurt, the area around demonstrations is less dangerous, less police had to appear which could mean the more peaceful demonstration is less disturbing. Also, less traffic obstruction would also mean less disturbance. According to the article “Why Are Japanese Youth Distancing Themselves from Social Activism?” about 52% of the Japanese youth thinks protests are a nuisance for society as a whole. This is a little bit more than the 32% of Japanese students who answered they strongly agree or agree with demonstrations nowadays disturbing the environment.

About the demonstrations in the 1950s and 1960s, 93% of the students strongly agree or agree that demonstrations are an important part of democracy, 92% that they show a strong sense of community, 86% that people who demonstrate have a strong opinion. This is similar to the image on demonstrations nowadays where 91% strongly agree or agree of the students that demonstrations are an important part of democracy, 86% that they show a strong sense of community, 82% that people who demonstrate have a strong opinion. As these attributes are very general attributes of demonstrations it is not surprising that this impression didn't change over time. Of course, it must be considered that all participants did not experience the demonstrations in the 1950s and 1960s by themselves. As there are not many demonstrations in Japan they also maybe didn't see many of them nowadays.

The following pie charts are about **objective 3** and compare the answers given by Japanese and German students on their general behavior towards demonstrations.



None of the Japanese students but 64% of the German students have joined and/or organized a demonstration which is a big difference. It seems not only Japanese students have a lower intrinsic motivation to go to a demonstration than German students, also it seems more difficult to motivate a Japanese student to go there than a German student. When it comes to the interest in political topics the difference is less big as all students inform themselves at least sometimes about politics and all but one student, who is Japanese, stated that they talk at least sometimes about politics with close social contacts. Nonetheless, it has to be considered that it is a subjective and probably cultural differing estimation how often “sometimes” is. Which means it is possible that both Japanese and German students consider themselves as informing and talking about politics “sometimes”, but the absolute number of how often they do so differ. Nonetheless, this result fits to rating the answer “Do not know something about a certain topic.” last in **objective 1** when it came to rating reasons why Japanese students are hesitant about joining a demonstration.

The students were also asked “One of your friends goes to a demonstration about peace. What would you think of that person?” and could choose one of the four answers “I admire that he/she is going to the demonstration. I go with him/her to the demonstration.”, “I admire that he/she is going to the demonstration but I don’t accompany him/her.”, “I think the person is troublesome.” and “I don’t want to be friends anymore.”. 14% choose “I admire that he/she is going to the demonstration. I go with him/her to the demonstration.” and 86% choose “I admire that he/she is going to the demonstration but I don’t accompany him/her.”. It is interesting to see that on the one hand Japanese students seem to be afraid to be seen as troublesome (results to objective 1) but at the same time none of them would think of a friend as troublesome. For further research it would be interesting to find out if they also wouldn’t think a person is troublesome, if they had a different social relationship like family member, stranger and so on.

In general, for all results it must be considered that I’m a beginner in Japanese and even though many friends helped me with all their kindness and patience the language barrier exists. This might have led to misunderstandings which effect the outcome of the research.

5. Conclusion

As the results of decisions made in politics have somehow always had an effect on our daily life, it is important to pay attention to what is done there. One tool for people who do not work in the field of politics themselves or in other positions with much power to show their opinion is demonstrations. They are also one tool of democracy in Japan. This means people are allowed to organize themselves and show their opinion in public. Nonetheless, the view on this democratic tool and the way and intensity it is used is quite different from other countries, e.g. Germany. During my research, I could find out that according to Japanese students the main reasons not to join a demonstration are that they do not want to be seen as troublesome by their social environment, that they do not have enough time, and also doubt a demonstration would lead to any effect.

The first two reasons were also guessed by the German students about the Japanese students. As a third reason, the German students thought Japanese students do not feel responsible for politics. Comparing the view on student demonstrations in the 1950s/60s to nowadays in Japan, students who know about this topic think of the demonstrations nowadays as more peaceful, less aggressive, less scary, and less annoying, less traffic obstructions. At the same time, they think demonstrations nowadays are fewer traffic obstructions but more disturbing. Furthermore, the results of my research showed that Japanese, as well as German students, inform and talk about politics, but German students go to demonstrations while none of the Japanese students did. Interestingly, the Japanese students would not judge friends who go to a demonstration as troublesome while they fear being judged as being so. As this study was only done with a very small amount of participants the results must be seen with this knowledge. Nonetheless, maybe this is an indicator of changes in younger generations, so all of us can curiously observe future developments and see what else will come.

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Japanese students and high school education on comfort women

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2022年のリサーチプロジェクトで、私は日本の学生が高校時代に慰安婦についてどのように学んだかを研究することにしました。生徒の視点を理解するためにアンケートを作成したところ、興味深い結果が得られました。その回答からは、日本における慰安婦問題に対する人々の様々な意見と、考えがどのように影響されたかがわかります。また、この複雑な事柄についてアンケートに答える生徒の気持ちを理解するように努めました。

Introduction

During my bachelor's degree at my home university, I had the opportunity to study the events concerning "comfort women" or "慰安婦" in Japanese. The more I learned about them the more my curiosity aroused, and some findings have sparked my interest to continue doing research. In particular, it is the much-discussed controversy on how the Japanese government has been handling the matter. From the end of the war until this day, the narration of comfort women has remarkably changed many times. This has led to confusion among people about the understanding of the issue and has created tensions and disputes with Japan's neighbors such as South Korea and China. Coming from a country that has taken responsibility for its mistakes during the war and that stresses the importance of the memory of these events in every cultural environment, I was surprised to understand that Japan has had a controversial approach to some historical aspects.

The event that gave me the idea for my research was the Japanese cabinet decision of 2021 to change some words used to describe comfort women and the Japanese invasion of China. From 2022 high school history textbooks will use different terms to refer to these topics. First, the term "従軍慰安婦" is being replaced by the simpler "慰安婦". It is believed that by taking off the adjective "military" the government wants to remark upon the will of the women to work in comfort stations so that it overshadows the coercion of which they were the victim. Another aspect that has been changed is how the books refer to the circumstances of the transfer of people from Korea: "「強制連行」については「動員」などとした。¹". While the words used until 2022 gave a negative perspective of the situation highlighting the fact that they were forced to leave their place of origin, the new textbooks will report that various circumstances led the women to move. I believe that in doing so, the truth about the events will not be properly addressed and that the message delivered will minimize reality.

Because of this recent reshaping of historical narration, I decided to research how Japanese people see these events. I wanted to understand if and how this part of history is taught in schools and how society perceives it. I consider this research important because even if it regards events that happened decades ago, they still have a considerable influence on Japan's current relations with its neighbors and because I want to understand how single words can shape someone's idea.

Methodology

The methodology I chose for my research project consists of a survey whose interviewees are Japanese university students. To prepare the questionnaire I researched online on both English and Japanese websites and I consulted Japanese high school history textbooks. With the information I got from these sources, I was able to create the online form which I then shared with Okayama university students. I believe that a questionnaire is the best way to get the

¹ 「従軍慰安婦」「強制連行」の記述 教科書7社なぜ訂正 どう変わる, 伊藤和行、阿部朋美、三島あずさ、
<https://www.asahi.com/articles/ASPBZ26F4PBFUTIL018.html> [31.10.2021]

students' opinions for many reasons. First of all, the answers remain anonymous and this lets the interviewees respond freely without the fear of possible judgment. Secondly, the survey is a method of research that can easily reach many people, is accessible to anyone who owns a laptop or mobile phone and can be answered at any time. Lastly, from this kind of questionnaire, it is easy to have a clear idea of the answers' trends and it is also possible to analyze the data using demographic information. To create the survey, I used Google Forms and I decided to use Japanese as the language for the questions so that I could reach more people and get as many answers as I could. The survey has 21 questions of which some are multiple choice and some are short answers. The number of people who decided to participate in the research exceeded my expectations. The number of interviewees amounts to 55 people. I will now list the questions I used for the research and show the results I got.

1. Q: What is your gender identity?
A: Women (63,6%); Man (32,7%); Other (1,8%); I don't want to answer (1,8%).
2. Q: How well do you consider yourself to understand comfort women?
A: I don't know at all (14,5%); I know a little about it (67,3%); I understand a lot (12,7%); I understand quite a lot (5,5%).
3. Q: Have you studied comfort women in school?
A: Yes (40%); No (60%).
4. Q: If you answered 'yes' to question 3, this question is for you. Was it when you were in junior high school? Or when you were in high school?
A: Junior high school (13,6%); High school (63,6%); Both (22,7%).
5. Q: Question for those who answered 'yes' to question 3. Was the high school you attended a private high school? Or was it a public high school?
A: Private high school (26,1%); Public high school (73,9%).
6. Q: Have you ever heard about comfort women in a non-high school setting?
A: University (32,7%); Internet (76,4%); TV (92,7%); Other people (25,5%); I have never heard of it (1,8%); Other (7,2%).
7. Q: When you learned about comfort women, did you think the way they were described in textbooks about them was adequate?
A: Yes (29,7%); No (37,8%); Other (32,4%).
8. Q: Which word do you think best describes those women?
A: Comfort women (40%); Military comfort women (21,8%); The so-called "comfort women" (18,2%); None of the above are correct (12,7%); Other (7,2%)
9. Q: Question for those who chose "military comfort women". Why is that?
A: Because that's what I read in my textbook (38,5%); Because I have heard people around me call it that (61,5%); Other (7,7%).
10. Q: Question for those who chose "comfort women". Why is that?
A: Because that's what I read in my textbook (27,3%); Because I have heard people around me call it that (68,2%); Other (13,5%).
11. Q: Question for those who chose "the so-called 'comfort women'". Why is that?

