

VISITING ENROLLMENT AT JAPANESE PRIMARY SCHOOL

ESCOLARIZACIÓN DE EXPERIENCIA EN COLEGIOS DE PRIMARIA JAPONESES

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Abstract

In the modern and globalized world in which we live at this moment, people are moving all over the world, the rate of international marriage increases and the children with mixed cultural backgrounds are not strange as were before. One of the most frequent and strong desires of these internationalized families is the maintenance of their heritage languages and the cultures. However, various studies show the difficulties these families face, mainly because of the decline of opportunities to use the heritage language, and consequently its development is slowed or even stopped considerably. In addition, the linguistic competence of a language is not based on the improvement of a language itself only, but also on the culture and society of the heritage language. How can we increase the opportunities for the children with heritage languages to study the languages as well as experience the culture? In this work, the case of visiting enrollment at a Japanese primary school will be presented and analyzed descriptively to learn from this case. Though the implementation of such educational opportunity in different settings might be very challenging, this example will be able to offer a new model for the maintenance and strengthening of heritage language education.

Keywords: heritage language; language and culture; visiting enrollment; Japanese primary school

Resumen

En el mundo moderno globalizado en que vivimos actualmente, las personas mueven por todo el mundo, los matrimonios internacionales aumentan, y los niños con dos o más antecedentes culturales ya no son tan excepcionales como antes. Uno de los deseos frecuentes de las familias internacionalizadas es el mantenimiento de las lenguas, o, en otras palabras, las lenguas de herencia y las culturas de origen. Sin embargo, varios estudios previos muestran las dificultades a las que se enfrentan estas familias, principalmente causadas por la disminución o la desaparición de las oportunidades de utilizar la lengua de herencia. Además, la competencia lingüística de una lengua no se basa solo en el aprendizaje de la lengua en sí, sino también en la cultura y la sociedad que la rodean alrededor de la lengua de herencia. ¿Cómo podemos incrementar las oportunidades para los niños con las lenguas de herencia para estudiarlas y al mismo tiempo tener las experiencias culturales? En este trabajo, se presentará un caso de la escolarización de experiencia en un colegio de primaria japonés. Se realizará un análisis descriptivo del caso para poder aprender de él. Por último, aunque la implementación de la oportunidad educativa de este caso en otros sistemas sociales puede parecer demasiado desafiante, este ejemplo creemos que logra ofrecer un nuevo modelo para la educación hacia un mantenimiento y fortalecimiento de la lengua de herencia.

Palabras clave: lengua de herencia; lengua y cultura; escolarización de experiencia; escuelas primarias japonesas

INTRODUCTION

In the modern globalized world in which we live in, people are moving, living and working all over the world. The rate of international marriage increases and the children with mixed culture backgrounds are no longer strange. Consequently, the questions relating to education is getting to be much more complex than before. One of the most frequent and strong desires, but at the same time the most complicated and effort-needed matters for the internationally moving families is the maintenance of their heritage languages. Yet, various studies show the difficulties they face. In addition, the linguistic competence of a language is not based on the improvement of a language itself only, but also on the appreciation of culture and society of the heritage language. To be competent in a language involves diverse factors such as understanding of traditional customs, managing social and interpersonal relationships and knowing of cultural behaviors. How can we give the opportunities for the children with heritage languages to develop the language skill as well as the cultural competence? In order to seek the ways for the better learning environment, this study examines the case of visiting enrollment in Japanese primary school.

Our target is Japan and the Japanese as a heritage language. Today, the Japanese society is facing numerous social changes caused by the globalization. Such shifts affect the Japan's everyday-life, including the school education. Increasing number of children now have diverse cultural backgrounds and the Japanese schools are challenged to adapt to the new demands and needs.

By means of data analysis as well as descriptive analysis of a qualitative data collected by interviews and observations, this article aims to provide some picture of current state of visiting enrollment at a Japanese public primary school. The case study shows the positive outcomes and problems of this system, which may be served as a new model for the maintenance and strengthening of heritage language education.

