Super Glocal Education: Exploring and Explaining Japanese Culture in English Classes

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Abstract: Government initiatives such as the “Global 30” and “Top Global University Project” illustrate a growing emphasis on the need for developing deeper intercultural awareness in higher education in Japan. This is a welcome change for those English language teachers who have always seen the English classroom as a place for integrating intercultural communication with language study. Unfortunately, EFL materials have not completely kept pace with this shift. Although many English language teachers endeavor to integrate language and culture teaching, finding suitable materials can be a huge challenge. An increasing number of EFL textbooks do indeed include rich cultural content, but it is impossible to cater to the needs and interests of all students in a class, especially if different students have aspirations to study or live in a specific foreign country. In addition, many textbooks are designed to be used by students in a wide range of countries, making it difficult to focus on individual cultures and their place in the world. Regardless of which foreign countries students are interested in, however, there is one common intercultural skill which all students need—the ability to articulate their own culture in English. In this paper, the author will propose one model for designing university English courses which include a focus on Japanese culture. This proposal illustrates that teachers should actually strive for glocal, not global, education.

Keywords: glocal education, global education, Japanese culture, intercultural awareness, international collaboration

Introduction

Recent higher education initiatives such as the “Global 30” and “Top Global University Project” (スーパーグローバル大学創成支援) illustrate attempts by Japan’s Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT) to globalize Japanese universities. Along with these initiatives has been the proliferation of the term “global *jinzai*,” or “Global Human Resources” (Yonezawa, 2014). Some of the goals put forth by the Council on Promotion of Human Resource for Globalization Development (2012) were for tertiary institutions to produce students with strong linguistic and communicative skills and an understanding of both foreign cultures and their own Japanese identity.

Such initiatives have obvious implications for English language education at the university level, particularly with the need to integrate language instruction with intercultural skills and global awareness. For many teachers, this hardly represents a sea change, as they may have already followed Krasner’s (1997) assertion that it takes more than just linguistic knowledge to be competent in a foreign language. Kramsch (1993) summarized the language and culture connection even more strongly by stating that “teaching language is teaching culture” (p. 177). In the specific context of Japan, English teachers may have also adhered to Cates’ (2004) vision that English should not only be a subject memorized for exams, but also to “help students learn about the rich variety of people in our multicultural world” (p. 31).

There are, however, several complications to successfully integrating language and culture instruction. The first complication is time limitations. Since many university-level English courses only meet once a week for 90 minutes, teachers may struggle with how to properly devote significant class time to culture instruction. To make matters worse, many traditional EFL materials do not provide sufficient cultural content, as culture may be relegated to trivial items at the end of a unit rather than an integral component of the lesson. Reimann (2009) criticized the fact that cultural content is often "presented out of context and without any representative or anchoring information" (p. 98). With regards to language teachers' approach to teaching culture, one study by Moore (1996) revealed that teachers generally relied on textbooks to provide cultural information, resulting in teachers providing only cursory factual information rather than in-depth cross-cultural analysis.

Perhaps due to these time limitations—and traditional EFL materials—many have questioned how profoundly cultural issues are covered in English language courses. A common criticism is that culture is only glossed over and covers only the lighter "5 F's" of food, fashion, famous people, festivals, and flags. In his *cultural iceberg* metaphor, Weaver (1987) criticized this approach as teaching only "surface culture" or "visible culture." It can thus be difficult to get deeper information about "values, attitudes, and beliefs in L2 culture" (Dema & Kramer-Moeller, 2012, p. 79) when limited attention is given to culture in EFL classes. If we are to make culture teaching an integral component of language teaching, however, it is ideal to go beyond these superficial cultural products and consider deeper, more complex cultural values, which have also been described as "hidden culture" (Hall, 1966) or "deep culture" (Shaules, 2010).

