Measuring the Relationship among Personal Network with Japanese Language Skill and Fit Well with Life in Japan

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Abstract. The trends of the diverse city spread across the world, not only megacities but also the city where become a destination to study. Challenge for the international student as a new community to accept and connect to the new place and new community. Culture, social and experience influence our perspective of place and region. Language is a tool of communication to connect to others. Personal network influences our perception of the environment. This paper wants to explore the relationship between personal network with Japanese language skill and fit well with life in Japan. One hundred and three international students became respondents to fill out the randomized questionnaire (year, age, country and gender). The data from the questionnaire were analysed with SPSS using the Spearman’s rank correlation. The results showed that there was a positive correlation between personal network and Japanese language skill also between personal network and feel fit well with life in Japan. This research founded that to get the feel in well with life in Japan, more important to connect with Japanese people than Japanese language skill.

1. Introduction

Globalization and global migration as a process involve many economies and multi-cultures. The effect, now in around the world, diversity becomes increasing [1], including Japan as a developed country. The city concentrates on diversity, is one of the effects. This phenomenon not only happens in megacities like London, Paris or Tokyo but spread in all cities in some developed countries.

Japan, as the home of diversity [2], is the one idea and effect of globalization. In Japan, just like the other developed country, it becomes a destination for study. As the destination of study for the International student, the existence of international students in Japan national universities is familiar and growing increasingly.

Ehime university or Ehime daigaku is one of the national universities in Japan. This university is the largest university in Matsuyama, Ehime Prefecture, Shikoku Island, Japan. As a national university in Japan, Ehime university becomes a destination for study from many international students. In figure 1, shows the growth of the number on an International student at Ehime University during 2008-2018. This Grafik even in the last four years there is a decrease, but totally for ten years, there is 3% of average annual growth.
Figure 1. The number of International Students at Ehime University during 2008-2018

In Japan, Japanese (Nihongo) is L1 (first language), that is way in every Japan National University, every first year for fresh foreign student, there was Japanese language course, as a tool for students to survive and make relation to the other. Language is language, whether it is spoken or written, coded, or encoded, and also as a tool with the tasks for communicating, informing, describing, and so on [3]. During studying, International students connect with others. In this research, we name it as personal network.

As a foreigner, with the various background who migrate from their country to Japan (whether temporary or not) the feeling of familiar, fit in well until attached to the new place becomes important. In this research, we thought there was a relationship among personal network with feeling fit in well with life in Japan and Japanese language skill.

1.1. Multiculturalism

Discourses of multiculturalism tend to spreads the world and debatable in many aspects from a political philosophy perspective, a policy framework until demographic reality [4]. In other research, multiculturalism emphasizes the idea of cultural diversity in a nation [5]. In the education aspect, multiculturalism also explored. One of the theories is from Banks, who described multicultural education, one term adopted by many scholars, explained detailed about multicultural in education aspect. In his book, Banks illustrating the portion of culture (the identity of International student: gender, age, religion, belief) shapes student behavior [6].

In Japan, this topic becomes widespread over the past decade, thus happened in research. Many research explored about multiculturalism in various aspect. There are two theories about multiculturalism in Japan. First, the idea of Japan as a monocultural and homogeneity image, which popular in media and textbooks [7]. The antithesis is the idea of multicultural Japan. This idea becomes discourses among many scholars, like Douglas and Roberts, who point out multiculturalism according to the history of demographically and history of immigration and culturally diverse population [8]. This idea is similar to Maher and Yashiro in their research explored the linguistic and cultural heterogeneity in Japanese society, as the response of the idea Japan has a monocultural and homogenous [9]. This idea has supported by Tsuneyoshi in his research about the portrayal of foreigners in Japan as a part of Japan’s portrait more multicultural by analyses foreigner portrayal in elementary social studies textbook in Japan [10]. While Nakamatsu elaborated on Japan’s multicultural policy in tabunka kyosei (multicultural coexistence) in Aichi prefecture [11]. All this research none examined the multiculturalism on
International students with measuring the relationship among personal network, Japanese language skill, and feeling fit in well.

1.2. People, language, relationship and a new place
The relationship between the place and the people not only talking about an individual but also about families, collective, group until community and culture. They become subject or object depends on the emphasis of the research.

The environment, urban, geography, and regional development study attention to emotions – both as an object of research and as a factor informing research and influencing its outcomes have increased in the last few years. From the neighborhood perspective, there is an interrelationship between people and the neighborhood, which is it could be the environment, the place, or the community where they live or belong. Such emotional relationships contribute to their feeling in someplace. This sense becomes essential because this emotional turn to shape society [12].

