

A Narrative Study of Bilingual Brazilians: Stories from Second Generation Brazilian Immigrants in Japan

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Since a change in the immigration law in 1990, many Brazilians have migrated to Japan looking for better life opportunities. Despite initial expectations that these immigrants would be temporary workers, their stay was prolonged due to an economic slowdown in the Japan in the late 1990s. After the financial crisis in 2008, even though many Brazilians have returned to Brazil, those who decided to stay became permanent residents of Japan. This social change in the nature of the Brazilian community has raised broad questions related to social mobility and integration, especially for second generation Brazilian immigrants who were raised in Japan. The main purpose of this study is to identify, through the life stories of multilingual Brazilians in Japan, the factors that led to multilingual acquisition and academic success. The results show that Portuguese has been crucial to the acquisition of English and English has played an essential role in academic success.

1990 年の入管法改正以降、大量の日系ブラジル人の出稼ぎ労働者がより良い生活を求めて来日した。ブラジル人は当初一時的な滞在者と見なされていたが、1990 年代後半の日本経済の減速により滞在が長期化した。また、2008 年の経済危機により、多くのブラジル人が帰国したが、日本に住むことを選択した人は永住者となった。このようなブラジル人コミュニティにおける社会的変化は、特に日本で育った第二世代にとって、社会的流動性や日本社会への統合という側面で様々な問題をもたらした。本研究は多言語話者である在日ブラジル人のライフストーリーを通して、彼らの多言語習得と学問的成功に関わる要因を探ることを目的としている。結果より、ポルトガル語能力が英語の習得に役立つことと、英語が在日ブラジル人二世の学問的成功において重要な役割を果たしていることが明らかとなった。

Immigration: Historical Background

The Dekasegi Boom

Regarding the beginning of the migration of Japanese-Brazilian descendants to Japan, Mita (2000, 2011) explains that, although Brazil-Japan immigration had already started in 1980, it was only after the amendment of the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Law in 1990 that a great number of Brazilian laborers immigrated to Japan. After the revision, Brazilians of Japanese descent up to the third-generation and their families (spouses and children) were allowed to come to Japan in order to work. Even the spouses of Brazilians of Japanese descent who were not themselves of Japanese descent had the right to get the same visa status as their spouses (Onai, 2009). The period immediately following the enactment of the amendment is known as the *dekasegi* boom (Onai, 2009, p. 6). The new amendment in 1990 was an incentive for Brazilians of Japanese ancestry to come to the land of their parents and grandparents to work (Carvalho, 2003, p. 80). As Figure 1 shows, the number of Brazilian residents in Japan before 1990 was still very low. However, in 1991, just one year after the legal amendment came into effect, the number reached 119,333, showing an increase of 112% from 1990 to 1991. In 2005, the number of Brazilian residents was over 300,000 and by 2007 more than 316,000 Brazilians were living and working in Japan.

Another factor that contributed to the massive influx of Brazilians of Japanese descent into Japan in the late 1980s was the unstable political and economic situation in Brazil (Mita, 2011, p. 15). The severe economic recession in Brazil encouraged many Brazilians of Japanese descent to migrate to Japan, looking for an opportunity to have a better life (Ishikawa, 2009, p. 59). After the *dekasegi* boom in the 90s, since the financial crisis in 2008 and the Tohoku earthquake in 2011, the number of Brazilian residents in Japan has decreased. In spite of this reduction, the number of Brazilians registered in Japan is still considerable, representing the fifth largest non-Japanese ethnic group in Japan and the biggest ethnic group from outside of Asia.

Feijo (2016) explains that, during her fieldwork in a Brazilian community in Ibaraki prefecture, and her volunteer participation in Brazilian Consulate activities in Tokyo in 2015 and 2016, the second generation of Brazilian immigrants in Japan demonstrated a strong desire to succeed in Japanese society. Many young Brazilians had declared that they do not want to follow their parents' path, and many showed a strong desire to continue their studies in Japanese universities.