One additional complication with regards to integrating language and culture teaching is identifying the target culture. With the spread of English as a global language, many now argue that focusing on countries where English is the native language in EFL courses is an outdated model, as we can no longer clearly define what a "target culture" actually is (Wenninger & Kiss, 2013). While focusing on a specific culture would certainly make sense for a study abroad preparation course in which all students will study in the same country or university (or an elective course about a specific target culture), such classes are the minority. A majority of English courses are general education courses with varying student needs and interests. Even in courses designed for students who endeavor to study abroad, students may be preparing to go to a wide range of destinations, increasingly including countries where English is not a native language (Shimmi, 2015). In our ever-globalizing world, it is just as likely for our Japanese students to use English with fellow non-native speakers of the language as with native speakers, as it has been estimated that 80 percent of English interactions are actually between fellow non-native English speakers (Finster, 2004). This reality has important implications for the role of culture in English language courses.

Considering the time limitations, issues with traditional EFL materials, and difficulty in identifying the target culture, one solution for English language courses in Japan is to start with the native culture of the students. Developing global skills involves not only understanding foreign cultures, but also your own cultural identity in our globalizing world. The importance of understanding one's own culture is often overlooked, considering the emphasis on foreign language education to acquire both a target language *and* culture. Kramsch (1993), however, argued that "teachers need

to recognize that students need to have sufficient knowledge and understanding of their own culture that will allow them to create a bridge from their culture to L2 culture" (p. 80). More recently, Lim and Griffith (2016) similarly claimed that "awareness of the learners' own culture is most likely to be a stepping stone to understanding the differences and similarities between cultures" (p. 1034). Regardless of the native country of the interlocutor, when Japanese people communicate in English, they need to not only be open to and aware of the foreign culture, but also be able to explain their own culture when necessary. Because of this reality, it is also important to include the role of Japanese culture in any discussion of culture in English language courses in Japan.

Still, focusing on Japanese culture in English language courses has its own potential drawbacks and obstacles. Consequently, there are several arguments against the approach of focusing on students' own culture in English language courses. One argument is that it is merely focusing on information which students already know. Hinkel (1999) and Turkan and Celik (2007) criticized this approach of presenting students only with familiar situations. Considering this, a related concern is student motivation. As English language courses provide students with the opportunity to increase their understanding of a foreign language and culture, how motivated would they be to merely learn about their own culture in such a course? One final argument is the concern that too much emphasis on the native culture might encourage students to glorify their own culture. If students are given the impression that focusing on their own culture illustrates the superiority of their own culture, this obviously goes completely against the goals of foreign language and culture education. Finally, there is again the limitation of existing EFL materials. Many EFL textbooks are marketed globally, making it impossible for them to also include a focus on students' native culture (Reimann, 2009).

A Model for Focusing on Japanese Culture in English Courses

In order to facilitate creating courses which integrate English language instruction with opportunities to explore and explain Japanese culture—and to respond to the criticisms above—the main purpose of this paper is to outline one model for implementing such culture-rich language courses. One way to potentially overcome the drawbacks and obstacles of such an approach is to design English language courses which give students the opportunity to explore Japanese culture, but also to: 1) localize, 2) personalize, 3) get international perspectives, 4) collaborate with international students, and 5) analyze and criticize. To ensure this paper also has a practical component, the author will include sample classroom-tested activities and anecdotes from his more than 10 years of experience teaching English language courses at the university level in Japan. With regards to classroom activities, the five steps above are intended as five separate possible approaches and of course not all five need to be included for each activity. Still, it is possible for some activities or projects to include several, or even all, of the steps.

Localize

As previously noted, one danger of teaching culture in language classes is the tendency for materials to include only cursory or overgeneralized information about a culture. There is obviously the same potential drawback even when focusing on students' native culture. Reimann (2009) pointed out that even EFL materials with the good intention of comparing Japanese and foreign culture run the risk of being

“counterproductive” and making students think “Japan and Japanese are one paradigm and the rest of the world is different” (p. 95). The myth that Japan is a culturally homogenous nation is propagated by foreign and Japanese writers alike. Japan is a country of more than 125 million people, with a great range of diverse local customs. University English courses are a great environment for exploring this diversity. Although a large number of students may indeed come from the local region, in any given university English class it is also not uncommon to have students from up to 10 or more different prefectures. So, English classes not only give students opportunities to learn about foreign culture, but also about the different regions and respective customs of Japan.

