



## Study Abroad Perspectives and Educational Globalization: A Panel interview with Toshiaki Kawahara & Steve McCarty

by Tim Newfields

Globalization is taking place in many disparate fields, and it is worth considering the impact of globalization on education. To assess how globalization is influencing foreign language education and study abroad in particular, Profs. Toshiaki Kawahara and Steve McCarty were interviewed.

Toshiaki Kawahara is chair of the Literature department at Kyoto Koka Women's University as well as an officer of JACET's Research on Foreign Language Education Abroad SIG. He has published many papers on language policy, multiculturalism, and language teaching, and co-edited *Asian English Studies*, the journal of the Japanese Association for Asian Englishes from 2010 to 2012. He has also edited *Language Policy*, the journal of the Japan Association for Language Policy since 2011.

Steve McCarty is a professor at Osaka Jogakuin College and University in Osaka. From 1998-2007 and again from August 2012 he has served as president of the World Association for Online Education (WAOE). He has also been a reviewer for the *International Journal of Virtual and Personal Learning Environments*, the *Handbook of Research on Web 2.0 and Second Language Learning*, and the *Electronic Journal of Foreign Language Teaching (e-FLT)*.

This interview was conducted by email in Japanese and English in 2011-2012. The Japanese version of this interview precedes this article.

**Newfields:** *First of all, please tell us your thoughts about English education in the midst of globalization.*

**Kawahara:** When I first started teaching at university level, I focused just on raising students' linguistic skills. However, I also teach background information as to why English is so used widely in the world and the central role of English in the world's economy. I've come to believe that more socio-cultural and economic themes should be included in foreign language classes. The degree that a society adopts English as a medium for communication has a significant impact on that society as a whole. Unfortunately, much so-called "English education" focuses almost solely on Anglo-American values. However, it is also important to learn more about other languages and cultures, particularly those in Asia.

**McCarty:** From the mid-1980s I have focused on promoting intercultural reconciliation through bilingualism, community service, and collaboration between English and Japanese native speaking teachers. . . . I believe the goal of English language education in Japan should be to become bilingual. This is an attainable goal to some degree and thus worth aiming for.

**Newfields:** *So in your view Japanese education should focus on bilingualism rather than multilingualism?*



**McCarty:** Bilingualism is a goal that can come into view if a society is generally monolingual. . . . Technically, the field of bilingualism includes multilingualism and it entails plurilingualism – a condition in which individuals can shift between two or more languages . . . There are some troublesome misconceptions about bilingualism such as overly idealizing it. So for Japan it might be a leap or make the goal recede even further to speak of multilingualism. I'm all in favor of foreign languages besides English, but I'm trying to speak to practical people and start from where Japan is at.

**Kawahara:** So far foreign language instruction in Japan has centered on English. However, I believe that multilingualism should be more actively promoted. In particular, I think Chinese, Korean, Portuguese, Spanish, and Tagalog should be taught more. These are languages used in neighboring countries and/or ones that many foreign residents of Japan speak.

**McCarty:** Bilingual education certainly involves issues related to macro-language policy. With respect to Japan's language policies, I believe the linguistic human rights (Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson, 1995) of children of immigrants urgently need to be respected. According to Burgess (2006), many young immigrants in Japan are not even in school. Moreover a survey by Vaipae (2001, p. 228) of those in Japan's ostensibly compulsory education did not find any who could keep up with their Japanese peers. If Sweden can offer educational support in 100 languages (Yukawa, 2000, p. 47), then why can't Japan? This is not a matter of wealth, but a choice between assimilation and multicultural policies (Grosjean, 1982, p. 207).

Furthermore, the non-Japanese languages acquired by minorities in Korean and Chinese schools as well as by Japanese returnees from abroad should be valued, maintained or developed. Linguistic diversity in residents of Japan should not be regarded as a problem but officially recognized as a human right, and valued as a resource (Ruiz, 1984) for international trade and exchanges. More attention to the principles of bilingualism (Baker, 2006) and the practice of bilingual education in Japan (Bostwick, 2001) would also accrue to the effectiveness of foreign language education.

