Standing in the *genkan*: Adjunct foreign English language teachers in the Japanese higher education internationalisation context

Craig Whitsed

This dissertation is the report of an investigation submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Murdoch University.

2011
Declaration of authorship

I declare that this dissertation is my own account of my research and contains, as its main content, work which has not previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary institution.
Abstract

This dissertation explores the experiences, knowledge and beliefs of adjunct foreign English language teachers (AFELT), and how they envisage their role and place in the Japanese university context. These experiences are important when considered against a backdrop of Japanese higher education reform and internationalisation. For example, this research asks, what are the experiences of AFELT? how do they conceptualise their expected role? and what do these suggest about internationalisation in the Japanese university context? This dissertation aims to: first, contribute to the understanding of how AFELT construe themselves as situated in the Japanese university context; second, investigate how AFELT contribute to, or not, internationalisation by illuminating phenomena that afford or constrain AFELT practices; third, examine the conceptual usefulness of applying a multi-theoretical perspective to elicit a richer, more nuanced understanding of stakeholders’ social interaction and ‘place’ at both macro and micro levels of internationalisation. It is these phenomena, including notions of inclusion and exclusion, that situate the research in the broader context of internationalisation.

The empirical study presented in this dissertation initiated out of a desire to better understand AFELT experience, role and ‘place’ from an emic perspective. Previous research on Japanese higher education internationalisation is generally quantitative or limited in depth, thus has remained silent on AFELT experience, place, and value. By privileging participant voice, this study makes an original contribution to this field of research. A key feature of this dissertation is its theoretical grounding in interpretive epistemology and constructionist traditions. The epistemological assumption upon which the research is grounded assumes social interaction and socio-cultural/political phenomena such as internationalisation to be complex, multilayered, multidimensional, and dynamic. Qualitative data were therefore generated from successive focus groups and in-depth interviews conducted over a year involving 43 participants working across 66 universities (public and private) in Japan.

The findings revealed a complex, multilayered, matrix of intersecting and diverging themes and discursive discourses. At the macro level, a major finding is the significant discontinuity
between internationalization and communicative English language education policy and practice in Japan, and how these are enacted at the institutional level. AFELT role and ‘place’ was perceived by participants to be mobilised in essentialist, utilitarian and symbolic terms, with AFELT value indexed to the realisation of internationalisation and marketing strategies rather than to educational outputs. Thus, a significant degree of incongruence concerning the nature, purpose and function of AFELT classes was exposed. According to participants, higher education, broadly speaking, constitutes a social rather than educational experience for many Japanese undergraduate domestic students. From AFELT’s perspective, English language classes are considered as peripheral to the function of the universities in which they work, and not essential to the internationalisation process advocated in the broad internationalisation discourse. As such, AFELT construed their role as being commodified and instrumentalised. They asserted that AFELT were not supported in, or encouraged to facilitate, the development of interculturality in the domestic student population. Yet nevertheless, the majority of participants still felt a responsibility to implement intercultural education and encourage the development of students’ ability to value diversity.

At the micro level, the research identified contextual and individual affordances and constraints that impacted upon AFELT communicative English teaching. Participants’ ‘subject positioning’ was identified as a salient factor affording or constraining AFELT professional identity and practice. The research concluded by casting AFELT as aggressively asserting their agency through ‘reflexive positioning’.

Through its in-depth examination of AFELT ‘place’ and ‘experience’, this dissertation makes a unique contribution to Japanese internationalisation discourse. The multiple theoretical perspectives appropriated from situative social/psychological person-in-context perspectives, Japanese culture and communication studies, cognitive linguistics, dramaturgy, and Positioning theory to explore AFELT ‘place’ and ‘experience’ provided powerful conceptual lenses to interrogate stakeholder positioning within the internationalisation space.

