

Tempted by Whiteness?: Linguistic Capital and Higher Education in Japan

The Journal of Educational Foundations
Vol. 32, No. 1, 2, 3, & 4
2019, pp. 49-71
Copyright 2019 by Caddo Gap Press

Kako Koshino

Abstract

This study uses the lens of Critical Whiteness Studies to examine how students and faculty at a Japanese university viewed ‘global education’ and ‘internationalization’—two concepts that have been ardently promoted and pursued in Japan. This investigation and analysis focus on the critical juncture of the modern Japanese higher education system and Whiteness. It sheds light on the under-addressed issue of the racial power dynamics that affect one’s perception towards race and race relations and, the impact of Whiteness on Japanese students’ self-esteem and identity. By selecting and adopting privileged standpoints, higher education in Japan has reinforced “the White vistas that centuries of racism have carved in our society” (Ross, 2002, p. 255). The findings of this study suggest that views and attitudes toward English education are influenced by Japan’s Westernization movement during the Meiji era (i.e., the second half of the 19th century) that privileged and pursued the cultural assets and linguistic capital of Western/White states.

Keywords: global education; Whiteness; linguistic capital

Global Education and Whiteness

The concept of “globalization” is embraced across sectors and disciplines including higher education. The term “globalization” is associated with the process of economic integration and interaction

Kako Koshino is an associate professor of education at Tokyo University of Social Welfare, Tokyo, Japan. Her e-mail addresses are: kakoshin@ed.tokyo-fukushi.ac.jp & readingforlearningm464@gmail.com

Tempted by Whiteness?

among people, information, money, and ideas across borders (Guillén, 2001; Levitt, 1983; Sparke, 2013). Japanese universities have embraced the notion for several decades. For example, educational institutions have sought to promote *kokusaika* (internationalization), which, in turn, has been reflected in Japan's efforts to gain international recognition as an autonomous, modern, and open society in the post-war era. As documented in numerous social sciences and humanities studies on Japan, the popular discourse about Japan's successful modernization has been linked with its Westernization. Accelerated by U.S. initiated trade relations with Japan in 1853, Japan quickly came under U.S. influence; this alliance affected policy decisions in Japanese national security matters, constitutional amendments, and educational curriculum around which the centrality of the hegemonic ideology of Western superiority were built. Therefore, I argue that Whiteness naturally came to be accepted, normalized, and instilled through the process of re-appropriation and reproduction of the ideology in both institutional and individual practices in Japanese society.

This study uses Critical Whiteness Studies as a lens to examine the international education agenda upheld by Japanese universities. The study probes the case of a government-funded global education program. The investigation and analysis focus on the critical juncture of the Japanese higher education system and Whiteness. It illuminates the under-addressed issue of the racial power dynamics that shape perceptions regarding race and race relations, the impact of racial superiority on self-esteem and identity, and the ways in which adopting a curriculum built around White privilege reinforces "the White vistas that centuries of racism have carved in our society" (Ross, 2002, p. 255). The ultimate goal of multicultural education, according to prominent scholars in the field, is to provide an inclusive curriculum and a learning environment that allows students from culturally diverse backgrounds to access education and achieve educational equity (Banks, 1993).

Critical Race Theory emerged in the 1980s in response to the limitations of Critical Legal Scholarship that had failed to adequately address the pivotal role of race and racism in legal cases and discourses (Delgado, 1987; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Tate, 1997). Recognizing the concept of race as ideologically constructed, rather than biological fact, Critical Race Theorists acknowledge that race is a social construct and yet racism is a harsh everyday reality. In the late 1990s, scholars in the field of higher education began utilizing Critical Race Theory as an analytical lens to re-evaluate and reframe educational research and practices to better understand and address the experiences of students of color affected by racism.

Understanding racism requires recognizing the location and the

standpoint of the privileged. According to Delgado and Stefancic (1997), it is essential to acknowledge the impact of the invisible power of racial privilege bestowed to Whites in order to fully capture the power dynamics in race relations. Critical Whiteness Studies provides an analytic lens to examine racism and race relations by questioning the authorized power of White privilege allowing one to recognize the role of institutionally supported practices that sustain the invisible power of Whiteness. Entering into a critical dialogue on the question of Whiteness begins to disturb benign norms of culture and received wisdom acknowledged as 'natural' and 'truth,' putting the universally assumed intellectual base under serious scrutiny. It is, therefore, critical to unravel myths surrounding race and power, as dissonance and resistance become more prominent, to re-evaluate the racial paradigm. The scholarship on Critical Whiteness Studies in the field of education addresses how the authorized power of Whiteness impacts teacher identity, student experience, curriculum, and self-esteem (Lee, 2005; Lewis, Ketter, & Fabos 2001; McIntyre, 1997; Sleeter, 1993).

In more recent years, studies that probed into the campus racial climate using the Critical Whiteness Studies lens gained prominence. For example, Gusa's study (2010) addresses the impact of White-based academic beliefs and practices on African American students. Similarly, in her study, Koshino (2016) looked into the high dropout rate of African American students at a predominantly White institution in the U.S. where Eurocentric values and perspectives embedded in educational values and practices led to the lower retention rate of African American students. In addition, there is a growing body of work that examines the formation and recreation of racial ideologies surrounding White supremacy and privilege through the worldviews and experiences of White students in higher education. Jackson and Heckman (2002) highlight the sense of White normalcy that White students eagerly adhered to and identified with as members of that race in response to a racial hate crime incident in their college setting. Cabrera (2014) also reported the four interconnected themes identified from the interviews conducted with the 12 White male undergraduate students. These themes included individualized definitions of racism, minimization of issues of racism, White victimization/minority privilege, and minimal change in racial views in college providing some insight into the justifications for the hegemony of normalcy under which White privilege operates. Nakayama and Krizek (1995, p.291) posit "White" occupies "the uncharted territory" that assumes the power of invisibility impacting all people in every sphere of life. The study investigates the strategies that mark the space of Whiteness by disrupting its centrality and deterritorializing the rhetorically instituted invisible position.