**Newfields:** *Returning to the issue of EFL education in Japan, do you feel English should become an elective subject in high schools and universities?*

**Kawahara:** Actually, I think students should study one or two foreign languages. I do not think English should be required, but do believe that students should be mandated to select one or two foreign languages. English as well as the other languages I have just mentioned should be among the choices.

**McCarty:** This is a good idea to aim for in the future.

**Newfields:** *One way that many universities are promoting globalization is through study abroad. Could you tell us about your university's study abroad program? What do you feel are its strong points?*

**Kawahara:** Kyoto Koka Women's University has sister-school affiliations with some schools in several "Anglo-sphere" countries such as Great Britain, the United States, Australia, and New Zealand. Each year



about 20 students from our school study in these countries in courses ranging from six weeks, to half a year or a full academic year. Ideally, I would like to see study abroad programs to other countries such as Singapore, India, and the Philippines established at our school.

**McCarty:** Osaka Jogakuin University (hereinafter OJU) and the two-year Osaka Jogakuin College (OJC) specialize in content-based EFL education for women. A study abroad handbook encourages all students to choose from a wide variety of programs, while admitting that studying abroad may not be suited to everyone. There is a faculty committee and Center for International Affairs along with administrators and two full-time staff focusing mainly on the study abroad programs. They feel that a strong point is the semester abroad program whereby third or fourth year OJU students can go to partner universities and enroll in regular classes according to their specialization. OJU students can go to universities in the U.S., Australia, New Zealand, Malaysia, South Korea, and Hong Kong. Moreover, at all of the selected universities they study wholly in English, whether in ESL environments or more economically in the nearby Asian countries. Three upper division English credits for each course they pass accrue to their OJU transcript. There is also a semester exchange program with Yuan Ze University in Taiwan, and four of their students are currently at OJU for a semester.

There is also an Internship Program whereby students go to educational institutions abroad and also NPOs, as some students have related specializations and are interested in such organizations. Students need a TOEIC score of at least 640 to qualify. Partners are in India, Hong Kong, the U.S., and Australia. Internships last four weeks and students earn three credits in English.

Moreover, we also offer a Field Study Program in developing countries facing poverty, civil strife, or environmental problems. It lasts for seven to ten days and students receive two credits. Current destinations include the Marshall Islands, India, Taiwan, as well as Gifu Prefecture for environmental issues.

These are but some of the programs at OJU and OJC.

**Newfields:** *Both of you have written extensively about multicultural education. In your view, how should multicultural education be taught to university students?*

**Kawahara:** In college I think we should expose students to a wide range of linguistic and cultural norms - not merely those in the "inner circle" described by Kachru (1985). This, of course, is somewhat idealistic. In reality, many staff funding issues need to be addressed. Teaching about cultures of Asia and Africa and doing joint research with students while using English is perhaps one of the most effective ways to promote language learning. Many university study abroad destinations are to countries where English is the dominant language such as the USA, Britain, and Australia. However, I hope more students will study in places such as the Philippines, Malaysia, Singapore, India, and Hong Kong to learn English.

**McCarty:** Japanese universities need to overcome the ostensible cultural factors that are holding the whole nation back, and wholeheartedly join the global community. Japan has a distinct and well-preserved culture



that is not too delicate to withstand intercultural communication. While I believe that a second or foreign language (L2) can be used solely as a tool for communication without changing one's culture at all, in my view the best way to promote multicultural understanding is to become bicultural or multicultural to an extent oneself. Understanding bilingualism as wholly enriching, Japanese universities would promote the utmost student exchanges with people from other cultures, and create learning environments where it is necessary and rewarding to use foreign languages.

*Newfields: What trends have you noticed among study abroad programs in Japan over the last 20-30 years? Do any of those trends in particular concern you?*

**Kawahara:** Recently, much discussion has been generated about how the number of young Japanese studying overseas has decreased. Although one likely reason is Japan's prolonged economic recession, it also seems likely that many young Japanese have become inward-looking. Moreover, many students today in Japan feel less need to venture overseas due to advances in communication technology via the Internet. Personally, I find such trends disappointing. I think young people need to go abroad and experience the world with their own eyes and ears and communicate directly with persons from abroad.