The dissertation highlights the need for further research into: the influence of AFELT as vehicles of, and facilitators for reciprocal intercultural understanding; local cultural affordances and constraints; and, processes to evaluate and support ‘global citizenry’ as
graduate outcomes in the Japanese context. Metaphorically, the experience of the Japanese university for adjunct foreign English teachers may be likened to ‘standing in the genkan’, that is, they are invited into the house but are not invited up and into the home, or beyond the confines of the genkan. As such, AFELT are socially positioned between states - neither fully ‘in’ nor ‘out’, ‘visible’ nor ‘invisible’.
Acknowledgements

How one acknowledges the contribution of so many without forgetting someone is problematic given the time it has taken to complete this journey. I would first like to acknowledge my former colleagues and friends who worked with me in Japan and contributed so much to this project. Without their contribution, this dissertation would not have been completed. In particular, there are colleagues at two universities in Kansai region that I owe a debt of gratitude to for their friendship, feedback and support concerning the direction of this research. To Peter Grant and Tony Silver I say ‘thank you’. I would also like to acknowledge the support I received from colleagues whilst working at Doshisha and Kinki Universities. Your support and enthusiasm has sustained much of my effort.

I would also like to acknowledge the contribution of my colleagues at Murdoch University in both the School of Education and what was the TLC (Teaching and Learning Centre) as it was affectionately known. In particular, I owe a debt of gratitude to Dr. Marian Kemp, Dr. Lucy Jarzabkowski, and Mr. Colin Beasley who, in addition to ensuring the clarity and focus of the articles contained in this dissertation, provided a deep reservoir from which to draw the determination to see this project through to completion. To Dr. Marian Kemp I especially want to express my thanks for providing space for me to work on the dissertation, when I really should have been working on other projects. To that end, I would also like to acknowledge the contribution of Associate Professor ‘Doctor Rob’ (Rob Philips) whose affectionate label ‘nearly doctor Craig’ and constant prodding encouraged me along the path to completion. Associate Professor Rick Cummings is also deserving of acknowledgement because of his thoughtful suggestions and advice that were particularly relevant and insightful. In addition, my corridor colleagues also deserve a note of thanks for enquiring after my progress and their encouragement along the way. Thank you Karin, Martin, Julia, Pam, Sarah, Jim and Lorraine.

Most importantly, I would like to acknowledge the contribution of my supervisors. Words are not enough to thank them for their persistence and support. Each has equally contributed not only through their expertise and knowledge, but scaffolded me into the community of researchers. It is through their efforts that I have come to view myself not as a PhD candidate...
but as an academic. Professor Simone Volet has been nothing short of an inspiration. Her boundless energy and enthusiasm has literally been awe-inspiring, and without her ‘minor editing’, patient guidance, direction, and prodding this dissertation would not have been completed. Dr. Peter Wright, likewise, has been inspirational. His gentle guidance and friendship has been and continues to be, a revelation. Peter not only acted as a supervisor, but through the passage of time leading to the completion of this dissertation has mentored and inspired me.

Finally, and foremost in my heart, I wish to acknowledge my wife Kayo Miyamoto and my two children Karin and Milan. It is to Kayo that I owe the greatest debt of gratitude, as it was she who first encouraged me to embark of this project. In addition to the encouragement I received from her, Kayo also indulged me throughout this journey by not getting too upset about the many hours I spent away from home over weekends and holidays and by constantly prodding me when I procrastinated. The girls have grown up with their father working on this dissertation, yet they have never complained, given I have almost spent more time on weekends with the dissertation than I have with them. Thank you girls for your patient understanding. I am therefore delighted to have finished this chapter of the journey so far.
Overview

Introduction

Summary of the main findings

Introduction

Summary

Paper 4

Paper 3

Paper 2

Paper 1

Introduction

Summary

The research process

Research Participants

The research aims

The data generation methods

Internationalisation: Japanese Perspectives

Internationalisation: Anglo and European Perspectives

The global higher education environment: Academic commercialism, globalisation and the intercultural dimensions of internationalisation

The theoretical perspective: Symbolic interaction and phenomenology

A Qualitative approach and methodology

The interpretive theoretical framework

Table of contents

Glossary of Japanese terms

Introduction

Prologue

Background to the study

Empirical study
Overall findings and discussion ................................................................. 155
The person-in-context layer: Some conclusions ........................................ 161
Metaphorisation and the uchi/soto layer: Some conclusions .................... 171
The liminality and impression management layers .................................. 172
The Positioning Layer ........................................................................... 184
Limitations and directions for further research ....................................... 189
In summary ............................................................................................. 191
Epilogue .................................................................................................... 193
References .............................................................................................. 194
Appendix ................................................................................................. 214

Figures, Tables, Appendices

Figures

Figure 1. Layers of theoretical perspectives .............................................. 103
Figure 2. The research process ................................................................. 118
Figure 3. The analysis framework ............................................................ 131
Figure 4. Theoretical frameworks as layers of meaning ......................... 156
Figure 5. AFELT soto intrusion into uchi, omote, and ura zones ............. 168
Figure 6. Tengu .................................................................................... 176

Appendices

Appendix A. List of participants ............................................................... 214
Appendix B. Spread of institutions by and participants by prefecture .... 218
List of Publications

Paper 1

Paper 2

Paper 3
Whitsed, C., & Wright, P. Taking the inside outside: Teaching communicative English, and intercultural and global competencies in the Japanese university sector. *In review*.