HERITAGE LANGUAGE

A heritage language means a language of immigrants, indigenous people or minority group in which a person wants to be connected in (He, 2010, p. 66). Moreover, a heritage language is generally used or inherited within a family and it also differs from the language spoken in the living society (He, 2010; Takamori, 2015, p. 491). The difference between a heritage language and a foreign language is that, the speakers of heritage languages are often united by the strong and special ties with their heritage language and culture because those are a part of their family history, their com-

munity and their identity (Kelleher, 2010, p.1; He, 2010; Kim, 2017; Takamori, 2015; Kondo-Brown, 2010; Leeman, Rabin & Ramón-Mendoza, 2011). Thus, the education on heritage language is not only a matter of language acquisition technic, but also the construction of cultural values, the way of seeing and observing the world, and the identity of the person with his/her heritage language (Takamori, 2015, p. 492).

Some researchers study the heritage language from the viewpoint of capital. For example, for Bourdieu, "capital" is the stock of resource and potentialities to produce benefits that are keys to increase or decrease the possibility of success in this contemporary world (1986). There are three categories of capital: economic, cultural and social capital. For the purpose of this study, the cultural capital is very critical. According to him, the cultural capital is the product of family efforts to pursue something, such as heritage languages, and a tremendous effort are needed to achieve this capital such as time, economic cost, personal struggle and all other work to be done within the framework of domestic education (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 243). This is the very reason that the investment on the cultural capital by family is important so that their children can dream of a better future (Takamori, 2015, p. 495; Nunn, 2008, p. 473). Kondo-Brown also support the importance of family involvement for the maintenance of heritage language, but she also pays attention to the state policies on the languages of minorities (Kondo-Brown, 2001, p. 157). Fortunately, the modern world with the waves of inclusive education is a favorable current for the education of heritage language, which not only include the linguistic resources but also the surrounding culture, or putting in other words, the cultural capital (Kondo-Brown, 200, p. 157).

Japanese as a heritage language

Although the total number of speakers of Japanese as a heritage language is very limited, its history is not too short. At the beginning of twentieth century, the first Japanese immigration to overseas headed to countries like Peru, Brazil and the United State (mainly to Hawaii and the West Coast). Those who emigrated and obtained the nationality or permanent residence of the destination countries, or their descendants are called *nikkei-jin*. The possibilities of maintaining the Japanese as a heritage language depended very much on the international politics and relations between destination countries and Japan around the World War II. Due to such circumstances, the researches on the education of Japanese as a heritage language had long been studied within the framework of the education for *nikkei-jin* (Calder, 2014, p. 10). After Japan's defeat of World War II, the Japanese economy recorded

the remarkable expansion especially during the 70s and 80s. In order to search for the new markets in foreign countries, the Japanese companies started to send their workers to the international branches, and some children of those people have established their lives in the destination countries. Here, the new necessity of education on Japanese as a heritage language is born. These two groups of speakers of Japanese as a heritage language (the *nikkei-jin* and the Japanese emigrants after the World War II) have the different needs and linguistic competence due to their background and social situations (Calder, 2014). Furthermore, the most recent trend, which has not been researched deeply enough yet, is the Japanese as a heritage language for the children of international marriages living in foreign countries. The lack of investigation in this new field is precisely the reason why this article treats this issue to fill the gap between the current demands and the absence in this research sphere.