From Temporary Residents to Permanent Residents: New Challenges

Even though Brazilians were first considered to be a temporary presence, the slowing down of the Japanese economy during the second half of the 1990s prolonged

their stay in Japan. As compared to native Japanese workers, Japanese-Brazilian immigrants had better employment opportunities during the recession. Japanese companies were highly dependent on the temporary and flexible nature of migrant labor as one important means to reduce production costs (Tsuda, 1999). As a result, instead of going back, many Brazilians decided to stay in Japan. As shown in Table 1, many became permanent residents of Japan. This change clearly shows the Brazilians' desire to live permanently in Japan. In October 2015, the Tokyo Brazilian Citizen Council approved a document called the Declaration of Yokohama (Ohphata, 2015). This document represents the end of the so-called *dekasegi* period and the start of a new phase for the Brazilian community in Japan, defined by two characteristics: (1) the intention of Brazilian immigrants to stay permanently in Japan, and (2) the importance of enhancing upward social mobility for members of the community, especially the second generation of Brazilian immigrants.

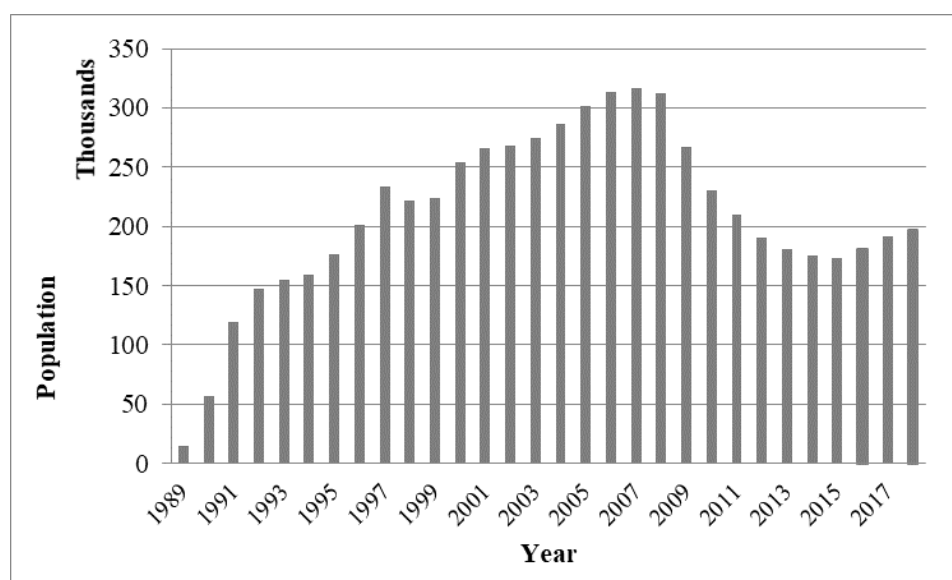


Figure 1. Change in the number of Brazilian residents in Japan: 1989-2018. Data from Ministry of Justice (1993, 1998, 2003, 2006, 2008, 2009, 2011, 2012, 2013a, 2013b, 2015a, 2015b, 2018a, 2018b, 2018c).

Language proficiency is one of the most important factors linked to integration and social mobility patterns of Brazilian immigrants in the United States (Beserra, 2003), so the present study focuses on the multilingual education of second generation Brazilian immigrants in Japan. By examining the life stories of second generation Brazilian participants who have succeeded in obtaining higher education in Japan, this study will identify the factors that have led to multilingual acquisition and how this multilingualism has impacted participants' academic success and personal identity, to

provide insight into avenues for social mobility for the Brazilian community in Japan.

Table 1

Number of Brazilians Residents in Japan and Visa Types

Year	1992	1997	2002	2006	2008	2013	2016	2018
Brazilian population	147,803	233,254	268,332	312,979	210,032	185,694	180,923	196,781
Spouse/child of Japanese	91,816	113,319	90,732	74,001	23,921	18,425	15,917	17,114
Long-term resident	51,759	111,840	139,826	153,141	62,077	50,549	49,542	60,417
Permanent resident	220	1,686	4,592	78,523	119,742	113,150	110,932	113,481
Others	4,008	6,409	33,182	7,314	4,292	3,570	4,532	5,769

Note. Data from Ministry of Justice (1993, 1998, 2003, 2006, 2008, 2009, 2011, 2012, 2013a, 2013b, 2015a, 2015b, 2018a, 2018b, 2018c).