Paper 4
The following lists key Japanese terms used throughout the dissertation. Definitions are sourced from the JEDict (4.7.1) by Sergey Kurkin (2011). Each term is defined according to its lexical function; however, the full range of meanings these terms connote within the Japanese context is not elaborated, as such a full treatment is beyond the scope of this dissertation. Therefore, the following is intended to indicate the range and flexibility these terms have as a metaphoric lexicon in this study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Daigaku</td>
<td>University (literally, ‘big’ ‘school’)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaijin</td>
<td>Foreigner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genkan</td>
<td>Entranceway, entry hall, vestibule, foyer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hon-ne</td>
<td>Real intention, motive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kami</td>
<td>Upper reaches (of a river), upper stream, top, upper part, upper half (of the body), long ago, beginning, first, (hon) person of high rank (e.g. the emperor), government, imperial court, imperial capital (i.e. Kyoto), capital region (i.e. Kansai), region (or direction of) the imperial palace, head (of a table), (hon) wife, mistress (of a restaurant)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kokusaika</td>
<td>Internationalisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nureen</td>
<td>Verandah, open verandah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oku</td>
<td>Interior, inner part, inside</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omote</td>
<td>Surface, face (i.e. the visible side of an object), front (of a building, etc.), obverse side (i.e. &quot;head&quot;) of a coin, outside, exterior, appearance, public, first half (of an inning), top (of an inning), cover (for</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹ http://www.jedict.com/
tatami mats, etc.), (comp) foreground

**Shimo** 下 (しも)
Lower reaches (of a river), bottom, lower part, lower half (of the body, esp. the privates), feces (faeces), urine, menses, end, far from the imperial palace (i.e. far from Kyoto, esp. of western Japan), (adj-no) dirty (e.g. dirty jokes, etc.)

**Soto** 外 (そと, ほか, そと, かい, よそ)
Outside, exterior, open air, other place, other (esp. places and things), exterior, open air, other place outside of, not covered by, somewhere else, strange parts, outside (one's family or group), those people, unrelated matter

**Tatemae** 建前 たてまえ:
Face, official stance, public position or attitude (as opposed to private thoughts), ceremony for the erection of the framework of a house

**Uchi** 内 (うち)
Inside, within, while, among, amongst, between, we (referring to one's in-group, i.e. company, etc.), our, my spouse, (arch) imperial palace grounds, (arch) emperor, I (primarily used by women and children), me

**Ura** 裏 (うら)
Bottom (or another side that is hidden from view), undersurface, opposite side, reverse side, rear, back, behind (the house), lining, inside, out of sight, behind the scenes, proof, opposite (of a prediction, common sense, etc.), inverse (of a hypothesis, etc.), bottom (of an inning), last half (of an inning)
Introduction

Prologue

The outside inside: The genkan space as frame

Space in Japanese architecture is made up of transitory units. Each unit serves, in essence, as a bridge between the foreground and the deeper interior, and space contains a series of such units, like the links of a chain. It is endlessly fluid, especially where the interplay between the interior and exterior is concerned, with a fluidity that depends on design stratagems and in the atmosphere of a place. (Nakagawa, 2005, p. 1)

The concept of space, while common to all cultures, is a culture-bound concept (Makino, 2005). Generally understood as a physical category, space can be subjected, along with, for example, orientational and positional constructs, to metaphorical interpretation (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Makino, 2005).

