

EDUCATIONAL AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC ISSUES JAPANESE BRAZILIANS IN JAPAN

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ABSTRACT

It is now 27 years since revised immigration laws brought some 300,000 Japanese-descendant *Nikkei* Brazilians to Japan for economic opportunities. Brazilian schools were preferred to maintain Portuguese before the 2008 worldwide depression, which also forced many *Nikkei* families to return home. Presently, in the so called ‘Second Generation Resident Brazilians’ age, more *Nikkei* children attend Japanese public schools hoping for higher education. Economic and educational gaps among the youth have widened. Some can attend college and others have become economically and linguistically stateless. This paper explores educational and socio-economic issues that Japanese Brazilians in Japan have faced to enjoy full citizenship.

Keywords: Japanese Brazilian, language maintenance, Japanese public school, educational disparity.

Introduction

A new law was enacted in June 1990 to bring more and more *Nikkei* Brazilians and their spouses to work in Japan, with the largest number, 312,979, arriving in 2006 (Ministry of Justice, 2012). It was a surprising phenomenon both on the Japanese and Brazilian sides. Brazil was a rather new country that had concentrated on accepting a large number of immigrants from Italy, Germany and other parts of Europe and Africa, and it had never experienced losing so many people to Japan, the U.S.A. and to Europe all at once (Consul General, Interview data, 2017).

However, due to the worldwide depression that developed from 2008, many of these workers’ contracts were terminated by the temporary personnel placement

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services and they were forced to go back to Brazil. In Hamamatsu, the city where the largest number of Nikkei Brazilians resides, the number decreased to 12,641 in Oct. 2011 from the peak number of 19,461 in 2008 (HICE, 2017).

Although public education is provided for foreign children in Japan, some Brazilian parents choose Portuguese-medium Brazilian schools, even though they generally have less-qualified teachers and poorer facilities. Within two months after the Lehman Shock, Brazilian and Peruvian schools in Japan lost around 2,500 students, and 35% of them were ‘staying at home’ or ‘not attending any school’, and therefore, educational supports were urgently called for (Shizuoka Newspaper, 2009). Presently, as tuition at Japanese public schools is lower, and with the prospect of longer stays, more and more parents choose Japanese public schools.

Now *Nikkei* Brazilians are facing the new phase called ‘2nd generation resident *Nikkei* Brazilians (in Japan)’. This means children who were born in or arrived in Japan in the late 1990s have become old enough to or hope to receive high education. Presently, about 56% of them attend high school but still the rate is much lower than the 98% for Japanese nationals. Ikegami and Ueda (2014) point out that the economic and educational gap among the younger generation has widened. What are the historical and socio-economic factors that have affected *Nikkei* parents and children? What kind of difficulties have *Nikkei* children faced in terms of education? Have they been successful at maintaining their mother tongue?

To answer these questions, this paper explores the issues that Japanese Brazilians in Japan have faced to enjoy full citizenship, which are demonstrated in a chronological order, with literature review including previous research conducted by Sugino (2008), questionnaire data conducted in 2008, data from 5 interviewees, the *Nikkei* principal at Brazilian school (2010-14), Brazilian Consul General (February 14th, 2017), a *Nikkei* graduate student (January 26th, 2017), Brazilian temporary employment agency (February 16th, 2017), and NPO *Nikkei* counselor (March 2nd, 2017).

From Japan to Brazil as immigrant

Despite being officially translated as *Immigration and Naturalization Office* in English, the Japanese government does not actually use the word immigration in government documentation, but instead refers to *shutsunyukoku kanri jimusho* (going out of and coming back to Japan control office). Historically, the word *imin* (immigrant) was associated with Japanese emigrants who sought economic advancement overseas, in places like Hawaii and South America. The word *Nikkeijin*, which refers to descendants of Japanese who emigrated abroad between 1868 and 1973, may be more appropriate in a strict sense.

In 1924, after the U. S. Immigration Act was enacted, which virtually prohibited Japanese immigration to the U.S., Japanese began to immigrate to South American countries (DE CARVALHO, 2003). When the *Kadaso-Maru* carried the first Japanese immigrants 110 years ago, Japanese were allowed to immigrate only temporarily to compensate for a shortage of European immigrants, while the Brazilian government wished to “whiten” the country (KAWAMURA, 2000).

As for education and language maintenance in Brazil, during the 1920s, Japanese parents debated whether to educate their children at a Brazilian or Japanese school (DE CARVALHO, 2003). Though the first generation were eager to retain their Japanese-ness and Japanese language, some second-generation were not (FUCHIGAMI, 1995). Until the 1990s, community-based Japanese schools were not viewed so much as ‘language schools’ but as places for cultural organization (SAKAMOTO & MORALES, 2016). In the early 2000s, 40% of the third generation and 60% of the fourth generation are married to non-*Nikkei* and their ability to speak Japanese is declining (DE CARVALHO, 2003).