One sample activity to start exploring the diversity of Japan is a “Japan Food Tour.” Give students the task of designing a food tour of Japan for foreign tourists and sharing their ideas with their classmates. Students are of course free to choose foods from their home region or anywhere in Japan. Although students are bound to choose *some* of the same foods, there will also be a great range of answers in a typical class of 20-40 students. Granted, the topic of food is given as one of the “5 F’s” representing only factual, surface level cultural information. With slight modifications to the task, however, students can acquire more meaningful linguistic and culture outcomes.

From a language standpoint, describing and explaining Japanese food in English is no easy task, especially considering the tendency for oversimplified translation. With regards to French culture, Bush (2007) detailed how “cooked pork meats” is an inadequate English translation of *charcuterie*. The same issue occurs with Japanese dishes such as *okonomiyaki*, often inadequately translated as “pancake,” or even “Japanese pizza.” Explaining such foods in English gives students the important practice of *describing* rather than merely literally translating Japanese foods and/or cultural terms.

From a cultural viewpoint, even discussing food can become a topic of deeper culture if you add the all-important question of *why*. Tang (2006) stressed that “not only should students know the *what* and *how* about a culture, but also the *why*” (p. 89). Although Tang was referring to learning about foreign culture, adding the *why* element is equally important when students examine their own culture. Even when merely discussing favorite foods, when you ask students to explain why they prefer certain varieties over others, it pushes them to consider deeper aspects of respective foods, such as the history of local customs. As an example, rather than just mentioning how delicious or tender Kobe beef is, students can also read about the development of the dish and learn that in the past Kobe beef was not actually consumed until Westerners living in Japan discovered it (Gordenker & Rucynski, 2017). With regards to regional varieties, one student shared the funny anecdote of a good-natured sign he saw at a concert, in which a Hiroshima performer asked people not to call *okonomiyaki* from Hiroshima “Hiroshima-style *okonomiyaki*,” as since Hiroshima is the origin of *okonomiyaki*, it should merely be called “*okonomiyaki*.” Again, if students are merely asked to translate items like Japanese food into English, the potential for exploring deep culture is limited. By designing communicative activities about preferences and history of (local) dishes, however, a richer integration of language and culture learning can be implemented.

Personalize

As previously mentioned, another potential drawback of focusing on Japanese culture in English classes is some students may not be particularly motivated by a topic they feel they already know. Furthermore, it is obvious that not all young Japanese will be particularly interested in traditional aspects of their culture. As just one example, anyone who has asked young Japanese their opinion of the national sport of sumo will be aware of this declining interest in traditional culture. Still, it is important to remember that "cultures are never static" (Savignon & Sysoyev, 2005, p. 36). Japanese culture can refer to anything from traditional cultural practices such as *sado* (tea ceremony) and ikebana (flower arrangement) to modern phenomena such as anime and manga to the more recent proliferation of musical idol groups. Just as students will have different needs and interests with regards to learning about English-speaking countries, it is also important to give individual flexibility in which areas of their own culture they wish to explore and explain more deeply in English classes.

One way to give students the freedom to explore aspects of their own culture that most interest them is to design communicative activities with open-ended themes. One simple example is to have students introduce their favorite Japanese films, books, or TV shows in small group speaking activities. In any given class, there is usually a wide range of choices, from classic literature to historical dramas to, of course, manga and anime. Even within the anime genre, however, choices range from Hayao Miyazaki's beloved for-all-ages classic *Tonari no Totoro* (*My Neighbor Totoro*) to Isao Takahata's dark war drama *Hotaru no Haka* (*Grave of the Fireflies*). While movies and TV shows may also hardly seem like examples of deep culture, with slight modifications it is easy to prompt students to consider deeper cultural elements of the works. In addition to language-based tasks such as explaining the plot and favorite scene in English, teachers can also pose the question "Why would you like to introduce this piece of work to people from other countries? What can they learn about Japanese culture or society by watching or reading this work?" Students admittedly sometimes struggle with this question, but eventually have come up with a good range of cultural or historical insights, such as the polytheism witnessed in the animated classic *Sen to Chihiro no Kamikakushi* (*Spirited Away*), the profile of the Tokugawa Shogunate in the historical drama *Jin*, or the portrayal of post-World War II family life in Machiko Hasegawa's original four-panel comic *Sazae-san*.

