Reconceptualizing 'Global Jinzai' from a (B)ELF Perspective

(B)ELF視点からのグローバル人材養成コンセプトの再考

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ABSTRACT

The cultivation of 'global jinzai' has been the main Japanese agenda across multifaceted disciplines and is a pressing national issue for businesses, government, and global education policy reforms. The term 'global jinzai' equates to global leaders or global human resources. In a definition by The Global Human Resource Development Committee of the Industry-Academia (2010), it describes people who possess three elements: (1) active and responsible membership in society; (2) a high proficiency in foreign language (English); and (3) holds a deep appreciation in intercultural understanding. First, this paper will review the major roadblocks in higher education in the path to develop these leaders including: low self-esteem, lack of sustainability of inbound and outbound mobility programs, and the paradox of goal-setting to native English speaker (NES) norms. Second, this paper will reconceptualize these issues by taking on an English as a lingua franca (ELF) and English as a business lingua franca (BELF) perspective to raise awareness on the changing use of English in social and business contexts among non-native English speakers (NNES). Finally, this paper will suggest teaching practices for an ELF and BELF-informed curriculum to provide students with opportunities to take ownership of their multilingual strengths for developing their own communicative capabilities.

KEYWORDS: ELF, BELF, Global human resources, Education reforms

1. POLICIES PROBLEMS AND CLOSED MINDSET TOWARD CULTIVATING 'GLOBAL JINZAI'

Japan has entered the new era known as Society 5.0 with the sophistication of artificial intelligence, cyber society, and the Internet generation (Cabinet Office, 2018; MEXT, 2018). The traditional education model was based on a memorized set of knowledge. This was appropriate for the industrial era, in which industries flourished under Ouchi's Theory Z Management Style (1981) of lifetime employment and high employee loyalty. However, in the new Society 5.0, job security is at risk of computerization and automation. A 2018 OECD study found 14 percent of all jobs across 32 nations have a high risk of automation with a further 32 percent at risk of significant changes (Nedelkoska &

Quintini, 2018; OECD, 2018). Students need to acquire new skills for tackling the rapid technological changes requiring creativity, flexibility, and adaptability. They need to be taught a new set of abilities to apply cognitive and social intelligence, leadership and 21st-century skills.

1.1 Issues of low self-esteem and need for university English reforms

Economic organizations, such as Japan Business Federation (Keidanren) and Japan Association of Corporate Executives (Keizai Doyukai) put pressure on MEXT (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology) to react to the stagnant growth of global human resources and its inability to sustain a pool of confident and globally competent university graduates. One problem companies face with their newly hired employees is the lack of confidence in English communication skills. The Keidanren places education policies at fault in the deterioration in the quality and inward tendencies of university students, and the separation between global human resources that the industrial world demands (Yoshida, 2017, p. 88).

Conversely, Japan has consistently scored in the highest-ranking group in the OECD PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) results taken in 72 countries to half a million fifteen-year-olds on their knowledge in science, mathematics, reading, collaborative problem solving and financial literacy (OECD, 2012) and often causes misconception with the disguised figures of successful results. However, the OECD survey also revealed that Japan lagged far behind countries such as China, US, and the Republic of Korea in student confidence levels in their capabilities and found lower motivation to learn. Results showed 72 percent of high school students felt they are "not useful", 52 percent are "satisfied with their life", and 56 percent said they perceive that they have "decent abilities" (Kimura & Tatsuno, 2017, p. 13). Low self-esteem was not found only among students, but also with young employees.

Japanese Ministry of Economy, Trade, and Industry (METI) (2009) found more than 40 percent of newly hired employees lacked global perspective and exhibited non-willingness to work abroad citing reasons such as difficulties in English language communication with non-Japanese workers, lack of confidence in leadership, and wanting to avoid challenging work responsibilities (Yonezawa, 2014). Fuji Xerox Learning Institute (FXLI) surveyed several Japanese multi-corporate employees in their twenties and thirties on their views toward pursuing leadership roles. The results found that only 30 and 40 percent respectively wanted to pursue future leadership roles and FXLI concluded that the problem exists because young employees did not exemplify a need 'to want' to become leaders. This could be due to deficits in the current higher education curriculum which focuses on in the lack of training in leader -oriented sources such as ambition, altruism, and responsibility (FXLI, 2017, p. 4). The report also shifted a greater focus on student attitudes, openness, and autonomy.

MEXT took these warning signs into account in radical education policies including the reform of the National Center Test for University Admission (Center Exam). "The exams put more priority on examining students' thinking ability, expression, and reasoning" (Kimura & Tatsuno, 2017, p. 14). This will open up opportunities for English education reforms for improving students' qualities and communicative capabilities rather

than cognitive testing of knowledge. Other key shifts such as 'active learning' and 'student-centered' approaches have been added to new teaching policies outlined in the MEXT's 'Senior High School Course of Study on Foreign Languages'. The policy changes include a "building up on the acquisition of knowledge, skills and development of thinking ability, judgment ability, and expression of power" (MEXT, 2018, p. 18).