- A: Because that's what I read in my textbook (12,5%); Because I have heard people around me call it that (50%); Other (50%).
12. Q: Do you want to see more research and detailed information communicated in the future in the field of education?
- A: Yes, I think more information should be given (89,1%); No, I think the content is already relevant (5,5%); Other (5,4%).
13. Which statements do you think match or are close to the description in the textbook you used?
- A: a. In colonies and occupied territories, a large number of women, mainly Koreans, but also Chinese, Indonesians, Filipinos and Dutch, were mobilized as comfort women, sexual partners of Japanese soldiers, in comfort stations in which the Japanese military was also involved in establishing and supervising (34,5%); b. As the war front expanded and the mass mobilization in Japan became insufficient, the volunteer soldier system was replaced by a conscription system in the colonies and occupied territories and forced mobilization of laborers was also carried out. Comfort women were also sent to the war zones, many of them Korean (18,2%); c. From 1943 onwards, some 200,000 Korean women were recruited into the Volunteer Service Corps. In addition, a large number of women were made into "comfort women" as sexual partners for Japanese soldiers and taken to the front lines in China, the Philippines and Indonesia, as well as to Okinawa (10,9%); d. In addition, a large number of Koreans and Chinese in the occupied territories were forcibly brought to Japan to work in mines and other places, and some Korean women and others were forced to become military comfort women (20%); e. In Korea, nearly five million people were conscripted into forced labor. Many of them were sent to the south as servicemen of the Japanese army and were sacrificed, and women were also mobilized as a "women's volunteer corps". There were also those who served with the military in various places as comfort women (so-called military comfort women) (16,4%).
14. Q: Which statement do you think matches your impression of the topic when it was explained to you in history class?
- A: Comfort women were forced (or threatened or tricked) into working in comfort stations by the military (52,7%); The comfort women were willing to work in comfort stations (7,3%); None of the above is correct (14,5%); I have never learned about it (21,8%); Other (3,6%).
15. Q: Which of the following explanations do you think is currently correct?
- A: Comfort women were forced (or threatened or tricked) into working in comfort stations by the military (56,6%); The comfort women were willing to work in comfort stations (3,8%); None of the above is correct (18,9%); I have never learned about it (11,3%); Other (9,5%).
16. Q: Where do you think you heard the content that left the greatest impact on your thinking?
- A: High school (11,3%); Media (71,7%); Family (1,9%); Politics (7,5%); University (3,8%); Other (3,8%).

17. Q: If you have any comments on the issue of comfort women or how they were taught in schools, please provide them in the following section. The questionnaire will be collected anonymously. Your answers will help me in my research.
18. Q: If you do not mind me asking you about comfort women issues beyond the content of the questionnaire, please give me your contact details (email, line, etc.).
19. Q: This is the end of the questionnaire. Lastly, please tell us if it was difficult for you to answer and why.
A: It was difficult to answer (54,5%); I didn't have any problems (43,6%); Other (1,8%).
20. Q: Question for those who answered 'it was difficult'. Why was that?
A: Because I did not have sufficient knowledge (93,3%); Because I am not interested (0%); Because I am uncomfortable (3,3%); Other (3,3%).
21. Q: Question for those who answered 'I didn't have any problem'. Why is that?
A: Because it is an interesting topic (34,8%); I don't know much about it and would like to learn more about it (52,2%); Other (12,9%).

Analysis

From question number 2 we can see how more than 2/3 of the interviewees claim they know just a little about comfort women while question number 3 shows that more than half of the students have never studied this topic. These data are not a surprise considering that “Japanese History” was not a compulsory subject until April 2022. Moreover, most history textbooks cover the topic in just a few sentences (with the longest being 3 lines) and some don't even address the issue, so it is very likely for students to not have appropriate knowledge about comfort women.

On the contrary, I was surprised by the results from question 4. Since this is a controversial and not easy topic, I was not expecting that 8 people out of 22 studied comfort women during junior high school. This is also because, as far as I read, junior high school history textbooks do not usually cover the matter at all.

Question number 6 shows which channels cover the comfort women issue the most. As one could predict, almost all the participants stated that they have heard about the matter from television programs and the internet the most. This can be connected to the fact that in the past decades there has been an increasing awareness of the issue and that the disputes between South Korea and Japan are still open and much discussed. Other ways through which students have reported having heard the topic are through university and from other people.

When the students were asked if they think that the way comfort women were described in textbooks was adequate, the answers I collected were various. Most of them believe that it is not adequate, while a smaller number stated it is. However, I also got many free answers from students talking about their own experiences. For example, one of them told that when they were in high school, they learned about comfort women from their teacher rather than from their textbook which was not addressing the topic. Some other students said that they believe the content is too short and should explain better the events. Others said that the information in textbooks is incorrect and should be modified. I think it is interesting to see how from a relatively small number of participants, we can get different opinions. This also reflects the variety of versions of the matter that are spread across Japan.

The answers to question number 8 follow the same path as for the previous inquiry. The word that almost half of the students believe to describe comfort women the best is “慰安婦”. The

other two terms “従軍慰安婦” and “従軍慰安婦” have similar percentages, while the least answered choice is the one stating that none of the previous terms are correct. I believe that the different views the students have can show the trends that society follows. In this case, particularly, words are extremely important. All of the terms that I have listed carry a deeper political meaning and express a specific view. For example, if we address the women as “military comfort women” we are implying that they were part of the many people who worked for the army during the war. In fact, the adjective “従軍” was also associated with the medical staff and reporters. Therefore, the image we have is one of women working voluntarily. On another note, the term “いわゆる従軍慰安婦” which translates to “the so-called military comfort women” express a disagreement with the words used. In fact, “comfort” is usually considered a euphemism. With this being said and considering how short the descriptions of the matter are in textbooks, it is possible to agree that the choice of words is not random and holds great and underlying meaning.

Questions 9, 10 and 11 show why the students picked one term over another. Interestingly, most of the interviewees were influenced by people around them rather than school textbooks.

From question 12 we see that the students would like to have more detailed information about comfort women in textbooks. This is not an answer I was expecting but I believe it to be meaningful.

Question 13 required the interviewees to choose a statement that resembled the one in their history textbooks. Even if the statements do not have striking differences, each of them carries some different information. It is possible to see that the answers are well distributed among the choices and this, again, reflects the variety of views in contemporary Japan about the topic.

Through questions 14 and 15 the students were asked about their views on comfort women. Not surprisingly, most of the students agreed with the statement which implies the coercing nature of the comfort system. Interestingly, many people answered that none of the answers were correct to them. It shows once again that there is no clarity on the reality of the events.

From question 16 we can see that the media has left the biggest influence on the students' opinions which is even more understandable considering the results of question 6.

On question number 17 the students were asked to leave a comment if they wanted to. I was extremely surprised to see that 15 people out of 55 decided to contribute to this inquiry. Their answers report different views and sometimes contrasting opinions. They also explained how they were taught about comfort women and their answers enriched my research.

The last sections were meant to understand the feelings of the students about the survey. To my pleasant surprise, the answers were split almost equally. I was not expecting so many people to have a positive reaction to the questionnaire because whenever the topic came out during conversations Japanese people would tell me that this is a complicated matter and wouldn't go on with the discussion. Almost all the people who said that it was difficult to answer the survey stated that the reason is their lack of knowledge about the issue while no one answered that they did not have an interest in the matter. On the contrary, most of the students who had no problem taking the survey answered that the reason is that they find it an interesting topic and others said that they wanted to know more.

Conclusion

Since 1945, the interpretation of what happened during the Pacific war has changed remarkably over the years. Therefore, Japanese people have different opinions on the subject and with the survey, I was able to confirm the variety of views that Japanese university students have. Other than understanding the students' views, one of the goals of this survey was to have the interviewed people answer the questions freely and let them reflect on how some issues are addressed. I hoped that the research would lead to a better understanding of how the students

have learned about “comfort women” and whether they believe the teaching methods were qualitatively and quantitatively good or not. Another goal was to allow the students to be more aware of the education system and give their own opinions on the matter. I also wished for this survey to spark curiosity in the interviewees and lead to more research and more talking about an issue that is usually avoided. Thanks to the answers, I believe to have reached my goals.

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Perception of nuclear energy among university students

大学生による原子力の認識

BURDESE Virginia ブルデーゼ・ヴィルジーニア

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私の研究テーマは大学生による原子力の認識です。

第二次世界大戦と福島の大惨劇の結果として原子爆弾によって被害を受けた国々で、原子力エネルギーはどのように見られていますか。これらの事件が日本の世論にどのような影響を及ぼしているのでしょうか。

確かに 2011 年の福島第一原発事故以降、原子力に対する認識は変化しましたが、今日の日本の原子力の状況はどうでしょうか。

これを理解するために私は岡山大学の 3 人の学生にインタビューしました。

INTRODUCTION

Japan is known for being the country that was hit by the two atomic bombs during the events of the Second World War on the 6th of August 1945 and then three days later, with more than 150,000 direct victims, almost exclusively civilians.

Survivors and rescuers became the core of post-war Japanese pacifism and since then the Japanese country has become a champion of the abolition of nuclear weapons around the world.

But another event related to nuclear power, even if not nuclear weapons, has further shaken the public opinion about this kind of energy: on the 11th of March 2011 a nuclear accident took place in the nuclear power plant located in Fukushima, triggered by the Tōhoku earthquake and the tsunami that followed it. It was the most serious nuclear accident after that of Chernobyl's on the 26th of April 1986, and with this the most serious of all. That event showed that a plant that may pass inspections and seem safe can still get damaged and destroyed by uncontrollable events such as earthquakes or tsunamis.

However, it is clear that despite the tragic events related to this kind of power Japan still relies on this kind of electricity, working out politically the balance between the citizens' sentiment and the government's one. In fact, Japan as a highly developed civilian nuclear power program, the third largest in the world after those of the United States and France.

So what is the relationship that Japanese people have towards nuclear power? For this research project I thought it would have been interesting to deepen the perception and opinion of young people in terms of nuclear power and how they think the population's opinion changed after the events of Fukushima.

LITERATURE REVIEW

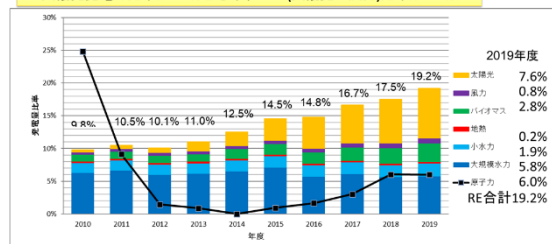
To begin my research I asked myself what the history of nuclear energy's use in Japan is. To understand so, I looked for some data on the topic.

First of all Japan needs to import about 90% of its energy requirements. The first commercial nuclear power reactor began operating in 1966, and nuclear energy has been a national priority since 1973, which of course was put in discussion after the events of Fukushima. Before that Japan was generating a 30% of electricity from its reactors, a plan that now is for at least 20% by 2030.

In the graph below, taken from the Isep's website (the Institute for Japanese energy policies) and updated until 2019, it is possible to see the change in the relationship between renewable energy and annual energy production of nuclear power plants in Japan.