Literature Review

As briefly mentioned in the previous section, despite 29 years of Brazil-Japan immigration, the chance of upward social mobility among Brazilian immigrants is still limited and much work is needed to change this scenario. As highlighted by Ishikawa (2014b, 2014c), the majority of children of Brazilian laborers barely finish their studies, and only a few young Brazilians have progressed to higher education. Studies by Kojima (2014) and Komachi (2013) showed that some young Brazilians are dropping out of school due to economic reasons and Japanese language deficiency. As highlighted by Fujiyama (2016) and Ikeda (2007), it is not rare to find young Brazilians with “double-limited” characteristics, which means children who have acquired neither Portuguese nor Japanese sufficiently. These studies clearly show that the lack of ability in both languages, Japanese and Portuguese, is still one of the biggest issues facing the Brazilian community in Japan.

Related studies about the Brazilian community in Japan also mentioned that despite the economic difficulties faced by Brazilian immigrants, they want to offer opportunities for their children to proceed to higher education in Japan (Ishii, 2000; Yamanouchi, 2015). Currently, the Brazilian Consulate is also working to support the higher education of young Brazilians in Japan. For example, on October 21 and 22, 2017, the Brazilian Consulate in Tokyo organized the first Educational Fair in Ota City, Gunma Prefecture, where several Japanese and Brazilian universities with distance-learning programs were invited to explain their enrollment processes and

scholarship opportunities. This event clearly shows the effort of the Brazilian Consulate in creating opportunities for young Brazilians and their parents to start thinking about their future in Japan, no longer as temporary immigrants but as people who want to be part of Japanese society.

Overall, even though past studies and Consulate activities have indicated the problems faced by Brazilian youths in Japan, and how these problems relate to language ability, it is still unclear what factors and conditions influence the successful acquisition of Portuguese, Japanese, and English for some members of the target community. In addition, studies of minority communities in Japan have paid little attention to foreign migrants' mobility patterns (Takenaka, 2009). This indicates there is a need for research on multilingual Brazilians in Japan.

Research Purpose and Questions

This study aims to:

- (1) first, examine the life stories of successful young Brazilian multilinguals who have achieved a higher education in Japan to elucidate possible factors that promoted their access to higher education in Japan and acquisition of multilingual proficiency;
- (2) second, examine the role of the Portuguese, Japanese, and English languages in their academic success and ethnic identity.

Based on the purposes of the study mentioned above, and the background of the Brazilian community in Japan, the present study was guided by following questions:

- (1) Who are the young Brazilian multilinguals who have managed to enter higher education in Japan?
 - (1.1) To what extent are they proficient in Portuguese, Japanese, and English?
 - (1.2) How have they acquired the Portuguese, Japanese, and English languages?
 - (1.3) What are their opinions about Portuguese, Japanese, and English?
- (2) To what extent did Portuguese language ability influence their ethnic identity?
- (3) According to participants' narratives, what role did English, Portuguese, and Japanese play in promoting their academic success?

Methodology

Research Method

The *narrative inquiry* method was used to elucidate participants' life stories in order investigate how they have acquired Portuguese, Japanese, and English, and the

role these languages played in their academic success and ethnic identity. Here narrative inquiry is understood as “a way of doing research that focuses on the stories we tell about our lives” (Barkhuizen, 2015, p. 169). It is the practice that “brings storytelling and research together either by using stories as research data or by using storytelling as a tool for data analysis or presentation of findings” (Barkhuizen, Benson, & Chik, 2014, p. 3). In other words, while telling stories about specific situations in the past, participants can make sense of their experience by organizing experiences and facts, temporarily leading to the construction of knowledge. According to Barkhuizen (2011) one of the main characteristics of a narrative approach is the co-construction of narrative knowledge between the storyteller and researcher. Sandelowski (1991) also explains that narratives can help researchers to understand events that cannot be explained and accessed except in retrospect, such as language learning. Therefore, due to the fact that the participants had already acquired Portuguese, Japanese, and English language abilities, and had also successfully entered higher education in Japan by the time of this study, narrative inquiry was the chosen research method to elucidate and analyze the data.

Data Collection Procedures

The data used in this study was collected between August and November, 2018. The main data collection procedures were a written questionnaire in Portuguese and one-hour oral interview with each participant. The written questionnaire contained a total of seven factual questions and four questions about subjective experience. Here factual questions are understood as “questions designed to elicit objective information from respondents” and questions about subjective experiences as “questions that involve the respondents’ beliefs, attitudes, feelings, and opinions” (Frackfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2008, p. 231). The factual questions were designed to elucidate information about the background of the informants, such as age, sex, parent affiliation, place of birth, mother language, language learning situation, year of immigration, and educational background. Questions about subjective experience were about participants’ oral and written abilities in Portuguese, Japanese, and English. The participants were asked to assess their own abilities on a scale from zero to ten.

