

A Report on Past and Future Research: Instructional Strategies, Identities, and Culture and Education

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This is a report on my presentation about my past and future research at the 2020 Akita Association of English Studies (AAES) Annual Meeting. The title of the presentation was *My Past Academic Studies and Plan for Future Research: Aiming to Explore Culture and Education in Hawai'i*, and I shared my past academic studies, such as instructional strategies and identities, and my future plan for research on culture and education. More specifically, my past research includes (a) the Center for Research on Education, Diversity, and Excellence (CREDE); (b) a process of Okinawan identity development in Hawai'i; and (c) a critical analysis of discourse in textbooks, and future research aims to look into the possibility of culture-based education in Japan's school system by examining a history and practice of Hawaiian culture-based charter schools. As this is a report on my presentation, not an original academic article, I use a more narrative style, include personal experiences, and refer to my previous studies.

When I was a doctoral student in the Department of Educational Psychology at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa (UHM), I joined the CREDE Hawai'i Project, which aims to help educators to use instructional strategies for students who are culturally and linguistically diverse. These strategies include the following seven CREDE Standards in early childhood (CREDE, n.d.): Joint Productive Activity, Language and Literacy Development, Contextualization, Complex Thinking, Instructional Conversation, Modeling, and Child Directed Activity. For Joint Productive Activity, a teacher and children collaborate with one another to create a joint product which is tangible or intangible. The teacher also encourages children to work together toward a creation of a joint product. The aim of Language and Literacy Development is to promote children's language and literacy competence. The teacher designs and enacts activities through which children develop language and literacy of instruction with multiple forms of assistance. Contextualization refers to linking a new activity and information to children's prior knowledge they learned in their everyday life environments, such as home, school, and community. A teacher purposefully assists children to connect a new activity and information to their personal experiences. Complex Thinking means to promote children's cognitively complex thinking by challenging their thinking through instructional activities and probing questions which assist children to uncover the *why*. When utilizing the standard of Instructional Conversation, a teacher elicits talks from children and questions them on their views, judgements, and rationales in a small group setting with a clear academic goal. The teacher listens, assesses, and assists children to reach the goal. As for Modeling, a teacher or child models behaviors, thinking processes, or procedures, and then practice them. Examples of a finished product are provided to inspire children. In Child Directed Activity, children are encouraged to generate an activity with their ideas and teacher's assistance.

As research on adaptation of the CREDE Standards to higher education has been limited, we implemented the CREDE Standard and described the effectiveness of the first five CREDE Standards (Yamauchi, Taira, & Trevorow, 2016). Three of us implemented the CREDE Standards in our own classes, including an undergraduate survey psychology class, introductory graduate-level Educational Psychology, and Introductory Statistics for undergraduates, with an ethnically and linguistically diverse student population. In my introductory statistics course, I separated the class into four groups, and gave some time for students to work together. As for Joint Product Activity, each group had chart papers, and group members collaborated to describe four steps of hypothesis testing and summaries of their discussion on their chart paper to create a tangible product that reflected their intangible understanding of statistical concepts. In order to develop students' language and literacy regarding statistical terms and concepts, I occasionally asked questions, such as "What are differences and similarities between hypothesis testing and interval estimation?" (Yamauchi, Taira, & Trevorow, 2016, p. 464). Contextualization helped a student who did not fully understand the concept of correlation. I talked to her about a positive relationship between GPA in college and the possibility of gaining a well-paid job, and she understood the concept by relating it to her prior knowledge. With understanding of questioning as an effective way to challenge students' cognitive thinking, I asked questions, such as "What is the level of significance or α level and what are typical probabilities at that level?" (Yamauchi, Taira, & Trevorow, 2016, p. 464) to promote Complex Thinking. One of the groups discussed setting an α level and its social consequence, which was an example of going beyond the class's objective of understanding the concept of an α level. During group work, I moved from group to group to ask questions and assist their understanding of statistical concepts through Instructional Conversation.

The second of my past studies is about a process of Okinawan identity development in Hawai'i, which is based on an article and my doctoral dissertation. This part of my presentation started with a brief history of Okinawa and my personal story of becoming interested in Okinawan identity salience and development among Okinawan students who grew up in Okinawa and came to Hawai'i to study at college or university. My intention was to let the audience understand the background of my research.

I told the audience that there was once a state called Ryukyu which was established in 1429 in East Asia. The Ryukyuan state included Okinawa Island and other neighbor and remote islands, and lasted until Japan's annexation of Ryukyu and establishment of Okinawa Prefecture in 1879. While being under the U.S. military rule from 1945 to 1972, Okinawa reverted to the Japanese administration in 1972 and has been part of Japan. This brief history gave a piece of information to help the audience to think about Okinawan and Japanese identities among Okinawans and to contrast them with regional and Japanese identities among people in other prefectures.