From Brazil to Japan as newcomers

With the Japanese economic boom in the 1970s and 80s, and with the economic adversities and relatively low standard of living in Brazil, Japanese ceased emigrating,

and instead Nikkei Brazilians started to come back to Japan. Because of the alarming rate of illegal workers, the Japanese government newly revised the law in 1990. This new law categorizes foreign workers into three groups. The first group is consisted individuals judged to possess special skills including sport players, entertainers, and language teachers. The second group is of people like manual laborers but they are usually denied visas. The third group is consisted of *Nikkei* Brazilians and their spouses and families (1-3rd generation) who are the only group granted the right to stay and work in Japan without a working visa (KAJITA, 2006). In 1993, the government added one more group of unskilled trainees from developing countries to work in agriculture and other fields in pursuit of skills qualification² Anyway, it should be noted that the *Nikkei* could stay and work 100% legally was extremely exceptional because the government does not issue working visas for laborers (TAJIMA, 2010b).

In 1989, Brazilians accounted for only 14,528, but in 2007, the number peaked at 316,916 out of 2.15 million registrants. The 2017 World Bank Brazil-Nikkei Household Survey revealed almost 20 per cent of 839 *Nikkei* households have a member in Japan, 18 per cent receive remittances, and 35 per cent have a member who has returned from working or studying in Japan (MCKENZIE & SALCEDO, 2014). The study also reveals a strong negative impact of education on the likelihood of migrating, consistent with those at the upper end of the income distribution in Brazil being less likely to want to migrate to do unskilled work in Japan (MCKENZIE & SALCEDO, 2014).

Though the original intention of the new law was supposedly not to compensate for the shortage of foreign workers, this new law was often interpreted by Japanese companies as an attractive opportunity to use them as an alternative to other kinds of foreign labor (KAJITA, 2006; ROTH, 2002). More than 50% lived in just a few prefectures, such as Aichi, Shizuoka, and Gunma, where many subcontractors for large

² This system has been criticized as a vehicle for forced cheap labor from countries such as China, Vietnam and the Philippines, sometimes trapping them into oppressive conditions . The revised law in 2016 will allow skilled non-Japanese to be agricultural workers but require university level agricultural knowledge and basic communication skills in Japanese (The Japan Times, Skilled foreign workers to be employed by farms in special zones, Dec 12, 2016)

companies are located. Regardless of their educational and professional backgrounds, most of the *Nikkeijin* were marginalized.

Table 1 – The total numbers of registered foreigners and Brazilians and its percentages in 2001, 2006, 2011, and 2016.

Year	Registered	Total	Males	Females
2001	Brazilians	265,962 (15.0%)	N/A	N/A
	Foreigners	1,778,462	N/A	N/A
2006	Brazilians	312,979 (15.0%)	171,499	141,480
	Foreigners	2,084,919	968,391	1,116,528
2011	Brazilians	210,032 (10.1%)	114,215	95,817
	Foreigners	2,078,508	945,153	1,133,355
2016	Brazilians	176,284 (7.6%)	96,098	80,186
	Foreigners	2,307,388	1,094,545	1,212,843

Source: Ministry of Justice HP, 2016.

Many municipal governments in these prefectures started to take special measures to better serve foreign residents, but, as the number of *Nikkei* Brazilians increased, Japanese residents began wary because of their neighborhood troubles, such as illegal garbage dumping, loud parties, and crimes (TSUDA, 2003).

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Issues related to education and language

Various institutions to maintain heritage language in Japan

Minority language rights' advocates have argued that: (1) Every child should have the right to identify positively with her mother tongue(s) and have her identification accepted and respected by others; (2) Every child should have the right to

learn the mother tongue(s) fully; (3) Every child should have the right to choose when she wants to use the mother tongue(s) in all official situations. (SKUTNABB-KANGAS, 1999).

In Japan, various institutions have been established to maintain heritage languages besides home languages. Among them are *Yokohama Chuka Gakuin* (Yokohama Overseas Chinese Schools) established as early as 1897, and *Doitsu Gakko* (Deutsche Schule Tokyo Yokohama) in 1904 (SUEFUJI, 2005). These foreign schools include ethnic schools such as Chinese and Korean schools, American schools on the U.S. bases, established schools such as French, German, and British schools, and new schools, such as 60 Brazilian schools and Indian International School in Tokyo (Suefuji, 2005). As of May 2011, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) reported that 127 foreign schools were accredited but they were essentially excluded from the public school system and were only acknowledged as *Kakushu gakko* (miscellaneous schools).

Foreign students who need special instruction in Japanese

Foreign students who needed special instruction in Japanese numbered 37,095 (7,897 Japanese nationals and 29,198 foreign nationals) at 6,137 public schools (MEXT, 2014). Figure 1 shows foreign national attending public schools and Figure 2 shows selected mother tongues spoken by foreign nationals who need instructions in Japanese.

Though education in Japan is not compulsory for foreign nationals, every child is guaranteed by a chapter of UNESCO. Therefore, if Nikkei students come to Japanese public schools, education is provided at a minimum cost, but if they decide to quit school along the way, municipal Board of Education do not stop them (SUGINO, 2008).

