

Action research on the minority problem in Japan: how we can empower the support network for foreign students' education

Wataru Ozawa
Ritsumeikan University
Professor of Faculty of
Social Sciences

From the late 1980's, the rate of new comers began to increase gradually in Japan. Especially since the change of Immigration Law of Japan in 1990, many workers began to come from South America. They were Japanese-Brazilian or Japanese-Peruvian. Looking at the 2009 public population data, about 2.2 million foreign residents are staying in Japan and about 80% of them are new comers. In recent days, the main ethnic problem in Japan can be thought of as the new comer's problem.

As many of foreign workers have decided to stay in Japan for a long time, we are now facing the new educational problem of the young foreign residents, namely their sons and daughters. Especially after the Lehman shock, the employment situation for foreign residents has become drastically worse, young foreign residents who cannot go to school increase in Japan.

Toward such a minority problem, central and local governments are taking action. For example, in "Niji-no-Kakehashi-Kyoshitu Plan" which has been introduced since 2009, Japanese language schools accept foreign students for a short time. However such a public policy is not enough for solving the problem. Even now many foreign students are not supported well.

From 2009, we have founded the Ritsumeikan University DAISY project. DAISY (Digital Accessible Information System) is a kind of digital talking text system which was invented at first to support disabled people, for example, people who are blind, deaf and with weak-sight or with dyslexia. We are now challenging to use this tool to support the foreign students' education. This action is the first challenge in Japan. By using such a useful tool, we can approach and access more easily the public education system. Since the spring of 2010, we have been collaborating with Konan City School Board to develop the multi-lingual DAISY textbook of the pre-school curriculum for new comer students.

I will discuss in this paper the following points.

- 1) The educational problem of the foreign minority students in Japan
- 2) The scheme of "Action Research" on foreign students' education using the

DAISY system

- 3) The DAISY system as the multi-lingual text book to support the foreign students
- 4) The possibilities of this Action Research Project to promote the voluntary network for supporting foreign residents

We can understand that it is very important for us to empower the voluntary to sector in order to solve the minority problems practically and especially to promote the intimate relationship between public schools and volunteer groups by the collaboration of the university project, foreign residents and school board. The aim of this report is to propose a practical way to step forwards in a Multicultural Society in Japan.

**Action Research on
the Minority Problem in Japan :
How we can empower
the Voluntary Support Network
for Foreign Students' Education
by DAISY System?**

Ritsumeikan University

Kyoto, Japan

Prof. Wataru Ozawa

ozawa@ss.ritsumei.ac.jp

Thank you very much for giving me your precious time today.
We are now supporting the foreign students by the multi-lingual
DAISY textbook.

Contents of Presentation

1. The educational problems of foreign students in Japan
2. Possibility of DAISY multi-lingual textbook
3. Social barriers against our project
4. Image of international support network by DAISY

I will explain about these four points.

Foreign Students in Japan

Nationality	Total number of residents	5 -19 years old residents
Chinese	687,000	52,000
Korean	566,000	48,000
<u>Brazilian</u>	<u>231,000</u>	<u>38,000</u>
Filipino	210,000	22,000
Peruvian	55,000	10,000

(Data from *2010 Report of Immigration Bureau in Japan*)

At first, let's check the population of foreign students in Japan. These are the top 5 countries. Many Korean are 3rd or 4th generation. With the exception of Koreans, other foreign young people have the problem of adapting to Japanese society and especially face the linguistic problem.

The educational problems for foreign students : Case of Brazilian in Japan

- 1) Low ratio of students who can go to high school. (Under 75% ⇔ Average ratio is 97%)
- 2) The number of students who cannot go to school increases.
- 3) The students who should return to Brazil face the linguistic problem because they could not learn both Portuguese and Japanese .

Focusing on the case of Brazilians, it is very difficult for them to learn Japanese. The ratio of students who can go to high school is low. It may be under 75%, and more than 50% of Brazilian students should go to night school.

After the Bankruptcy of Lehman Brothers, the Japanese-Brazilian employment situation has become drastically worse. The number of the children who cannot go to school increases.

On the other hand, the students who should return to Brazil face the linguistic problem in Brazil because they could not learn well both Portuguese and Japanese . Toward such a minority problem, central and local governments are taking action of course. For example, since 2009, Japanese language schools accept foreign students who can not go to school for several months. However such a public policy is not enough for solving the problem. Even now many foreign students are not supported well.



I will show you some pictures of the place where our project is trying to support Brazilian students.

This is a special class for foreign students in the public school of KONAN city. He is now learning Kanji characters, which is difficult to learn for foreign students from the non-Kanji areas.