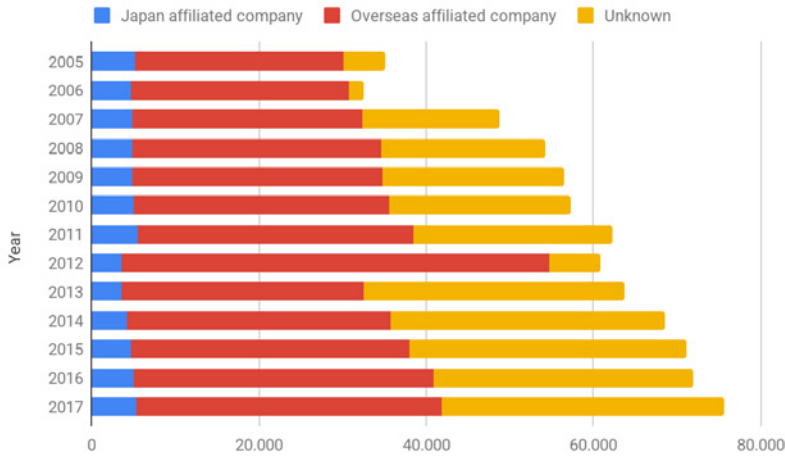
JAPAN, INTERNATIONALIZATION, AND CHILDREN

Today, the Japanese society has been facing a number of social problems and changes. One of the most severe issues is the shrinking population, which causes the problem of aging society, depopulation of rural areas, decrease of children, lack of manpower, and so forth. On the other hand, the wave of globalization brings a fresh air to this apparently homogeneous nation. Although the trend is nothing to compare with the countries of colony or immigrant traditions, this is a quite big challenge for the Japanese society to host the international demographic movements. The multinational companies send their Japanese employees to the offices abroad, and bring foreign workers into Japan. The international marriage between the Japanese and foreigners are notable more and more. And recently the Abe government is changing its immigration policy to welcome more immigrants into Japan (Osaki, 2018). Such shifts affect the everyday-life of Japanese, including the school life.

Internationalization of Japanese companies

There are more than 75,500 Japanese companies which are operating their business outside Japan, and the tendency of increase has continued since 2005. Another trend is the increment of number of Japanese companies but overseas affiliated. This tendency contributes to the raise of Japanese long-term or permanent emigration to foreign countries, therefore, pushes the growth of children with Japanese as a heritage language.

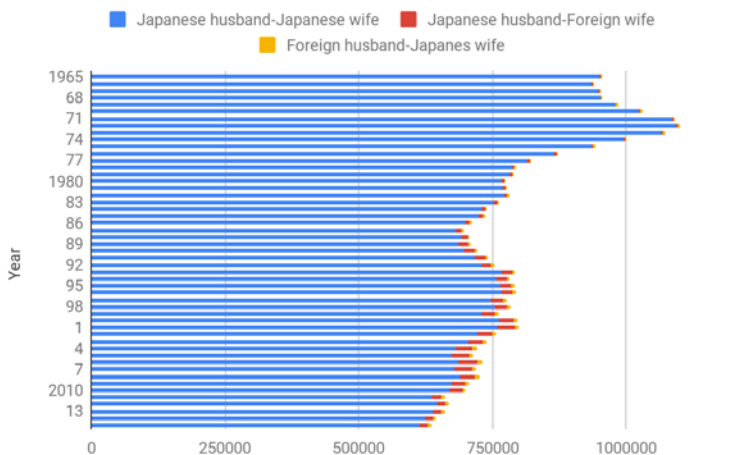
Chart 1. Japanese Affiliated Companies (hub-based) (Designed by the author, based on the data derived from Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, Consular Affairs Bureau, Consular Policy Division, 2017)



International marriage between Japanese and foreigners

Being an island, Japan never has been a remarkable country of international marriage. Yet, while the total number of marriages is decreasing, the number of international marriages is increasing. There has been a boom of Japanese husbands and foreigner (mainly from Asian countries) wives couple during 1980s and 1990s. Recent tendency is the growing of foreign husbands and Japanese wives (Amano, 2017).