日本国内の自然エネルギーと原発の年間発電量の割合の推移

- 2018年度の自然エネルギーの比率は約19%
- 太陽光発電の比率が7.6%となり、VRE(太陽光+風力)比率が8.4%に



Among the renewable energies taken into consideration, the most important are certainly the solar one (yellow), the hydroelectric ones (blue and light blue) and biomass (green) too. The black line represents nuclear energy, and as it clear to see if in 2010 the nuclear power was in a ratio percentage of 25% compared to renewable energy, after 2011 and the events of Fukushima its use dropped dramatically, even zeroing in 2014. However, it has experienced a gradual recovery over time which has settled around 2018 and 2019, but that will certainly increase in the years to come, even if it is not known whether it will return to the levels recorded before the Tohoku earthquake.

In fact, talking about the recovery process, in 2015 the first two reactors of Fukushima restarted and 16 reactors are currently in the process of restart approval. Right now 6 nuclear power plants are re-authorized after Fukushima, but 6 of the 10 reactors are down. However, it is a recent news that Shimane Prefecture in western Japan approved a plan to restart a nuclear reactor of the same type as those that suffered meltdowns at the Fukushima Daiichi plant in 2011.

In fact, due to higher and higher temperatures and heat waves, it is increasingly difficult to avoid blackouts. Furthermore, there was concern not only about energy for the winter ahead, but also for Russia's possible gas cut due to the conflict with Ukraine. This is the main reason why at the moment the government considers this type of energy essential in order to face Japan's economic and environmental future.

Given this, I asked myself how Japanese people might perceived the topic, and in particular if they might still consider the nuclear theme to be a taboo, after the events of Fukushima.

First of all I looked for a definition of the term “taboo”. A taboo can be defined as objective or subjective. In the first case, the nuclear taboo holds some characteristics associated with taboos: it is a prohibition, it refers to danger, and it involves expectations of awful or uncertain consequences or sanctions if violated. In the second case, it is strictly personal and is related to people’s emotions and reactions about it. That is the reason why among the questions I addressed to the students there was one about the perception as the nuclear topic as a taboo.

Finally I looked for an accurate illustration of the Tohoku disaster and the effect of Fukushima’s nuclear crisis. In particular, it was interesting to see how public concerns about health effect and nuclear energy dramatically increased after this tragic event and a lot of public support was starting to be shown towards renewable energy, with a lot of anti-nuclear activism being raised by citizens.

METHODOLOGY

As for my methodology, I first thought about creating an online survey. Initially I wanted to expand my research not only in the Okayama area but also in the areas of Hiroshima, Nagasaki and Fukushima, in order to be able to compare the answers based on the different areas and different experiences. In fact I hoped to be able to get a lot of different information both from two cities that were directly hit by atomic bombs, from a city that was hit by nuclear energy instead and finally from a city that did not touch these issues first hand.

Unfortunately, however, it was difficult to get in touch with those cities’ universities, and only one person Hiroshima University answered my survey. Even though I received some more answers from the university of Okayama, the material was not enough to make a comparison, so I decided to change my methodology.

Taking a cue from the questions used in the questionnaire, I then created an interview of 8 questions on the topic of nuclear energy to be submitted to some Okayama students. This way I was hoping to get more elaborate opinions on the subject, and in fact I received some interesting answers.

1. What is you field of study at university?
2. Do you have a general negative, positive or neutral perception of nuclear energy? Why?
3. Do you think people from your city/region are for or against nuclear energy?
4. Do you think that the nuclear topic can be considered as a taboo among people in Japan or not? Why?

5. Do you think that at school the World War II events such as the nuclear weapons against Japan are dealt with in an objective way?
6. Do you think that nuclear energy can be considered a sustainable alternative for the environment or Would you like Japan to abandon nuclear energy to focus on renewable energy only?
7. Do you think nuclear energy plants are relatively safe nowadays in comparison to the past even in such a seismic country as Japan? Why?
8. Do you think people's perception of nuclear energy changed after the Fukushima disaster in 2011? How?

Specifically, I interviewed three college students. The answers have been:

Questions	Student 1 (21 years old)	Student 2 (19 years old)	Student 3 (18 years old)
What is your field of study at university?	Information engineering	Medicine	Mathematics
Do you have a general negative, positive or neutral perception of nuclear energy? Why?	I have a neutral perception. I know nuclear energy is dangerous, but it is important to create enough electricity. This summer Japan won't be able to create enough electricity, so at the moment nuclear energy is important to support the country's economy.	My opinion on nuclear energy is neutral. The reason is that it is dangerous, but it will have to be used in the future for Japan, which has scarce energetic resources.	I think I have a neutral opinion, but I feel like I don't know enough on the topic to make a statement. It is at the same time very useful but very dangerous.
Do you think people from your city/region are for or against nuclear energy?	I think people in my city don't really care about nuclear energy, because we don't have any nuclear power plants in our prefecture. However, my father, who works for electricity company, really cares about it. I think that the importance people give on the topic really changes based on the area they live in or the kind of work they do.	Nuclear power is not used in my area, so I don't think I have much knowledge about it, rather than pros and cons. I can say I have a neutral opinion.	Sincerely I don't know.
Do you think that the nuclear topic can be considered as a taboo among people in Japan or not? Why?	I don't think the nuclear topic can be considered a taboo in Japan. We sometimes talk about the topic in university classes, for example.	I personally think the nuclear one tends to be a taboo topic. I think it's because it leads to the memory of the Second World War and the disaster on Fukushima of 3/11, so people usually prefer not to talk about it.	I think it's not a taboo topic in Japan. It's a very important topic so people talk about it.
Do you think that at school the World War II events such as the nuclear weapons against Japan are dealt with in an objective way?	I think it sometimes can be subjective, mainly because Japan was the first country in the world to be bombed by nuclear weapons. However even	I think at school such events are taught in a neutral and objective way. It's important to teach history with the entire	At school those topics are always dealt with in an objective way. It is necessary to teach the correct thing.

way?	if sometimes the perception of events can of course be subjective at school and at university it is important to teach the objective way, with pros and cons of every country.	truth.	
Do you think that nuclear energy can be considered a sustainable alternative for the environment or Would you like Japan to abandon nuclear energy to focus on renewable energy only?	Yes, I think nuclear energy can be considered a sustainable alternative. I don't think I would like Japan to abandon it, even though it's important to develop renewable energy as well.	I don't think it is sustainable. I think we should put nuclear power on hold and develop renewable energy, as well as means for treating waste generated by nuclear power.	Even if it brings some risks and waste that needs to be disposed I think nuclear energy can be sustainable for the ambient. I don't think it's necessary for Japan to abandon it, even if obviously relying more on renewable energies would be better.
Do you think nuclear energy plants are relatively safe nowadays in comparison to the past even in such a seismic country as Japan? Why?	No I don't think it's safer. Nowadays big earthquakes happen more frequently than in past. Japan is a very seismic country, I still consider nuclear plants to be very dangerous.	I don't know if the lessons of 3/11 have been well thought out about seismic structures and tsunami countermeasures, so I can't say that nuclear plants are safe. Also Japan is very seismic and tsunami can still happen.	I think nowadays nuclear plants are safer than in the past, because the safety rules have certainly been revised and improved.
Do you think people's perception of nuclear energy changed after the Fukushima disaster in 2011? How?	Yes. There have been so many victims and disasters related to the radiations, so people started to take the problem more seriously after that event.	I think the perception of people about nuclear energy has changed after Fukushima. It turned out that nuclear power brings acid rain, radiations, which reminds people of how dangerous the plants can be.	Surely. There have been many victims and many people still suffer from radiation today. the perception and use of nuclear power changed after the disaster.

ANALYSIS

As mentioned before, I had to reduce the number of people to ask my questions to, but I tried to get the most personal answers possible. The views of these three students will then be considered as representative of this Okayama age group, although obviously these responses are personal and may not reflect the majority of opinions. I found it interesting that in some cases all three opinions were the same and in others markedly different. I would not have expected to find such a variety of opinions, which was unexpected and inspiring.

First of all, the opinion of young people on nuclear energy is generally neutral. It seems that in general both the risks associated with it and the possible environmental damage in case of accidents and radioactive waste are perceived, but on the other hand people are aware of the fact Japan needs this type of energy as well, in particular to cope with the energy shortage.

Both those who consider this energy as sustainable and those who don't agree on the importance of

renewable energies' development. It can be said that using nuclear power to make up for energy shortages but then gradually put it aside to use only sources coming from nature is considered a good option for the future.

Secondly, the nuclear power's one does not generally seem to be a taboo topic in Japan. It is dealt frequently and objectively at school and people talk about it. Despite this, it is still considered a complex subject and is not very well known in detail by young people. As one of the three students rightly said, the importance people give on this topic – as on many others – tends to change based on the area they live in or the kind of work they do. I think the same can be said for many other topics and for many other countries around the world: when dealing with such complex and broad issues it is difficult to have a precise opinion.

On the other hand, as I expected before doing the interviews, it is certain that the 2011 Fukushima event was a watershed that profoundly changed people's opinion and views on nuclear power. Even if studies and improvements on nuclear plants have certainly been made, it is widely believed that they continue to constitute a non-ignorable danger, especially in a country like Japan where earthquakes, tsunamis and typhoons can put them at serious risk.

CONCLUSION

The goal of my research was to find out how university students in Japan perceived the nuclear theme. I chose this topic because I think it would have been interesting to talk about nuclear power in a country like Japan, which I perceived as divided between the still open wounds due to the events of Fukushima and the need of using this type of energy to face the country's energy future on the other side.

The process of elaborating this research project has not been easy due to the difficulty of sticking to my original plan, which was initially a comparison between several cities such as Hiroshima, Nagasaki and Fukushima. Unfortunately, however, it was a project that was too large to carry out in a short time and with few resources, but I am still very satisfied because I've been able to outline a series of interviews and focus my research on Okayama, the city where I am currently living and studying.

I was surprised by the variety of opinions I received from the three students I interviewed, and the answers were not always what I expected. For this reason I found this research experience very useful and stimulating.