We are now collaborating with the school board and beginning to support Brazilian students by using iPads.

This pupil can concentrate well to read Japanese textbooks and learn by himself with DAISY file on his iPad.

Since 2009, we have started our project by getting collaboration from a Brazilian School. In 2009, we made the multi-lingual (Japanese and Portuguese) textbook with them.

The students drew the pictures, title of which was “My dream of Brazil”, and wrote the essay.

We made the multi-lingual DAISY picture book, recording their own voice. This project was successful to empower them.

We are now trying to approach another Brazilian school: COLEGIO SANT’ANA in Shiga prefecture.

Please look at these school buildings which are prefabricated ones.

There are 30 elementary students and 10 junior high school students and 20 nursery school toddlers in this school.

The tuition is ¥30,000 to ¥45,000 (R\$ 670 – 1,000) for a month. One third of them can not pay their tuition.

Merits of DAISY for foreign student education

- Efficient tool for learning languages.
- Especially for learning both mother language and host country language.
- Promote the communication between foreign students and their parents.
- Useful tool in order to support the young foreigner who left their school.
- We can accumulate the knowledge of how to support them, and everybody easily gets it by DAISY tool.
- We can build the support network by volunteers.

By the way, what are the merits of DAISY for foreign students education?

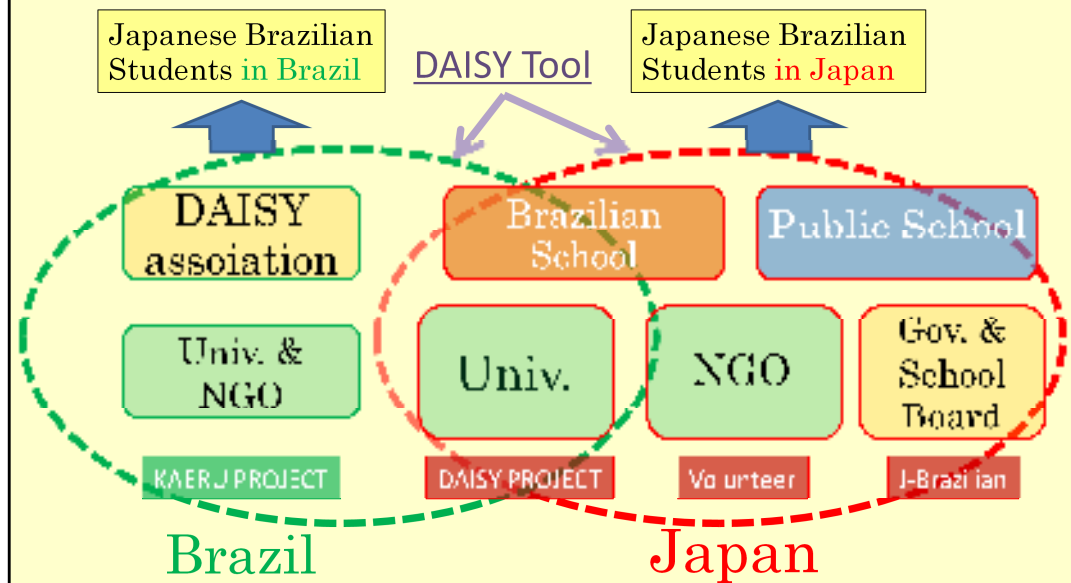
1. DAISY text is a very efficient tool for learning languages, because each word synchronizes the sound. It is possible to stimulate the sense of hearing and the sense of sight at the same time.
2. If we can make the multi-lingual DAISY textbook, we can educate simultaneously the students in their own language and the host country's language.
3. If the foreign students go to public school and their parent can not understand Japanese, a communication gap arises between them. The multi-lingual text book promotes communication between them.
4. The DAISY tool is very useful in order to support the young foreigner who can not go to school.
5. We can accumulate the knowledge of how to support them, and everybody easily get it by DAISY tool.

Social barriers against our project

- Gulf between the support system for the disabled person and for the foreign student.
- The great possibility to support the foreign students by DAISY is not yet well known.
- It is difficult to find a collaborator in public schools because school culture is so conservative.

The DAISY is usually thought of as the tool for disabled people. The support system is built on such a belief. In Japan the government as well as the school board can not imagine that DAISY textbooks are also useful for foreign students. It is difficult to find a collaborator in public schools because school culture is so conservative.

To break through the barrier,
international support
network is very important!



I think it is very important for us to collaborate to make an international support network in order to break through such barriers.

If we can make such a network, it will be easy to make the multi-lingual DAISY book. This kind of project will surely contribute both for making the inclusive society and for raising the level of basic education all over the world.