Fig. 1 – Foreign nationals attending public schools (MEXT, 2012b)

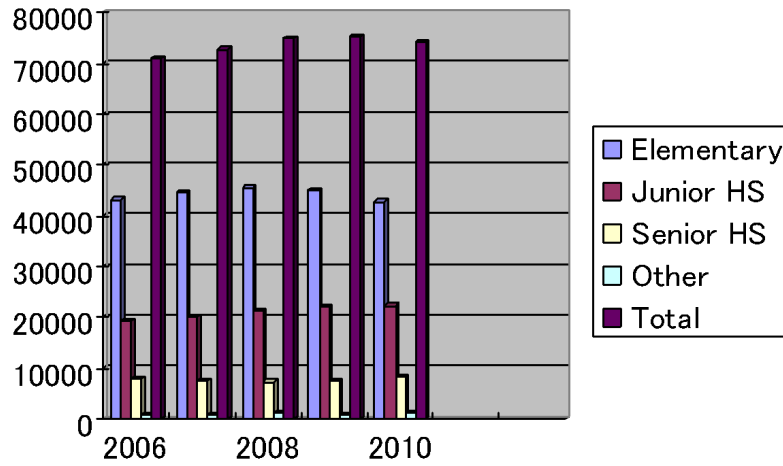


Fig. 2 – Selected Mother Tongues Spoken by Foreign Nationals who need Instructions in Japanese (MEXT, 2012b) (No data is available in 2009).

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(Note: Other languages include Korean, Vietnamese, and English. Spanish speakers are mostly Nikkei South Americans.)

Nikkei Brazilians in Hamamatsu

Background information

Revista de Letras Norte@mentos

Dossiê Temático em Linguística Aplicada: horizontes multidisciplinares, Sinop, v. 10, n. 23, p. 122-147, outubro 2017.

Hamamatsu city is a mid-sized city of 800,000 people. Since many subcontractors for large companies are located there, together with the mild weather and lower rents, more and more Nikkei Brazilians came to live in the city. 2004 was the first year to have the largest number of Nikkei Brazilians of 12,766. There were 12,641 in October, 2011 after the peak number of 19,461 in 2008 (HICE, 2016).

Before 2008, ethnic business was flourishing, which enabled Brazilians to obtain daily living supplies and information without any knowledge of Japanese. Besides ethnic businesses, Brazilian schools, church services, brokers, bank services, travel agencies, car dealers, and day-care services were also available in Portuguese.

The Hamamatsu Foundation for International Communication and Exchange (HICE) was established in Oct. 1991 to promote international exchanges and local multiculturalization where Japanese and non-Japanese residents can live together cohesively. Then in 2001, Hamamatsu City proclaimed ‘World Urbanized Vision (*Sekai Toshika*)’ promoting ‘international exchange’ and ‘multicultural understanding’. Despite its efforts, some local residents became bothered by littering, noise and crimes allegedly caused by the *Nikkei* Brazilians. Some residents developed negative feelings against them, showing ambivalent views toward internationalization (SUGINO, 2010).

In September 2009, the Consulate General of Brazil was established besides Nagoya and Tokyo, to serve 50,000 Nikkei Brazilians in the city and its vicinity. In January 2010, The Foreign Resident Study Support Center officially started to offer general educational support, regardless of age. The “UToC” (Yuto Todo Mundo Center) has four goals of offering Japanese classes for foreign residents, Japanese volunteer training courses, multiculturalism experience workshops, and Portuguese classes for Japanese school teachers.

As for education, to best serve the increasing number of Brazilian children, the Hamamatsu Board of Education tried to provide remedial Japanese lessons and bilingual assistants in regular classes. For example, in 2002, the city started a bilingual program called *Canarinho*. This program was not managed by MEXT, but rather by the Office of International Affairs, and served to help put Brazilian children into

mainstream public classes after they felt comfortable with the Japanese language. In reality, since it cost too much money to help children start schooling or go back to school, the city integrated the program and other remedial Japanese classes. The bilingual program was terminated after a few years. Table 2 shows the number of foreign registers in Hamamatsu and children by country. The foreign registers account for 21,055 out of 807,739 people in the city.

Table 2 – Number of Foreign registers and children by Nationality in Hamamatsu City
(As of 05/01/2016)

	Total	Brazil	Philippines	Peru	Vietnam	China	Indonesia	Other
Foreign registers*	21,055	8,424	3,277	1,674	1,560	2,446	711	2,959
Grade school	1,013	474	158	131	108	72	35	35
Junior HS	480	267	90	57	30	17	11	8
Total	1,493	741	248	188	138	89	46	43
Ratio at school		49.6%	16.6%	12.6%	9.2%	6.0%	3.1%	2.9%

Source: Hamamatsu City Board of Education, 2016.

(Note: * The latest data available for foreign children by nationality was as of May 1st 2016, the data for foreign registry was used accordingly. Presently, there are 22,068, 8,679, 3,501, 1,692, 1,932, 2,450, 762, 3,052 respectively out of 806,488.)

As another example, in order to cope with the high rate of absenteeism as seen in Table 3, Hamamatsu City started *Fushugakuji zero sakusen* [Zero absentee children campaign] in 2011. Of 92 students reported, 48 children were Brazilian children. The city hired several staff to find these children and try to get them to attend school.