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Perception of Virtual Experiences in Japan

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要旨：この研究は、仮想現実と拡張現実について日本人の体験と意見に関するものである。これらのトピックは年々関連性が高まっており、近い将来に多くの成長が見込まれるため、非常に重要なトピックとなっています。

日本では、ボーカロイドやキズナアイのようなバーチャルストリーマーなど、様々なバーチャルメディアがすでに長い間存在していたため、数年後にこのようなものがどのように受け入れられるかを見るには良い場所だと思います。

このため、多くの日本人がさまざまなバーチャルメディアについて知っており、概して関心を持っているという調査結果があります。また、多くの人がすでにバーチャルメディアにお金を使っているか、将来的にそうするつもりであることがわかりました。

Introduction

This research project aims to analyse how virtual medias like virtual artists, virtual streamers or other virtual content like Vocaloid etc. are perceived by people living in Japan and if they are really as popular as they appear. For this a survey has been conducted which had a focus on the entertainment industry as this is which most people might have experience with. Two very famous examples would be Kizuna AI which worked with the Japanese National Tourism Organisation [1] as well as Hatsune Miku, a character of the voice synthesizer Vocaloid, who appeared twice in the official trailer for the 2020 olympics[2].

I think that virtual medias and all technologies around it can and will play a big role of how our lifestyle will change in the near future. There are a lot of ways to use these technologies to improve our life quality, to make the world more accessible for everyone and to make interaction with people around the world much more natural. Also, it opens doors for creativity in way that weren't possible every before.

What are virtual experiences

Virtual basically means that a something is brought into existence by the use of computer software. In this research and in the context of Japan the virtual experiences that currently exist can probably grouped in three different groups:

1. Virtual experiences which appear in the real world. This would for example be concerts in real concerts halls performed by artists who are either completely virtual, meaning the voice, the appearance of the person and everything is generated by the computer. Alternatively, there could also be real singers who chose to represent themselves with virtual avatars instead of performing on the stage themselves.
2. Virtual experiences on the computer, for example live streams or similar where you simply consume the content created by other people
3. Virtual experiences in virtual worlds, experiencing and actively participating, moving around and interacting with people in virtual worlds probably also using VR-Headsets. This is currently the most immersive way to have virtual experiences but due to cost of the hardware necessary to run all the software necessary for this not many people have been able to experience this yet

Background

With the rise of everything regarding virtual reality in the last two years, especially since the start of the pandemic and the switch from Facebook to becoming Meta, trying to create the Metaverse providing not only the platform but also the whole software and hardware solution around it, virtual reality has become a topic one should not avoid. It is necessary to gather information on how successful it can be and how attractive it is to potential customers. The current market value of virtual and augmented reality is about USD 30 billion but Bloomberg actually reported an expected grow of more than 40% per year of the virtual and augmented reality market, reaching a total value of about USD 450 billion by the year 2030.[3]



Spending some time online and consuming or creating some media around the topic of virtual reality sooner than later one will come across Japanese media or content solutions coming from there. May it be useable content like 2D or 3D avatars or affordable software solutions, they can often be found being made by Japanese creators or on Japanese websites like BOOTH which is one very popular source for these.

But Japan has been creating a lot of content related to virtual reality for a long time. A famous example would be Vocaloid a voice synthesizer technology which was created by the Yamaha Corporation to be used in musical context. It was first released in 2004 and has since then released 4 new updates and a lot of extensions.

Another more recent example would be Live2D's Cubism which is a software used to create 2d avatars which can be animated and linked to real humans' movements. This software is the base for the so-called V-tuber which are live streamers who use mainly 2D, sometimes 3D avatars instead of showing themselves on stream.

Given that these and many other technologies and events regarding virtual reality already exist in Japan in form of concerts of virtual characters on real stages (Vocaloid or V-tuber concerts) or art fairs which are completely in virtual worlds (NEOKET) it would be a good opportunity to find out here how people perceive these events and how they feel about them.

Method

To gather information about how people in Japan think about virtual experiences, a questionnaire with 24 questions has been prepared. The questions covered basic information like age, general knowledge of virtual media as well as more detailed questions about personal spendings on such. There also have been questions comparing the virtual alternatives to the real options, like concerts of real bands comparing to concerts in virtual reality or concerts by virtual artists. This is an attempt to try to find out if virtual alternatives to real events are wanted and how they are valued compared to the real thing. In order to not scare people away with the length of the questionnaire most questions were fast to answer with multiple choice options so that most people could finish it in about 5 minutes.

In the end as the last question people were asked to write down their general feelings about virtual medias without any limitations. This is important as multiple-choice questions only can give you so much choice and that way limit the information that can be expressed. While the multiple-choice questions are good to compare different opinions or experiences the open question allows more detail of expression.

Questionnaire results

A total of 15 people have responded to the questionnaire over the course of one week. The demographic of respondents consists of mainly university students with the age ranging from 18 to 27 years.

The first few questions aimed to get a general idea how many people know about virtual media, how many actually consume or how many even create it.



Yes / No

As can be seen in the graphs above with 93,3% most people know about the existence of virtual medias and with 40% a lot of them also actively consume those medias. 13,3% even are creating their own virtual media content. This number is quite high, it shows how accessible virtual medias are to people in Japan.

Concerning virtual reality, while only 6,7% own their own virtual reality hardware, 80% already have tried it or would like to try it if they were given the opportunity to try it. Only 6,7% also spend money attending virtual events but 26,7% actually spend money on merchandise of virtual content creators or virtual artists.

The next part of the survey is comparing real events with virtual alternatives and how they are valued by the participants. Since the majority of concerts which are performed by virtual artists are accessible in the form of online live streams one important question was how many people are willing to buy tickets for the live streams of regular artists and how many are willing to buy tickets for the live streams of virtual artists. With 86,6% most people are willing to consume concerts in form of live streams and with 73,3% the number of people who want to see live streams of virtual artists is not much lower.

When asked if the live stream of the virtual artists should be priced at a lower or at a similar or even higher price the responses were nearly even with about the half of them saying the price of the virtual artists live stream should be cheaper and the other group saying that the price should be the same or even higher.

The question if people would like to experience concerts in virtual spaces, in virtual reality once again split the participants nearly even. 60% thought concerts in virtual spaces should be cheaper than concerts at real locations.

Looking at the topic of conventions or industry fairs people seem to be very open to with 86,7% willing to attend them in virtual reality and 73,3% being willing to pay the same or a higher amount than for the equivalent in the real world.

The last multiple-choice question was regarding the importance of the music and the appearance of the artists performing at that concerts. With 86,7% participants found it to be important or very important for both of the questions.

Lastly the free form question about the thoughts on virtual media. A lot of people left only short remarks consisting of only a few words, saying that they think virtual media create a good culture, that it is generally good or that it sounds fun.

Some people pointed out that they were lacking experience about how virtual reality really feels like so that they weren't sure if they can properly judge the good or bad things about virtual media and were not about to point out any good or bad about it because of that.

Many people also pointed out opportunities virtual media can create outside of just being a new form of entertainment. One person for example pointed out that, living on the countryside it is hard to impossible to go to concerts or other events so if VR would have been more popular they would have had more chances to actually attend such events. Because of that they wish that VR will be more widespread in the future.

Another person made a point that virtual reality can be a great opportunity for some people with disabilities making events more accessible or making activities that are not possible otherwise possible in the first place.

One person thinks that real performances in virtual spaces and virtual artists performing in real spaces are already so common that it is hard to separate them in the first place. This is an interesting observation which I wouldn't have expected at all.

Discussion

Looking at the numbers from before it can be observed that while not many people have had too much experiences with virtual media a lot of people see it as a good alternative for the real counterparts. In many cases people estimate the value of the virtual experience similar to the real experiences.

It is noticeable that the value of concerts is more bound to the location than if it is a real or a virtual artist. With nearly 70% thinking that a live stream of a concert of a real artist should be cheaper than visiting the concert in person and only 40% thinking that a concert of a virtual artist at a real venue should be cheaper than the concert of a real artist at a real venue.

The main value of virtual media seems to be just like in most parts of the entertainment industry nowadays not in the actual content they provide but in the merch around it that fans buy to support the artists they like. While less than 7% paid to consume or attend virtual media content more than 25% actually spent money on buying merchandise.

Very interesting but not really surprising is also the focus on the appearance of artists performing at concerts. Virtual avatars might give musicians who are not conventionally attractive a way to attract big audiences by not appearing as themselves. While from a social standpoint that might not be exactly good from a business standpoint as well as a musical standpoint this would allow talented artists who otherwise wouldn't be able to compete in this business to participate and contribute more to the music world.

The fact that over 60% of the participants thought that virtual events are as or even more interesting than real events shows that there is a big audience who actively wants to see virtual events. Considering that most events nowadays are still hold by real people in real places, this shows that there is a huge potential for the market to grow.

Especially for conventions and industry fairs virtual alternatives seem to be perfect with many people being seeing it as valuable as the real one.



Conclusion

A lot of people know about virtual experiences and are consuming virtual content as well as creating it. While not a lot of people experienced virtual reality, they are open to it and want to try it. Especially the free form comments showed that people are really interested in the topic of virtual experiences and look forward to its further development in the near future.

While some people see virtual alternatives not really as alternative for real events there has not really been any big critic against virtual experiences. With many opportunities and unknown what exactly is to come many seem to only perceive virtuality as a positive thing.

Overall virtual medias seem to be even more popular than I expected, with more time it would have been good to conduct a second questionnaire with a control group of people who live in different countries than Japan to see if the acceptance for virtual experiences is globally as good or if it really is connected to Japans long exposure to virtual content. This could be part of further research in the future.

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Influence of Japan's soft power

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A country's ability to attract other nations through positive means rather than coercion is very important to international relations. This theory is known as a country's soft power. Soft power influences how one views a nation and interacts with its citizens. It is a relative topic for Japanese students who want to study a broad and international student currently studying in Japan. As, one way or another through media and other means, the positive image of Japan advertised has led us here. To find out if the average Okada Student knew of the influence soft power plays in our lives, several interviews with both Japanese and International students were conducted. The questions varied from; do you know what soft power? Do you think nations should utilize soft power more than hard power? Many may not know the theory by its name but are aware outside sources such as media and interacting in cultural and language exchanges can affect our perceptions of others. Soft power unlike hard power is not direct, meaning many are not aware they are being influenced, therefore must be more conscious and question why we may view a certain nation or group of people in either a positive or negative light.

