

ASSISTING JAPANESE BRAZILIANS' ADAPTATION IN JAPANESE SOCIETY

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Abstract

Over the course of many years, Japan has come to find itself teeming with long-term residents of diverse national backgrounds. One group that stands out is the Japanese Brazilian community. The focus of this research undertaking is on Japanese Brazilians living in a provincial city. Their numbers, which increased following the revision of the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act, and their successful integration into Japanese society require considerable concern. Through interviews with Japanese Brazilians using the life-story research method, it can be ascertained that interviewees are leading a generally trouble-free life after staying in Japan for a long period of time. There are cases in which interviewees, although lacking in Japanese proficiency, build strong bonds with their family members and Japanese acquaintances to solve life-related problems. Another point common to many interviewees is that they are highly conscious of their children's education and still very eager to understand the Japanese language to improve their own situations. Specialists in Japanese language learning and local governments are working extensively to construct a framework for Japanese language education in local communities. From the point of view of societal welfare, it is essential that access to Japanese language support be maintained for Japanese Brazilians to ensure harmonious acclimation.

Keywords: Japanese Brazilians, Life-Story Research Method, Interviews

Abstrak

Selama bertahun-tahun, Jepang telah menemukan dirinya penuh dengan penduduk jangka panjang dari berbagai latar belakang negara. Salah satu kelompok yang menonjol adalah masyarakat Jepang-Brasil. Fokus dari penelitian ini adalah pada orang Jepang Brasil yang tinggal di kota provinsi. Jumlah mereka, yang meningkat setelah revisi Undang-Undang Kontrol Imigrasi dan Pengakuan Pengungsi, dan keberhasilan integrasi mereka ke dalam masyarakat Jepang memerlukan perhatian yang cukup besar. Melalui wawancara dengan orang Jepang Brazil menggunakan metode penelitian kisah hidup, dapat dipastikan bahwa orang yang diwawancarai menjalani kehidupan yang umumnya bebas masalah setelah tinggal di Jepang dalam jangka waktu yang lama. Ada kasus di mana orang yang diwawancarai, meskipun kurang menguasai bahasa Jepang, membangun ikatan yang kuat dengan anggota keluarga dan kenalan Jepang mereka untuk memecahkan masalah yang berkaitan dengan kehidupan. Poin lain yang umum bagi banyak orang yang diwawancarai adalah bahwa mereka sangat sadar akan pendidikan anak-anak mereka dan masih sangat ingin memahami bahasa Jepang untuk memperbaiki situasi mereka sendiri. Spesialis dalam pembelajaran bahasa Jepang dan pemerintah daerah bekerja secara ekstensif untuk membangun kerangka kerja pendidikan bahasa Jepang di komunitas lokal. Dari sudut pandang kesejahteraan masyarakat, akses ke dukungan bahasa Jepang harus dipertahankan bagi orang Jepang-Brasil untuk memastikan aklimatisasi yang harmonis.

Kata Kunci: Orang Brasil Jepang, Metode Penelitian Kisah Hidup, Wawancara

INTRODUCTION

Japanese Brazilians are focused on this study to see what is going on among foreigners who live in Japanese society long and medium term.

The action of the local government toward the Japanese language assisting system for foreigners is very active these days. It is heavily influenced by government actions. The

Japanese government gave effect to the new law, called the Act on Promotion of Japanese Language Education (Act No. 48 of 2019). The purpose of the law is to provide direction, especially with regard to Japanese language education in Japan. In particular, the fact that local governments, such as prefectures and cities, are now obligated to improve their Japanese-language assisting systems is groundbreaking. In Ibaraki Prefecture, which is located in the northern part of the Kanto region, centered on Tokyo, and has the 10th largest foreign resident population in Japan, the movement is also very active.

With the increasing trend of foreign residents living in Japan for longer periods, it is meaningful to know how foreign residents who have lived in Japan for a long time have lived their lives. Since the 1990s, the number of Japanese-Brazilians has been increasing rapidly in various parts of Japan, and some have already been living in Japan for nearly 30 years. I believe that by learning about their lives, I can make effective proposals for Japanese language assistance in the local area.

METHODS

The purpose of this study is how Japanese Brazilians in Japan solve their daily problems and small tasks with or without Japanese. And a further objective is to understand what Japanese-Brazilians value in their daily lives and what kind of networks they have built with the people around them. To achieve this objective, the life story method is chosen. The unique features of the method can be summarized, there is an interaction between the listener and the teller, “it is the place created by the narrator and the listener that gives birth to the narrator's narrative (KANO(2021, P.94) There are many studies of Japanese Brazilians using life story methods. This study belongs to that stream.

The dates and conditions under which the interviews were conducted were as in Table 1.

Table 1. Interviews with two Japanese Brazilians

collaborators name※	Date of Interviews and time length	Other conditions
Ms.WATNABE	July 24, August 11, 2021 (each 1.5hous)	Face to face, Online Semi-structured interviews Recording voice
Ms.MONTEIRO	August 10, Sep.22, 2022 (each 1.5 hours)	Face to face, with a translator Semi-structured interviews Recording voice

※ The collaborator's name is a pseudonym.