In the following, genkan space is briefly introduced as a frame for this dissertation (Entman, 1993; Gitlin, 1980; Goffman, 1974). Space in Japanese architecture is made up of multiple and fluid transitory units that bridge and link foreground and a deeper interior, especially in relation to interior and external spaces (Nakagawa, 2005). As Nakagawa (2005) explains, Japanese architecture is interesting as there are ambiguous spaces that are neither fully interior nor exterior, but are combinations of both. This concept is similar to Turner’s (1967) notion of liminality and the concept of betwixt and between. Two spaces with special significance in the Japanese psyche are briefly elaborated to illustrate the fluidity of space. The veranda and genkan are spaces within Japanese architecture where boundaries are blurred as they simultaneously contain elements of inside and outside.

The Veranda (nureen)

The veranda is a feature of more traditional rural Japanese domestic homes. According to Nakagawa (2005), a veranda simultaneously affords one ‘elements of both an indoor and outdoor experience’, as one is both inside and outside at the same time (2005, p. 40). It is this duality, according to Nakagawa (2005), that is the defining characteristic of the veranda
space. However, traditionally the veranda is a space reserved for family and close associates, and as such it is a ‘closed’ space to those outside of the family and its associates. It is, therefore, perceived as an interior space even though it is open to the outside. As such, the veranda is not psychologically associated with impurities that exist outside the home (Ohnuki-Tierney, 1984), and in that light it affords the sanctity of the uchi (closed interior) space without a sense of impurity, violation or intrusion. Generally, the veranda is not used to enter, or exit, a home.

The genkan

Like the veranda, the second space where the boundaries of interior and exterior blur is the genkan. Regardless of size, the typical Japanese residence has a small hallway one steps into when entering a home. It is a space similar to that of a vestibule. According to Wetzel (2004), while the meaning of genkan, defined through space, is controversial, several observations can be made. For example, while the religious meanings associated with the genkan space have faded over time (Yagi & Hata, 1982), overtones of the sanctity of the space linger in the psychology of the populous. For example, in pragmatic terms, the genkan functions as a space where shoes are removed, but it is a space invested with psychological qualities. Psychologically, it functions as a partition, and marks a clear demarcation between an ‘unclean’ exterior space (soto) and a ‘clean’ interior space (uchi) (Ohnuki-Tierney, 1984). When entering the genkan, residents announce their return by calling ‘todaima’ (loosely translated as, ‘I’m home’). They then remove their shoes and step up into their slippers. Then they move into the interior (uchi) regions of the home. These acts may be understood as constituting ‘a ritual symbolizing the passage from public to private space’ (Davidson, 1994), or in other words, a psychological transition from outside to inside.

The importance of the genkan in the Japanese psyche can be demonstrated in that even the smallest of homes of between 33 - 50 sq. m. (10 -15 tsubo) provide no less than 10% of the entire floor area for it (Engel, 1964, p. 242). The Japanese custom of removing shoes before entering the home is one reason why the genkan has retained its place in the modern home. However, as noted, the importance of this space is more than the pragmatic functions it affords. Genkan space is ambiguous (Makino, 2005) and, in addition to its literal purpose, has a psychological function, as noted. This is now elaborated.
‘Genkan’, according to Engel (1964), literally means ‘mysterious gate’ (p. 241). Engel (1964) suggests, ‘the sentiments of the people are still governed, if only unconsciously, by concepts of the past society in which this formal entrance space was a privilege held only by the upper classes and forbidden to the general public’ (p. 242). Traditionally, the genkan was associated with rites of purification to remove the ‘impurities of the world outside’ (Ohnuki-Tierney, 1984). The genkan has come to represent a space where one leaves behind the outside world, and as such, the genkan ‘symbolizes the first stage in removing the antithesis of man and his environment until both are finally within the house and receive from each other confirmation and meaning of their existence’ (Engel, 1964, pp. 242, 243). Moreover, meta-physically and metaphorically, the genkan represents the escape from the hostile chaotic cosmos that exists outside of uchi space. Thus, once one enters the genkan one has figuratively passed through the hostile space of soto. Therefore, as Wetzel (2004) observes genkan space constitutes more than a static location through which bodies move; rather, genkan space is dynamic and substantive. It is in genkan space where ‘outside’ and ‘inside’ intersect and overlap (Katoh, 2005). Genkan space, it has been observed, is situated between the ‘in’ and ‘outside’, and as such, functions as a ‘boundary marker’ (Makino, 2005). The territory encompassed in the genkan also marks the boundaries between omote (the façade, the exterior, for public consumption) and ura space (hidden from view and public scrutiny) (Lebra 1967; 112).