At first, these radical changes were welcomed and applauded for their top-down approach in intensifying the speed for a change. However, student self-esteem issues have not been completely resolved with these policy changes and also pressure on teachers has intensified. Teachers were suddenly held accountable for implementing a new teaching agenda through a communicative approach and needed to prepare their students on taking the four-skills institutional tests. These changes have eschewed a shift to adopting more communicative approaches to English language teaching.

Moreover, it is important to mention self-esteem issues for both students and teachers are due to the Japanese mindset related to the native speakerism goals. The focus on NES goals are commonly found in University English programs. Oda (2018) studied the use of key phrases on eighty-four university English language program posters. The results suggested the ideology of native speakerism in a majority of the programs with key phrases including: Learning English in an 'English only' environment, Native English-speakers (NES), Learn authentic English, and a focus on such standardized tests as TOEIC, TOEFL and IELTS. These non-attainable and non-realistic goals have continued to hurt self-esteem as students and teachers work to mimic a NES, ending in failure by falling short.

As a consequence of abolishing the Center Examination for English, Japanese students submit scores from institutional tests (i.e., TOEFL, IELTS, TOEIC) for Japanese university admissions. The policymakers and university admissions in Japan need to reconceptualize what kind of student will be successful in the university. Jenkins (2013) discussed the issue of using standardized tests which focus on the NS norms. Her research revealed how students recognized that the IELTS focuses on "one way to do English" and prepares students to communicate only with British people rather than for international communication with a homogenous approach by expecting foreign students to only hear British accents on campus – a criticism leveled also at TOEFL in respect of American accents (p.179). Also, D'Angelo (2017) notes that Japanese students' over-reliance on grammatical accuracy based on NES norms, and the teaching of American pronunciation is a disservice to the real needs of Japanese ELF users and they may be a root to the reported low-self-esteem problems. The reforms took out the Center Examination but only to replace it with another test. The policy goal was to help increase global jinzai, but it was only adding to further self-esteem issues with the new English admission policies.

1.2 Issues on university mobility policies

Japanese students are studying abroad at an average of 3.1 percent of all university students accounting for 136,000 students in 2011. However, this falls short of the OECD 7.1 percent average (Shimomura, 2013). In the past few years, Japanese universities have taken the initiative to develop new inbound and outbound mobility programs with special MEXT funding policies. MEXT also saw this as a way to increase Japan's footing in international

reputation and rankings but also to promote the mobility of graduate students, researchers, and visiting professors. International rankings go hand in hand with the number of scholarly publications and the ratio of international students and faculty. This rapid growth came in several forms of tie-ups. For example, foreign universities established branch campuses in Japan (e.g., Temple University, McGill University, Lakeland University, Far Eastern State University); dual degree partnerships between Japanese universities and foreign universities (e.g., Keio University and Sciences Po, Ritsumeikan University and Australian National University); and bilateral agreements between institutions for long/short-term study abroad programs. Other programs are part of government-funded projects: Global 30 (inbound), the International University Exchange Project, the Top Global University Project, the 300,000 International Students Plan (inbound), the Go Global Japan (primarily outbound) and many other bilateral programs. Some programs are ambitious in numbers such as Go Global which supports 120,000 Japanese human resources in the global field with aims to improve Japan's global competitiveness and enhance industry-academia ties between nations (Ota, 2018; Shimomura, 2013).

However, problems have intensified as MEXT conducts regular checks on these government-funded programs. Universities are inclined to focus on reaching their quota or key performance indicators (KPIs) as their first priority in order to continue to receive funding. This focus takes away time from developing high quality programs. Instead, universities are heavily relying on funding for its operational costs and raising questions of whether or not the programs could sustain independently beyond the funding period. Ota calls this 'a kind of numbers game of KPIs' so, it is not certain that the government supported funds have increased international competitiveness and compatibility of Japanese higher education as a whole" (Ota, 2018, p. 98). With this funding, many universities have developed English as a medium of instruction (EMI) courses hastily and has taken a toll on its quality as many Japanese professors needed to suddenly shift their medium to English without enough preparation time. At the same time, many Asian students that had proficient Japanese proficiency opted to take mainstream courses in Japanese as a medium of instruction rather than courses taught insufficiently by Japanese professors in EMI. This is important to acknowledge because Japanese students (and teachers) still do not have the ability to sufficiently communicate (or teach) in a classroom with international students from different countries (D'Anglelo, 2017).