One staff member I interviewed in March 2017 recalled that when they received a list of the students with names and addresses, they tried to visit their home many times until they finally could talk to the parents and ask the reasons why their children were not attending schools. Some said they did not know the system, did not have enough money, and some even said because of the fear of earthquakes. In 2013, the city terminated this campaign as they felt there was no child left behind at home.

Table 3 shows attendance for children of foreign nationals, whether they attend Japanese public schools, Brazilian schools, or not attending school at all.

Table 3 – School Attendance for Children of Foreign Nationals

	No of Students Registered (6-15)	Children at Public Schools	Students at Foreign-Based Schools	Children Not Attending School (%)***
2016	No data	1,493	352	2 (0.1)
2012	2,535*	1,447	361**	727 (28.6)
2010	2,724	1,503	348	837(30.7)
2007	2, 923	1, 558	745	620(21.2)
2002	1,556	873	358	325(20.9)

Source: Hamamatsu City Board of Education, 2010; Hamamatsu NPO Network Center, 2012
 (Note: *The Foreign registry system was abolished in July, 2012. This number was added by the author. **The author totaled data from the Hamamatsu NPO Network Center. ***This number includes older students who leave Junior HS at 14.)

A number of reasons have been proposed to explain the high rate of absenteeism among newcomer children. Difficulty of Japanese, Chinese characters, parents' poor Japanese, a significant discrepancy between Japanese and Brazilian school cultures, such as strict school rules are just some of the reasons.

Portuguese-medium Brazilian schools

Since only Nikkei Brazilians can stay and work in Japan legally without special skills, the Brazilian government granted Brazilian nationals their rights for education. In 1999, the Brazilian government accredited the Brazilian schools that met the standard of Brazilian schools as 'overseas Brazilian schools' for the first time in the world (TAJIMA, 2010a). However, since the Japanese government does not acknowledge them as public educational institutions, they are managed as private companies.

When the author started investigating one particular Brazilian school, there were seven Brazilian schools in the city and fifteen including the peripheral towns, 13 of which were accredited by the Brazilian government. This meant they used the same textbooks and educational systems as in Brazil, including curriculum and failing systems. As shown in Table 3, of the 1,556 Brazilian students, 873 attended Japanese public schools, 358 Brazilian schools, and 325 (21%) were absentees (SUGINO, 2008).

The number has changed, as of June 2016, to 1.493 students attending Japanese public schools, 352 Brazilian schools (elementary, junior and senior high school including distance learning), and only two students were absentees.

Escola Brasileira (2002-2006)

The Brazilian school I investigated was founded in 1996 and had approximately one hundred children and another 150 at a branch school. The number of the students enrolled varied from time to time. The school facilities were deteriorated compared to Japanese public schools but had three wooden buildings with a large playground and volleyball courts. To maintain the school facilities and quality of teachers, parents paid around 400 dollars to cover tuition and busing, about five times as much as the cost of Japanese public schools.

The sixth grade class I had observed had a Japanese lesson once a week. But the Japanese teacher mentioned that the students were not motivated to study Japanese because they did not need it. They could get by daily life without knowing any Japanese at that time. However, the firm manner of teaching could be seen in other classes such as math, science and history taught by Brazilian teachers, which was quite different from the stereotypical impression of Brazilians that I had before class observations.

Vice President Mr. N (2nd generation Nikkei Brazilian, in his 40s at that time) mentioned:

When they transfer from Japanese schools, some children are stressed out. They are under a lot of pressure and feel that they have nowhere to go. Some have nervous breakdowns.

After the children came to this school, their feelings became so bright—they became so happy. As they can understand what the teachers and friends are saying, even though their grades (here) are not good, they feel so good about themselves. At Japanese schools, they lost interest in studying because they could not understand (Interview in Japanese, November 20, 2002).

The previous study by Sugino (2008) revealed that mother tongue maintenance, content-based studying, and a sense of belonging are the main reasons why the Brazilian parents chose a Brazilian school over Japanese public schools.

Brazilian school Escola Brasileira (2006-2008)

Before 2006, many Nikkei Brazilians could be seen around the Hamamatsu station, especially on the weekends. Portuguese services at ATMs and buses began around this time. Vice-president Mr. N took over the business in December 2006, and started their new school near the center of Hamamatsu.

In June 2007, Mr. N told me the following in an interview.

As there are more Brazilian schools now, it has become really competitive. We used to have 130-150 students but now we have only about 100. At one time the number decreased to 80. The location is quite convenient but we do not have a playground. We have P.E. on Mondays. We take students to a nearby community center or other places so that the students can play sports. We have three school buses and four RVs for busing students. Sometimes we have to go and get a few students all the way from the countryside but we cannot refuse. We ask a volunteer teacher to come and teach elementary Japanese for an hour every day (Interview in Japanese, June 7, 2007).

Although the school was accredited by the Brazilian government, it was not by the Japanese government, and consequently, the school could not obtain much needed financial support from the Japanese government.