**McCarty:** Mr. Yahisa Kazuo of the International Office at Kobe City University of Foreign Studies reports that commercial study abroad programs have grown and improved over past decades, making it easier for students to study abroad if their families can afford it. Yet his university believes that students' best interests are served by continuing their "very challenging study abroad programs" (personal communication, 2012, May 11). Thus it would be of concern in terms of accountability if universities specializing in foreign languages or international studies were to outsource such a vital function.

However, it can be beneficial when families send students abroad in addition to what their universities offer, with the flexibility private firms offer to fill periods such as between semesters. My wife found one in Kobe that introduced relatively inexpensive English programs in Malaysia and the Philippines that our sons could enjoy during otherwise unproductive periods. Through an NPO our older son could even earn a TEFL International (2010) certificate in a month of training in Kathmandu, Nepal.

*Newfields: Some short-term study abroad programs have been criticized as mere tourist excursions. What's your opinion regarding these? Also what do you think of short-term study abroad programs without any language training components?*

**Kawahara:** They also have value. It is useful to go to foreign countries to see things with your own eyes. As a consequence, it is my belief that some students may feel more inclined to a foreign language when returning home. Rather than conceiving of short-term study abroad in terms of formal studies, I think they are "eye openers" that can cultivate a desire to learn more about foreign cultures and languages.



**McCarty:** I fully agree. If measured by the yardstick of L2 acquisition or improvement in proficiency, it might be unrealistic to expect significant changes in linguistic proficiency from short-term study abroad, but the complete change in environment can activate passive language and transform motivation.

**Newfields:** *Have there been any interesting studies about multicultural education and study abroad that you have read recently? Also, what sort of research studies are you hoping to see in this area in the future?*

**McCarty:** One article available online takes a nuanced view on the extent to which Japan is a multicultural society (Burgess, 2012). There is a Website, which also has a Facebook community named *Study Australia Information*, which aims to provide unvarnished facts about studying abroad in Australia (*The Truth*, 2011).

Prof. Mabuchi Hitoshi, a colleague who specializes in multicultural education, recommends Banks (2009) and Mabuchi (2011), while for concerns of foreign students and international exchanges he recommends Yokota and Shiratsuchi (2004) and a Japanese MEXT Ministry document (2010).

For further research, in my view it would be important to first define, describe, and measure the largely unrecognized types of bilinguals common in Japan, particularly those who are bilingual to some extent such as receptive bilinguals who understand but do not express much in English. Then survey how long it takes for them to turn into active bilinguals by studying abroad, which would provide guidance to those programs along with evidence of their effectiveness.

**Kawahara:** I would like to mention two books that address this issue. One is *Nihon no I-Gengo Kyouiku* [Learning about Different Languages in Japan] by Yasushi Otani, a professor emeritus at Osaka University. Another text worth reading is *Eigo Kyouiku to Bunka* [English Education and Culture], edited jointly by Profs. Shiozawa, Ishikawa, and Yoshikawa. Both books offer useful insights about how English language education is linked with multicultural issues, and books these are worth perusing.

**Newfields:** *Finally, what research projects are on your horizon now?*

**Kawahara:** I'm interested in exploring the relation between political/economic power and cultural-linguistic diffusion. At this point in history, English has become extraordinarily powerful and it is a lingua franca in many parts of the globe. 200 years from now I'm almost tempted to speculate that people all over the world may be speaking only English. However, such a scenario I regard with consternation. Whether it's possible to promote English without fostering too much cultural hegemony is something I'd like to continue to explore. It is good to remember that language is never "neutral" and when we decide to speak a specific language, we are also demonstrating allegiance to a whole group.

**McCarty:** While publishing more about bilingualism and language teaching (McCarty, 2012a), I have started a series on the essentials of academic life (McCarty, 2012b), and I hope to test the hypothesis that the academic standards and ethics among the worldwide community of scholars are universal.



My experiences including using Japanese over the past 30 years have convinced me that speaking another language does not imply changing one's cultural allegiance. Fortunately, there are cosmopolitan Asians who can use English and shift gears linguistically and culturally and I hope to work with those individuals more. I teach students that becoming bilingual or multilingual brings greater choices, hence greater freedom.

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