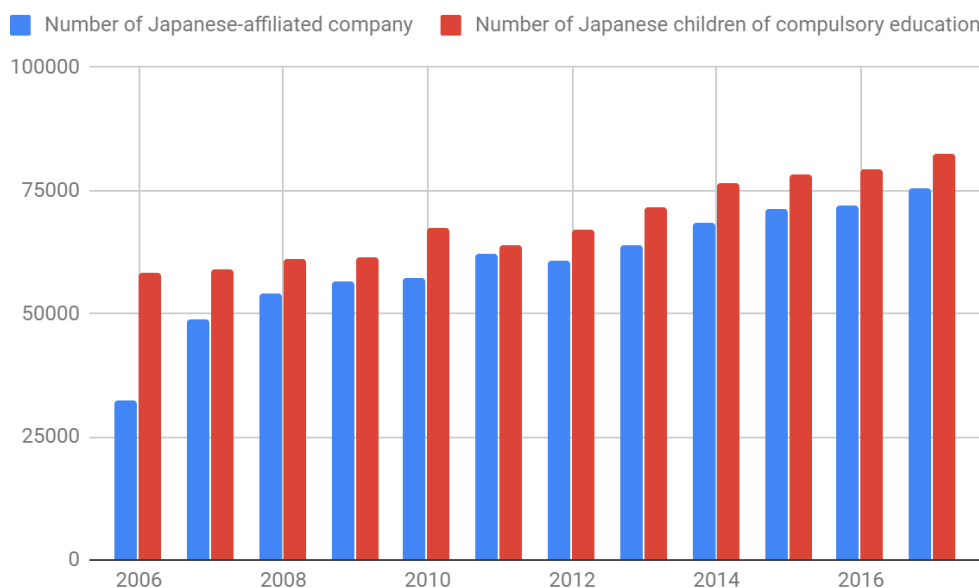
Chart 2. National and International Marriages (Designed by the author, based on the data derived from Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, 2016)



Japanese children in overseas

The majority of Japanese children living in foreign countries are those of Japanese working abroad. Chart 3 illustrates that growth of number of Japanese-affiliated companies abroad and the increase of Japanese children of compulsory education ages. As observed, the more Japanese business is established in overseas, the more Japanese go abroad to work and the more Japanese children live out of Japan.

Chart 3. Number of Japanese-affiliated company and Japanese children of compulsory education in abroad (Designed by the author, based on the data derived from E-Stat, 2017)



To those Japanese children in foreign countries, the educational options provided are basically the following four: 1), going to the Japanese school, 2) going to the local school or international school as well as the Japanese supplementary school, 3) going to the local school or international school and study Japanese material by themselves, or 4) going to the local school or international school only. There are 89 Japanese schools officially recognized by the Japanese government in 50 countries and 1 area (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, n.d. a). They offer the same school curriculums as Japan by using the textbooks provided by the government. They are founded basically to educate the children of Japanese business persons abroad whose overseas assignment are supposed to be in limited period, so that the children are not to lose their Japanese educational track even out of Japan, and to be able to re-enter the education system smoothly once back to

Japan. Those who live in non-English speaking countries tend to bring their sons to the Japanese school, whereas those in English speaking countries often choose the local school (because the ability of English can be advantageous once back in Japan), and take them to the supplementary school to complement the Japanese education. Those who study at international schools oftentimes have the similar reason of preference for English learning and the multicultural atmosphere. There are 205 supplementary Japanese schools in 53 countries and one area all over the world, and they offer mainly Japanese class (*kokugo*) and other materials. Those who have bad access to the Japanese or supplementary school frequently study Japanese by themselves, using the materials from Japan or distance courses delivered by some institutions like Japan Overseas Educational Service.

Chart 4. Types of school and Japanese children in abroad (primary school level) (Designed by the author, based on the data derived from E-Stat, 2017.)