Tempted by Whiteness?

However, these studies were predominantly conducted in the U.S., primarily examining the awareness of White teachers and students, including their attitudes about their racial identities in relation to students of color, and how their racially privileged positions impacted their interactions with them. Studies that challenge and question the role of Whiteness in Japanese higher education classrooms are non-existent, due to deep-seated taboos on the subject in Japan. Critical Whiteness Studies provides a lens for understanding the ways in which Whiteness operates internationally and how this has been incorporated into higher education in Japan. It addresses how Whiteness is embedded and prevalent in the modern higher education system in Japan and received wisdom and skills from the Western states have been uncritically incorporated since the 'enlightenment era' in the 1800s.

Whiteness as Linguistic Capital

Early in the 21st century, with the eminent concerns and the heightened awareness to meet the challenges of globalization, business leaders in partnership with the Japanese government, were the first to respond. For example, in 2012, UNIQLO, a casual clothing store chain, and Rakuten, an electronic commerce company, were two of the first Japanese companies to adopt English as an official language used for internal meetings, and communications, as well as official documents. According to Maeda (2010), many business analysts projected both companies' growth in the domestic market would slow, due to population decline in Japan. This development would demand the establishment of franchises in foreign markets, thus, the adoption of the English policy. The business industry's move to adopt English coincided with the Japanese government's ongoing agenda to potentially adopt English as the second official language of Japan. A critical analysis of globalization argues that the imperialistic approach of domination and exploitation of the capitalist enterprises created the situation. The major economic superpowers concentrate in the imperial countries, most notably, European states, North America, and Japan. These nations' with their political and economic interdependence with the U.S., generated the exploited classes and states highly dependent on the imperial countries' decisive influences that perpetually benefit them. Petras and Veltmeyer (2001, p. 32) describe the ways in which academic institutions have contributed to the imperialist project:

Academic mentors in prestigious universities of the imperial countries have trained a long list of globalist advocates from dominated countries. Frequently, academics shape the economic programs of dominated countries to maximize the interests of global capital and receive lucrative consultation fees.

Since the late nineteenth century in Japan, there have been continuous attempts to replace the Japanese language with the English language by intellectuals and politicians (Kubota, 1998). The adoption of English as an official language grew out of the era of Civilization and Enlightenment, emerging in the late 1800s. This reform, driven by Western powers, reflected an ideology often conveyed by the popular slogan, *kokusaika* or internationalization, indicating open-mindedness and progressive education yet often meaning the Eurocentric educational agenda and ability to speak English.

The era of Civilization and Enlightenment surged following the arrival of Commodore Matthew Perry of the United States Navy in Japan on his battleship in 1853, demanding to open Japan to diplomatic relations and a trade treaty favorable to the U.S. As Kincheloe and Steinberg (1991, p. 5) explained, this racialized diplomatic contact expanded the imperial powers of superpower nations at this time:

We believe that a dominant impulse of whiteness took shape around the notion of rationality of the European Enlightenment, with its privileged construction of a transcendental white, male, rational subject who operated at the recesses of power while at the same time giving every indication that he escaped the confines of time and space. In this context, whiteness was naturalized as a universal entity that operated as more than a mere ethnic positionality emerging from a particular time, the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and a particular space, Western Europe.

Within the context of European expansion and accelerating world-wide expeditions, Japan had taken the path of accepting and pursuing Western ‘wisdom’ rooted in both the nostalgic and hegemonic idea of White supremacy. Japan’s inability to conduct serious political negotiations with Western powers, in tandem with its early experience of Whiteness during the Perry Expedition, shaped the Japanese education system, national identity, and its status within the international community for decades to come.

The Context

This study was conducted at an institution I will call Progressive University under a special mission to enhance internationalization at its campus in Japan during the 2015-2016 academic year. In 2014, the Japanese government launched a funding initiative aiming to promote globalization of Japanese universities. The ultimate goal of the project was to, according to the director of its Global Education Program, ‘reform their institutions and focus on internationalization—with the aim of attaining a global standard’ (Japan Times, 2014). The funded universities

Tempted by Whiteness?

were evaluated based on shared performance indicators, including the increased numbers of: full-time foreign faculty and Japanese faculty who received their degrees from foreign universities; subjects taught in foreign languages and; students enrolled in study abroad programs under inter-university agreements (MEXT, 2014). It was during this movement when Progressive University developed and implemented a new Liberal Arts Education Curriculum providing general education courses in English while attempting to meet other demands.

Due to the standard protocol to protect confidentiality of the identification of individuals involved, the details of the conversations that shaped the curriculum must remain minimal. Initially, these English-taught general education courses were primarily staffed by eight individuals including four White persons originally from North America and Europe; four persons having origins in Asia were hired during the 2014-2015 academic year. At the time of the research, two of the White instructors did not have master's degrees. In contrast, all four Asian instructors held PhDs from various fields; some had previously worked as university professors with robust teaching and research experience, and one had worked as an intergovernmental organization program specialist. At the start of the program in Fall 2015, the classes taught by these eight instructors were widely publicized in an effort to secure high enrolment.

According to MacIntosh (1997, p. 1), White privilege is one of the corollary aspects of racism that advantages White people. White privilege, she argues, is 'an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, assurances, tools, maps, guides, codebooks, passports, visas, clothes, compass, emergency gear, and blank checks'. The invisible power has remained unquestioned and unchallenged in Japan's higher education. In this case study, White instructors were routinely hired with lesser credentials than their Asian colleagues; this had the effect of establishing a double standard that contributed to hostile work environment, in which the Asian instructors were forced to confront what McIntosh termed as "an invisible package of unearned assets" (p. 1). Critical Whiteness Studies explores issues of advantage, dominance, and normativity that are produced, reproduced, and coproduced through institutional processes that seek to preserve and sustain Whiteness as merit and/or advantage (Fine, 1997; Frankenberg, 1993). The case study at Progressive University suggests the presence of a double standard regarding job qualifications, affording White privilege in the hiring process.