Culture, belief, and experience influence the perception of our environment [13]. Culture relates to beliefs and perception, where values and behavior influenced our perspective about place [14]. In the perception process (selection, organization, and interpretation), culture has a huge influence [15], [16]. This idea is similar to Tuan think about culture as uniquely developed in human beings, which is strong influences human behavior and values [17]. These studies draw about the theories of culture, perception, relation, and place.

A personal network is a part of social capital. It is a deterministic factor which effects on process integration and constructs identity [18], direct and active relationships with a focal individual [19], a primary group connect each other by direct, established through communication regularly from face-to-face until online contacts, personal knowledge, and interaction between people. The research about personal network across the subject. Vacca, who explored the structure of personal network contributes to a better understanding of transnationalism and assimilation patterns among international immigrants [20]. Boessen A. and friends explored the relationship between personal network and built environments [21]. These studies examined personal network, place, and foreigner, but none of measuring the relationship between personal network, Japanese language skills, and feeling fit well in Japan.

Language as a tool communication used to connect to the other expresses the cultural reality, and in the context of communication, it is tied up with the culture in a complicated way. In language, there is a word. Word reflects facts, ideas, events, attitudes, and beliefs because the word refers to a stock of knowledge about everything. As a medium, language creates an experience and also expresses the experience [22]. The way we perceive the world is shaped by language [23].

The research about the Japanese language mostly relates to pedagogy, literature, language, linguistic, and education field, including the research Japanese language relation with foreigner and multiculturalism [7]. However, none of these researchers pays attention to relationship Japanese language with personal network and feels fit well with life in Japan.

In our research, we elaborated on the relation among personal network with Japanese language skill, and feeling fit in well in Japan. From the theories of multiculturalism, the concept of built connection among personal network with Japanese language skill and feeling fit in well in life in Japan is one aspect of feeling accepted in a new place with the identity as international students. This feeling accepted in a new place with the identity as belongs to multiculturalism’s aspect.

2. Data and Method

2.1. Method

2.1.1. Participants. In Table 1, we can see, there are 103 international students from Ehime University, in Matsuyama (Shikoku Islands, Japan) (48.5% female and 51.5 male) aged between under 19 to over 30 (cluster 20-24 with 51.5% become the most), from undergraduate student to doctoral
student participated in this study. Most participants use the Japanese language as a daily conversation (45.6%).

Table 1. Category of participant

| Choice | Frequency | Ratio(%) |
|--------|-----------|----------|
| Gender |           |          |
| Male   | 50        | 48.5     |
| Female | 53        | 51.5     |
| Age    |           |          |
| under 19 | 2     | 1.9      |
| 20-24  | 53        | 51.5     |
| 25-29  | 22        | 21.4     |
| over30 | 22        | 21.4     |
| Japanese language | |          |
| Fluent | 11        | 10.7     |
| Daily conversation | 47 | 45.6 |
| A little | 40   | 38.8     |
| Not at all | 5    | 4.9      |

2.1.2. Instrument and procedure. The method used questionnaire was applied randomly by email to international students from August to October 2017. The participants responded to the questionnaire by google forms. The questionnaire designed in English (for International student non-East Asian) and in Japanese (for the East Asian international student).

The questionnaire started with identity questions (age, gender, nationality, Japanese language skill, and language). The identity questions designed in categorical and ordinal format.

There are twelve questions we used to measure the personal network. This variable consists of 6 sub-themes; Personal network with Japanese, personal network within foreigner (student and not the student), personal network within the same country (student and not the student), personal network with deep communication, personal network with shallow communication, personal network on campus, personal network off-campus. All the variables of personal network written in an interval format. In this research, we distinguish between the foreign and international students. Foreigner refers to foreigners (including international student), and international student refers to an international student. Even if our study about international students, but in the questionnaire about personal network, we asked about the relationships within international students (personal network on campus) and between international students and foreigners (personal network off-campus).

One question was developed to measure the feeling of fit in well during living in Japan with a Likert scale format ranging from 1 (disagree) to 5 (agree). Next to this variable, we called as fit well with life in Japan.

To analyze the data, first, we investigated the normality of data using Kolmogorov-Smirnova and Shapiro-Wilk tests (both of them involve the same method, but different interpretations). The results reported that the data were not normally distributed; that is the way in this research we used nonparametric analysis. Next, we used Spearman’s rank correlation to measure the relationship among each of personal network, Japanese language and fit well with life in Japan. We used this correlation because our data is nonparametric.