Despite the gradual vulnerabilities of the economic system, Mr. N seemed to be trying hard to manage the Brazilian school for the sake of mother tongue maintenance and a sense of belonging. It was also a time when education in the mother tongue was spreading in Hamamatsu City. Sakuma (2011) purports that since Portuguese would be important for communicating with grandparents and friends in local communities when children go back to Brazil, their abilities in Portuguese should be valued more, instead of just requiring the children to assimilate into the Japanese culture and Japanese

language. Sakuma further claims that for a successful multi-cultural society, valuing mother tongues is the first step (pp. 128-129).

Brazilian school Escola Brasileira (2010-present)

The Brazilian school in this study had to move again to an older and smaller building with fewer teachers.

In October 2010, Mr. N told me the following in an interview.

Anyway, I was not planning to go back to Brazil and I didn't feel we were losing money, so we did not go back. Even after the Lehman Shock, I didn't go home. Right now the number of students is 20. At the end of the last school year, 21 students didn't come back. My wife and I and two others are the only teachers left now. I wanted to continue our school because I am not doing it for money. We had some savings left and the children who are staying now are financially doing fine, I think. The Japanese teacher came from the local government to teach Japanese to 5th graders and up, three times a week. I had to lower the fee by 60 U.S. dollars. In Hamamatsu, since there are several Brazilian schools, it is causing tough competition. Our contract is up soon. Since the owner knows that the economy is bad, he trusts me and helps me greatly. I hope we can extend the contract (Interview in Japanese, October 31, 2010).

In another interview in 2014, though the Hamamatsu city proclaimed in previous year that there was no *Nikkei* child left behind at home, Mr. N mentioned that there were some children who were between the educational and social systems and they felt nowhere to go. Also, Brazilian schools only require children to attend half a day, they try to locate them and offered to take care of them on a volunteer basis as 'after school daycare facility' (January 24, 2014).

I visited the school several times between 2012 and 2014. I saw Mr. N trying very hard to manage his school only because he believed that *Nikkei* children needed a place to main their heritage language. Unfortunately, in 2016 the school was closed down.

Social and economic issues

Japanese society has held ambivalent notions about internationalization for some time. Many Japanese admire the English language and foreigners, a feeling that forms the basis of the Japanese government's movement toward "internationalization." When Japanese use the term foreigner, most associate it specifically with Westerners mainly Americans. On the other hand, though many *Nikkei* Brazilians are socially successful and culturally respected for their "Japanese" qualities in Brazil, in Japan they are criticized for their "Brazilian" behavior and cultural traits (TSUDA, 2003).

Ambivalent attitudes of local residents and identity issue

While doing research on the Brazilian school in Hamamatsu for several years, the author noticed that her acquaintances were not even aware of the existence of Brazilian schools, even though the city has the highest number of *Nikkei* Brazilians in Japan. So, a questionnaire was conducted on local residents between July and December of 2008. 438 (83.5%) were returned completed out of 524. The 438 participants were all Japanese nationals. 142 (32.4%) were male and 296 (67.6%) female (SUGINO, 2010).

As mentioned earlier, the city's accommodation infrastructure is fairly good and the local government actively works toward coexistence with foreigners. However, it is still a mid-sized city and quite different from multicultural and multiethnic cities such as Tokyo or Osaka. For example, a large number of residents have lived in the same city for a long time. The background data showed 217 participants had lived in the same city for 30 to 70 years. Only 20 % of the 438 participants had dealt with the foreigners, mostly as the Japanese teachers, doctors, and truck drivers. Only 14 (3.2%) of the participants has some contact as NPO workers and volunteers.

Asked whether the participants had close foreign friends, 56 participants said "yes", but they were mostly associating with people from the U.S., the U.K., and

Canada. Thirteen people said they were associating with Brazilians, but just in greeting them when they happened to meet them.

Asked about Brazilians' mother tongue maintenance, 25% felt Brazilians should attend Japanese public schools, but if had to, most of them said they'd send their children to English-medium international or Japanese schools in a target country. The results may show that even among the local residents where the largest number of Nikkei Brazilians reside, people have a tendency to show favorable feelings toward English and English-speaking countries (SUGINO, 2010).

The survey by McKenzie & Salcedo in Brazil (2014) also revealed that reasons for migrating to Japan were mostly economic in nature, but the main reasons for coming back to Brazil were social such as homesickness and a desire to be with family members and "to be with my own culture", as well as the high living costs.

Economic Deterioration

The worldwide depression in 2008 delivered a hard blow to Nikkei Brazilians. Because many of them were hired on a temporary basis in the first place, together with the ones who went back to Brazil voluntarily, more than half of the workers were fired (Higuchi, 2011). Among the Brazilian workers, 60% lost not only their jobs, but their company housing (Yasuda, 2010). Within two months after the Lehman Shock, Brazilian and Peruvian schools lost around 2,500 students, which caused 35% of the children unable to attend school (SHIZUOKA NEWSPAPER, 2009).

Starting March 31, 2009, the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare provided Nikkei South Americans with 300,000 yen (\$3,500) for each person, and ¥200,000 (\$2,400) for each dependent if they went back home (IIDA & ISHI, 2009). However, once they received this money, they would not be allowed to return to Japan on an unconditional working visa again. Therefore, criticism arose that the aid implied "xenophobic consolation money" (ISHIDA, 2009).