Another area of kokusaika that the university aimed to promote was the growth in international student enrolment. According to its Institutional Research and Reporting, the university had a large number of international students originating from Asia who were either degree-

seeking or non-degree-seeking students while very few were from the U.S., Europe and other so called 'Western states.' Moreover, no degree-seeking students were enrolled from Europe or the United States. Despite these demographics, the university's internationalization agenda was primarily designed to promote Euro-American-Centric values and practices oriented toward White privilege. Some of these practices included: offering and enhancing English-taught general education courses; predominantly publishing the images of the White instructors on the university's outreach materials, including its Website and flyers. The university's efforts to promote the idealized image of Whiteness embedded in *kokusaika* was also supported by the local media, which featured a few White male instructors on the local news while superficially touching on the topic of globalization. As these images circulated among the university community and through the media, the university's agenda on *kokusaika* implicitly suggested a link between globalization and Whiteness.

Japanese Higher Education and Government Employed Foreigners from European States and the U.S.

According to Kincheloe and Steinberg (1991, p. 5), "in educators' efforts to understand the forces that drive the curriculum and the purposes of Western Education, modernist whiteness is a central player." Thus, higher education is not an exception as a site for the construction of Whiteness or the resistance to it. Rather students encounter a curriculum constructed at the intersection of race, linguistic capital, and, in Japan, the university's internationalization agenda.

Japan's Civilization and Enlightenment era provides an instructive case study of the construction of Whiteness within the Japanese education system. The system was reformed based on the U.S. education model, in tandem with hired foreigner consultants primarily from Great Britain, France, Germany, and the United States. Each of these countries played key roles in shaping Japan's national identity as a close ally during this time period and in the century ahead. These foreigners were called *Oyatoi gaikokujin* (literally meaning "hired foreigners"); they taught and advised in academia and government to assist Japan's modernization in technology and science. While it is difficult to verify the total number of the hired foreigners, Kanai (1997) estimates that until the system of imperial hired foreigners was abolished in 1899, 600 to 900 foreigners were hired each year over the span of 30 years.

It was in the midst of the Civilization and Enlightenment era when Mori Arinori, Japan's first Minister of Education, proposed the adoption of English as the official language of Japan, abandoning Japanese in favour of English. Mori's doctrine emphasized Westernization and

Tempted by Whiteness?

elitist education, however, was widely condemned by his contemporaries including academics and public intellectuals. Although Mori's plan was not enacted, similar proposals regarding Japan's language policy were routinely introduced in subsequent decades.

The number of the *Oyatoi* gradually decreased as the government faced financial challenges in providing them with high salaries, and the practice was replaced by the Western-educated Japanese returning from their studies abroad (Hara, 1977).

Local Climate and Invisible Privilege

Meet Dave. He is from a Mid-Atlantic state in the United States. He is in his late twenties and has lived in the city where Progressive University is located for several years. He is about six feet tall and has blonde hair and blue eyes. He says he is a Quaker by education, as he attended a Quaker college. He moved to Japan immediately after graduating from an American college, where he majored in Japanese Language. During his undergraduate studies, he lived in Japan for a couple of months while he participated in a short-term study abroad program. He thought that living in Japan would be 'fun' and came to the city through an introduction from a friend. While he had originally planned to return to the U.S. to attend graduate school, his plan changed shortly after moving to Japan. He now owns an American-style Café and also operates English language school. His café has not been very successful since, according to Dave, he had "no skill of managing a restaurant" and that "it's quite difficult to appeal to the good points of something that people aren't used to." Dave thought that running his English language school was easy, as compared to his café:

English school is easy. You know who your customer is. There are a few types of customers in Japan. You know why they are studying English. Their company says that they have to take TOEIC (The Test of English for International Communication) or they want to live abroad or go to universities abroad or just their general life fulfillment so it's easy to target the customers. In this city, the competition of English school is soft. (Dave)

Dave's experience suggests the relative ease of accessing job opportunities for White people with no expertise or prior experience in either restaurant management or the English school business. Understood within the historical context of the Civilization and Enlightenment Era dating back to the late 1800s, the case study illustrates how White privilege works in modern Japan. As Japanese business and political entities embraced *Kokusaika*, idealized images of Whiteness increasingly emerged. This, in turn, fostered the privileging of Whiteness that has led

Kako Koshino

to increased opportunities for a person with Dave with his characteristics. When asked what it has meant to be a White man and how that has shaped his experience living in Japan, he recounts:

On average, I am the most privileged. I could complain about, you know, this is annoying, Japanese university girls want to talk to me because I speak English, you know. Maybe it's true, but in the total picture of my life, that's minor thing, you know. (Dave)

He also acknowledged that being a business owner meant accessing powerful people with influences on local businesses and affairs. For example, at a local networking event convened by a business magazine, he found himself surrounded by influential figures from the local business circles, as he easily drew their attention. He was even invited to appear as a guest on a local television show as an "American who spoke Japanese."

Dave's access to local business circles and open his café and English school exemplifying the systematic and institutionalized supports and protects invisible White privilege in Japanese businesses and industry. This privilege facilitated and eased Dave's process of acculturation and integration into Japanese society. His experience illustrates a prototype of White privilege observed in daily life as a cultural norm in Japan, providing an example of how White privilege operates "an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions," (McIntosh, 1997, p. 1) paving the way for someone like Dave, a blonde-headed, blue-eyed, English-speaking White male to economic and career success. It was in this local context that this study was conducted; this case study will be woven into the participants' reflections in their cross-racial contexts in the learning environment. The role of White privilege in Dave's professional experience in this community in Japan illustrates the ways in which Whiteness is normalized, affirmed, and perpetuated. As discussed below, these dynamics also influence the practices and experiences of students and faculty at Progressive University, as well as its organizational culture.

