

Use of the Japanese Language and the Construction of the Social Relations
by Bangladeshi Residents in Japan
- Recommendations for Policy on Development of Japanese Language
Education in Bangladesh -

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Abstract

Since 1972 Japanese language has been taught in Bangladesh. This research focuses on Japanese language education at the University of Dhaka, which is the author's affiliated institution and is considered the leading and central academic institution in Bangladesh. The objectives of most of the learners of the Japanese language are to go to Japan for higher study, or to get employed by a Japanese company. But the objectives and the policies of Japanese language education at the University of Dhaka are not clearly stated. In addition, content and the teaching methods do not match the motivation of the learners. The consequence is a lot of students drop out in the middle of the course. To improve the situation, class content should be change in such way that matches the motivation of the learners. For that purpose, how the Bangladeshi residents in Japan preserve his/her identity, values, lifestyle etc. while they construct cooperative relations with the surrounding Japanese peoples should be investigated. At the same time we should also investigate what kind of problems they face, and what are the required abilities and skills to address those problems. Findings of such kind of investigations will be useful for the language learners.

Considering the above, the objective of this study is to find out how Bangladeshi residents in Japan use the Japanese language in their daily life, and to make necessary recommendations for the development of the Japanese language education at the University of Dhaka. Then, a concrete recommendation on the teaching content and teaching methods will be made to the educational institutions and other relevant institutions. At the same time the survey model that is used in this research will be proposed for use on Bangladeshi residents living in other countries. This study will investigate the following three research questions.

1. What are the measures that the Bangladeshi residents in Japan take when they face any problems in their daily life? [Research 1]
2. With the goal of improving their lives in Japan, what kind of measures do Bangladeshi residents in Japan take to construct social relations? [Research 2]

3. What are the areas in which Bangladeshi residents in Japan feel the necessity of using the Japanese language?

To investigate above mentioned 3 researches, the theory of Language Ecology of Okazaki (2009) is used. In the process of data analysis, the concepts of “isolated entity viewpoint” “ecological capacity viewpoint” “self preservation” “confrontation for difference” “intrinsic integration” “ecological literacy” were used. And on the basis of these concepts how the Bangladeshi residents in Japan communicate in the real situation has been discussed.

Objective of the [Research 1] is to reveal what the Bangladeshi residents in Japan consider to be the problems that they face in daily life; and what kind of measures they take to solve that problem. Moreover, in the process of settling various problems, what kind of change occurs in their thinking and values was also investigated. In this research a semi-structured interview survey was carried out on 2 students of the Japanese language school. Interview data has been analyzed using the SCAT (Steps for Coding and Theorization) method of Otani (2008). In [Research 1] among the 2 respondents, one faces problems with other staff at his part-time work place because of the differences of their way of thinking. Another respondent faces a problem while taking common food at his part-time work place, as the food includes some ingredients which he cannot eat because of religious restrictions. At the beginning both of them were strict to their “Self Preservation” which led to the “Confrontation for Difference”. How those differences were solved or why they were not solved is discussed in this research. It has become clear that to solve any problem language skill is not the only required means; rather the ability of grasping one’s self position and understanding the surrounding facts, things, and persons is important. In other words, ecological literacy is an indispensable element.

Like [Research 1], in [Research 2] an interview survey was conducted to investigate what kind of activities are done by the Bangladeshi residents in Japan to improve their living standard and expand network. Two service holders who have been living in Japan for 7-8 years were interviewed. The actions they take to expand their social circle were examined. One respondent took self initiative to be involved with society; and consequently he expanded his network and was involved with various social and volunteer activities. By participating in such activities he feels proud. Another respondent explained about “Ramadan”, a Muslim religious act, and how important it

is to Muslim people. He did it deliberately so that during Ramadan, everyone can understand his actions. And doing so, he was able to work in a relaxed mood without any stress. Both the respondents' collaborative acts have brought a better environment for them. And to achieve that, again ecological literacy was the key as in [Research 1].

In [Research 1] and [Research 2] only data from 4 respondents was analyzed, so from that result we cannot generalize about the whole situation of the use of the Japanese language by Bangladeshi residents in Japan. For that reason, to know the general trend of the language use, in [Research 3] a questionnaire survey was carried out. To reveal in which situations the Bangladeshi residents in Japan feel the necessity of using the Japanese language, a four scale survey on 42 daily life related language activities was carried out. Data from 169 respondents has been analyzed. A factor analysis was conducted and the analysis results reveal 7 factors; namely "F1: Job" "F2: Involvement with local community" "F3: Medical related acts" "F4: Conduct as dweller in residential areas" "F5: Purchasing conduct in store" "F6: Confirm the information of transport" and "F7: Getting information from media". To check the characteristics of the language activities, the sub items of these 7 factors have been reclassified. The result is 3 major categories have been revealed; namely "Survival situation" "Emergency problem solving situation" and "Social participation situation". And the results also confirmed the importance of ecological literacy; which also found in [Research 1] and [Research 2].

Considering the above mentioned 3 researches, 3 recommendations have been proposed to develop the Japanese language education in Bangladesh. They are; (1) to improve the skill of ecological literacy, introducing "Case Study" activities in the 3rd and 4th year of the Japanese language class; (2) language activities mentioned "Survival situations" in [Research 3], should be listed as "Can-do Statements" and used as tools for setting concrete learning objectives and improving the syllabus; and (3) from the policy level viewpoint for the development of all foreign language education in Bangladesh, the research emphasizes the necessity to survey Bangladeshi residents living in other countries as well; and proposes this survey model as an example.

There are 4 significant points of this research. Firstly, the importance of nurturing ecological literacy is pointed out. Secondly, so far the theory of language ecology is used from the viewpoint of receiving side; but in this research is has been used from the viewpoint of entry side, that is Bangladeshi side. Thirdly, to nurture the ecological

literacy to the Bangladeshi student, the usefulness of demonstrating via case studies has been proposed. Fourthly, carrying out a survey on language use of Bangladeshi living abroad based on this survey model has been proposed.

Regarding future research and tasks, it is necessary to prepare sufficient materials for conducting class using the case study method. And such environments should be required to list up all language items under the “Survival situations” mentioned in [Research 3] in accordance with Can-do Statements of the Japan Foundation Standards. Finally, effective ways to share the survey model of this research with the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Expatriates’ Welfare and Overseas Employment and other relevant organizations in Bangladesh should be addressed.

Keywords: Japanese language education in Bangladesh, Use of Japanese language by the Bangladeshi residents in Japan, Language ecology, Ecological literacy.