Another topic for shorter speaking activities or more formal presentations is an open-ended theme such as "wonders of Japan." Again, such a theme gives students practice explaining Japanese culture or society in English while also giving them the freedom to choose subjects based on their personal interests or respective majors. As an example of the latter, one of the best PowerPoint presentations this author has seen in over a decade teaching at universities in Japan was by a group of engineering students introducing Hōryū-ji, the temple complex in Nara also known for being one of the oldest wooden buildings in the world. Through explaining the engineering process of the building in this presentation, the students not only developed their English speaking/presentation skills, but also could present on a topic related to their academic major, as well as their native culture. Again, depending on student interests or major, the teacher can easily modify the general theme of "wonders of Japan" to something more specific such as "cultural wonders," "engineering wonders," or "technological wonders."

One final benefit of giving students the freedom to choose aspects of their own culture which most interest them is the reality that other students may be more open to listening to topics introduced by their classmates than the teacher. Just one example of this was a student who gave a presentation about sumo after attending her first *basho*, or tournament. Her enthusiasm about the topic made it one of the most highly-rated presentations in the class. In all honesty, it is also likely that her presentation was much more effective than any attempts by this author to get Japanese students interested in their national sport.

Get international perspectives

Another potential drawback of focusing on Japanese culture in English classes in Japan is that there are so many aspects of their own culture which students take for granted. In informal surveys, a majority of the author's students in general education English courses have never been outside of Japan, even for a short trip, let alone for an extended stay such as study abroad. Considering this, it is not surprising that when tasked with describing their own culture in English many students give overgeneralized, or even inaccurate, statements such as "Japan is unique because it has the four seasons" or "Japanese people are very kind."

Japanese students can thus benefit from being exposed to international perspectives of their culture. Through such exposure, students can learn more about what people from other cultures find surprising or unique about Japanese culture. At the same time, this can also provide students with insights into similarities and differences between foreign cultures and Japanese culture. One consistently effective resource for such an approach is the work of journalist Alice Gordenker, who has extensively written about foreign perspectives of Japanese culture and society for *The Japan Times*. In her first column "Matter of Course," (April 2001-December 2004), Gordenker wrote about surprising aspects of the education system in Japan through the viewpoint of an American mother with two children attending local schools in Japan. For her second column, "So, What the Heck is That?" (January 2005-November 2015), Gordenker collected and researched questions non-Japanese have about surprising or confusing everyday objects in Japan. Due to Gordenker's extensive research about each topic, usually involving interviewing Japanese experts, these articles provide historical details that even many Japanese may be unaware of. So, this resource provides students with both a potential language and content learning component.

To modify these columns for use in university English courses, the author collaborated with Gordenker to produce two textbooks, *Surprising Japan* (Gordenker & Rucynski, 2013) and *Surprising Japan 2* (Gordenker & Rucynski, 2017). Through these columns and textbooks, students can explore and reflect on aspects of their own culture through non-Japanese perspectives. Although a range of lighter cultural topics are considered, such as a comparison of Western and Japanese sweets (*wagashi*) and the history of bento grass (*baran/haran*), the textbooks also include a wide range of deeper cultural and social issues. Such issues include Western and Japanese communication styles, the unique cultural characteristics of *ijime* (bullying) in Japanese schools, and the low rate of organ donors in Japan. One very important benefit of Gordenker's columns is that they are all based on actual questions posed by foreigners living in or visiting Japan, giving the topics much more authenticity than the sometimes contrived or "tacked on" (Kramsch, 1993, p. 1) nature of cultural

content in EFL materials. Again, such materials can be used for developing both language skills and intercultural awareness, as students are exposed to foreign perspectives of their culture and then take part in communicative activities to practice responding to or discussing these topics in English.