Method

The data gathered in the study at Progressive University emerged from the interviews conducted with eleven participants. Together, this data provides rich examples of the ways in which the racial/cultural climate of the social and learning environment impact the experiences of both students and instructors.

Data collection

One-on-one interviews were the primary method of data collection. The researcher interviewed a total of eleven participants at Progressive

Tempted by Whiteness?

University, including eight undergraduate students who had taken at least one course from any of the eight instructors, two professors, and one curator of the university's museum. Eligibility criteria for recruiting the students as potential participants of the study included the following: taking at least one English-taught general education course and familiarity with the instructors through their interactions. All students, except one international student from East Asia, identified themselves as born and raised Japanese; three were male and five were female. The two professors were recruited, as both of them had lived and taught at academic institutions in Western English-speaking countries and were willing to provide their insights and thoughts on the cross-racial/cultural learning environment. Finally, the curator also became an ideal participant as her familiarity with the university's history and culture based on her relatively long period of employment provided insights into the inner-working of the institution.

The interviews were conducted during the 2015-2016 academic year. After obtaining informed consents, open-ended in-depth interviews were conducted. Each interview lasted between 45 and 80 minutes. The interviews were conducted in the researcher's office to assure the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants. The questions were concerned with the participants' perceptions about campus internationalization efforts, race, and education.

In addition to the interviews, descriptive and reflexive field notes were kept. The descriptive field notes detailed the historical background of the academic institution as a research site and observational notes regarding the interactions between participants and researcher. According to Creswell (2005, p. 214), reflexive field notes serve to "record personal thoughts that researchers have that relate to their insights, hunches, or broad ideas or themes that emerge during the observation". Thus, the reflexive field notes allowed me to constantly examine and acknowledge my emotive responses, the sense I made of events at the site and the people involved as well as questions and ideas and concerns that came to my mind.

Data Analysis

Data sources for this study included participants' information including ages, gender, and status (faculty or staff or student); interview transcripts; and field notes from each interview. Pseudonyms were used throughout the study in order to protect participants anonymity and confidentiality. Data collection and data analysis were conducted in parallel. I used thematic analysis to examine the transcripts and field notes, capturing major themes that emerged from the data to inform deeper discussions. The participant quotes were provided in rich detail

to support the themes (Creswell, 2005). The phases are iterative in that I cycled back and forth between data collection and analysis as the understanding about the information in the data deepened. The coding process included the following steps: divide the data into text segments; label text segments to generate broad themes discussed by the participants most frequently; and examine and eliminate the overlap and redundancy in the data.

Researcher Reflexivity

As the researcher of this study, I was cognizant of how my race, ethnicity, gender, nationality, and my credible position as a faculty member at Progressive University would help build rapport with my participants. I am Japanese by birth. I grew up and went to college in Japan, as did most of the study's participants. My background and familiarity with Japanese universities, and my passion for learning English for cross-cultural understanding allowed me to better connect with the study participants. This helped create a space for affirmation and validation, encouraging them to express themselves and thoughtfully reflect on their experiences. My immersion in the scholarship on critically conscious research, race relations, anti-oppressive education, and Critical Whiteness Studies—as well as my previous experience of teaching the courses on these themes in teacher education programs in U.S. universities also influenced my view regarding the interplay of racial power dynamics. As one who has questioned, and continues to question the construction of my own identity with respect to Whiteness, I embarked upon the journey of unravelling the process of making meaning of the unsettling space with my research participants.

Findings

Four themes emerged, and each is discussed in detail in this section. The interview excerpts were interwoven with the perspectives drawn from the field notes.

Theme 1: Linguistic Status Quo

The interviewees were aware of the power dynamics between instructors and students due to the privileges of the instructors, including, for some, their Whiteness, and for all, the assumption that they have higher English-speaking ability. The interviewees noted the power dynamics related to the language status quo as they reflected on the instructors' privilege of speaking English and choosing not to learn and

Tempted by Whiteness?

speak Japanese. These dynamics resulted in the situation where the blame was entirely placed on the students for their limited English proficiency, rather than critically examining how the language status quo alienated the students, lowering motivation and increasing feelings of resentment, both towards the instructors and English education overall.

As observed in the case of Dave, the local White American expatriate who ran a café and an English school business, being White and an English-speaker allowed him to access local resources and valuable information necessary for him to advance his business and social status. The following students' accounts may explain why a situation such as Dave's would become possible.

Ken pointed out the lack of Japanese proficiency of his instructor. The instructor had been in Japan for more than 10 years, but did not speak Japanese much. Ken found it odd that the instructor had been in Japan for so many years and did not speak the language. Ken also said that the instructor would speak some simple Japanese words and sentences, however, his superficial use of the language reinforced the status quo between the instructor and the Japanese students. As Ken explained, "He would speak simple Japanese. But it did not help me understand or deepen my knowledge on the concepts that really needed to be explained." Ken was also upset and angry when the instructor repeated "Japanese students are shy" in class as if to hide his own lack of competency in Japanese, while putting the blame entirely on the students. Indeed, students who dropped the course felt their limited English proficiency was the reason they struggled with the course content.