Educational Crisis

As far as education is concerned, in the past 20 years, the rate for Brazilian students going on to high school has been only 30 to 35 %, and as a result, they are often excluded from the educational system (Higuchi, 2011). Quite often, if parents cannot afford to send children to Brazilian schools, in many cases, children stop going to school. Hamamatsu city decided to support 1/3 of textbook costs for 745 students who were assumedly going to Brazilian schools. In 2010, the city was successful in identifying 48 absentees out of 96, but the rest of the students could not be located (Shizuoka Newspaper, 2011).

On the other hand, children who went back to Brazil, especially those who attended the Japanese public schools, were feeling out of place and facing the problem of illiteracy in Portuguese (OYAMA & SHINAGAWA, 2009). In Brazil, the Japanese programs offered at regular schools are designed and implemented by the Brazilian community, focusing on Japanese as a foreign language, not as a heritage language (SAKAMOTO & MORALES, 2016). Even if they had a diploma from a junior high school in Japan, they could not automatically attend high school in Brazil, and it created a serious problem, especially when children had literacy only in Japanese (OYAMA & SHINAGAWA, 2009). Surprisingly, students who were absentees in Japan could go back to school more easily in Brazil because the Brazilian school system decides a student's grade or year according to his/her Portuguese abilities, not according to age as in Japan (OYAMA & SHINAGAWA, 2009).

Providing effective Japanese teacher training as well as guaranteeing higher social status for Japanese teachers still remains a challenge in Brazil, and furthermore, it is pointed out that *Nikkei* Japanese language instructors in Brazil do not value their Japanese heritage and they SAKAMOTO & MORALES denounce their own heritage while they engage in Japanese teaching (2016).

These results show that if children cannot study continuously, whether in Japan or Brazil, their futures appear less bright and they face more severe difficulties.

Children in the age of ‘Second Generation Resident Brazilians’

Presently, in the age of so called ‘Second Generation of Resident Brazilians’, Ikegami and Ueda (2014) point out that the economic and educational gap among the younger generation has widened. They categorize the Nikkei youth into four groups:

1. They attend university and have become global human resources at big corporation making use of their language abilities and multicultural competency.
2. They are pretty good at Japanese, graduate from high school and/or vocational tech. and have become (factory) workers in a pretty stable company.
3. They are not good at Japanese, keep the same ‘dekasegi’ style as their parents, and engage in labor work hired by a temporary employment agency.
4. They are semi-lingual, not good at Portuguese or Japanese. Since they are used to living in Japan, they dislike working as laborers and get by working as part-time.

The key factors to categorize them into these groups are language abilities and educational background.

The interview was conducted with a 3rd generation *Nikkei* college student in January 26th in 2017. The following is the excerpt from the interview.

I came to Japan when I was in the 4th grade. I stayed in the Brazilian community in Yokkaichi with my parents and two older brothers. My home language was Portuguese. After finishing junior high school, I started working in a factory like my brothers and peers did until I had a car accident and felt obliged to started preparing for the University Entrance Qualification Examination. I did not have literacy in Portuguese until started working in a factory with other Portuguese-speaking workers, and I learned English at junior high school with grammatical explanations in Japanese.

I feel only about one out of 20 Nikkei students attend universities. Now Nikkei youth have become permanent residents, not just factory workers just like immigrants. We are not only a labor force, but members of the society. Japan emphasized blood-lines and we do not have voting rights, but in Brazil, as it is pronatalism, it grants voting rights.

It is very important for parents to support children both financially and mentally. There is a large discrepancy among parents. I feel young Nikkei would like to engage in professional work both in Japan and overseas. (Original is in Japanese)

What makes his story unique is that he first started out in group 3 as mentioned above. Then due to the car accident, he decided to attend college and found a distance learning school to get a high school diploma. He said he acquired literacy in Portuguese while working in a factory, brushed up his English while working in a company before coming to college.

On the other end of the spectrum, in the survey by the Hamamatsu city, young people between 16-19 who did not go on to higher education, and are working right now (11.2% out of 1,035), answered in the survey that they can speak ‘only Japanese’ 17.5%, ‘can speak Japanese better than mother tongue’ 7.8% , ‘pretty good at both Japanese and mother tongue’ 45.8%, ‘can speak only mother tongue’ 3.0%, and ‘not so good at both Japanese and mother tongue’ 5.6% (The Committee for Localities with a Concentrated Foreigner Population, 2015). They are the ones who are categorized in groups 3 and 4.

Retaining heritage language

680 foreign parents in 23 cities with a Concentrated Foreigner Population were asked what they felt was important in education, with more than one answer possible. More than 65.4 % of the parents answered, “to acquire abilities in Japanese”. 64.6% answered to “learn healthy attitudes toward life and good manners”, with 62.6% answering to gain “enough ability to go on to higher education”. 60.9% answered to “nurture communication abilities”, but only 185 parents, 27.2%, answered to “acquire mother tongue” (The Committee for Localities with a Concentrated Foreigner Population, 2017). In the present, 437 children attend Brazilian schools, 200 in elementary school, 180 in junior high school, and 40 in high school (Consulate-General,

2017) with the scope of going back to Brazil in the future. They hope to get special qualifications to help them work at places other than factories.