When introducing international perspectives, striving to include a diverse range of perspectives is important. This approach can help to dispel long-held stereotypes about foreigners in Japanese society. For many Japanese, the term "foreigner" often refers to an English-speaking Westerner working in Japan as an English instructor. We hoped to help dispel this stereotype and considered the importance of diverse perspectives when creating another textbook, *Working in Japan* (Gordenker & Rucynski, 2015), aimed at helping Japanese students understand international perspectives of their society. For this textbook, people from more than 10 different countries living in Japan were interviewed and profiled. These interviews also included non-native English speakers and professions ranged from architect to sales representative to translator. Perhaps influenced by the foreign media, people outside Japan often have bizarre images of the country, focusing on the weird and wacky, such as that Japan is a country full of square watermelons and monkeys relaxing in hot spring baths. Considering this, it is also important for Japanese students to be exposed to the perspectives of long-term foreign residents who have built successful careers in Japan. In addition to dispelling the aforementioned stereotypes about foreigners in Japan, such a resource can also prepare students for entering the globalizing workforce in Japan. Finally, the inclusion of fellow non-native speakers—including fellow Japanese—can show the potential of English as a tool for global communication.

In addition to these materials, another promising resource for examining foreign perspectives of Japan is the growing number of foreign-directed documentaries which explore specific aspects of Japanese culture. By carefully observing what elements of daily life in Japan foreign filmmakers focus on, Japanese students can get a deeper understanding of which aspects of their culture are considered different or unique. When it comes to the topic of sports, for example, students might imagine that the baseball played in the United States is the same as in Japan. However, the 2006 documentary *Kokoyakyu: High School Baseball* (Shear & Nagasawa, 2006) provides insight into the uniqueness of Japan's Koshien high school baseball tournament. Other recent documentaries that can be used to explore specific aspects of Japanese culture include *Jiro Dreams of Sushi* (Iwashini & Pellegrini, 2012) (food culture), *Happy* (Shadyac, Reid, Shimizu, & Belic, 2011) (health and longevity), and *Japanland* (Muller, 2006) (various aspects of traditional and modern Japan). Even though some of these documentaries may be in Japanese (with English subtitles), short clips can still be used as a springboard for class discussions, student presentations, or written assignments. Again, although the main themes of some of these films may seem to be only surface level cultural topics, the next section will touch on how to expand these themes to encourage deeper intercultural discussions.

Collaborate with international students

While the previous section stressed the importance of including international perspectives when exploring Japanese culture in English classes, an even more

promising approach is to create opportunities for Japanese students to interact and collaborate with international students. Despite the increase in the number of international students at Japanese universities, there is still far too infrequent collaboration between Japanese and international students. A peak into classrooms at any given university will often see only Japanese students in one classroom and only international students in another. This represents a terribly missed opportunity, especially considering initiatives to globalize Japanese universities. Fortunately, teachers can increase opportunities for collaboration by designing courses open to both Japanese and international students or arranging smaller-scale collaborative activities with Japanese language teachers and their students.

Collaborating with international students has three distinct advantages when it comes to improving the intercultural awareness of Japanese students. First, there are more opportunities to discuss the *why* of culture which, once again, Tang (2006) stressed as making culture learning more meaningful and memorable. By interacting with international students, the possibility of authentic why questions about Japanese culture will greatly increase. By responding to these questions, students can develop their intercultural awareness by reflecting on their own culture and learning to express corresponding explanations in English. Second, the nature of these questions will also provide interesting insights into cultural differences between Japan and the respective cultures of the international students. Third, when collaborating with international students, Japanese students can become more aware of the role of English as a global language rather than merely a tool to communicate with native speakers of the language. With regard to past collaborations arranged by the author, a majority of international students have actually been fellow non-native English speakers.