Kazuya also felt frustrated and questioned the lack of cultural competency by the instructor in his English-only class:

I was overwhelmed because it was taught all in English and I was even more frustrated because he did not seem to consider the fact that some of us had no clue what he was saying. He didn't stop, but just carried on with his talking... it was almost like he was ignoring us. Some people pretended that they understood, but none of them actually had clear understanding of the instructions. (Kazuya)

As a result, according to Kazuya, 12 out of 14 students dropped the course. Like Kazuya, Reika found it troubling that many students signed up for the class with high expectations and were willing to participate in class discussions, however, many of these students faced the reality of the pre-established language status quo and the lack of teacher attention to more sensitive issues that the Japanese students were concerned about:

The idea of taking general education courses taught all in English is intimidating for many students and I think that's the reason

Kako Koshino

many students hesitate to take these classes. I believe it's a valuable opportunity to take these courses, but I think it's meaningless, if you are not understanding the content at all. (Reika)

Another student, Chika, took a course on Japanese history taught only in English by a White male instructor. She praised how much she had learned from the course because "he seemed to know more about the Japanese history than I did. I am Japanese but I did not know as much as he knew about Japanese history" (Chika). However, when she was asked what exactly she did in each class period of the course, she was not able to describe what she had done in detail and replied after a long pause by saying, "we were given true or false questions... and we had some discussion about it, I think" (Chika).

Having been asked again, what the questions were and how she answered them, she had a quizzical look on her face and said she did not remember them. While she emphasized that she had learned 'quite a bit', in reality, she did not seem to have gotten much from the course at all. Chika was generally happy if she could immerse herself in the English-speaking environment, so it could well be that the language status quo did not bother her at all.

The university museum curator addressed her concerns in response to the reality of the English-only, teacher-centric instructional style embodied by the White instructors:

First of all, the students are not even understanding most of what the instructors are saying. How are the students expected to develop those leadership skills or active participation, if they are basically sitting and not understanding? (Curator)

This situation raised the question of the qualifications that one is expected to assume when teaching respective disciplinary areas in higher education. While the university's purpose in offering general education courses in English may reflect its goals of promoting students' English language skills, other competencies, such as cultural sensitivity and responsiveness, and leadership skills must be promoted simultaneously in order to strategically enhance international education. The holistic goal of international education curriculum can not be achieved in an environment such as the one described by the curator.

Theme 2: No Expertise, No Qualifications

Study participants identified instructor credentials as a key component of a quality of education, and they questioned the apparent willingness of the university to disregard hiring standards for White candidates. Participants indicated that they expected instructors to all

Tempted by Whiteness?

be held to some standards, including a minimum level of qualifications and credentials, namely expertise in a given discipline and/or area of study, as well as intercultural competence. However, both students and faculty reported experiencing disappointment and frustration, as they began to understand that some White instructors had been exempted from the general qualification standards.

Nami was an education major student and felt that the teachers' qualifications were particularly important to ensure the quality and credibility of her university education. However, given the fact that some of the instructors were without proper credentials, she felt deceived:

I don't like it at all. I am serious when it comes to academic work and university education. I am interested in becoming a researcher. It is shocking to know that they do not even have a Master's degree. I feel like I have been cheated. I would like to receive education by people who had proper training as a researcher and qualifies to teach at a university. (Nami)

Ken recounted how he became dubious of the instructor's expertise in what he was teaching when he learned that the instructor created his PowerPoint presentation primarily from Wikipedia:

I remember that the information on the power point slides that he shared was copied from Wikipedia. I knew it because I came across the same information on Wikipedia when I was studying ahead to be prepared for my next class. He also copied and pasted the images from different Websites without referencing them. I usually read widely about the topics discussed in his class and his information mainly came from the Wikipedia. (Ken)

The plagiarism committed by the instructor raises a question about the vision and the motive of such a learning environment created by the university. The skepticism was also addressed by Hiroshi, who does not plan to take additional classes taught by the White instructors. As he confided, "I looked for information about their academic backgrounds and publication history using different data sources, but nothing came up" (Hiroshi). The students also questioned how the classes, which were lacking in pedagogically-conscious and culturally sensitive instruction, were taught. According to Reika, many of the students enrolled in one of the instructors' classes chose to take her class because they knew she would give them an A without clear justifications as "it was one of those classes that you could earn an easy A without doing anything" (Reika).

I did not know how the course was graded. There was one presentation at the end of the semester. We were told to form a group randomly with two or three other people maybe. Throughout the entire course, we would sit there just listening to her. Many students lost focus and fell

Kako Koshino

asleep... Occasionally, she would ask questions to class but that was it and there was nothing substantial done to engage us in what she was talking about... I was hoping that she would do something more to enhance her teaching, but it never happened. (Reika)

Other enrolled students shared similar experiences. They said that many students chose to take the class because they didn't have to do anything but would get an easy A. The class was strictly teacher-centered and rarely engaged in discussions or other forms of meaningful interaction:

We were given no chance to talk nor discuss at all... She didn't seem to have a grading criteria so it was like everyone automatically got an A even those who were asleep in class. So my guess is that the word spread and more students enrolled in the course for getting an A effortlessly. Overall, I felt the instructor didn't know what she was doing. (Ken)

These situations were taken seriously by Takashi, a faculty member, at the university. Takashi earned his Ph.D. from a British university and continued his research and taught at another university in the United Kingdom for a couple of years before returning to Japan to begin his current position as an assistant professor at Progressive University. He was concerned about the credential issues addressed by the students:

I would like to know the disciplines and the areas of study that each instructor in the college has pursued in their graduate schools, their visions toward how their disciplines match the mission of 'global education' that the university is attempting to promote here. I am wary of the fact people teach general education courses without proper qualifications. (Takashi)

For Takashi, the current practice of hiring instructors based on the fact that they looked more Caucasian and spoke English would simply fail to fulfil the mission and goals of international education in higher education:

I mean, in graduate school, you acquire the necessary knowledge and skills to research. You then educate college students based on the integration of your scholastic interests, research findings, and advanced knowledge. If you don't have these trainings and scholastic integrity, I doubt that one can possibly ensure the credibility of what he is teaching. (Takashi)

For Takashi, this is a clear example of the university's lack of clear vision for global education. For him, global education must start by defining its goals, including the specific competencies such an education seeks to develop. The university must ensure that White instructors and Japanese students are on the same level in terms of respect for culture, the value system, and language. But given the lack of Japanese language skills

Tempted by Whiteness?

and no appropriate academic qualifications, the leadership foreshadows a wrong direction for the program. Apparently, the lack of credentials generated the issues relevant to the quality of teaching and the status quo between the instructors and the students.