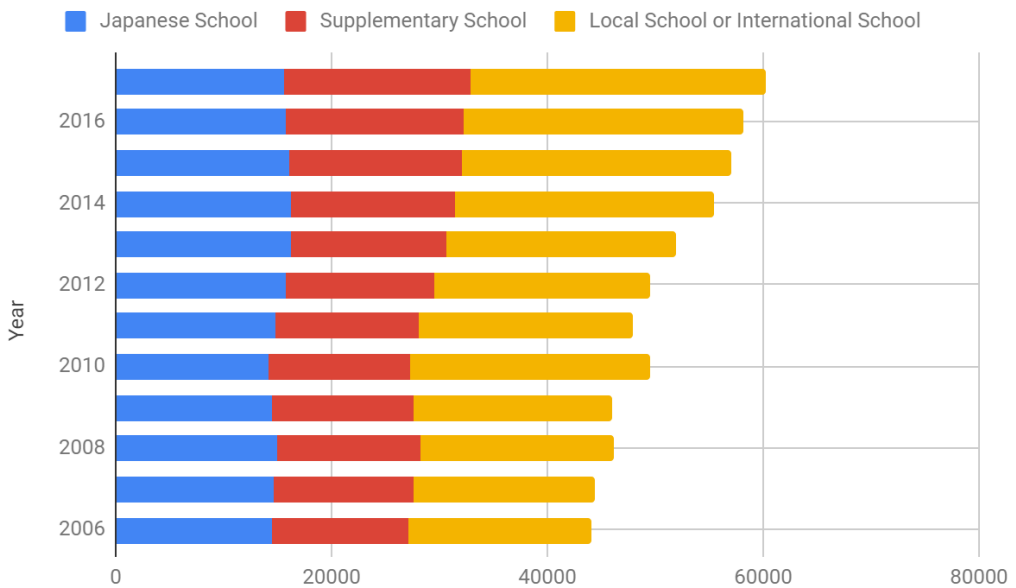


Chart 4 show that a growing number of Japanese children in foreign countries choose the local or international schools instead of Japanese school or supplementary school. The reasons are, the preference of English education as stated before, and because the number of Japanese children counted in this statistic includes the children of international marriage who hold the Japanese nationality but living

abroad, and may not have the future vision of living Japan. In those cases, learning Japanese in depth is not the urgent issue, so they do not have much pressure to follow the Japanese education.