When it comes to classroom collaborations between Japanese and international students, there is a great range of activities which can be planned, from one-off exchanges to larger-scale collaborative presentations or projects. Needless to say, repeated collaborations—or even semester-long courses open to both Japanese and international students—have much great potential for deeper intercultural interactions rather than just surface level exchanges. One possible classroom activity would be to take the same approach as Alice Gordenker's previously mentioned "So, What the Heck is That?" column and invite international students to bring questions about aspects of Japanese culture they find surprising or confusing. This will give Japanese students the authentic experience to reflect on their own culture and also learn to express these ideas in English. Ideally, the questions that come up will also provide insight into the cultural differences between Japan and other countries. Japanese students should of course also be encouraged to ask questions in return about the situation in international students' respective cultures.

As previously mentioned, documentary films are one promising source of cultural material, and they have even more potential when used in multicultural classes. Documentary scenes can be used as a springboard for student-generated discussion questions or presentations. When such activities are designed for a mix of Japanese and international students, the topics can be used to deepen awareness of both Japanese culture and the cultures of the international students. The aforementioned *Jiro Dreams of Sushi* is just one possible documentary of interest, as it is far more than just a documentary about Japanese food. Deeper cross-cultural

comparisons can be discussed with regards to themes such as work-life balance, the apprenticeship system, and food sustainability. Similarly, *Kokoyakyu* is more than just a look at baseball in Japan, but also can lead to discussions about how sports reflect culture, the *senpai/kohai* (senior/junior) relationship, and the balance of sports and academics. Again, with slight modifications, examples of the 5 F's of culture can be transformed into deeper intercultural exchanges and discussions.

For a larger project, one sample assignment is a campus improvement proposal. For this project, Japanese and international students work in mixed-culture groups to brainstorm ideas, conduct research, and deliver a PowerPoint presentation to the class. Through brainstorming and planning their ideas together, Japanese students can get deeper insight into international perspectives of universities in Japan and they can also act as informants to explain the history or reasoning behind respective aspects of Japanese universities. As previously suggested, giving students flexibility with their proposals will result in a greater range of topics. Past proposals from the author's classes have included improvements to the social structure (making it easier for international students to join clubs or circles), campus facilities (providing more halal items at the school cafeterias), or the curriculum (offering more courses in which Japanese and international students study together). If Japanese universities sincerely endeavor to globalize, it is important to consider the experiences and opinions of international students. In addition, Japanese students attending a so-called "global university" should have ample opportunities for interacting and collaborating with international students.

One issue that should be addressed with regards to collaborations between Japanese and international students is which language(s) to use. While it may be assumed that all activities will be conducted in English, the author has found that there are several disadvantages to using only English for such collaborations. First, depending on the level of the Japanese students, they may hesitate to speak out much if all communication is expected to be in English. Second, international students may feel that their role in such collaborations is only to serve as language assistants. Third, despite the role of English as a global language, this does not mean that other languages should be neglected. In addition, hearing international students speak Japanese can help break down old stereotypes that only Japanese people can speak Japanese. Furthermore, exposure to international students speaking Japanese can provide Japanese students with insights into their own language and encourage them to use English actively for the purpose of global communication. Although this is a paper about English education, it must be noted that globalizing universities in Japan should not entail making them English-only zones. International students still come to Japan to also develop their Japanese language skills. As previously stated, the emphasis should be on "glocalizing," not globalizing, universities.

Criticize and analyze

One final criticism of focusing on the native culture in English courses is the possible tendency to only consider the positive aspects of the culture and thus glorify it over foreign cultures. Such an approach would obviously be counterproductive to using English as a tool for global communication and intercultural awareness. In citing Graff (1992) and Hames-Garcia (2003), Rodriguez (2015) argued that teachers "should avoid self-congratulatory approaches to culture, history, and identity in their

pedagogy because celebratory discourses are one-sided in that they do not allow students to learn about the true sociocultural realities of a nation" (p. 3). Referring back to this article's section on the need to personalize topics, simple modifications can also be made to allow students to choose whether they want to take a positive or critical approach to respective topics related to Japanese culture. In a class for education majors, for example, students could examine both the pros and cons of the education system in Japan or the teacher could assign a problem solution essay or presentation. In one of the author's previous courses, for example, one group praised cultural traditions such as Japanese students cleaning their own school, while another group critically called for changes to the exam-focused, passive learning nature of education in Japan. Problem solution assignments not only give students the opportunity to critically reflect on their own culture, but also give them the language and critical thinking practice necessary for similar tasks on English language exams such as the IELTS.