Regarding the oral interviews, they were mainly conducted in Portuguese. Although the main language was Portuguese, all participants felt more comfortable in mixing some words in Japanese and English while speaking, to better express themselves. The main questions that led the interview were questions about when they came to Japan and started studying Japanese and Portuguese, why they studied English, and why they decided to go to university.

The sampling technique, known as snowball or friend-of-a-friend technique, which uses a network of friends, was used to recruit the informants (Milroy & Gordon, 2003). In other words, the researcher asked participants to introduce possible new participants who fit the terms of the research inquiry—second generation Brazilians, raised in the community, who had succeeded in enrolling in a Japanese university—and who were willing to participate in the study.

Data Analysis

The data collected was analyzed through interpretative work on the stories told by the participants. First, all the oral interviews were transcribed verbatim, which means “word-for-word transcription” (Barkhuizen, Benson, & Chik, 2014, p. 26). In other words, each word was transcribed as it naturally occurred in spoken interaction, in order to preserve non-standard grammatical utterances, repetitions, and informal phrases. The transcription was then translated into English by the author, who is a proficient multilingual Portuguese, Japanese, and English user. After the translation of the transcription was completed, the author highlighted passages that were relevant to the research questions.

Four categories were created in order to organize the highlighted passages and define them, based on shared content and their context with regard to past research. The most relevant passages were selected to exemplify the results of the research throughout the results section. The categories are:

- (1) Language Ability and Learning Path (Feijo, 2016; Ishikawa, 2014a, 2014c)
- (2) Emotional and Financial Support (Ishikawa, 2014a, 2014b)
- (3) Language Opinions and Ethnic Identity (Feijo, 2016)
- (4) English Education (Okumura, 2018)

The Researcher’s Positionality

As explained by Moore (2012), the relationship between the researcher and the participants in qualitative research varies, but it is a principal factor that contributes to the success of the research. This dynamic becomes even more complicated when the research involves the interaction between a migrant researcher and a migrant participant. According to Ganga and Scott (2006), being part of the same ethnic group, being able to speak the language and share the same ethnic values as the participants has countless advantages, such as an increase in social proximity, and enhanced understanding of social and cultural differences. However, these advantages can also influence the objectivity of the study due to possibly biased data collection and analysis.

During the data collection, the researcher was aware that her shared ethnic and cultural origin helped her to approach participants for this study. The fact that the researcher and participants are both enrolled in Japanese universities and learned Japanese as an additional language may also have helped the contact with participants. The researcher's ethnicity, which is Brazilian, also helped her in the sense that she could easily relate to the members of the community. For instance, during the interviews she was able to share her experiences and problems living in Japan. As result, the researcher was seen as a cultural insider, and, as a result, the participants felt more comfortable and wanted to share their stories.

Despite the researcher's awareness of these advantages, at some level, her background and language abilities may have influenced the study. First, although the researcher and participants are Brazilians in Japan, differences in social class and length of stay in Japan divided the researcher and participants. However, as mentioned in the previous paragraph, after she shared her experiences and problems living in Japan the social proximity between the research and participants was enhanced. Secondly, despite the fact that her language ability in Portuguese helped to create a connection with participants, it was also a source of anxiety for them. Although the participants claimed that they felt happy speaking in Portuguese in the interviews, once the researcher mentioned she could also speak Japanese, many participants felt more comfortable mixing Portuguese and Japanese to better express themselves.

Results

Profile of Young Brazilian Multilinguals

The participants in this study were Brazilian immigrants raised in the Brazilian community in Japan who had successfully entered higher education in Japan, and have high self-assessed proficiency in Portuguese, Japanese, and English. Here *bilingual proficiency* is understood as the ability to use two or more languages (Pearson, 2008). Therefore, in this study the term *bilingual* will be used interchangeably with *multilingual* to describe not only people who are able to use two languages, but also people who can use three or four.

As shown in Table 2, all participants are of Japanese descent, and three of the four participants migrated to Japan with their parents at an early age.