EDUCATION IN JAPAN AND VISITING ENROLLMENT

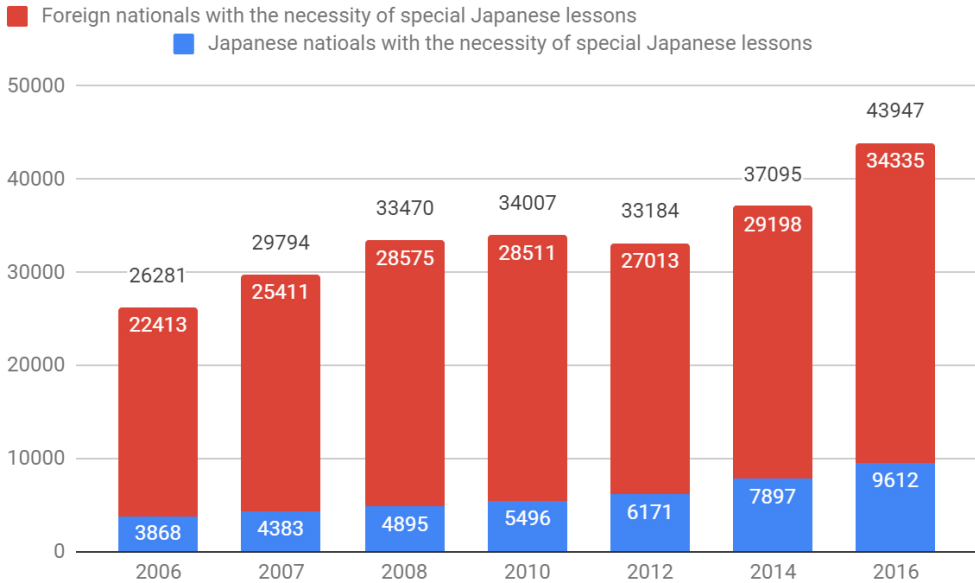
Legal framework

Under the Article 26 of the Japanese Constitution (1946), all Japanese have the rights and responsibility to education. In accordance with the Constitution, the Basic Act of Education (2006) defines the details of education, and the School Education Act (1947) designs the different types of schools. The School Education Act illustrates the importance of compulsory schools to teach children the basic social norms, such as values of cooperation, respect to the nature, and the good understanding of Japanese culture and tradition as well as the foreign cultures. The Japanese nationals living abroad can receive the Japanese education if go to the Japanese schools (or at the supplementary school if wish partially). Still all have rights to receive the pack of Japanese textbooks for free every year through Japanese embassies (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, n.d.b). Those extensive cares for children in overseas seem to be the Japanese government's manifestation of strong belief in education to construct the identity as Japanese.

Diversification of children's origins at Japanese schools

Together with the globalized market and internationalization waves, not only the number of Japanese living outside of Japan increase, but also the foreign people living within Japan increment, therefore, the number of foreign children studying at Japanese schools expands. The chart 5 shows the growth of both Japanese nationals and foreigners with the necessity of special Japanese lessons. It is remarkable that in last ten years, the foreign students with needs of Japanese lessons has increased about 1,5 times, and the Japanese has increased 2,5 times, fundamentally due to the Japanese nationals of international marriage who coming back from overseas (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, 2018, p.5).

Chart 5. Number of students with necessity of special Japanese lessons (Designed by the author, based on the data derived from Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, 2018, p.2)



To summarize, the internationalization brings to the Japanese schools the variety of children from diverse backgrounds and differing needs. The Japanese school of all levels are facing the big challenge to be flexible and adapt themselves to response the new requirements that the internationalization delivers. The visiting enrollment is one of their answers.

Visiting enrollment

There is no official school system called "visiting enrollment" (*taiken nyūgaku* in Japanese, literally means "entrance experience"). Yet, since 2001, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology sets the council to study the education for foreign students and Japanese students coming back to Japanese schools (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, n.d.c). Recently there are some local authorities that explain the necessary processes for visiting enrollment. For example, the Kamakura City has the official document saying that the visiting enrollment consists of,

- This system is designed and offered to children living abroad and coming back to Kamakura for their summer vacation to experience the Japanese school.

- The assigned school corresponds to the resident address in Kamakura during his/her stay.
- Normally the length of visiting enrollment is no more than one month.
- Textbooks should be prepared by himself/herself.
- Fee of school lunch, educational materials, and other expense should be paid to the corresponding school.

The process is as follows,

1. Call or ask to the corresponding school directly before. (It should be noted that there are some occasions we cannot accept the visiting enrollment due to lack of child's language competence, school facility problems, etc.)
2. If the school gives permission, once back to Japan, you should go to the board of education (*kyōiku iinkai*) of the city to submit the application form.
3. Receive the permission from the board of education.
4. Finally, submit the permission to the school and arrange the visiting enrollment.

(Kamakura City, 2017)

Zushi City also offers its official information, but it limits to those who live in foreign countries and have plan to live in Zushi City when come back to Japan, and only once before the official enrollment (Zushi City, 2018).

There are scarcely academic studies done regarding the visiting enrollment. Sugimori (Akimoto) (2006) studies the effects of visiting enrollment to examine how much it contributes to the improvement of Japanese acquisition. Her sample are three Japanese-American, and one Japanese-Japanese children living in the United State, whose normal conversations are in English and Japanese. She recorded the family conversations before and after the visiting enrollment experience and found out the considerable improvement of language competence of these children after the visiting enrollment experience.

CASE STUDY

In order to study deeply about the visiting enrollment and its advantages and disadvantages, the case study methodology is adopted for this research. Our samples are two children of Spanish father and Japanese mother; a boy of 10 years old and a girl of 7 years old. At the time of the research, they were living in Spain but they had been traveling between Spain and Japan frequently ever since they were born, including the experience of attending the Japanese public school. In Spain, they go to the Spanish concerted primary school (*colegio concertado*), and they do not go to the Japanese supplementary school because there is no such school in the city they live.