Once again, documentary films about Japanese society are good resources for students to critically reflect on their own culture. *Hafu: The Mixed-Race Experience in Japan* (Nishikura & Takagi, 2013) can be used as a springboard for exploring the issue of national identity in a diversifying Japan. As an introduction to the film, the author shared the case of Ariana Miyamoto, who in 2015 became the first multiracial woman to be Miss Universe Japan. Despite the issue making international news—mostly based on the comments of some Japanese that Miyamoto's mixed racial heritage made her an inappropriate choice as Miss Universe Japan—only one student in a class of over 30 students was familiar with the details of the controversy. Similarly, in written reactions to viewing scenes from *Hafu*, a great number of students admitted that they were surprised that mixed race students are often the victims of bullying at school, as they had previously considered only the positive aspects of being bicultural and bilingual. One would hope that students who graduate from universities aiming to be global institutions are aware of such controversial issues related to racial diversity and identity in their own society.

Other possible topics to allow for critical analysis are real-life incidents that reveal cultural differences between Japan and guests or residents from foreign countries. With the recent increase of foreign tourists to Japan, one issue getting a lot of attention is the traditional practice of barring people with tattoos from entering *onsen* (hot spring) establishments. While it is widely understood here that this rule started due to the Japanese fear of yakuza, it can cause a lot of surprise and confusion among guests who come from cultures where tattoos are much more common. Perhaps the most famous case involved a Maori woman who was denied entry to an *onsen* in Hokkaido in 2013 due to her traditional facial tattoos. Although some might criticize the banning of tattoos as an outdated cultural practice, it is important for the teacher to remain neutral and provide students with access to multiple perspectives of the same issue. In addition to both the Japanese and Maori perspectives, for example, the teacher could also assign readings on recent calls from the tourism sector for *onsen* operators to relax these rules regarding tattoos when it comes to foreign patrons (Murai, 2016). Again, students graduating from global universities should have the ability to discuss complex cultural matters in English related to Japanese society, such as when traditional Japanese practices should be kept and when they should be modified to fit a globalizing society.

Conclusion

The global education movement in Japan is an exciting opportunity to encourage Japanese university students to both improve their English skills and develop their intercultural awareness. This is a welcome movement for those English language teachers who advocate the integration of language and culture teaching. Moeller and Nugent (2014) noted that “when language skills and intercultural competency become linked in a language classroom, students become optimally prepared for participation in a global world” (p. 2). Still, this “participation in a global world” entails not only knowledge of foreign culture, but the ability to explain and discuss Japanese culture in English. Despite any movements to globalize education, we must always also consider the particularities and preservation of the local culture. As previously argued, we thus should not be striving for global education, but glocal education.

Nonetheless, focusing on Japanese culture in English courses at the university level comes with potential drawbacks, including possible lack of student interest and a tendency to glorify the native culture. This paper thus argued for five possible steps to offset these potential obstacles. First, encouraging students to explore local culture can help them to take pride in their home regions, better understand the diversity of Japan, and develop the English skills to express these ideas. Second, giving students the freedom to personalize topics lets them develop their English skills related to their personal interests within Japanese culture. Third, exposing students to international perspectives of their culture can help them to consider aspects of Japanese culture they may have taken for granted and consequently increase their awareness of differences between Japan and respective foreign cultures. Fourth, arranging collaborative activities between Japanese and international students can lend more authenticity to increasing awareness of differences between Japan and foreign cultures and encourage students to see the potential of English as a tool for global communication. Fifth, allowing opportunities for also criticizing and analyzing Japanese culture can help to prevent students from merely glorifying their own culture and also more deeply consider their own role and cultural identity in a globalizing and changing Japan. As previously stated, these are five individual suggestions, but several or all of them can be integrated in planning respective individual activities, or even as an approach to a full course.

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