All participants come from a blue-collar background, with parents working in factories. In Japan, factory work is defined by long hours and low pay (Onai, 2009). Based on ads for jobs in a popular magazine for the Brazilian community *Alternativa*¹, the average starting salary for jobs is 1,000 yen per hour. During the interviews, all

1 Available at <https://empregos.alternativa.co.jp/Job/Details/6179/Reg/0/>

participants said that this economic background was a hurdle to their academic advancement and made it necessary for them to work while attending Japanese university or seek financial aid.

Table 2

Basic Information about the Participants

Nickname	Age	Japanese descent	Place of Birth	Age at immigration	Mother tongue
Karlla	31	3rd	Rio de Janeiro	8	Portuguese
Maria	24	4th	Sao Paulo	1	Portuguese
John	21	3rd	Saitama	Born in Japan	Portuguese/Japanese
Paul	24	3rd	Mato Grosso	2	Portuguese

Language Ability in Portuguese, Japanese, and English: Learning Paths and Language Opinions

Figure 2 shows the distribution of self-assessed oral and writing abilities in Portuguese, Japanese, and English. The informants were asked about their language competence in four language skills: reading, writing, listening, and speaking. They were asked to assess their own abilities on a scale from zero to ten, with zero the lowest and ten the highest. This self-assessment structure has been used in other research on minority groups (Feijo, 2016; Matsumoto, 2001; Matsumoto & Tokumasu, 2014). In this study, ratings for understanding and speaking are combined to give an oral language ability score in each language, while the ratings for reading and writing are added to give a written language ability score.

Overall, all the participants consider themselves proficient in the three languages, Portuguese, Japanese, and English. It must be acknowledged that these are self-assessed abilities, and not the result of a rigorous test. Having said that, the participants' backgrounds give credence to these assessments: entrance into and presence in Japanese universities requires high Japanese language ability; two of the four participants studied abroad in English-speaking countries and one works as an English teacher; and, with regard to Portuguese, the assessment of oral skills as higher than written fits with their lived experience in Brazilian immigrant households. For the purposes of this research, the self-assessed English ability of participants is the most important.

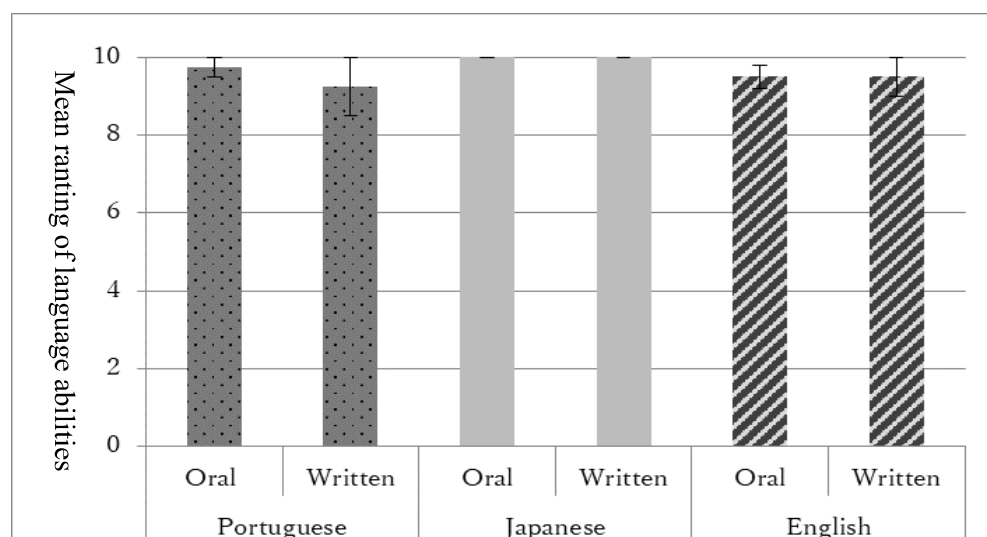


Figure 2. Self-assessed language abilities in Portuguese, Japanese, and English. (Rating of language ability: 0 = lowest; 10 = highest).