They study Japanese using the distance course during weekends with their mother. Their parents work for academic-related jobs, and they are quite conscious about the importance of education on the Japanese as heritage language, which drives them to send their children to the visiting enrollment during the summer vacation.

The family decided to send their two children to the public school in Gamagōri City, Aichi Prefecture, where the parents of the wife live and where they used to live. Even though Gamagōri city is a small rural city with about 80.000 population located near the third biggest city of Japan, Nagoya (prefectural capital of Aichi), the notable feature is the relatively high representation of foreign residents (approximately 3.000 people, 4% of the population) (Gamagōri City, 2019). Compared to the proportion of foreigners in Japan (2%) (Urano, 2018), this rate is remarkable, yet very typical of cities in Aichi Prefecture due to the foreign blue-colour workers working for the car-industry-related factories of Toyota located in this area. Therefore, people of Gamagōri is quite get used to live with the foreign people, and so as schools.

The two children went to the public primary school near to their grandparents' home. They have been there before, they already had many friends from the school and their grandparents and parents knew some of the school teachers already. All of these conditions were favorable to carry out the visiting enrollment. Also, this school had a considerably large number of foreign or mixed national (Japanese and foreigner) children because of the situation of Gamagōri City as described before. Thus, the school already had a flexible attitude towards children from foreign backgrounds. Moreover, the school already had experiences of receiving students of visiting enrollment before. In fact, there are many Japanese working for multinational companies located near Gamagōri like *Toyota*, *Denso* and other affiliations of *Toyota*, and they were frequently assigned to the foreign office. Some of their children already used the visiting enrollment at this primary school (about 2 to 5 children per year). In this sense, the preconditions this primary school had were notably favorable to receive these two children.

Administration Process

Without knowing the process of the visiting enrollment, the grandmother of the children talked to the school in the middle of April, 2018 to ask the possibility of visiting enrollment. The school told her to make a phone call at the end of May (since in May they were to have a sports festival and teachers were busy). The mother made an international call from Spain after the sports festival day, and asked again the possibility. She was received very warmly by the curriculum-coordinator. Considering the school calendar, they arranged the starting and ending dates of the visiting en-

rollment, which were from the end of June to the early September. Thus, in this case, no administration process through official channels was needed because Gamagōri City did not have the officialized process and the decision was left to each school and its director.

Once they arrived to Japan, one day before starting the school, the children and the mother went to the school to introduce themselves, meet the teachers, and pay the lunch fee (*kyūshoku hi*) for the corresponding dates.

Experience

On the first day, the children went to school with their neighbor friends in *tōkō dan* (the group formed by neighborhood children to go to school together without adults). Their teachers rent the textbooks and supplementary materials such as mathematics and kanji drills. At the end of the first day, the children came home quite happily. According to them, there were several sons of immigrants in their classes and the assistant teachers to take care of foreigners helped them when needed.

Since then, two children completed the all classes and all assignments as if they were the officially enrolled students. The elder child happened to be on the day of excursion to the sea and enjoyed the special lecture there. There were summer holidays from the third week of June until the fourth week of August. Still, there were activities organized by the school and the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) such as swimming activities (that were offered almost every day during holidays) and the painting workshops. They did all the homework given for the summer holidays even though their paintings and essays could not go to the official contests as they were not enrolled to the school formally. The boy also participated in the after-class soccer club activity and enjoyed it very much. Yet, the coach told him that he could not go to the competition because he was not an official student of the school, therefore, he could not represent the school. Eventually the competition was not held due to the weather condition, but he felt a sort of disappointment.