The genkan is also the space where social interactions between hosts and guests are initiated, conducted, and concluded (Black & Murata, 2005). Social interactions and transactions that occur within the genkan also mark and reinforce social stratification. The homeowner is always, by virtue of the architectural design of the genkan, positioned physically higher than visitors as the floor of the genkan is generally lower than that of the interior. This psychologically functions to reinforce and delineate status.

Genkan space is marked by the ritualized ceremonies of entrance and exit that are performed within that space which symbolically express transition and the distinction between in and out (Tobin, 1992). Hense they echo the three phases; separation, transition, and reincorporation which van Gennep (1960) described as defining rites of passage. The genkan experience
aligns with the transitional stage van Gennep (1960) labelled ‘liminal’. Turner’s (1967) concept of liminality is useful when considering how genkan space functions at the psychological level. When in genkan space, for example, one may be conceptualized as positioned as neither ‘in’ nor ‘out’ and therefore ‘betwixt and between’ states (Turner, 1967). By extension, Turner’s ‘liminal personae’ construct is useful when framing individuals or groups, positioned between states, or in ‘nonesmanneslond’ (OED, 2011) commonly referred to as ‘no man’s land’. Therefore, it is worth noting again, while the genkan is literally part of the home, it is generally not considered part of the house figuratively.

Throughout this dissertation, genkan serves as a useful metaphor for understanding the Japanese university, and as a semantic device to better understand the interactions that occur in that space. In this dissertation, following Tsuda (1993), the Japanese university maybe likened metaphorically to a liminal space. In other words, a genkan affords the possibility of ‘standing aside not only from one’s own social position but from all social positions and of formulating a potentially unlimited series of alternative social arrangements’ (Turner, 1974, pp. 13, 14). Critiquing the Japanese university system, Tsuda (1993) cautions that any analysis that only considers measurable outputs, such as standards and what is taught and learned, or not, without due consideration of the psychosocial functions of the university experience, would be incomplete. Tsuda (1993, p. 310) argues, for example, ‘[t]he Japanese university, unlike other social institutions, can function as such a special and effective psychological outlet because it is equivalent to a Turnerman liminality where normal social requirements, cultural norms, social rules, and relationships are temporarily suspended’.

Metaphor, Turner observes,

> at its simplest, is a way of proceeding from the known to the unknown… It is a way of cognition in which the identifying qualities of one thing are transferred in an instantaneous, almost unconscious, flash of insight to some other thing that is, by remoteness or complexity, unknown to us (1974, p. 25).

Metaphorically, the experience of the Japanese university for adjunct foreign English teachers may be likened to ‘standing in the genkan’. They are invited into the house but are not invited up into the home or beyond the confines of the genkan; as such, they are socially positioned
between states - neither fully ‘in’ nor ‘out’, ‘visible’ nor ‘invisible’. As ‘liminal personas’, their condition is ambiguous and paradoxical (Turner, 1967). Moreover, as Turner observes, ‘liminal personas’ for the ‘non-inoculated’, almost universally are perceived as ‘polluting’. They are, therefore, not afforded the rights of full participation within the cultural context. In other words, ‘[t]hey have physical but not ‘social’ reality, hence they are hidden’ and are very often either partially or completely excluded ‘from the realm of culturally defined and ordered states and statuses’ (Turner, 1967, p. 97). Similar phenomena were experienced by Asian Americans who, as Bow (2010) argues, drawing on Turner’s (1967) concepts, were likewise ‘liminal personae’. As such, and in a similar fashion to AFELT, Asian Americans in the segregated South had to, ‘struggle with the destabilization of established social categories’ (Bow, 2010, p. 12).

Throughout the interviews that produced the data for this dissertation, the Japanese university sector was generally conceived of as not performing an educational function in the sense of a formal academic education typified in the western sense. Rather, universities in Japan were conceptualised by participants as institutions through which students transit before entering the adult world of work and responsibility. From this macro perspective the *genkan* as a metaphor works well. From a micro perspective the English language classroom may also be described metaphorically as a *genkan* within a *genkan*. It is a place where the students experience (ritualistically as in a rite of passage) and interact with foreigners (*gai/soto* ‘outside’, *jin* ‘person’) from outside their *uchi*. However, this interaction occurs within the confines of a safe liminal space where the students are invested with the power to participate, or not, in the lesson and with their foreign teacher.