2.1.3. Results. Table 2 shows that there was a weak significant correlation between Japanese language skill and Personal Network within foreigner: rs (101)= .276, p= 0.005; personal network within same country rs (101)= .198, p= 0.045; personal network on campus rs (101)= .259, p= 0.008.
Then for the variable of fit in well with life in Japan, there was a moderate significant between this variable and personal network with Japanese: rs (101) = .318, p = 0.001.

In table 2, we do not show the result of variable fit in well with life in Japan, and the other personal network category (A, D, E, G) with Japanese language, because the correlation was not significant (p > 0.05).

**Table 2. Correlation coefficients between personal network with Japanese language skill and fit in well with life in Japan**

| Personal network with Japanese | Personal network within foreigner | Personal network within same country | Personal network with deep communication | Personal network with shallow communication | Personal network on campus | Personal network off campus |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Japanese language skill       | .276^a                           | .198^a                              | .259^a                                   |                                           |                           |                           |
| Fit in well                   | .318^a                           |                                     |                                         |                                           |                           |                           |

^p < 0.05

3. Result and Discussion

Our main research question was, `is personal network related to Japanese language skills and feeling fit in well with life in Japan?` About this question, we formulated three hypotheses: first, personal network has positively associated to Japanese language skills; second, personal network has positively associated to feeling fit in well with life in Japan; third, Japanese language skill has positively associated with feeling fit in well with life in Japan. Also, in this research, the personal network we elaborated into six sub-personal networks, to emphasize what kind of the personal network that relates to the other variables.

To examine this relation refers to data not normally distributed, we used a Spearman`s rank correlation. As expected, the result of the test about the relationship between personal network and Japanese language skill reported there was a positive correlation between personal network within foreigner, personal network within same country and personal network on campus. That three relations even if weak correlation, but positive significance. Moreover, for the test of the relationship between personal network and feeling fit in well with life in Japan show there was a moderate significant relation among personal network with Japanese and feeling fit in well with life in Japan. However, the relation between Japanese language skill and feeling fit in well with life in Japan was not significant, and this result rejected our third hypothesis in this research.

In the above we elaborated on the basic theory multiculturalism (in a general perspective and multicultural Japan`s perspective), culture, language and personal network. Multiculturalism and culture, both of them are unity and topic to describe International students as a part of the foreigner, with their various backgrounds. In general, language as representative of Japanese language skill, and the theory of personal network to draw the notion of personal network.

The present study examined language in many aspects, mostly in pedagogy, literature, language, linguistics, and education. However, in the specific topic Japanese language, the topic explored Japanese language and multiculturalism, not used the skill of Japanese language and personal network.

The theory of place, generally explored the connection between people, culture and place [14], [17]. In our research, we prefer Tuan`s theory about the place in Topophilia. Tuan described the culture in general as the medium that influences our perception of our environment/place [17]. Thus conclude can draw the relation between our perception of our environment. Above, we described the portion of personal network. Commonly we conclude that there is a portion of personal network to build our perception. From this statement, we suggested that personal network influences our perception about
the environment. This conclusion similar to our founding about the correlation between personal network and feeling fit in well with life in Japan. In a general view, the whole personal network’s context, this results (either relation between the personal network and Japanese language skills or relation personal network and fit in well with life in Japan) support the theory about personal network and communication, the notion language as a tool for communication, and personal network as the medium to connect to something. Furthermore, if we see the results more specifically, we found a new point about the personal network, Japanese language skill, and feel in well with life in Japan. According to this result, we concluded that to get the feel in well with life in Japan, more important to connect with Japanese people than Japanese language skills.

4. Conclusions
This research is a part of our primary research about the sense of multiculturalism perspective in international student. Even if we can report from this study that there was a significant relationship among personal network within foreigner, personal network within the same country, personal network on campus with Japanese language skill and there was a significant relationship among feeling fit well with life in Japan and personal network with Japanese. However, to conclude that there is a sense of multiculturalism is too early.

Overall, this research suggests the importance connect to Japanese people to get feeling in well with life in Japan.

This research can develop because, in this research we do not yet measure what kind of Japanese language skill that relates to this personal network (Whether fluent, daily conversation, a little or not at all). This research also can develop by measuring the relationship among personal network and feel fit well with life in Japan with another identity of the International student (i.e., age, or gender).

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