Other Asian universities have joined the race for higher global university rankings. China's Ministry of Education claims it has surpassed Japan as Asia's top producer of local university and foreign university collaborations (Redden, 2018). Research and development activities are important in pushing up international rankings and reputation (Piro, 2016). However, cracks have emerged in the Chinese-foreign collaborations as the Chinese Ministry terminated 220 contracts with foreign universities with more than a hundred of them since 2016 due to: 1) low instructional quality, 2) low student satisfaction, 3) poor attractiveness, and 4) weak specialized programs (Redden, 2018). Also, China aimed to recover its regulatory control of universities without foreign influence. Despite these high risks, Japanese universities have continued to launch programs similar to China and other Asian countries at exponential speeds with the support of MEXT policies. A reconceptualization of policies with a fresh mindset is necessary in order to develop high

quality and sound programs based on sustainable global jinzai development plan from an ELF and a English as a business lingua franca (BELF) perspective.

2. RECONCEPTUALIZING POLICIES & MINDSET FROM A (B)ELF PERSPECTIVE

English is a vital part of the 'workplace kit' just like smartphones or laptops and it is inevitable to divert from using English in business especially since English is spoken at a useful level by 1.75 billion people worldwide-which is one in every four people (Ehrenreich, 2011; Neeley, 2012). ELF researchers claim that native English speakerism has been safeguarding the boundaries of English, which ultimately conflicts with the hybridity of English when the focus should be on creativity and pluralization of English and rethink about what constitutes a harmonious, cohesive, integrated, and motivated speech community" (Kachru, 2006). This section will take a view that policies need to be reconceptualized with a need for a more open dialogue between industry, academia, and government and looking at how English is being used in the global workplace.

2.1 Reconceptualizing low self-esteem from a (B)ELF perspective

How does a student increase their self-esteem and confidence in English? One way is to reconceptualize and help the student to build an awareness that English does not belong to only native English speakers (NES) but it belongs to anyone in every corner of the world. Mauranen (2016) researched the multilingual aspects of businesses and the role of English in the wider framework of globalization and internationalization of business practices. According to Borzkowski (2017) and Neeley (2012), multinational corporations (e.g., Airbus, Daimler-Chrysler, Nokia, Renault, Samsung, SAP, Technicolor, Microsoft-China, Sodexo, and Siemens) have started to mandate the use of English as their corporate language to organize and collaborate globally.

   In March 2010, Rakuten, a Japanese IT company, announced "Englishnization" and became one of the "52 percent of multinational companies that had adopted a language different from that of their originating country in order to better meet global expansion and business needs" (Neeley, 2017. p. 17). Many other Japanese multinational companies have already made plans to mandate English as their corporate language. As a result, NNES will evolve exponentially in this globalized world, "it is unlikely to supplant local languages in its function as a lingua franca, but to complement the linguistic diversity that lives on locally and regionally" (Mauranen, 2016, p. 44) and the question of ownership of English is no longer viewed as a language that is not owned by only native speakers but it is also a language owned by NNES.

2.2. Reconceptualizing mobility from a (B)ELF perspective

In Europe, universities have found mobility as a factor of success through the signing of the Bologna Process of 1999 which allowed the mobility of students, professors, and researchers across the Pan-European community. Initially, twenty-nine countries in Europe (with 48 signatories in 2015) had a vision for a 'One Europe' education market approach and the integration of global education policy initiatives. European universities adopted a regulatory system to recognize comparable degrees, to transfer credits, and promoted a

European cooperation in high quality assurance (Piro, 2016) and create borderless fluidity of human resources for national and international economic growth.

China and India also connects study abroad to economic growth. These countries have the largest exodus abroad and accounts for more than a quarter of all students studying outside their home countries (Piro, 2016, p. 83), and Korea follows closely behind. Study abroad initiatives are linked with industry-academia-government initiatives with goals to infiltrate the global workforce. It is now expected that China will supply more than sixty percent of the G20 workforce with qualifications in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) by 2030 (OECD, 2015).

However, Japan's inbound and outbound policies still tend to be bilateral agreements between universities without a higher agenda linked to industrial initiatives. Japan is lagging behind in STEM related mobility programs that directly lead to innovation, leadership development, and job opportunities in new technology. These successful benchmarks from around the world can give hints in ways to expand mobility in not only a unilateral direction, but a cooperative approach with industries partnering with universities and giving students internships and creating joint academia-industry projects with chances to challenge their English communicative capabilities in a real world situation. The reconceptualization of mobility must begin with a plan to help students realize they are current ELF learners and are aiming to become competent ELF users. These ELF users will be eventually aim to play important roles in multinational corporations with multilinguistic and multicultural people. Thus, the goal is to become a competent in BELF.