The ability to use positive attraction and persuasion to achieve foreign policy objectives. Through means of building networks, communicating compelling narratives, establishing international rules, and drawing on the resources (Arnaud,2009). To achieve influence and make a country naturally attractive to the world. This is a loose definition of soft power. Although it is a common theory used in discussion of politics, mainly international relations. Soft power is an important concept to acknowledge, as it can affect how we persevere and interact with others around us. In contrast to hard power, which is a form of coercion by using force, the threat of force, economic sanctions, or inducements of payment. Soft power is a more passive approach which influences reaction through indirect persuasion rather than military force. Soft power is a very common political strategy used by nations across the world (Arnaud,2009). Countries across the globe use soft power to some degree, either on a micro or macro level to alter a positive perception of their nation. This can also be used to foster the promotion of certain beliefs or values. The most common form of soft power the average person will notice is how countries influence pop culture. For example, the British invasion in the 1960's with groups like the Beatles. Soft power can also be used to alter a country's international image. Which Japan did after World War II. This fuelled the emergence of Japan's technological boom and Kawaii



culture (Sato, 2009). Today Japanese media, culture and food is consumed and admired across the world.

Soft power can be used to charm other countries into viewing them in a more favourable light or voluntarily following their preferences. Although soft power sometimes is not as effective as it appears. Even with all of Japan's pop-cultural exports, it cannot get rid of its history (Sato, 2009). As Japan has a length history of counited conflicts and colonization of with other nations in Asia. The soft power cannot diminish the hurt, anger and resentment countries have towards Japan. In relation to Japanese politics today, many Japanese politicians are struggling having to maintain the title of a global superpower due to the constraints of article 9 (Arnaud,2009). Leading for a push for developing more hard power. While many think the best course of action would be to develop the nation's soft power. Although relying on soft power and not hard power could be a burden for the nation. As cultural exports are considered soft power, how effective can they be in altering a country's mentality and perspective of Japan, especially if they have a negative history Japan.

Soft power is an important topic as it is an indirect method used to persuade one's views. It affects people on both a micro and macro level. Soft power is the most commonly in the form of cultural exports. For example, Sushi and anime. Domestically soft power could be the encouragement or reinforcement of traditions art, food, and culture. Learning about the different influences and methods is relevant as exchange programs, especially for teaching English in Japan are a common tool of soft power (Fukushima, 2006).

By being able to increase the number of English-speaking Japanese and more Japanese speakers it will be easier to integrate and influence more people through the Japanese government's soft power. It is also important to note that soft power is not necessary evil. It is another political theory that all nations utilize for foreign affairs. Some countries utilize the international image to their advantage while others neglect their soft power and focus on physical power. Which Japan cannot be due to article 9, which is places more emphasis of why Japan's soft power is so string and important (Gauder, 2017).

This is an especially relevant topic for EPOK and other international students, were most the students were likely influence by Japan's pop culture and its international image of being a culturally rich nation. To make the decision to conduct their exchange in Japan. This research project will be exploring how soft power is applied both domestically and internationally. As well as looking at different methods with soft power is deployed. As well as the use of exchange or language study programs for cultural and language exchanges. All international students were influenced by Japan's soft power in some way, to make the decision to come to Japan for their exchange. Soft power could come from the amines, art, music, or media one consumes, which paints and interesting and exciting picture of the nation. From its



delicious foods or its rich history. All these factors helped to contribute to one's positive perception of the nation and ultimately aided in the decision to visit. In regards to language exchanges, it is very popular for English speakers to become an English teacher in Japan. The opportunity allows for Japanese students to learn the language of international business and aid in international diplomacy to further spread Japan's soft power (Fukushima, 2006). The same could be said for people moving to Japan to learn Japanese. As once you become familiar with the language it becomes easier to understand the cultural values and views.

Overall Soft power is not an inherently dangerous tool, it depends on how it is used. Is it used to cover serious crimes the government committed or continues to commit? Is it used to try attracting more tourists and from more and stronger better international relations. Soft power is common on both an international and domestic level. It allows us to find the common image of a place and determines the initial impression many will have based off stereotypes and over generalizations, wither its positive or not. Many of us may be aware of the soft power of Japan and our own nations but may not be conscious on how it may affect how one may interact or our perceptions others from different nations. Even amongst the international students when learning each other's nationality, they have an image or stereotype of how said person may carry themselves. The notion of soft power is common in many western sociology and politic classes, but it seems to not be the cause in Japan. As Japan was ranked at number 4 in the 2022 Global soft power index (Kawasaki,2022). It was surprising how unfamiliar many were with the topic. As soft power is the countries number one source of international influences it may not be an open topic to maintain some secrecy as its one of the nation's largest exports.

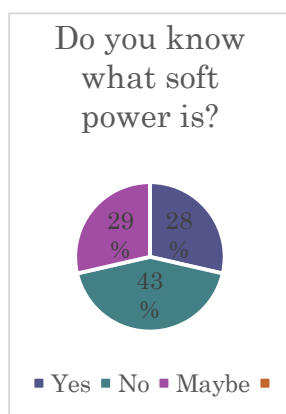
The research project revolves around the main ideas of wither Okadai students, both Japanese and international students know about and understand the theory of soft power. As well as relevant methods of how soft power is practiced, such as language exchanges. How soft power may unconsciously affect how one interacts with students from other nations. How one views soft power, positive or negative in contrast to hard power. Finally, how students feel about soft power in relation to article 9. To conduct the research, firstly, there was a lot of reviewing academic articles on the matters of soft power in Japan. The articles highlighted the use of language exchanges and more common examples of such as manga and anime were provided. The development of Japan's soft power was also included in the readings, such as how the nations image was reshaped after World War II. As well as Article 9 contributing to the use of soft power as a new means to maintain the image of a power nation. As the topic can be very complex and requires detailed answers, the best method to conduct such an in-depth topic was by conducting small interviews with Okadai students.

The interviews consisted of 15 questions ranges from their age and major to how do they think soft power has affected their interactions with people from other nations? The



interviews allowed for more in-depth answers on why they believe their answers are correct. It also gave the ability to ask further questions or reword them if they did not understand what was being asked. Almost all the students interviewed were female. All the students were in their early twenties and majority were Japanese nursing students completing their internships at a local hospital. There was also a couple law and politics students who were interviewed. The hypothesis for the results based on the group interviewed was that the majority, the nursing students would not know of the theory and therefore not be able to answer majority of the question. On the other hand, the law students would know of the theory but may not be too familiar with its impact, both domestical and internationally.

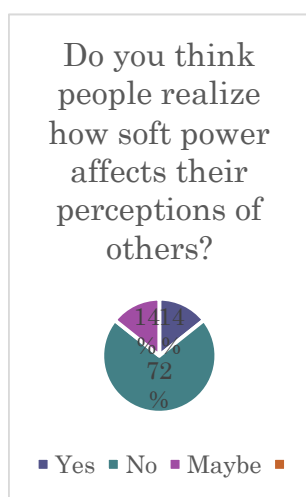
As there was 15 questioned asked, only what is deemed to be the most relevant to the influence and acknowledgment of Japan's soft power will be further examined. The answers were categorized into major groups then graphed to easily display the data. Answers from the interviews will be quoted and further analyzed to understand why the students answered the way they did. Firstly, the participants were asked to state their age and major, to understand the average demographic that was taken apart in the interviews. As previously stated, the participants were majority Japanese, female nursing students in their early twenties. Next, they were asked questions such as, if they know what soft power is, and if they did know, could they provide examples? As well as "how would they define soft power?". As seen in the following graph, majority of the participants ,43%, said no. while 29% said yes and 28% said maybe or they were unsure. This was the expected out come due to the fact most of the participants studied nurturing and were more likely to be unfamiliar with the theory. Also as expected the law students were familiar with the theory of soft power.



Both the nursing and Law students were able to provide their own definitions which were very familiar to the one provided. One student stated, "The power of a nation to gain the trust and influence of the international community by gaining understanding, sympathy, and support for its culture and values, independent of military or economic power, etc." Another student defined soft power as "not relying on the military or economic power but making people from other countries feel attracted to your country's culture, history and other aspects of your country and then making them your friends". The following definitions they provided focused on the ability to gain a positive affiliation through an international's audience rather than the use of military strength. They highlighted the key difference between soft and hard power which is the ability to attract and persuade rather than to use coercion.

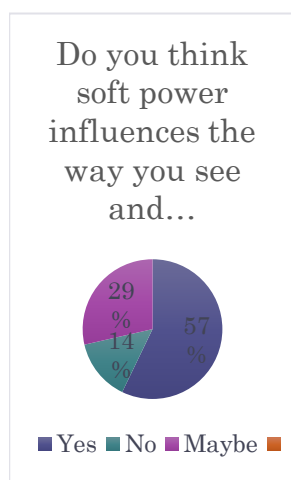


The participants were also able to provide examples of soft power to further their understanding of the theory. They were asked for both Japanese and international examples. For the Japanese example many stated anime or manga. For an international example majority stated K-pop. One answer that was surprising was “The expansion of Corona has led to the spread of Asian hate (tarnishing China’s image) in Europe and the U.S.” I did not expect a student to give an example of an example of the negative affects soft power can have on a group of people and nation.



Secondly, the question of, “do you think soft power influences the way you see and interact with people from other countries?”, Will be examined. As the chart shows Majority said yes (57%), while 29% said maybe and 14% said no. After discussing what soft power is by getting the interviewed to create their own definitions and provide examples, this may have led to a better understanding of the topic and lead them to become more aware of the indirect influence soft power has. Some agreed that soft power may create or contribute to the stereotypes of people from certain nations but overall, it does not. While others reported yes it dose just not in a direct way, but soft power involves altering a countries international image, therefore also

the perception of its citizens. One person stated, “I guess whether a person tends to view a country positively or negatively depends on the soft power influence. I think it will have a greater impact, especially for those who have less of a connection to the country”. Another student had a similar answer and stated, “Yes. Soft power is not a direct power. However, it can certainly influence diplomacy indirectly. There are probably countries in the world where Japan is not well known. It is tough for people in those countries to know exactly what kind of people the Japanese are and how Japan has contributed to the world. It is important to get the people of those countries interested in Japan and aware of Japan, which will contribute to the level of hard power influence”. This also brings attention to the point of the affect soft and hard power have on each other. With Japan’s friendly and kind international image countries are going to be less likely to use their hard power on Japan.