Theme 3: Globalization as the Practice of Whiteness

The students also questioned the practice of putting a 'No entry' sign at the bottom of the staircase leading to the instructors' office compartment on the second floor. According to them, students could go upstairs only by getting a 'permission' from the administrator's office:

I wondered about the way the building was structured... it just seems to pronounce that it is the center of internationalization and we have to go to them. It's always us who has to go to them, not them come to us. (Aya)

In addition to the office isolation, Mei hua also felt that some White instructors made themselves unavailable to her. When she wanted to talk to one of the White male instructors immediately after class, he told her that he didn't want to speak to her unless she made an appointment with him first, and then he walked away. She thought he was "arrogant and had a problem" (Mei hua).

To Hiroshi, the center appeared to be a place where people gathered to learn about American culture and English, which he described as "where people learn English or American village." Although he couldn't explain exactly why, he felt it was because "there are many White people there" (Hiroshi).

Shota is a first-year faculty member at the university. He earned his PhD from an Australian university and taught there as a teaching assistant for a couple of years. He problematized the trend of viewing global education as Europeanization and Americanization in Japanese higher education:

I don't think this is just the phenomena at this university, but it's all the same in Japan... The foreign languages offered here persistently represent the Eurocentric hegemony as these languages have been taught ever since it was founded. English, among others, is the most powerful language. This political practice is troublesome creating a situation privileging White people without proper academic qualifications. This is disappointing. (Shota)

Indeed, Shota's and other students' assertions underscored the practice of isolating White privilege and centering Whiteness reflected in the students' perception of English education, their purpose of learning English, and how race might have played a role to shape their idealized image of English teacher:

Kako Koshino

My biggest reason for taking these courses offered in English is to improve my English and I just appreciate that I can take classes from native English speakers. If it's a White instructor, I mean, a native speaker, I think I can learn English better. I mean I can learn 'correct' English. (Chika)

In response to my question as to whether or not she used the terms 'native speaker' and 'White instructor' interchangeably and if race mattered when learning English from people with different racial backgrounds, Chika answered:

(Chuckles) I mean I can learn correct English from native English speakers. I really appreciate the opportunity to be able to learn the authentic, correct English from them. This is a perfect opportunity for me to achieve my goal (of learning and improving her English). (Chika)

In this above statement, even as Chika seems to recognize how she inadvertently equated the native speaker with a White instructor, she still seemed to hold the idea of White person being an ideal English teacher without clarifying the distinction between her conscious use of the two terminologies. Chika's desire for learning English from White instructor exemplifies the authority surrounding White privilege.

Nami challenged the image of White people as ideal English teachers and the centrality of Whiteness that seemed to have firmly occupied the international education curriculum in Japanese higher education by addressing the lack of racial diversity among the teachers:

It's almost like people automatically give credit to White people regardless of their qualifications. They pass without being questioned... Another student thought it was not a problem that they taught these general education courses since they were native English speakers. I asked her if she thought it was a problem, but she was like, no, I think it's fine. (Nami)

Aya had taken a course with one of the White male instructors as she explained her primary purpose of taking the class was to improve her English skills. She took a class with him again the following semester. However, the topic of the course was not her interest since her primary interest was to be in an English-speaking environment:

I did not care much about the topic of the course and I actually am not fully understanding what has been taught in the course, but I was fine with it because I just wanted to be in an English-speaking environment. (Aya)

While she does not deny her motivation for taking the class without consciously problematizing the issues addressed by Shota and Nami, she raised a question of lack of racial diversity among the instructors by asserting, "I always wondered why there were only... White people. Are

Tempted by Whiteness?

there any Black teachers on this campus?" (Aya). Aya's question about the 'missing race' not only represents the reality of White majority instructors in English education in Japanese universities, but also implied. This is in keeping with Ishihara's argument (1998), which found that White privilege was normalized and authorized as unspoken rules, therefore, taboo among English educators in Japanese universities.

Theme 4: Challenging to De-Center Whiteness

In McIntyre's participatory action research (1997), she examined how her research participants used various speech-tactics in order to avoid critically examining their own Whiteness. They created a discourse that left unchallenged the centrality of Whiteness in race relations by "derailing the conversation, evading questions, dismissing counterarguments, withdrawing from the discussion, remaining silent, interrupting speakers and topics, and colluding each other in creating a 'culture of niceness'" (p. 46). These speech-tactics were called 'White talk' and although the study specifically focused on the characteristics of these speech tactics of White individuals, 'White talk' is pervasively observed in dialogues among all races when they engage in race related conversations. In White talk, people perpetuate their uncritical perspectives by remaining color-blind, and shifting the responsibility to someone else, thus centering Whiteness. Attempts were made to disrupt these uncritical talks by de-centering Whiteness. In their thoughtful reflections, two of the interviewees carefully identified their shifting views and emotive responses to their cross-racial interactions by first centering Whiteness and then by de-centering Whiteness.