More Brazilian children speak Japanese than Portuguese though Nisei or Sansei (2nd or 3rd generation) parents still cannot speak Japanese and have difficulty communicating with teachers at school. In big cities such as Tokyo and Nagoya, the stories are quite different and they cannot get the same kind of assistance as in Hamamatsu city (Consul General, 2017). As children are assimilated into Japanese society, they start to forget Portuguese. Therefore, at the Consulate General of Brazil in Hamamatsu, they offer Portuguese classes on Saturdays for about 250 children and host speech contests in Portuguese and Samba Festivals twice a year, which both residents of Hamamatsu and *Nikkei* Brazilians enjoy.

Guidance for higher education

In the new *Nikkei* age, according to a report by Hamamatsu city (2017), as of the 2014-2015 school year, 116 out of 168 (69%) of the first grader Brazilians were born in Japan, and for all the Brazilian children enrolled at elementary school, 64% (497 out of 757) were born in Japan.

In order to help foreign born children to be good members of an inclusive society, the municipal government provides counseling about education, has counselors visit schools (interpreters, advisors), and offers guidance to continuous learning to high schools. In fact, asked about their children's futures, 489 (71.9%) of the foreign parents in the survey answered they hoped their children would go on to university/graduate school level in Japan though some said they want their children to go to universities in Brazil and a few parents said no plan for higher education (Committee for Localities with a Concentrated Foreigner Population, 2017).

In 2011, there was only one student who was attending college and graduated with honor. Two years ago, at two colleges in Hamamatsu, there were 30 students and

this year in 2017, 42 had applied to colleges and universities (The Consulate General, 2017)

In an interview which took place in February, 2017, a non-*Nikkei* Brazilian, the owner of temporary employment agency with a *Nikkei* Brazilian wife, told me the following:

I came to Japan 28 years ago after graduating from university in Brazil as a spouse of a *Nikkei* Brazilian. I have lived in another city with a 'Concentrated Foreigner Population' near Nagoya. I have dealt with many delinquent children and trouble at home for Brazilian children. At present, more students attend high schools, for example, they can go to school with sport abilities. Also, one private international university in Nagoya accepts about 10 students every year. However, retaining Portuguese totally depends on educational philosophy. After 2011, the Brazilian school in the vicinity went bankrupt. As parents work more than 12 hours, they have difficulty communicating with children, especially in Portuguese, because of parents' poor Japanese. Most of the parents stay in the *Nikkei* community and live in the same way as they did in Brazil. Young people nowadays do not want to work as factory workers. Parents in their 50s do not want to go back to Brazil because of little insurance coverage. To maintain both Japanese and Portuguese, it all depends on the parents.

The Consul General also mentioned about the rate of college attendance. In an interview

Nowadays, more children speak Japanese than Portuguese. More children go to Japanese schools. Although parents still cannot understand Japanese, they are getting used to the Japanese school system. They don't want to work in factories. They are seeking career development. In 2011, there was only one student who was attending college in Hamamatsu. This year (2017), 42 students submitted applications to colleges. There has been great support from the city, for example, if there are more than 50 students in one elementary school, they provide (language) assistants to that school. (February 14th, 2017, interpreted from Portuguese into Japanese.)

Since more and more parents want their children to go on to higher education, Hamamatsu City started a 'Career Support Project for Youths with Roots Abroad.' In

the questionnaire administered by the Project group, out of 135 foreign nationals aged 15-19, 53.3% were Brazilian nationals. As for their language abilities, since almost all of them were born in Japan and/or had stayed in Japan for more than 10 years, they felt they had 'No problem with Japanese' (42.2%) and 'Have kanji literacy' (24.4%). Yet 14.1% felt they had 'Limited proficiency in Japanese' or 'no kanji literacy'. Asked which language they felt most comfortable in, 59.3% answered 'their mother tongue' more than 'Japanese' at 45.2%. Asked about higher education, 54.8% are presently attending Japanese high school, 3.7% had graduated, 1.5% had dropped out, and 25.9% were attending foreign schools (not necessarily high school level).

Only 2.2% said they were attending or have attended colleges or vocational training organizations. This number is much lower than 70% (university, junior college, voc. Tech combined) for Japanese nationals (Hamamatsu City, 2017).

Existing problems

That the largest number of Brazilian parents ever has become homeowners indicates that children are assimilated into Japanese society. Yet, this also indicates, more and more, that children are forgetting Portuguese, unless parents try very hard to maintain it. Therefore, the Consulate General of Brazil in Hamamatsu hosts a speech contest in Portuguese and a Samba Festival twice a year.

Though the number of Brazilians attending higher education has increased, only about 60% enter into senior high school compared to 98% for Japanese students. We can assume that children who have dropped out of high school or have not attended high school will have more difficulty getting a good, stable job than Japanese students. Also the type of high schools they attend will matter. In a career development survey, of 119 who said they had attended high school, 15.1% had attended a day school,

39.5% night school, and 35.3% distance learning. This again shows disadvantages.

