

International Students' Multilateral Contributions : Attempts Ranging from Cultural Exchanges to Community Involvement

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1. Introduction

Due to the globalization of higher education, the demand for admission of more international students to Japanese universities has been increasing. The advantages of fostering international students' admission can be summarized as below.

- 1) Diversity on campus : diverse background of students produces new ideas and activates students' learning
- 2) Global contribution in higher education : universities contribute globally by educating international students
- 3) Increasing educational effect through diversity of students : the new ideas and activated learning environment brought by the diversity mentioned above produces a positive educational effect for both international and domestic students

Based on these advantages, universities are accepting more international students with tuition exemptions, financial support, etc. However, having international students does not automatically guarantee that cultural exchange will occur. Difficulties in fostering cultural exchange are often reported by researchers, and the "educational intervention" for facilitating intercultural contact has also been proposed such as those by Kagami (1999). At the Faculty of Regional Development Studies, Toyo University, events for cultural exchange are held every year (Murata 2013, 2015). Such efforts on campus should be continued. On the other hand, it must be considered that universities are institutes contributing to their own regions. International students are part of this region, and they also can contribute to regional communities.

This paper focuses on the contribution of international students both to the campus community and the local community. Several attempts for encouraging students' contributions will be reported to suggest desirable

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practices for the future. First, practices at Toyo University and other universities will be introduced as the example of international students' contributions to campus community. Second, collaborations among local governments and universities will be introduced as an example of contributions to regional communities. The advantages of these initiatives will then be examined.

2. Practices at Universities

2-1. Practices at Toyo University

In 2013, the library of Toyo University launched a program named “English Tips,” and the library cooperated with international students to offer domestic students help regarding effective English communication. The program comprises 20-minute mini lectures held at lunchtime at the library's open space, with English-speaking international students acting as lecturers. The event has attracted many students and the special version of the lecture— “Korean Tips” by Korean students— gathered more students than any other lectures in this series in 2014.

Table 1. “English Tips” and “Korean Tips” in 2014

No.	Date	Theme and Contents	Participants
1	May 28, 2014 (Wed.)	“Online Databases for TOEIC Listening” Introducing databases as an English learning tool by describing text-to-speech functions with the option of using various English accents.	78
2	June 17, 2014 (Tue.)	“Introduction of Japan” Let's speak about your own country in English! This is the first step toward becoming a global citizen.	57
3	June 30, 2014 (Mon.)	“Homestay 1” Are you going to stay in a local's home abroad this summer? You should ensure that you know how to communicate effectively with your host family and how to make yourself understood.	70
4	October 8, 2014 (Wed.)	“Korean Tips” This is a good opportunity for those learning Korean to get together as well as an opportunity for Korean students to introduce their culture and language to other students.	81
5	October 27, 2014 (Mon.)	“TOEIC Listening” Observe the differences among four major native English accents by listening to native speakers of those accents.	43
6	November 12, 2014 (Wed.)	“Graded Readers” Autumn is the best season for reading! The best choice for extensive readers, “Graded Readers,” will be introduced. Some of these have audio options effective for dictations.	26
7	December 11, 2014 (Thu.)	“Lonely Planet” “Lonely Planet” is a world-famous and popular guidebook for travelers.	29

		It has a good reputation for the amount of information it provides and is also very helpful when travelling through lesser-known areas of Asia and Africa. If you are interested in learning English or going abroad, you should check it!	
8	January 9, 2015 (Fri.)	<p>“Homestay 2”</p> <p>★Different content from “Homestay 1” above with different guest speakers.</p> <p>Are you going to stay in a local’s home abroad during this spring break? You should ensure that you know how to communicate effectively with your host family and how to make yourself understood.</p>	22

In 2015, the library started a new version of “English Tips” called “Global Tips” to attract students who wish to play a part globally. It contains lectures on English communication by a university lecturer of English (a native speaker) and additional lectures on different countries, with guest students invited from those countries.