Table 3

Language of Schooling

Nickname	Pre-school	Primary school	Elementary school	High school	University	Graduate school
Karlla	Portuguese	Portuguese and Japanese	Japanese	Japanese	Japanese	English
Maria	Japanese	Portuguese and Japanese	Japanese	Japanese	Japanese	Japanese
John	Portuguese	Portuguese	Japanese	Japanese	Japanese	
Paul	Portuguese	Japanese	Japanese	Japanese	Japanese	

The self-evaluated scores of Japanese ability were highest, indicating that, among participants, Japanese was considered their strongest language. High self-assessed language ability in Japanese can be explained by participants' schooling backgrounds. As shown in Table 3, from elementary through higher education, the majority of the participants attended Japanese schools. Other studies of minority immigrant communities have also shown the influence of formal school on the acquisition of the dominant language (Matsumoto, 2001). These results also support the findings of a similar study that showed a possible language shift toward Japanese in the Brazilian community in Japan. According to pilot research on bilingualism conducted by Feijo

(2016), Portuguese language ability is decreasing from one generation to another, while Japanese language ability is increasing.

Concerning the participants' opinions of Japanese, although they claimed to be more proficient and comfortable when using Japanese now, they considered that at first the Japanese language to be a source of social and academic hardship:

“Because I’ve been living in Japan for more than 10 years, Japanese is part of my daily life. Sometimes I feel that I speak more Japanese than Portuguese. I see it as a natural language for me. It is not a foreign language anymore. It belongs to me.” (Karlla)

“I was ashamed [to speak Japanese]. I didn’t know how to speak Japanese. Once I tried to speak, but they laughed at me, so I didn’t speak Japanese for a whole year.” (Karlla)

Despite the fact that their self-assessment of their Japanese was the highest among the three languages, participants also claimed to have high proficiency in Portuguese and English, indicating through their scores that their oral language abilities in both were slightly higher than their written. The analysis of participants' life stories showed that the maintenance of their ethnic language (Portuguese) is due to its obligatory use in the home domain and to formal learning at Brazilian ethnic schools:

“Japanese was forbidden at home. I’ve learned how to speak Portuguese at home, and later I’ve learned how to write in a Brazilian school.” (Maria)

All the participants said that they attended Brazilian ethnic schools every day for one year during their childhood. All the classes were conducted in Portuguese, and the textbooks were imported from Brazil. Regarding the curriculum, each school makes its own curriculum, but usually the curriculum follows the education criteria used in Brazil (Haino, 2010, p. 65). Due to this experience, some of the participants were able to acquire written language ability in Portuguese. Therefore, it is essential to briefly explain the history of Brazilian schools in Japan. In the context of Brazilian immigrant communities across the globe, the Brazilian community in Japan is the only one to have established ethnic schools (Haino, 2011). According to Haino (2014), the Brazilian schools were established to aid in the maintenance of the heritage language, Portuguese, for Brazilian children in Japan. The author also highlights that, because “the use of Portuguese at home was not sufficient for maintaining the heritage language,” from the

mid-1990s to the early 2000s, the necessity of creating a place where children could learn in Portuguese led to the establishment of Brazilian schools (Haino, 2014, p.110). This was a direct result of the *dekasegi* boom period, in which immigrants expected to stay temporarily in Japan and therefore needed to maintain proficiency in Portuguese.

Another study of minority communities has shown that the use of the ethnic language at home is crucial to its maintenance (Matsumoto & Tokumasu, 2014). Therefore, the obligatory use of Portuguese at home and formal learning at Brazilian ethnic schools helped to maintain high oral and written language ability in Portuguese among all the participants.

As for the participants' opinions about the Portuguese language, although Portuguese was a mark of their ethnic identity for the members of the second generation, at the beginning Portuguese was perceived as being associated with discrimination:

“I never thought people were different, but at school Japanese people kept saying this to me: *Gaijin, go back to your country!* [...] This is not a place for to you speak Portuguese. Then, listening to this kind of thing every day made me understand: OK! It's fine! I am Brazilian.” (Karlla)

Despite these negative emotions linked to Portuguese, Portuguese was also the language that facilitated participants' acquisition of English.:

“Only after I entered high school did I feel [knowing Portuguese means being a Brazilian] was good. It helps you to learn a third language. I think it is easier to learn English. It is easier to learn new vocabulary because English and Portuguese are similar.” (Paul)

“Portuguese helped me to learn other languages. It's also the language that connects me with my family in Brazil. My aunt forced my cousin to learn Portuguese. Nowadays he does not speak Portuguese, so he does not talk with their family. I think this is very sad.” (Maria)

Finally, one interesting finding is the high self-assessed score for English language abilities given by all the participants. The analysis of the participants' life stories showed that they learned English at Japanese schools. Previous studies of Brazilian communities in Japan showed English education to be highly valued among the members of the second generation. According to Okumura (2018), some members of

the second generation who are attending Brazilian schools and have low proficiency in the Japanese language claimed that learning English can help them to find better life opportunities in Japan. Although the participants in the current study have graduated from Japanese schools, they also strongly asserted that knowing English enabled them to achieve higher social status among their peers at school and even offered them better schooling opportunities.