First, Aya talked about her experience of hosting a White Australian girl with her family in Japan when she was in high school. She was well aware of her conflicted feelings that she could not dismiss as she went out of her way to please her:

I was reflecting on my experience of her and how much I was trying to please her by constantly talking to her and taking good care of her. At some point, I became so exhausted that I slowly began distancing myself from her. In the end, I didn't even want to see her any more. (Aya)

At the same time, she was aware how she stereotyped White people:

I had this idea about them being open-minded and nice... but I realized now that the reason I had such a positive stereotype about them (White people) was that, maybe, I didn't see them just like us and idealized them too much... and that's why we failed to become closer to each other. (Aya)

Instead of defaulting to self-blame by criticizing her language skills or

Kako Koshino

avoiding the question of White privilege, she carefully analyzed how she might have created an idealized image of White people and acknowledged the racial distance between her and the White Australian girl. She became even more cognizant of the centrality of whiteness through the course that had specifically focused on diversity issues taught by a Japanese professor encouraging her to confront the rarely addressed issue of White privilege in Japanese higher education, thus developing a discourse by challenging the White privilege and de-centering Whiteness:

In our class, there was no White students and when we talked about White privilege, I knew everyone in the class was aware of it. I was constantly reminded that it was everywhere and how visible it was in our everyday life... I am so aware of this problem now that my worldview was definitely reshaped... I realize now that it's those who have privilege who has to change, not those who don't. (Aya)

Like Aya, Nami was provoked and problematized the centrality of Whiteness, male privileges, and the language status quo through reflecting on her personal relationship with her White boyfriend as well as through careful observation of the socially constructed identity of White men and their behavior in Japanese society:

I know this British guy and he told me that it was easy to date Japanese women as they are 'easy' and how he actually looked down on Japanese women... and he is married to a Japanese woman... I often have a conflict about my relationship with the White man I am dating. I have always suspected that the reason he liked me was because I was Japanese. (Nami)

As seen in Dave's case earlier in this article, his race, gender, and possibly, nationality helped him access the network of abundant cultural resources making his life smooth. Given the racially, culturally welcoming environment for people of Dave's background, added to the British man's account on his accessibility to Japanese women, Nami was skeptical of her White boyfriend's motivation to be with her and expressed her frustration about her conflicted feelings and further questioned the envious reaction by her Japanese female peers:

I don't like the response from people in general when I tell them that my boyfriend is from Europe. They are like how lucky you are! Their reaction would have been very different if I were dating a Taiwanese man. Once someone said, 'I wish I had a White boyfriend'. I was so conflicted and I hated it. (Nami)

Nami's affective response to the situation illuminates the absence of critical dialogue about racial privileges and power issues that operate in inter-racial relationships and marriages. It points to an education that carefully teaches people to accept rather than to challenge White male privilege while being aware how the desirable White

Tempted by Whiteness?

male images created undesirable images of Asian men. This implies the possible future research to explore the impact of race and gender on English education, which has rarely explored at Japanese universities.

Discussion

The four themes identified by this research suggest the dissonance, skepticism, and even resistance toward the current implementation of English education and Whiteness. The university's vision and mission for global education lacked clarity according to my research participants, thus questioning the validity of the global education agenda itself. First, there was a sharp dissonance between how global education was promoted as an ideal image by the university and how it was perceived by the interviewees. To the interviewees, the university's goal of global education fixated on the simple idea of English education by White people. There was no substantial engagement with active learning processes such as questioning, assessing, analyzing, and evaluating the complex phenomena that occur at the intersection of imperialism, colonization, race, ethnicity, language, citizenship, economy, politics, beliefs, gender, sexual orientation, and other components. Some of the interviewees challenged White privilege by carefully reflecting on their thoughts, ideas, and behaviors while others challenged the popularly embraced notion of global education.

The interviewees expressed their discomfort about the ways global education was pronounced and implemented by the university. The participants questioned if the current trend of prioritizing English education might run the risk of effacing other aspects of international education. They felt that the purpose of international education had to be rooted in the idea that they must first know their own culture and language well as it provided them with a platform to engage in cross-cultural understanding.

As a result, the concept of 'internationalizing' or 'globalizing' that the university prioritized did not align with the participants' expectations regarding the curriculum and educational practices. Rather, participants had expected that a global education was meant to provide a space where people from different countries and cultures would come together and have meaningful discussions through which 'we discover our stereotypes about each other and analyze how these stereotypes were shaped through media for example' (Kazuya). The process would certainly help the students be self-reflective, eliminating their own prejudices about other cultures, which would hopefully contribute to overcoming the walls between people.

This study was conducted as a means of understanding how

linguistic capital, Whiteness, and English education intersected giving significance to the role of race, dominance, and privilege in the process of the racialization of language education. The critical analysis of such an intersection begs the question of the global education program seen in this study and the clarity of the goals as Japanese society increasingly becomes multilingual and multicultural. The issue of Whiteness has rarely been explored or discussed in Japanese university classes. Overall, the participants' thoughtful reflections challenge the current trends in global education, thereby expanding our existing frame of reference and expanding the ways we think of international/global education.

Implications for Future Research

The findings from the study will serve as a testimony that would guide any future research on English education in international contexts through the lens of Critical Whiteness Studies. Such a research agenda, however, may be met with resistance, due to ideological dissonance resulting from the lack of general awareness about Whiteness. The status quo itself upon which English education and global education are formulated is an often-invisible but quite powerful force standing against change. As seen in Japan's experience of a strong push for 'Enlightenment and Civilization' in response to the Western demands for establishing diplomatic relations for commercial purposes, Japan's economic prosperity and political stability set an unprecedented example of the success by a nation of color in history. This suggests Westernization is crucial to the success of the country and Japan's example remains as a legacy to prove this formula. Thus, changing the formula would require a large-scale educational reform demanding structural transformation and a paradigm shift. Dramatic transformations take time requiring a long-term commitment.