Table 2. “Global Tips” in 2015

No.	Date	Theme and Contents
1	May 28, 2015 (Wed.)	<p>“Practical cross-cultural communication tips”</p> <p>Useful and simple techniques for conversation with people from different cultural backgrounds are introduced.</p>
2	June 5, 2015 (Fri.)	<p>“Malaysian Tips : Want to know more, Malaysia!”</p> <p>Malaysia is now very popular for sightseeing and study. Malaysian culture, lifestyle, language, and other attractive features are introduced by Malaysian students.</p>
3	June 16, 2015 (Tue.)	<p>“Tips on job hunting”</p> <p>Is job hunting agony for university students all over the world? Let’s talk about job hunting and careers in various countries with help from international students.</p>
4	June 24, 2015 (Wed.)	<p>“How to have a great homestay experience”</p> <p>Do you have problems communicating with your host family? Hints for building a good relationship and gaining wonderful experiences are introduced.</p>
5	July 7, 2015 (Tue.)	<p>“Korean Tips 1 : South Korea learned through K-pop”</p> <p>Let’s learn more about South Korea through K-pop!</p>
6	October 20, 2015 (Tue.)	<p>“Introducing Switzerland”</p> <p>Interesting but unknown features of Switzerland are introduced.</p>
7	November 10, 2015 (Tue.)	<p>“Korean Tips 2 : South Korea learnt through food”</p> <p>Let’s understand South Korea more thoroughly through its food and culinary culture.</p>
8	November 27, 2015 (Fri.)	<p>“Virtual English Learning Resources : An introduction”</p> <p>Practical and free online English learning tools are introduced. Let’s find out how to use these resources effectively.</p>
9	December 10, 2015 (Tue.)	<p>“Common English communication obstacles”</p> <p>Do you have the experience of feeling lost for words in foreign language conversation? Practical techniques to use phrases fluently are introduced.</p>

The library hosted a lecture called “Malaysian Tips” on June 5, 2015 that attracted 62 participants and was favorably received. The author lectured with two Malaysian students as guest speakers. In recent years, Malaysia has become popular as a destination not only for Japanese tourists but also for Japanese students who wish to learn English. If the lecturer were merely a Japanese teacher, the lecture would not have attracted that much attention. Malaysian students as guest speakers stimulated participants’ attention and successfully increased the reality of the contents. The library is also going to receive a lecture on Switzerland by a lecturer of German later in 2015.

The “Global Tips” lecture series is very easy for students to participate for many reasons. First, the venue is convenient because it is held at the main library, which is located at the center of the campus. The time setting is also appropriate as it only takes 20 minutes over lunchtime. Third, it does not require any registration or preparation for participation, which would attract students who instantly decide to participate upon hearing the announcement of the day. The “Global Tips” lecture series provides a good opportunity for international students to contribute to an increasingly multicultural understanding on campus. It is desirable to continue attempts such as this and invite more international students from more countries as lecture guest speakers. It is also desirable to invite local residents to the library as lecture participants because the library is open to surrounding communities. Such effort would foster multicultural exchange both in and outside campus.

2-2. Japanese Speech Contest

The Faculty of Regional Development Studies, Toyo University, has held a Japanese Speech Contest for undergraduate international students almost every year since the establishment of the Faculty. This is an opportunity for international students to express themselves in Japanese that they have learnt. It also provides an opportunity for domestic students who listen to the speech or who help the contest as volunteers to know international students and to familiarize themselves with perspectives from different cultural backgrounds. In past years, volunteer organizations from the neighboring community have been invited as guests for enhancing cultural exchange. Since some domestic students do not have much chance to know international students in classrooms, the contest provides an appropriate reason for students to meet.

Contests both in and outside campus provide good opportunities for international students to contribute to multicultural understanding. In fact, a student of the graduate school of Regional Development Studies, Toyo University, was chosen as a speaker in this nationwide Japanese speech contest held by the International Education Center in June 2015. Twelve speakers from 11 countries were chosen out of 81 applicants from 26 countries through document and video screening. The contest was broadcast by NHK television as in previous years. Speakers were invited to parties and sightseeing trips at the venue, which fruitfully enabled speakers to obtain much experience in communication and to develop international friendships. The municipality of the venue also provided advantage in promoting tourist spots to speakers from all over the world and in promoting nationwide

viewers through television. International students contributed to these speech contests, which serve not only as a competition of linguistic skill but also for multicultural understanding inside and outside campus, and promotion of host communities.

3. Practices at Other Universities in Japan

3-1. Multilingual Homepages

Though cultural exchange events such as those mentioned above are commonly seen in universities in Japan, international students' contributions to university administration should also be considered more carefully. For example, at Waseda University (2002) and Kyoto University (2013), international students participated in a translation of the homepages of their universities. At Meiji University, international students translated articles of the official homepage of Nakano Ward, Tokyo, into three languages: English, Chinese, and Korean (Meiji University, 2015). Entrusting tasks related to promotion (such as these translations) to international students is a good example of contribution to university administration because those students continued to attract more students from their home countries. This also constitutes a good way to satisfy international students through fostering commitment to the university and to the local community.