As shown above, there are cities such as Hamamatsu city and cities of Kobe, and 12 other municipal governments, which follow the school attendance of foreign children. Those cities are successful at tracking students who are not attending school. However, many local governments fail to follow up on the enrollment of foreign children due to the central government's policy of applying mandatory school education only to Japanese nationals (Sawa & Tsumura, 2016). This policy may affect these students' futures and lead to a cycle of poverty among Japan's foreign residents (Sawa & Tsumura, 2016).

In another interview a NPO Nikkei counselor and bilingual teacher shared a story

:

After the Lehman Shock, those who went back to Brazil with the Japanese government financial support really wanted to come back to Japan to work because of the unstable economic situation and educational opportunities for children. However, the Japanese government would not let them come back unless they had at least a one-year job contract, which made it almost impossible to come back since Nikkei Brazilians are commonly contracted on a monthly basis in Japan.

Sometimes parents bring children as old as junior school age. Naturally as they do not know Japanese, they stay at home instead of going to school. Some parents genuinely feel that children do not need to continue education. As parents nowadays have better opportunities to buy a house, they feel children need to know Japanese. They have grapevine NPOs to offer free Japanese lessons to help them attend public schools. Since Brazilian schools cost more and parents earn less money with less night shifts, more parents send their children to Japanese schools. One public high school in Hamamatsu accepts Brazilian students though they have very limited Japanese abilities. (March 2nd 2017 in Japanese)

I invited the Nikkei college student mentioned earlier to private university classes in Tokyo in December 2016, where more than 50 students had never met Nikkei Brazilians personally. After hearing his life story and some issues Nikkei Brazilians have faced, those students commented: 'Cultural difference between Japanese and Brazilians', 'That Nikkei Brazilians like Japan and they want to work in Japan', 'As for identity, he feels he is not Japanese nor Brazilian but Nikkei Brazilian', and 'the

problems and ideas the guest mentioned were hard to understand for the students who were brought up in a monolingual and monocultural society’.

To summarize, we can see a few commonalities from the four recent interviews. We can clearly see that some youth in the new generation are striving for professional work with good language abilities, Portuguese, Japanese and possibly English. Yet, the percentage is still very low. Many of them, lacking language abilities and/or higher educational background, stay as ‘(temporary) workers’ though they do not want to do hard labor. All of the four interviewee agreed that parents’ effort or consciousness makes a great difference whether their children will be successful in studying and at work, though it is difficult to convince or change ideas of parents.

Conclusion

It is said history repeats itself. The first Japanese migrants 110 years ago went to Brazil for economic opportunities and they tried hard to establish and maintain their mother tongue, Japanese. Along the way, they became successful citizens but within 2-4 generations, they lost their heritage language, Japanese. The economic boom in Japan and deterioration in Brazil and the 1990 revised law brought many Nikkei Brazilians back to Japan. They have faced other difficulties, such as social and educational issues. But the world is changing much faster than the time of the first immigration wave and it is much easier going back and forth as long as they do not have working visa problems.

When they first came in a large number, local residents were concerned about the neighborhood problems as well as language issues, especially how best to help them and their children learn Japanese. Now that they seem to have assimilated or have got used to the new society, these problems have decreased. Yet, having assimilated successfully does not mean that their problems have disappeared. There are still problems, but unfortunately, they are treated as local matters.

Though there is no *one* solution to solve their difficulties, I suggest that keeping one's mother tongue is a key to succeeding in education, along with an additional language English as well as Japanese, in the case of Nikkei Brazilians.

Social inclusion and identity have changed and it is time to think how foreign workers can fully participate in Japanese society and also make the best of their linguistic sources. Therefore, instead of asking Japanese Brazilians to choose one language, a dominant or heritage language, if we can use both as language resources, instead of losing or excluding one language along the way, *Nikkei* children will have much to look forward to in the future. The time may have arrived for the Japanese government to cooperate with heritage language maintenance through policy that supports immigrants to Japan educationally, and importantly, linguistically.

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QUESTÕES EDUCACIONAIS E SOCIOECONÔMICAS DE JAPONESES BRASILEIROS NO JAPÃO

RESUMO

Faz 27 anos que a revisão das leis de imigração trouxeram cerca de 300 mil japoneses Nikkei brasileiros para o Japão em busca de oportunidades econômicas. Preferiram escolas brasileiras para manter o português antes da depressão mundial de 2008, o que também forçou muitas famílias Nikkei a voltar para casa. Atualmente, na chamada "Segunda geração de brasileiros residentes", mais crianças Nikkei frequentam escolas públicas japonesas na expectativa de ensino superior. As disparidades econômicas e educacionais entre os jovens se ampliaram. Alguns podem frequentar a faculdade e outros tornaram-se economicamente e linguisticamente apátridas. Este artigo explora as questões educacionais e socioeconômicas que os japoneses brasileiros no Japão enfrentam para aproveitar a cidadania plena.

Palavras-chave: Japonês brasileiro, manutenção da linguagem, escola pública japonesa, disparidade educacional.

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