3. B(ELF)-AWARE PRACTICES FOR INCREASING COMMUNICATIVE CAPABILITIES

What can university English classes do to promote ELF and BELF-awareness? First, Terauchi & Araki (2016) suggest that ELF learners will benefit from lessons on actual uses of ELF found in both meaningful communicative settings and in business scenes. This will give students an early exposure by having a clearer image of themselves acting globally in their future, which will help them to develop their learning process. Such practice can also help students' self-esteem in English by understanding the changed role and status of English, and see it as it is shaped by conventional use to revise the 'ideologies and beliefs associated with the language' (Seidlhofer, 2016). Also, university classes need to align their assessment policies to ELF-aware understanding by not penalizing students for mistakes based on NES standards. Effective communication can be achieved without having to conform to NES norms (Kirkpatrick, 2015; Seidlhofer, 2016) and this can be validated by the data of NNES natural occurring conversations in the Asian Corpus of English (ACE). Students need to know "what matters is how effectively the speaker can make expedient use of linguistic resources to achieve a successful communicative outcome" (Seidlhofer, 2016, p. 27).

Teachers that are interested in ELF and BELF-aware pedagogy can also refer to 'The Model of Global Communicative Competence' (Figure 1) by Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaanranta (2011, p. 258). This model highlights the expanding areas of knowledge elements that are needed in successful interactions in a business context known as global communicative competence.

FIGURE 1. Global Communicative Competence Model in a Business Context, adapted by Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaaranta (2011, p. 258)

The outer layer, 'Business knowhow', includes actual business abilities or capabilities to do daily business tasks. This layer represents the actual day-to-day business knowhow. The second layer, 'Competence in BELF', represents situations that are highly specific to a context. The focus of includes communication that is dynamic, idiosyncratic and tolerant of different varieties in order to focus on building rapport and trust. The inner layer is 'Multicultural competence' and includes accommodation skills including respect and tolerance toward 'different ways of doing things'. All of the three layers are necessary to reach the core which is "Global Communicative Competence".

Japanese university students lack in opportunities to improve business knowhow and multicultural competence in a sheltered classroom especially if there are no foreign students. This model shows the importance of focusing on interactional skills, rapport building, and the ability to ask for and provide clarifications. Teachers can expand students' repertoire by introducing case studies and hold business meetings and discussions. Also project-based learning activities can simulates real-world communication providing meaning communication practice. For developing 'Multicultural Competence', a teacher could select intercultural and real-world authentic materials to study different cultural aspects found in everyday and business situations in Japanese multinational companies.

One way to overcome low self-esteem is to incorporate NNES authentic materials into the classroom through readily available materials on the Internet. Teachers can also design materials by referring to and comparing several Corpus extracts (e.g., VOICE, ACE) to study NNES speakers to give them a more achievable and meaningful examples of real-world listening. Björkman (2013) suggests incorporating listening and speaking materials with a variety of native accents, and materials which encourage negotiation of meaning and use of communication strategies, such as non-verbal cues, asking for clarification, asking for more information, and communication strategies. This includes noticing the role of rapport building, building trust and cooperation, and communication strategies focusing on clarity, brevity, directness, and politeness (Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2013).

Furthermore, traditional forms of listening comprehension activities where

students are passive receptors of auditory input into dialogic events can be replaced with more reflective real-world processes also known as proactive listening skills (Dimoski, Yujobo, & Imai, 2016, p. 69). Classrooms can provide explicit and implicit use of communication strategies and compensatory strategies are needed for repairing breakdowns and maintaining conversations to facilitate interactions. These activities can contribute to the negotiation of meaning to achieve mutual understanding and to deal with uncertainty in ELF conversations (Björkman, 2014; Cogo & Dewey, 2012; Seidlhofer, 2011). Finally, Kubota (2016) mentions the implications for education and policy to include a need to critically reflect on the promise of English to seek beyond linguistic accuracy and fluency, and develop dispositional and strategic competence. Kankaaranta and Louhiala-Salminen (2013) summarizes it up well by stating that rapid changes in work environments, particularly advancing globalization and new technology, have highlighted the need for expanding our knowledge of the elements that constitute communicative competence in global encounters.

4. FUTURE DIRECTIONS & CONCLUSION

It is hard to ignore the deepening symbiotic relationship emerging between industry-academia-government. The "global corporatization of education" (Piro, 2016, p. 32) is not only happening in Japan, but it is a global phenomena whereby corporations influence and pressure policy makers to shape the goals of education and human behaviors for the corporate workplace. The clearing of the roadblocks in the path towards cultivating 'global jinzai' will begin with a reconceputalization by: (1) solving self-esteem issues through cooperative dialogue for education policies based on ELF and BELF-awareness, (2) developing lucrative mobility programs that are sustainable and linked to global business development, and, (3) changing the mindset of NNES with the development of global communicative competence through ELF and BELF-aware classroom practices. Then the time will come when Asian nations cease to look at global jinzai with a national agenda, and finally realize the true meaning of cultivating competent 'global jinzai' with a global agenda.

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