The background of the collaborators is also shown as follows.

<Ms. WATANABE>

- 3rd generation of JB, 50s
- Family: a husband, a son
- Experienced many occupations
- Came to Japan in 1992
- Living in Ibaraki prefecture
- Having high Japanese-language ability

<Ms. MONTEIRO>

- The 3rd generation's wife, 60s
- Family : a husband, an independent son
- Worked mostly as a temp, in factories, etc.
- Came to Japan in 1995
- Living in Ibaraki prefecture
- Not enough Japanese proficiency

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This proceedings presents some of the interview results

1) Ms. WATANABE's life story

It was not from the beginning, but she was able to take advantage of her high Japanese language skills and as she gained experience, she moved on to the next phase of her career. She now has a job at a public institution assisting Japanese-Brazilians living there with their daily lives and procedures. What caught my attention was the reason why she did not move, while many Japanese Brazilians descend to Japan in search of better jobs. Some of the statements she made related to this point include the following.

2010nen ni kennai de hikkoshita no.Demo kodomo mo sugoku ochitsuite gakko ni iku koto ga dekiteita no ne.

(We moved our house inside Ibaraki prefecture in 2010, my son was in the 1st grade in an elementary school, he didn't have any trouble and was able to spend good days there.)

2011 nen no jishin no toki ni doshimasho tteiuono atto n desu kedo, sono manma de ikimasho tteiu koto ni natte. Mainasu ni kangaenai tteiuuka, ochiko anai de hutsu no seikatsu o shite ikimasho tte iu koto o kangae mashita.

(We had some questions about what to do after the earthquake in 2011, but we decided to go on as we were. We decided not to think negatively, or rather, not to be depressed, but to live a normal life.)

Her remarks indicate that she feels great relief that her son can go to school calmly and that her family can go about their daily lives without major problems. While gaining experience as an interpreter and knowledge about Japan and the Japanese system, he realized that the disadvantages of not knowing about them were great, and at the same time, he often felt sorry for other Japanese-Brazilians who were losing out because they did not know anything about them.

2) Ms. MONTEIRO's life story

Ms. MONTEIRO came with her son (10 years olds), besides her husband came earlier. At the beginning, she couldn't speak any Japanese. She didn't move out to Ibaraki, either.

Watashi maiban chotto hima, hiragana katakana chotto chotto benkyou suru.
Hanasu dekinai yo demo shigoto dekiru. (Ms. MONTEIRO's words)
(I have a little free time every night. I study hiragana, katakana, a little bit.
I can't talk. But I can work.)

Achikochi tenten to shinakatta no wa kodomo ga 5nensei no toki ni kita node gakkou no koto mo atte, tenten to shite itara kodomo no kyoiku nimo eikyo ga deru n janaika to. Kazoku to ite kodomo no kyoiku o mein ni suru tte iu no wa soiu koto. Sukoshi no okane no ii warui wa ki ni shinai. (Translate Mr. MONTEIRO's Portuguese into Japanese)
(The reason I didn't move from place to place was because my child was in the 5th grade, and I thought that moving from one place to another would affect his education. That's what I meant by staying with my family and focusing on my children's education. I don't care if a little money is good or bad.

Her remarks indicate that although she is eager to learn Japanese, she can realistically work without Japanese language skills and has prioritized education for her children. She has grandchildren. She also told us that her grandson can only speak Japanese, and that he is still eager to learn Japanese. She also mentioned many times that she would like to continue to live in Japan for a long time, as she is now able to continue working and live peacefully.

One common thread that emerges from certain parts of their interviews is their prioritization of their children's education. One can imagine that behind this is a vague anxiety about Japanese schools, which they has never experienced themselves. The strong intention to continue to live in Japan peacefully was also observed in common by both groups. Due to differences in fluency in Japanese, there were significant differences between the two persons in terms of the relationship between the Japanese language and their work.

CONCLUSION

I would like to summarize the findings from my interviews with them from the perspective of the construction Japanese assistant system in the local area. Still in Japan, there is no regular system for foreign residents to assist their Japanese learning. It depended on the local government. For example, there are 60 volunteer groups in Ibaraki Prefecture that support Japanese language learning (shown in IIA HP), but they are established in different ways.

Japanese language education for foreigners who have just arrived in Japan tends to be coordinated, but in fact, considering the current situation where the number of foreigners residing in Japan in the mid- to long-term is increasing, it is important to create an environment where they can start learning at any stage of their lives. Furthermore, it is desirable to create a system that is easy to access no matter which area they live in. Considering the positive aspects of the differences in Japanese language ability and experience in Japan, it is one idea to publicly consider a system in which senior Japanese-Brazilians help their juniors and, moreover, senior foreign residents help their juniors. There is no reason to limit the people in charge of the Japanese language support system in a community to native Japanese speakers. Finally, I would like to convey to the many people involved the fact that our interview collaborators place great importance on a peaceful life in Japan.

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