The third question is like the second. It asks, “do you think people realize how soft power affects their perceptions of other?” Unsurprisingly the results displayed on the graph correlate with the ones from the graph for the second question. The majority at 72% stated no, people were not aware, while yes and maybe are at 14% each. As 57% stated that soft power dose affect how one interacts with people from other countries it makes sense that majority would also agree that most people are influenced and do not realize it. As many said before, soft power is not direct but could subconsciously affect one’s perception or bias towards others. Most had similar answers to the last

question as one stated, “With how often soft power is used, I don’t think that most people realize how it can affect how you perceive someone”. Another answered, “I do not think so. Soft power is not easy to verify. The validity of a non-visible theory can only be ascertained by its "ineffectiveness" in the face of contrary results”. Which brings to light a very valid question on how one can determine what is being utilized as soft power and how can its actuary be calculated. As it’s hard to dictate what is one’s own personal bias and what has been influenced by soft power. Mostly they both overlap to confirm a pre-existing bias.

Next, “do you think language exchange programs, especially those for foreigners to teach English in Japan, are a soft power tool?”. Majority also reported yes at 57% while 29% said no and 24% were unsure or said maybe. It was expected after the discussions and pervious answers. As the majority also stated that yes soft power dose influence how we interact with other, and most are not aware of the influence soft power has on us. One participant stated, “Lessons that merely teach English grammar and speaking skills are not sufficient soft power tools. Programs that enable students to deepen their understanding of each other's countries and lifestyles through speaking practice can be considered soft power tools”. With brings up a key point of how properly developed are language programmes. In the case where the content is poor then it would not aid in furthering the spread of soft power. Another pointed out how it is an exchange of soft power from both sides, “Language exchange programs are a soft power tool because they can be used to slowly immerse foreigners into the respective country. it also allows for the respective country to advance certain policies”. This was a great observation as languages exchange, specifical teaching English in Japan provides both the foreigners and Japanese the opportunity to learn each other’s languages but also each other cultures. As once on can order another countries language it makes it easier to be intergraded in their society and understand their culture and values. Which makes soft power more powerful if you understand the history, culture, and language.



The final questions being asked were, “Should countries focus on soft power or hard power?”. In regards to Japan’s article 9, should the nation continue to utilize soft power? As these are more in-depth questions, with various expiations there will be no graph provided. All the percipients answered that soft power is a useful tool that countries should focus on, in favour of hard power. Similarly, Japan should respect article 9 and continue in developing its soft power. They all indirectly agreed with each other that taking the less confrontational route was best. Nations should aim in creating peace on an international stage instead of using hard power to intimidate other nations. Partly due to the fact it would hinder Japan’s international image, “To gain international influence, soft power seems like the best way to go about it. A good majority of the time, hard force most often leads to stricter policies as well as less influence in the global sense”. In regards to article 9 one person stated, “Japan should respect Article 9 of the Constitution as it has in the past. I think it is better to focus on "aid" such as humanitarian aid, rather than "combat" in the phase of activating defensive forces. It is an international contribution and contributes to soft power”. Lastly, there was two unique perspectives on the question. The first was, “It seems to me that countries with strong hard power do not necessarily coincide with countries with strong soft power. (For example, Korea has very strong soft power in the cultural field but does not have a strong international assertiveness.)” The second observation being, “I think that relatively small countries should focus on soft power, while large countries such as the U.S. and China should focus on hard power much more”. These two comments highlight comments common in North America. Where stronger, global superpower nations need to invest in a strong military to defend their lands, while developing nations should on creating a democratic and sound economic foundation. Nations who have strength in soft power do tend to focus on maintaining the image they developed but America is a nation always in the top 10 soft power nation and has the most powerful military.

In conclusion, soft power, which is the theory that contracts that of the coercion style of hard power, in favour of gaining the ability to use positive attraction and persuasion to achieve foreign policy objectives. Through means of building networks, communicating compelling narratives, establishing international rules, and drawing on the resources (Arnaud,2009). The research was conducted reviewing academic articles related to the topic and Interviews conducted with both Japanese and international students, were used to find more information of the influence of soft power in Japan. Soft power may not be commonly known by its name, but most are aware of Japanese and international examples. Soft power unlike hard power is not direct, meaning many are not aware they are being influenced. Soft power can affect how we view and interact with people with other nations. Language exchanges provide great opportunities to spread the nations soft power, as learning a new language opens the person up to the ability to better understand the correlating culture and values (Fukushima, 2006).



Therefore, it makes it easier to be influenced by the nations soft power. This was the common conscious based on the interviews conducted. The aim of the research was to get students to reflect on why we express a strong desire to travel and understand and interest to understand certain nations. What was the motivation, this is especially relevant for internationals students or Japanese student who want to study another language like English or want to go abroad. Even subconsciously soft power may be used to paint a new image of a nation or confirm a stereotype especially when interacting with people and cultures from other nations.

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SHINSENGUMI:

Where is the Shinsengumi image from, and what is that image?

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要旨

新撰組は、京都を攘夷志士から守り、幕府に仕える警察のような組織であった若者たちのことである。このエッセイでは、彼らが普通のサムライから、日本人の中で人気者やヒーローになるという歴史的なメディア作品のモデルにどのようにしてなったのかを探る。フィクションと現実の違い、そして実在の人物から伝説に出てくるようなキャラクターを作り出すという現象が、メディアを通してどのように行われているのかを見ていく。このエッセイでいうメディアとは、小説、映画、マンガ、アニメのことである。

Introduction

This essay is a look and explanation of the influences, consequences, and methods of extensive and pervasive romanticisation of heroism. Through the lens of heroism's cultivation through various kinds of media, entertainment, and popular culture. The specific phenomenon of how this kind of mythology and character begins will be explored from the historically recent and very documented rise of the Shinsengumi group in the minds of the Japanese people (Lertsattha 2018). How they went from a normally feared to hated policing group to examples of heroes of loyalty, service, and swordsmanship in popular culture. With the ultimate questions of this essay being “What causes these phenomena?”, “how effective is the changing of public opinions through fiction?”, “what is the pop culture image and cause of said image in the Shinsengumi?”. As to who the Shisengumi are Yamamura, Seaton (2022) summarises them as a “corps of samurai loyal to the Tokugawa shogunate that was active from 1863 until the final defeat of shogunate forces at the Battle of Hakodate in May 1869. (Yamamura, Seaton 2022)

Moreover, I would like to preface this essay by saying the personal motivations for such research, apart from being a general fan of history and interested in popular culture, would be that I sincerely believe that it is quite a broad topic that has yet to have had



sufficient research for. Which will be elaborated upon in the next section. Additionally, I was curious about the teaching and ideas of the Shinsengumi in the minds of the people and its pop culture influences. Through this research we can see the patterns of this phenomenon of legends being fostered posthumously, which will help to show the power of media and its influence on the minds of people of all cultures. This effect can be used purposely, such as the changing of the meaning of bushido in the Japan of World War two to create an ideal soldier who would die for the emperor as the valiant “samurai” would have done, the idea of dying as a loyal Japanese was fostered through the use of legend. (Lertsattha 2018) This will be elaborated on further through the Shinsengumi, but we can see romanticising the past figures into a state of heroism can have political, culture and not so well-intentioned cases of cultivating imagery of heroism in war. Such as Americans after World War 2 and the British empire of the seventeen to nineteen hundreds.

Preliminary analysis and discussion

As for the preliminary analysis of the research already done into the topic, I believe that the best resources for me so far have been the wonderful research conducted by Rosa Lee in her article “romanticizing the Shinsengumi in contemporary Japan”. This research helps to focus on the same topic I have chosen and also goes into detailed processes as it helps to show how to go about conducting the research and as to how the media has influenced and romanticized the Shinsengumi. In general, there are a few pieces of literature about the Shinsengumi and the current thoughts about it by Japanese people. However, finding any works that reference why and where these ideas and opinions may have come from, was rare. Alongside this research I found an article of “BUSHIDO IN JAPANESE AND INTERNATIONAL POPULAR CULTURE” in which the author Chalita Lertsattha talks about various differentiating topic pertaining to bushido but also makes reference to how the Shinsengumi have also influenced that idea of bushido in their own way. With one of her main ideas being the use of media to change the idea of the Shinsengumi and samurai bushido from post war Japanese “ultra-nationalism by shifting its image from a militaristic point of view towards a new impression through entertainment” (Lertsattha 2018). with this point of view aligning with my research I thought it would be good to add this essay into the mix of essays I’m using for this research.

Methodology

In terms of how the research was conducted, I thought a mainly straight to the point closed question and occasional, and optional, open question questionnaire would be the best of both



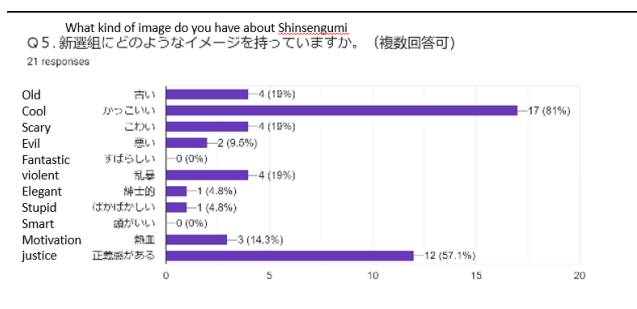
worlds with its quantitative data (closed statistical data) with bonus explanations and feelings from the person taking the questionnaire from the open questions. The questionnaire previously mentioned is a 10 question open and closed question styled process. With this style of method, quantitative and qualitative data available is extremely useful towards this sort of group opinion style popular culture research. The participants, of which there was 23 altogether, were all university students around the age of 18-25. This is an aspect that if I were to do this research again, I would try to find a more diverse age group for the aspects of research. The students were asked what they knew about the Shinsengumi already, what their opinions were and why that was. This information was impeccable in finding some correlations to the patterns of the rise of heroism and as for finding answers to how the Shinsengumi enter the cumulative mind of the people. It was more than useful information for the research to proceed.

Analysis and discussion

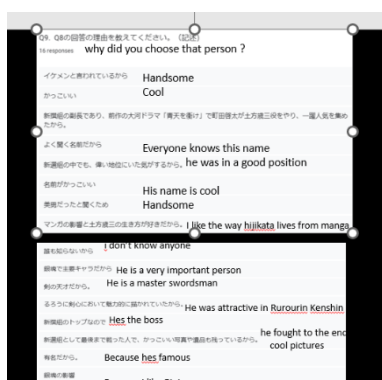
For the main discussion of this topic, I thought it to be best to split the analysis into three distinct ideas or topics. The reason being that this should be more appropriate to elaborate upon the complex intrinsic of, what I believe to be, the major and most important areas of what is needed to know to get a full idea as to how the Shinsengumi has evolved into this mythology. But before elaborating on all of that it is necessary to show the findings of what their image currently is to the young students of Japan.