“When the others [Japanese peers] were still learning their second language [English], I was learning my third language.” (Paul)

“For me English is like a door, which you open and there is a completely new world on the other side.” (Maria)

Differently from Portuguese and Japanese languages, because there were no negative emotions and feelings attached to the English language, English was perceived as a neutral language and one that some of the participants felt more comfortable using to express their feelings:

“For me, English is much easier. I can say anything I want to say. It was the first time I can truly express myself [...] It is the language that gave me the chance to express myself. I feel free[.] My ability in Japanese is much better, but for me English is much better.” (Karlla)

Factors Surrounding Academic Success

As briefly mentioned in the introduction section, the number of young Brazilians who have reached higher education in Japan is still low. Previous studies of young Brazilians who were successful in obtaining higher education in Japanese universities showed that the common factor among them is financial support provided by their parents (Ishikawa 2014a, 2014b, 2014c). The current research complicates that image, as the analysis of participants' life stories showed that the choice to go to a Japanese university was not *directly* influenced by their parents' opinions or emotional and economic support. In fact, due to financial limitations and differing personal opinions between participants and their parents, this study indicates that the emotional and economic support offered by participants' parents were limited. This difference from Ishikawa's studies could be a result of differing participant backgrounds and research methods, but this is difficult to ascertain as Ishikawa does not provide economic, personal, or social information on the research participants.

“My family was not in a good situation [economic situation] and when I told them I wanted to go to university they didn’t say ‘no,’ but they said I had to pay for it.” (Maria)

“My father said to me: Women don’t need to study. He told me he wouldn’t even help me with *ichien* [one yen].” (Karlla)

Two main factors seemed to influence participants’ decision to go on to higher education: friends’ opinions and previous working experience. Some participants claimed that they decided to go to university just because their friends were doing so. For them, social and cultural pressure seemed to have influenced their decision:

“First, I just took the exam [entrance exam] because everyone was taking it. Here in Japan it is expected you to go to university after you graduate from high school. If you don’t go to university people will ask: ‘What are you going to do with your life?’” (Paul)

Moreover, it is not rare for young Brazilians to do part-time jobs in factories, in the same places as their parents, to help their family. The real experience of working in low prestige jobs seemed to influence them to go to university as a way to look for new life opportunities:

“I really liked to work at the factory [...] But I started thinking: Do I want to keep doing this forever?” (Karlla)

Factors that Promoted Academic Success

Regarding the factors that promoted academic success, the analysis showed that (1) high English ability, (2) high school teachers’ emotional and technical support, and (3) institutional support were most closely related to participants’ academic success.

First, a common factor to all participants is the role of the English language in their academic success. All participants claimed that high English proficiency helped them to obtain good scores at school. These scores helped them to proceed to higher education in Japan. Here it is important to mention briefly that most Japanese universities consider grades obtained during high school when selecting their students.

“To go to *koukou* [high school] I did some exams. But my [grades in] *kokugo* [Japanese Language Arts] were terrible. They made me write some *sakubun* [essay]. [...] But here in Japan if you are really good in something they let you go in, and I was really good in English. So I passed to this school that I really like, until now.” (Karlla)

Moreover, high scores in English classes seemed also to have helped them to build their self-confidence in a context where they felt uncomfortable and lacked faith in their abilities. English was a tool that enabled them to overcome social and linguistic pressures:

“All my grades at school were terrible. I was terrible in everything. Just English I was a little better. Because the alphabet in English is *romaji* [Roman alphabet], not like Japanese. So, for me it was the subject that *saved me*.” (Maria)

“For me to participate in this competition was awesome. Since then I started studying English by myself.” (Maria)