Future research must be aware of this problem and could expand this dimension by carefully examining the sources of resistance and propose an educational agenda that invites all educators to consider the impact of Whiteness as observed in careful analysis of the narratives by the study participants. According to Leonard (2002), it is necessary for one to be familiar with Whiteness in order to confront it, by raising awareness of how one may engage in the vicissitudes of discourses that center, de-center, and re-center Whiteness. The purpose of such a practice and endeavor will hopefully find its way into dismantling the racial status quo while resisting the temptation of Whiteness.

Acknowledgements

First, I would like to thank the participants of this study who were willing to offer their thoughtful reflections and constructive criticism on what they were learning and how they were learning. Your narratives will be valuable resources for those who are involved in creating the curriculum and the learning environment in this critical moment of paradigm shift in all learning communities in Japan and beyond. I would also like to thank Kevin Kumashiro, Bill Ayers, and Jabari Mahiri for their support, encouragement, and offering constructive comments. This article is also dedicated to you.

References

- Banks, J.A. (1993). Multicultural education: Historical development, dimensions, and practice. *American Educational Research Association*, 19, 3-49.
- Cabrera, N. L. (2014). Exposing whiteness in higher education: White male college students minimizing racism, claiming victimization, and recreating White supremacy. *Race, Ethnicity and Education*, 17(1), 30-55.
- Creswell, J. W. (2005). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research*. Hoboken, NJ: Pearson Education.
- Delgado, R. (1987). The ethereal scholar: Does critical legal studies have what minorities want? *Harvard Civil-Liberties Law Review*, 22, 301-322.
- Delgado, R., & Stefancic, J. (1997). *Critical White studies: Looking beyond the mirror*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
- Fine, M. (1997). Witnessing Whiteness. In M. Fine, L. Weis, L. C. P, & L. Mun Wong (Eds.), *Off white* (pp. 57-65). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Frankenberg, R. (1993). *The social construction of Whiteness: White women, race matters*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Guillén, M. F. (2001). Is globalization civilizing, destructive or feeble? A critique of five key debates in the social science literature. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 27, 235-260.
- Gusa, D. L. (2010). White institutional presence: The impact of Whiteness on campus climate. *Harvard Educational Review*, 80(4), 464-490.
- Ishihara, M. (1998). The domination of English and the English teacher education program. In Y. Tsuda (Ed.), *The Japanese and English* (pp. 55-66). Kyoto, Japan: International Research Center for Japanese Studies.
- Hara, Y. (1977). Westernization to Japanization: The replacement of foreign teachers by Japanese who studied abroad. *The Developing Economies*, 15(4), 440-461.
- Jackson, R. L., & Heckman, S. M. (2002). Perceptions of White identity and White liability: An analysis of White student responses to a college campus racial hate crime. *Journal of Communication*, 52(2), 434-450.
- Japan Times. (2014). *Universities aim to boost their global ranking*. Retrieved from https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2014/10/22/national/universities-aim-to-boost-their-global-ranking/#.Wfk_04hUuUk
- Kanai, M. (1997). *Oyatoigaikokujin in the national archives and historical*

- documents. Tokyo, Japan: Tokyo University Library System.
- Kincheloe, J. L., & Steinberg, S. R. (1991). Addressing the crisis of Whiteness: Reconfiguring White identity in a pedagogy of Whiteness. In J. Kincheloe, S. Steinberg, N. M. Rodriguez, & R. E. Chennault (Eds.), *White reign: Developing Whiteness in America* (pp. 4-29). New York, NY: St. Martin's Press.
- Koshino, K. (2016). Campus climate and experiences of students of color in a Midwestern college. In F. Tuitt, C. Haynes, & S. Stewart (Eds.), *Race, equity and the learning environment: The global relevance of critical and inclusive pedagogies in higher education* (pp. 98-111). Richmond, VA: Stylus Publishing.
- Kubota, R. (1998). Ideologies of English in Japan. *World Englishes*, 17(3), 295-306.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (1998). Just what is critical race theory and what's it doing in a nice field like education? *Qualitative Studies in Education*, 11, 7-24.
- Lee, S. J. (2005). *Up against Whiteness: race, school, and immigrant youth*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Leonardo, Z. (2002). The souls of White folk: Critical pedagogy, Whiteness studies, and globalization discourse. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 5(1), 29-50.
- Levitt, T. (1983). The globalization of markets. *Harvard Business Review*, 61(3), 92-102.
- Lewis, C., Ketter, J., & Fabos, B. (2001). Reading race in a rural context. *Qualitative Studies in Education*, 14(3), 317-350.
- Maeda, M. (2010). *Uniqlo, Rakuten make official language English*. Japan Center for Economic Research. <http://www.jcer.or.jp/eng/research/pdf/maeda20100715e.pdf>
- McIntosh, P. (1997). White privilege and male privilege: A personal account coming to see correspondences through work in women's studies. In R. Delgado & J. Stefancic (Eds.), *Critical White studies: Looking behind the mirror* (pp. 291-299). Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
- McIntyre, A. (1997). *Making meaning of Whiteness*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology. (2014). *Top global university project*. Retrieved from <https://tgu.mext.go.jp/en/about/index.html>
- Nakayama, T. K., & Krizek, R. L. (1995). Whiteness: A strategic rhetoric. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 81, 291-309.
- Petras, J., & Veltmeyer, H. (2001). *Globalization unmasked*. New York, NY: Zed Books.
- Ross, T. (2002). The unbearable Whiteness of being. In F. Valdes, J. M. Culp, & A. P. Harris (Eds.), *Crossroads, directions, and a New Critical Race Theory* (pp. 251-258). Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
- Sleeter, C. (1993). How White teachers construct race. In C. McCarthy, W. Crichlow, G. Dimitriadis, & N. Dolby (Eds.), *Race, identity and representation in education* (pp. 1-20). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Sparke, M. (2013). *Introducing globalization: Ties, tensions, and uneven integration*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Tate IV, W. (1997). Critical Race Theory and education: History, theory, and implications. *Review of Research Education*, 22, 195-247.