3-2. Community Involvement Projects with International Students

It is natural to listen to foreign visitors to make tourist spots more attractive for them. However, perspectives vary between foreign tourists who visit places for the first time and foreign residents who actually stay there for some years, such as international students. Adler (1975) suggested five stages of culture shock as a transitional experience. New visitors such as tourists can be considered to be in the first stage, the contact stage (Adler, 1975), of culture shock, which is marked by the excitement and euphoria of a new experience. The individual is far more attuned to similarities than differences. However, people who remain in a new culture longer would perceive things differently depending on the duration of their stay. International students might be at different stages of culture shock depending on their mental condition, and provide opinions from different perspectives compared with tourists in the first stage of cultural shock.

The Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Preparation Bureau (2015) has taken the opportunity of the Olympic Games as a chance to promote not only Tokyo but also Japan as a whole, all over the world. It has launched a new project for multilingual hospitality. The project encourages trial projects of multilingual hospitality by local governments, toward and following 2020, for foreign visitors to stay and travel comfortably. For example, in Oita prefecture, international students of Ritsumeikan APU uploaded promotion videos of the prefecture to the official homepage of Oita and promotion video sites, contributing to increased attention to Oita prefecture. The Bureau also introduced some projects for improving the environment for tourists. This includes projects by Inuyama city, Itoshima, Hakone, and Saitama prefecture, but above all the project by Kanazawa city.

This latter project is the most remarkable example with various options open for cultural exchange. The commercial/industrial association of Kakinokibatake shopping street in Kanazawa city cooperates with international university students in Kanazawa, such as those from Kanazawa University, Hokuriku University, etc., to develop an internationally friendly community. First, international students are invited to local festivals and events to enhance cultural exchange and for local people to learn how to manage foreign visitors while the invited international students learn local lifestyle and culture. This is a good way to let students commit to the local community. It is not a one-shot event but rather a long-term multilateral project in which international students contribute as lecturers for their native language, translators for multilingual leaflets explaining local shop streets, developers of multilingual menu sheets, etc. The international students also improved the homepage so that it describes Japanese foods such as sushi, ramen, okonomi-yaki, oden, and so on. It explains what these foods are and how to eat them. Though many municipalities provide unilateral projects, such as offering a monitoring tour or homepage translation, the project by Kanazawa city is distinctive in attempting to tackle the integral and multilateral project of cultural exchange. This project constitutes an ideal example of cooperation between universities and local communities for cultural exchange. Furthermore, it is a good example of international students' contribution to universities and neighboring societies.

4. Conclusion

Thus far, examples of international students' contribution on and outside campus have been overviewed. Some attempts increase cultural understanding, and others enable international students to help promote their universities and contribute to neighboring communities' activation. The diversity inside campus activates campus community while also activating surrounding communities, which are opened to society outside of the campus. The advantage of accepting international students is often regarded unilaterally, i.e., enhancing cultural exchange and diversity on campus. However, it should be understood to have multilateral benefits. This is because it has great potential for enabling universities to contribute to the surrounding society in various ways. More attempts focusing on international students' multilateral contributions are required, and the significance of these projects should receive increased attention in the future.

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【Abstract】

留学生による多面的な貢献 —異文化交流から地域活性化まで—

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高等教育のグローバル化に伴い、大学における留学生受入は拡大している。従来、留学生受入の利点は学生の多様化によるイノベーションの促進、異文化交流の促進など、一面的にとらえられてきた。本稿では、「留学生受入の利点」を「留学生による貢献」ととらえ、その貢献の多面性を指摘する。特に、現在東洋大学国際地域学部で行われている取り組みや、各大学および自治体での取り組みを通じて、留学生が大学の内外で多方面に貢献していることを指摘し、留学生が多面的に貢献できるような取り組みの重要性について述べる。

キーワード：留学生、異文化交流、社会的貢献、多言語対応、地域活性化

The advantage of accepting international students is often considered to be unilateral ; this enhances cultural exchanges and diversity on campus. However, accepting international students could be made multilateral. This would have great potential in help universities contribute to their communities in various ways. This paper reports some practices to foster international students' contributions at Toyo University as well as other universities in Japan. It examines potential contributions this could make both on and off campus.

Key words : international students, cultural exchanges, social contributions, multilingual hospitality, community involvement

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