Secondly, unlike the situation in previous studies (Ishikawa, 2014b, 2014c), high school teachers and staff, rather than parents, were responsible for creating opportunities to help participants to enter higher education. They also seemed to offer emotional support:

“When I was looking for universities here in Japan, one teacher strongly recommended University A. I did what she told me to do.” (Maria)

“He [Japanese language teacher] and she [English teacher] were the ones who did everything to me. They’ve created small *goals* for me to enter into university. They helped to fulfill the papers, they even bought my *shinkansen* [bullet train] tickets because my family could not afford it.” (Karlla)

Finally, university assistance programs, institutional support, helped the participants to overcome economic difficulties that accompany higher education. Two participants explained that they were able to enter higher education because their university offered a “special program” for students with economic problems.

“If we study at night we pay less, just half price of the tuition fee.” (Paul)

To focus on their studies, three students claimed they needed to apply for refundable Japanese scholarships or loans to help them to keep pay tuition:

“The first semester I paid the university [...] I worked from 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. I studied from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. It was a hard semester for me. So, I decided to get a loan to focus on my studies [...] because of my good grades, I was able to get a refundable scholarship.” (Paul)

“I got a refundable scholarship, but I also worked really hard. There was a period that I had 4 different part-jobs to pay my university.” (Maria)

Conclusion and Discussion

This study has provided some the insights into multilingualism in the Brazilian community. First, with regard to research question (1) and question (3), this research presents some profiles of successful Brazilian second-generation multilinguals in Japan. All participants considered themselves to have high language ability in Portuguese, Japanese, and English, the last of which seems to have played a crucial role in their success. Japanese and English were acquired at Japanese schools, while their heritage language, Portuguese, was acquired and maintained by its usage at home, primarily through parental efforts, and through Brazilian schools. Although some participants first saw Portuguese as a language connected with discrimination or as a non-useful language, it became a mark of Brazilian ethnic identity and also facilitated participants' acquisition of English.

Secondly, with regard to question (3), this study also elucidated some relevant factors that promoted and surrounded the academic success of young Brazilian multilinguals in Japan. Rather than parental support, it was the school environment and the participants' desire to look for new job opportunities that motivated participants to go to Japanese universities. In fact, the personal stories of the participants in this study indicate that successful second-generation attendees of university often did so despite the lack of parental economic support, not to mention emotional support.

Thirdly, with regard to questions (2) and (3), the analysis of participants' stories revealed that the English language helped to build participants' confidence, and acted as a bridge to higher education in Japan. In other words, high English proficiency helped young Brazilian immigrants to overcome schooling difficulties by helping them to build their academic confidence. Good grades in English classes also helped participants to enter Japanese schools, including Japanese universities. Special programs offered to low-income students by some universities helped these young Brazilians to

break a circle of disadvantages, which tends to replicate the socioeconomic position of their parents, and created new opportunities for upward social mobility. Despite their shared childhood perception of Portuguese as a source of social estrangement from Japanese society, its usefulness in English language acquisition and its role as a mark of their ethnic identity gave participants a more positive relationship with the language later in life.

In summary, by conducting this research, the researcher listened to the stories of young Brazilian second-generation immigrants in Japan who struggled and are still struggling to be accepted by Japanese society. The results of this study contributed to a more detailed understanding of the multilingualism of successful young Brazilian immigrants in Japan through analysis of their life stories. The narratives not only elucidated participants' language acquisition patterns in three languages but also showed that English, acquired as their third language, has an essential role in the academic success of young, multilingual Brazilians in Japan; namely, its positive impact on self-confidence, its high evaluation by universities and other academic institutions, and its consequent ability to act as a bridge to higher education. Although there is more than one path to academic success and social mobility, a way to break the common circle of disadvantages for Brazilian migrants in Japan is by promoting the acquisition not only of the Japanese language but also of Portuguese and English.

Based on the preliminary findings of this study, further analysis and interviews are necessary in order to clarify: (1) the actual role of the Portuguese language in the acquisition of English; (2) how participants' personal motivation relates to their multilingual acquisition and academic success; and (3) the role of participants' confidence (identity) in determining their proficiency in Japanese, Portuguese, and English.

Remarks

In order to protect participants' confidentiality, their personal information, such as their names, was replaced by codes. The present study obtained approval from the Committee for Ethical Review of Experimental Research Targeting Human Subjects of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, the University of Tokyo.

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