1. Popular culture and the Shinsengumi's image

so what is the current image of the Shinsengumi? according to the results of my research questionnaire, most people have an positive “cool” image of the Shinsengumi. Which can be seen in this chart of the results as shown below, the reasons given for these opinions is also particularly telling. With people quoting the reasons for their choice of image as to the fact that they are “often in manga”, “everyone has an interesting character” and that “they lost but, in the revolution, they fought and became cool, so the motif of the Shinsengumi is popular in books, anime and manga”. The opinions of “they have an interesting character” and “they fought and became cool” are also most likely influenced by the media that created these images, characters and glorified their actions after the groups disbanding in 1869. The modern Shinsengumi of anime and manga that people may have, consciously or unconsciously, pinned their opinions on the real Shinsengumi from. This contemporary Shinsengumi is one of justice and coolness, with their more mystical master samurai than the more realistic bodyguard police portrayal most likely being the major factor into people placing these opinions on them (lee 2011)



Additional to this data. When asked what they thought of the specific members of the Shinsengumi, the responses they gave were interesting in the context of how their image has been transitioned through media. For example, some students had given the simple responses of “because he is famous”, “because I like Gintama” and “because he was attractive in Rurourin Kenshin”. All of these responses are simple in the fact that the media influence of these real people turned into characters is clearly shown through the answers. However, the more complex responses are just as interesting as shown through the answers shown below.



2. The reality and the fictional influence

Furthermore, in reference to the data, the idea of the fictionalised cool and justice wielding Shinsengumi is only followed in the results by the third-place idea of the “violent” Shinsengumi. A comment that most likely refers to the real historical idea of the group that may have been taught in textbooks, or more grounded media (Lee, 2011). Since, in reality, the Shinsengumi were famous at the time for being masterless ronin who were tyrannical in their policing methods (Yamamura, Seaton 2022). As shown by the apathy shown towards them after the battle of Hako date when 800 of their bodies were left in the open to decompose (Yamamura, Seaton 2022) Should you be caught with suspicion they would be quick to torture you or even



execute you without the proper reasons. This juxtaposition of fiction and reality would be captured most perfectly in the various contemporary media we have seen about the Shinsengumi in recent memory.

To answer our question from the beginning of this essay, “where and why?”, One example of just modern popular culture influencing the ideas of the people (Lee 2011). Would firstly be best portrayed through the post war, samurai boom of 1950’s Japanese cinema revitalising the idea of the samurai as the stoic manly loyal hero who fights for justice and for his ideals until the death. This revitalisation of the samurai leading to the American boom of revitalising the image of the cowboy. Taking inspiration from Kurosawa movies such as “the seven samurai”, the samurai breathed new life in pop culture. From this samurai boom, there came a pseudo Shinsengumi boom in the nineteen sixties and seventies. With dramas on the new widespread mainstreams TVs. And an exploding in popularity manga industry, and with the golden age of Japanese cinema, “jidaigeki” movies (Lertsattha,2018). All of which had begun to use the Shinsengumi as motifs for their stories. Whether as the foreground element. Or just a side motif in an otherwise larger story. But one thing can be certain. The Shinsengumi portrayed, such as that of early media like Yamamura and Seaton said in 2022, was one of loyalty and ragged masters of the blade just like “kamikaze” tourism. With them fighting until the last man in a heroic standoff. Which was an ideal put forth by the militaristic nationalist Japan at the time (Yamamura, Seaton 2022)

These portrayals were most likely inspired by the books, “started in 1928 with the publication of the novel Shinsengumi Shimatsuki by Shimozawa Kan”. (Lee, 2013) and movies that came before them. But I believe this to be one of the biggest and most major influences on the people alive today’s image of the Shinsengumi. With this legendary imagery being fostered with each new piece of media. Until we reach contemporary times. Where the more grounded style of the sixties and seventies is now replaced with a cool image from various popular anime such as Rurourin Kenshin or Gintama. From the slightly grounded we have transitioned into complete fiction, as the motif of the Shinsengumi is used as a sort of archetypal setting, proposing to the viewer that any character within is cool, skilled, and loyal enough to hold their attention. Their transition to “characters” (Lee 2011). To further show the idea of how these idealistic heroes come to fruition we need to look no further than heroism in the west. The knight, and the samurai have much in common in the mainstream conscious, an image that is nearly old as time and is global in its appeal of strong elegant warriors who would do anything for their masters. Whether it be the daimyo or the baron, they would fight to the death for them. An image created through fictional exaggeration in books older than modern English, a clear reference to how the creation of legends and archetypes is done. Whether it be the elegant duke,



the loyal ruthless Shinsengumi, or any other of the global, or culturally specific, mythological people/ groups and the fiction that created them. All of these are completely different to that real people who lived behind the legends and hyperbolic fiction. But to the people creating these stories the real people may not be what they want. As the students said in the data “the characters and motif are attractive”.

To put it in other terms, after death, even those hated in their time can become romanticised through media so much that they can even become legends i.e. king Arthur (Lee 2011). The authors Yamamura, Seaton (2022) puts forward the idea of how they think the Shinsengumi made their transition into heroes in what they call “the broader narrative transformation of shogunate loyalists from ‘traitors’ immediately after the Restoration to ‘heroes’ in the twenty-first century.”

3. Heroism, the west and Japan and the Conclusion

In conclusion, we have looked at the correlation between the use of literature and media as a method of changing people’s image when it comes to the famous people of global and individual cultures history. The media we consume changes our perception of the people who it is based off. When we watch a movie about the Shinsengumi, unconsciously we are absorbing the director’s vision and individual interpretation of the image of the Shinsengumi. This therefore influences our image as to who they are what they had done. For example, one who watches the comedy “Gintama” may see the Shinsengumi as cool yet incompetent buffoons who are master swordsman and the butt of many jokes. Whilst also absorbing their visual identity. The same can be said with manga, games, and any other media. With another example being how when someone watches something like the NHK’s “taiga drama”, they may associate that real life character with the actor who portrays them in the show. As such, Hijikata Toshizou’s image may be transformed into that of their favourite actor. Creating a positive connotation.

Moreover, when talking about the Shinsengumi’s image change, we talked about how it relates to that of the European heroism of knights (Lersattha,2018). In which we had talked about the use of heroism in fiction to create real life people, who could have been neither not particularly good or bad people and hyperbolise them into villains or the good-hearted protagonists. Almost every person of some importance in history, will be transformed by the use of fiction, and even non-fiction, through the use of exaggerative and hyperbolic heroism or villainy. As can be seen even today, within recent history the people of films- such as those autobiographical or historical, will distort the real person under the guise of dramatization and structural integrity (Lee 2013). Such as the film about the real, still alive, Elton john “Rocket man” distort the real-



life events of the man to create a more simplified and easy to digest reaction from the audience. Another, more darker interpretation of this, would be the glorification of the American war effort in saving private Ryan. The use of film to influence pop culture and a generation into thinking that American war efforts are justified and undeniably justified. No matter what they do, it is in the name of freedom. No matter what they did in real life, they fought the good fight. The film's creation of a mythological idealism, an hidden pro war film, helped to create the idea of American centrism. And therefore helped to influence the public's opinion after the disillusion after the disastrous Vietnam war. Leading to another war in Iraq and other such countries.

That is to say. The power fiction and media as a whole holds over our current ideals are a tool that can also be used for no good. (Lee 2011) As a final note, the idea of "American GIs are the heroes" in saving private Ryan. Is the equivalent of use of fiction, and media, to Japan's use of the kamikaze pilots as an ideal and is also an example of the creation of a desirable image of heroism to be used negatively (Yamamura, Seaton 2022). All is the same pattern as that of the Shinsengumi, whether post humourlessly, or contemporary, the fiction and reality (as talked about in that section) are the masters over our perception of this world and its various characters.

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Japanese woodblock printing today

現代美術界に木版画の影響

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ABSTRACT

私の研究プロジェクトの目的は、今日のアートの世界における日本の木版画の実践を調査し、木版画の伝統が現代美術にどのような影響を与えたかを調べることです。国内外の木版画の実践における技術的・実践的知識の維持について探求したいと思います。また、浮世絵の視覚的側面から現代アーティストが描くインスピレーションを理解したいと思います。

Japanese woodblock printing, or *mokuhanga*, is a technique of unclear and ancient origin that can be traced back to the time in which Buddhism was introduced to Japan and new media were experimented with to copy and spread buddhist writings. This technique then became known on a national and international scale during the Edo period (17th-19th century), when the artistic genre of *ukiyo-e* flourished and showed the wide expressive abilities of this medium. The purpose of my research project is to investigate the practice of Japanese woodblock prints in today's art world, in a new wave of interest after its golden age. I would like to explore both the maintenance of the technical and practical knowledge in the practice of *mokuhanga* in Japan and abroad, as well as the inspiration contemporary artists draw from the iconographic and visual aspect of *ukiyo-e*, to understand the scope of the influence of woodblock prints today. To do this I plan to combine the knowledge from previous studies and research and the direct observation of the practice itself, by interviewing artisans, printers and intaglio artists who carry on the *mokuhanga* tradition. By seeing firsthand the maintenance of this ancient art form, I hope to understand why it is so important for artists around the world to keep it alive and how the charm of Japanese woodblock prints still has an impact on the art world today.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODOLOGY

So far the contemporary woodblock print scene has received little attention from the academic world, apart from brief excerpts in books that examine this art movement more broadly in the course of history. In particular, I could not find significant or extensive contributions by Japanese scholars after the 1980s, and the same can be said about scholars abroad. What has been said and what the current research seems to agree about, however, is that



Japanese contemporary art shows a desire to reconcile elements of the modern, globalized age, and elements from Japanese traditions and crafts. As a matter of fact, in the identitarian crisis left by World War II, many Japanese artists resorted to reevaluating traditional forms of folk art, inciting a new interest in pottery and intaglio. In addition to that, European vanguards, which had been influenced by *ukiyo-e* works at their dawn in the 19th century, came to represent a fascinating way for artists to express the chaos of the postwar period, in a mutual exchange of inspiration and imagery. Moreover, it has become evident that international artists and exhibitions have an important role in maintaining this art form. The peculiarity of Japanese xylography lies in the choice of materials (washi paper and water-based ink) as well as the technique, which requires the carving of a wood block for every color included in the print. Because of this, it is interesting to see why contemporary *mokuhanga* has such an international and global character.