The reason I became interested in this topic comes from my study abroad experience in Hawai'i. When I was an undergraduate student at the University of the Ryukyus, I gained an opportunity to study abroad at UHM for two semesters. At that time, I still had a stronger Japanese identity than Okinawan one, but felt some changes in my identities during the second study abroad experience for a Master's degree in the School of Communications at UHM for two years. I had more opportunities and longer time to interact with local people who had

similar and different cultures and to get involved in Okinawan communities and the East-West Center (EWC) in which people from other countries live and collaborate with each other. Through this experience, I felt my Okinawan identity more salient and became more interested in Okinawan history, culture, politics, and society, and my Japanese identity became weaker. In addition, it seemed to me that this kind of psychological phenomenon of Okinawan identity salience happened to other Okinawan students who grew up in Okinawa and came to Hawai‘i to study abroad. I decided to conduct research on this probable phenomenon and entered the doctoral program in the Department of Educational Psychology at UHM. Through the course of the program, while studying how to do research, I continued to have experiences of interacting with local people and getting involved in Okinawan communities and the EWC, and began to learn about Hawaiian history, society, culture, and politics. Over time, my Okinawan identity became stronger and Japanese identity disappeared. With knowledge and techniques of how to conduct research, I completed my research on this topic.

I presented the results of the research (Taira & Yamauchi, 2018) by showing the diagram illustrating Okinawan consciousness and identity salience and development over time among Okinawan university students in Hawai‘i. The diagram showed the environment and space where Okinawan identity became more salient: Hawai‘i as a historical, social, cultural, and political environment, and the Okinawan Club as a space promoting Okinawan consciousness and identity. The examples of the characteristics of the Hawai‘i’s environment that emerged from the interviews included being in a culturally and ethnically diverse environment, Okinawans and Okinawan cultures in Hawai‘i, and learning about Hawaiians. The examples of the characteristics of the Okinawan Club involved space to be able to express Okinawan identity, increased opportunities to think and learn about Okinawa, taking a role as a representative of Okinawa, and sharing cultural heritage. I coded the core category as being more conscious as Okinawan in Hawai‘i to relate Okinawan university students’ experiences of their Okinawan consciousness and identity salience and development in the environment and space. Based on these research findings, I conducted further research on this topic for my doctoral dissertation in order to delve into developmental aspects of Okinawan identities among Okinawan university and college students in Hawai‘i, identify other spaces than the Okinawan Club, and examine influences of activities and learning about Hawai‘i on students’ Okinawan identities (Taira, 2019). The results showed the in-depth analysis of a process of Okinawan identity development in Hawai‘i.

The third of my past studies is a critical analysis of discourse in textbooks. Specifically, I analyzed a textbook excerpt used in high schools on Okinawa Island to investigate how this excerpt could function as a Japanization discourse constructing Japanese identity among Okinawans. My curiosity about how Japanese identity could possibly be constructed within Okinawans’ minds motivated me to conduct this research. Probable causes of Japanese identity construction include education, media, economy, administration system, language, and the like. Among them, I chose education as one of the modes of Japanization in Okinawa, and focused on contents of textbooks that are official knowledge legitimized by the power of the Japanese educational system. The analyzed textbook excerpt is entitled *Mizu no Tōzai*, or Water in the East and West. The findings showed that how *Mizu no Tōzai* functions as *nihonjinron* discourse characterized by “Japanese culture,” “Japanese uniqueness,” and “Japaneseness.” I argued that the “East–West” dichotomy described in *Mizu no Tōzai* induces students on Okinawa Island to

choose “the East/Japan” and become “Japanese.” I problematized this Japanese identity construction through education as a systematic form of Japanization in Okinawa.

The last part of my was my plan for future research, which is to look into the possibility of culture-based education in Japan’s school system by examining a history and practice of Hawaiian culture-based charter schools. I have been teaching cross-cultural understanding courses in the Faculty of Education and Human Studies at Akita University (AU), and interested in culture and education. When I was a doctoral student in Hawai‘i, I noticed that there are schools where students can learn Hawaiian culture and language. In particular, my focus is on Hawaiian culture-based charter schools because of my curiosity about how public schools can integrate cultural learning into school curriculum and practice. The charter school is a public school which any community members can create by receiving authority of a charter granted by an authorized sponsor, and which is free from state’s rules and regulations (Nathen, 1996). There are 17 Hawaiian-focused charter schools in Hawai‘i emphasizing Hawaiian language, culture, and values (Espania, Kelling, & Keehne, 2019). My aim is to explore the system of charter schools and how Hawaiian culture-based charter schools started and operate, which will enable me to discuss how possibly we can teach and learn about our own cultures in Japan’s educational system more often than now. My plan is to look into a history of Hawai‘i, such as Hawaiians’ indigeneity and culture, the U.S. colonization and annexation of Hawai‘i, immigration, and Hawaiian renaissance. This will guide me to clarify the historical, social, cultural, ethnical, and political background of the charter schools. I will also gather information about a history of Japan regarding national building, ethnicities, and school in order for me to compare the Japanese school system with Hawaiian charter schools and discuss the possibility of cultural learning in the Japanese school system.

The 2020 AAES Annual Meeting was a precious opportunity for me to share my studies and let the audience know who I am and what my interests are. As a lecturer teaching cross-cultural understanding in the Faculty of Education and Humanities at AU, I hope to make progress on my plan for future research in order for me to provide some opportunities for AU students to think about cultural teaching and learning at school.

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