Positive outcomes

There are numerous positive outcomes for these two children gained from the experience of visiting enrollment. First of all, their development of Japanese language skill was remarkable. At the beginning, they suffered a little confusion and frustration of not being able to express themselves in Japanese, but soon their language ability caught up with other children of their age. At classes, learning a large number of kanji (which is one of three Japanese characters and approximately 1.000 letters

are taught at primary school level, about 10 new letters per week) was a tough task, yet it appeared to be less hard than doing it by themselves at home in Spain, since they did with their friends at school or at home by doing homework together. In fact, the girl eventually achieved to get a mark of 94 out of 100 at the kanji quiz. Secondly, they could experience the school life that were realizable by only being in Japan. For example, not only eating but also serving and cleaning up the lunch is a unique but very educational experience possible only in Japan. Cleaning their classrooms and all school facilities by themselves also help children to be disciplined. These contribute to learn the values such as cooperation and discipline highly appreciated in Japan. Thirdly, they could have the cultural experience through the school activities such as the festival of *Tanabata* in July as the School Education Act describes. Fourthly, they could also get in touch with the neighbors living around the school community, since there were many volunteers involved in the school activities like volunteer patrol while children go to school and come back home, library volunteers, and PTA volunteers at swimming pool activities. These face-to-face interactions helped the children strengthen the sociolinguistics competence. Finally, and perhaps, the most important is the discovery of reason to be motivated to learning Japanese. To keep in touch with their friends made through this experience, to be back to the school again next year if possible, and to be able to identify themselves as Japanese, it is necessary to keep studying Japanese. The increase of motivation was observed especially when they came back to Spain and started to study Japanese at home. The same can be said for the other students of the classes. They seemed to be more motivated to learn all about the foreign cultures these two children brought into their classes. On this wise, the visiting enrollment contributes mutually to make a better learning atmosphere at classroom.

Problems

Problems are observed from both sides of the school and the family. As for the school, having an extra student with a need of help means an additional work. Therefore, it could be a burden or a problem. Actually, the teacher of the boy was a chief teacher of fourth grade and had a lot of meetings outside the school. He seemed be very busy although his effort to host the boy was significant and his attitude to make him feel comfortable was noticeable. Perhaps this problem was even clearer because the boy was at the fourth grade and the studies were getting harder than the girl at the second grade. Consequently, the teachers of elder grades were busier to take care of other students and other matters. Regarding the difficulties observed for the family, first, it would have been impossible to experience the visiting enrollment if there were not living in Spain and had the summer vacation when

the Japanese host school was still during the first semester or it had extra activities during the summer break. Furthermore, this family was fortunate to be able to have a long vacation and to afford the cost to stay in Japan for a relatively long period. On top of that, fortunately they had their grandparents who help the process of visiting enrollment, and the school with whom they could have a good relationship. Without all these conditions, the visiting enrollment experience would have been impossible. Secondly, the boy looked to have more difficulty than the girl to fit into the school. Some of the reasons were, for example, the Japanese study level was higher in the fourth grade than the second grade, therefore, he felt some stress for not being able to catch up with his classmates. Another cause was the fact that he could not participate in the soccer game because he was not officially-registered student and it provoked him to have some frustration. Those are unavoidable because the visiting enrollment is merely an opportunity to experience the Japanese school life. Yet, it is also important to pay attention to the children's emotional satisfaction and to look for the ways to fulfill their expectations.

CONCLUSION

In this study, the system of visiting enrollment in Japan was examined descriptively to see the positive outcomes and problems of this scheme. Several advantages were observed such as the improvement of competence in heritage language, the opportunities of experiencing the cultural events and community-based interactions, and the increment of motivation to keep studying the heritage language. On the other hand, it was also discovered that realizing the visiting enrollment needs to meet numerous lucky conditions such as the family ability to afford the travel cost and the long-period vacation, the timing of the school holidays, relatives' support and good understanding of the host school. Considering those aspects, the implementation of such educational opportunity in different educational settings in other countries might be challenging. Still, this analysis based on the case study of Japan may be able to show a new model for the maintenance and strengthening of heritage language education.

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