I believe that examining the current woodblock print scene can add to the analysis of the relationship between modernity and tradition in Japanese contemporary art, as well as show the flourishing mutual influences between artistic traditions from different continents and cultures.

In order to explore the influence *Mokuhanga* has on the current global art scene, I intend to interact and interview some contemporary artists who show in their work the impact this art form has had in the past centuries. I am also interested in understanding the role tradition and modernity play in the choice these artists made to carry on the *Mokuhanga* technique, and if they think that it presents different expressive abilities when compared to other art forms. Then, I also want to ask these artists about the influence *ukiyo-e* iconography had on their work if present, and on the other hand in what way foreign and domestic vanguards had an impact on their choice of subjects to represent. With this objective in mind, I wrote a list of questions to let the interviewed artists freely express their views on the relevance of *Mokuhanga* today.

1. Why and when did you choose to pursue art as a career?
2. What is the purpose or goal of your work?
3. How has your background affected your work?
4. How did you find out about *Mokuhanga* and what drove your interest in it?
5. How did you learn the techniques and what other training did you receive?
6. Why did you choose this art medium and how would you compare it to other media you have experimented with in terms of expressive abilities?
7. How important is it to you to maintain the traditional techniques and materials of this art form? Do you prefer to combine it with other techniques?
8. What do you think are the pros and cons of *Mokuhanga*?



9. What are your main influences from the Japanese tradition of Mokuhanga, if any?
10. What are your main influences from the Japanese and global contemporary art scene and avant-garde movements, if any?
11. How do you choose the subjects for your works and where do you get your inspiration from?
12. Mokuhanga is more connected to natural elements and environmentally friendly than other art forms. As a contemporary artist, how relevant is this to your choice of medium?
13. Mokuhanga, as other types of print, has the benefit of being replicable. Did this influence your choice of medium?
14. How would you describe the overall influence of Mokuhanga in contemporary art?

RESEARCH

The first artist I talked to was Yamada Naokimi, during a carving and printmaking workshop he held in Okayama. Born in 1956 in Katsuta, Okayama prefecture, Yamada shows a practical and craft-oriented approach to mokuhanga, being also highly skilled in intaglio sculpture. Inspired by his grandfather and father Yamada Shoun, he was heavily influenced by Munakata Shikō, a family friend of the Yamada and one of the most famous mokuhanga artists of the twentieth century. The imprint Munakata left can be seen in the style of his intaglio and in the prints, which are often in black and white and portray buddhist and natural images, and his main interest is that of carrying on the family tradition of woodblock printing and wood intaglio. To do this, Yamada also offers mokuhanga classes at affordable prices to amateurs in Okayama prefecture, supplying the needed tools and knowledge to produce prints in the style of Munakata Shikō. I had the pleasure to partake in one of these classes and see the passion Yamada puts into preserving the technique he was taught by his family, considering himself more like an artisan than an artist. First, he taught me how to transfer the design that is going to be printed onto the wooden tablet, to define the area to carve. Then, he showed me the various tools and chisels that are used to carve the wood with precisions, in order to create a relief onto which the ink is applied. Finally, we applied the ink onto the matrix and create many copies of the print on postcard paper. It was a very valuable experience and a privilege for me to learn



from a master with so much passion, and mister Yamada was extremely kind and happy to share his knowledge with me and many other aspirant printers.



transferring the design



carving process



copies of the final result

After Mister Yamada, I had the pleasure to meet two more artists with a different approach, and I interviewed them on Zoom not to inconvenience their busy schedules.

The first is Mia O, a South Korean artist who currently lives in Tokyo and exhibits her mokuhanga prints in galleries all over the world. After receiving her Bachelor of Fine Arts at Hongik University of Seoul and her Master of Fine Arts from Pratt Institute School of Art in New York, she participated in an Artist-in-Residence program in Nagasawa, where she started practicing mokuhanga.

During the interview, miss O told me that she has always felt attracted by the art world, and she has drawn for as long as she can remember. While she was in New York for her Master's program, she went to a Hiroshige exhibition at Brooklyn Museum and was immediately charmed by woodblock printing. She had taken etching classes before, but because of the chemicals that are involved in the making of that kind of print, she preferred to learn a safer, more environmentally friendly type of printmaking. To learn the technique she enrolled in a residency in which foreign artists can participate in workshops with professional Japanese printers, and at first she felt discouraged by the complexity of the process. However, when in 2005 she had her daughter, she started to create her own way of producing mokuhanga and scheduling the different parts of the process to carry them out while the baby slept. In particular she said that the process of carving, which requires the most time but the least mental energy, was a great way for her to release the stress of being a new mom, and allowed



Mia O, Evapotranspiration,



her to be prolific even at such time. As her daughter grew up she had more time to dedicate to printmaking, but as her family had to move to Dubai for a few years she had to adjust the technique of mokuhanga to another, much drier climate by using a humidifier and spraying water. As she said, replicating a climate in which an art form was developed is essential to the process: “The weather and the environment is very important, together with culture they create an art form”.



Mia O *Waves* 2020

When asked about her choice of media and the purpose of her work, miss O stated that she wishes to blend together different elements to create something new, and “invite other forms of art to her work”. On her mokuhanga prints, she often adds other materials and techniques: she experimented with acrylics, with collage of different prints, and is lately fascinated with the idea of folding printed paper, as is shown in her work *Waves* (2020). The thinness of traditional *washi* paper allows her to make foldings and overlay multiple layers of prints, in order to

create transparency and tridimensional effects. This, together with the ease with which prints can be sent and transported, is her main reason for choosing this specific medium. As a matter of fact, transporting a painting to multiple exhibition locations would require her to travel a lot and only exhibit at one place at a time, but with prints she can send them by mail to different venues, and if something in the delivery goes wrong she can print the same work again. She also deeply cares about the fact that mokuhanga is a very material art, allowing the artist to use tools and their sense of touch, and help the craftsmanship of Japanese paper and ink flourish. “I’m so happy to use the tools and the paper”, she stated, “it’s beautiful to touch the paper and connect with nature”. The same nature which she mentions as her main source of inspiration, and her escape from the city life she lives in Tokyo. Inspired by Japanese landscape tradition, *fūkeiga*, and the simplicity and minimalism of Japanese craft, as well as Ob’Art’s illusionistic effects, she creates imaginary dreamy landscapes using the elegant technique of mokuhanga.



Katsutoshi Yuasa, *Tokyo 2100*, 2020

The last artist I had the honour to interview is Katsutoshi Yuasa, born in 1978 in Tokyo, where he still lives. He obtained his Bachelor of Fine Arts in Painting and Printmaking from Musashino Art University of Tokyo, and lived in London while he studied for his Master of Fine Arts in Printmaking at the Royal College of Art. To this day his works have been included in multiple catalogues, solo and group exhibitions and art fairs, he has partaken in multiple residencies all around the world and has taught as a lecturer and instructor at numerous institutions in Japan. Despite of his prestigious career, mister Yuasa seemed glad to share his opinions on mokuhanaga with great humbleness, and like miss O offered me a valuable insight in contemporary art world.

Mister Yuasa told me he discovered his fascination for mokuhanaga while he was studying for his Bachelor degree in Tokyo. He was in an oil painting course, but he was required to study another art medium like all the other students. While many preferred installation, performance art or other trendy art forms, Yuasa was intrigued by the traditional feeling of printmaking. While he studied different print media such as etching, lithography and woodblock printing, he traveled to Germany where he came in contact with contemporary European art, and he developed a desire to study abroad and explore more of the global art scene. Thanks to his teacher, the famous artist Ayomi Yoshida, he found his way through mokuhanaga, and was inspired by her to adapt such a traditional and ancient art form to contemporary art. What I found interesting about his view on mokuhanaga is that when asked about the expressive ability that this art form has compared to other art forms, he stated that its slowness is what makes it unique. He likes to use photography and images from real life, as can be seen in *Vr London Live Walk #2*, but as many artists already made photo-based oil paintings, he found his originality and uniqueness in combining an immediate art form such as photography with a very slow and methodical medium. In particular, Yuasa stated: “time is part of the artwork, not only the result”. The time taken to produce a print is in itself part of the artistic value of the final work, as it allows the artist to mediate with his thought the image that is going to be presented to the public. And regarding to this, he said that beauty is part of the artwork, but the focal point is the message that is conveyed. He wishes to connect his work to present time and current events, so he gets his inspiration from daily life, nature and current circumstances in the world. Apart from that, he is very interested in reading books about



different matters, such as history, psychology and music, but he prefers poetry, and he likes to connect words he is inspired by with pictures he takes in his daily life and during trips to create his artwork. The artist who mainly influenced him to create large-scale prints based on photographs is Wolfgang Tillmans, a German photographer who defines himself as an “image maker”. This



Katsutoshi Yuasa, *VR London Live Walk #2*, 2021

definition is very appreciated by Yuasa, and he sees mokuhanga as a reliable method to create images and spread them to a wider public, thanks to the portable nature of prints. To conclude, he underlines the importance that the tradition of the technique has in his artwork, stating that carrying on the tools and the materials used from ancient times is part of his goal and because of them he defines his work as part of the tradition of mokuhanga.

CONCLUSIONS

Thanks to this research project I had the opportunity to meet incredible artists that I really admire, and ask them about a topic that has fascinated me for many years. Reaching a more solid conclusion as to why mokuhanga has recently seen a new rise in interest would require a wider, more thorough research, but collecting the opinion of three different artists from different backgrounds and approaches has allowed me to conclude that mokuhanga, unlike many other contemporary art forms, has the charm of being a material craft which requires the sense of touch, discipline, expertise and great respect of tools, supplies and time. In a world where every aspect of life is being influenced by digital and technological media, mokuhanga is a way to stay connected to a more genuine, natural means of expression, without discouraging artists from exploring art trends or combining different media to obtain a unique, fully personal result.

Tatakibori website: <https://tatakibori.jimdofree.com/>

Mia O website: <https://mia-o.format.com/>

Katsutoshi Yuasa website: <http://www.katsutoshiyuasa.com/>



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Scenes from the EPOK Research Project Presentation on July 27, 2022.



The End



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