Symposium Report

Significance and Strategies for International Dissemination of Outputs of Early Career Researchers

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The primary aim of this symposium was to provide a forum for demonstrating ways of internationalizing Japanese special education research. Firstly, three Japanese early career researchers (ECRs) gave model presentations in English, followed by discussion of points to consider when presenting in international forum. Suggestions from the three ECRs were presented regarding the goal of the presentation, dealing with the audience, and preparation for Question and Answer sessions. Secondly, Dr. Paul Lynch presented the procedure for writing and submitting English language papers, while Professor Divya Jindal-Snape presented practical aspects of internationalization of Japanese special education research. Finally, Dr. Yoshiko Toriyama concluded that, in order to establish themselves internationally, ECRs need to be mindful of the international perspective. This symposium needs to be held periodically to help ECRs develop positive attitudes and strategies towards disseminating their outputs internationally.

Key Words: strategies, international dissemination, outputs, early career researchers

Purpose of the Symposium

Japan is a country with a rich history of special education. Building on past ideas and skills, since 2007, Japan has moved towards the concept of special needs education. However, unfortunately, little is known outside Japan about what has been done both in practice and research in Japanese special education. With this in mind, a group of researchers facilitated the symposium.

The primary aim of this symposium was to provide a forum for demonstrating ways of internationalizing Japanese research through: (1) model presentations by three Japanese ECRs in English, followed by discussion of points to consider when presenting, and (2) presentation of experiences and views of two researchers from the UK. In particular, Dr. Paul Lynch presented the procedure for writing and submitting English language papers based on his experience as an editor of an international journal. Professor Divya Jindal-Snape presented practical aspects of internationalization based on her past experience as a student in Japan and now an internationally established researcher herself.

Oral Presentations by ECRs and Points to Consider When Presenting Internationally

Abstract of the Three Oral Presentations

As a model for the audience, three early career Japanese researchers presented their research in English for 10 min each, followed by questions from the two UK presenters. The three Japanese researchers presented research that employed frequently used methodology, namely documentary analysis, survey research, and experimental research. The first pre-
sentation was given by H. Miyauchi, on 'the Education for visually impaired in Japan: Challenges and an English Solution' which aimed to discuss the current condition of education for the visually impaired in Japan and looked at a possible solution from Oldham in England to address problems faced in Japan. This presentation was based on the one Miyauchi had previously presented at the International Conference of Education for Visually Impaired (ICEVI), where not only researchers, but teachers and delegates from over 50 countries had gathered. This study was based on Documentary Analysis of official reports by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, National Association of Principals of schools for the Blind, and on Special Needs Education published in the UK. Sufficient time was used to explain the basic information about the Japanese special education, such as how children with disabilities in Japan are educated in various settings, how even the children with most profound disabilities have access to education, and how there are more than 1000 special schools in total so that everyone has equal access to education.

The second presentation was given by A. Noguchi on 'Comparison of the Japanese and U.S. curriculum modification for children with disabilities'. The research aimed to identify the differences and similarities between Japanese and U.S. curriculum modification for children with disabilities. This presentation was based on one presented at the Annual Conference of the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD) in 2012. The presentation started off with Noguchi introducing herself in Japanese; something that she had done at AAIDD, where most of the audience was non-Japanese. This flavor of entertainment not only got the attention of the audience, but also worked as an icebreaker, which led to interesting discussions. Also words such as 'jiritsu-katudou' that are original Japanese concepts, were not translated directly. Instead she left them on the slide in Roman letters and defined them in English.

The last presentation was given by S. Okuhata on 'Neural synchronization during simultaneous and successive tasks of Das-Nagrieli Cognitive Assessment System (DN-CAS) analyzed by Phase Lag Index'. The objective of the research was to compare the neural network during the simultaneous and successive tasks of DN-CAS, using a newly developed measure of neural connectivity, PLI. The presentation started with an explanation of DN-CAS, and the simultaneous and successive processing. The former part was done by getting the audience to participate in a quick activity which demonstrated the two types of processing. The audience participation not only helped their understanding of the content, but also got them engaged and interested in the presentation. The slides were unique in a way as she used more graphics with minimum words on the screen to explain the rather complicated computation of PLI, and the concept and problem of neural connectivity analysis.

**Points to Consider When Presenting**

After the oral presentations, the three Japanese ECRs presented several points to consider when making oral presentations to an international audience. As a basic point to consider, they suggested that slides should be prepared with appropriate number of words, graphs and charts, and that the presenter should speak to the audience (rather than reading off the slide) to engage with them. These are points which should be taken into account whether the presentation is in Japanese or English. In addition, there are other things that, especially if you are a non-native English speaker, you should keep in mind. Based on the experience of the three ECRs, the following points were discussed:

Firstly, the ultimate goal of the presentation is to sell your research by getting the important points across. Therefore, we should think about how we could deliver the speech and use visual effects in the most effective way. Regarding the speech, we often see inexperienced Japanese researchers preparing a complete script to read off. Also because they feel insecure about speaking in English, they usually read it fast in a little voice. To avoid this situation, it is valuable to note that the audience at an international conference are not necessarily native English speakers themselves, and therefore, might be faced with the same difficulty as you. This means that what is required is that, the non-native English researchers like us, should speak clearly with adequate speed and decent pronunciation. The pronunciation does not have to be exactly the same as that of native speakers, but proper pronunciation is essential for effective communication to take place. Also if you are faced with words that you have difficulty pronouncing, consider
changing that word to something else that you feel more comfortable using. Regarding the visual effects, use graphs and tables and avoid putting too many words on one slide. Figure 1 is a good example of this as words are kept to a minimum by using graphics. However, if you do not feel comfortable or are not sure if you can get the point across by just speaking, writing down the key points in sentences can be an option. Also, if there are people with visual impairment in the audience, you may want to consider describing the visual information in words. You should practice so that you know your ideas inside out, and record your speech if you can and listen to it. Learn to control speed, tone and volume. Knowing your weakness and exploring ways to work around them will make you a better presenter.

Secondly, knowing your audience and introducing your research from an angle based on that aspect is also important. International conferences will be attended by different people from different backgrounds. If you are presenting a paper which is on, or reflects Japan or the Japanese culture, focus on talking about the big picture (in this case, going over the basic information about Japan) before going in to the technical details of your research. Also, along with talking about the big picture, it is important to verbalize what might seem obvious to you about Japan or your field, as not all will necessarily know about it. For example, when talking about the current condition of education for the disabled in Japan, the fact that everyone, even children with the most profound disabilities receive education has become such a common practice in Japan that we usually do not verbalize it when we are talking about the same topic in Japanese conferences. However, at international conferences, where many people from different countries attend (especially from developing countries), this fact should be mentioned at the beginning to secure a common ground for further discussion. Also words like ‘jiritsu-katsudo’ for example are so original, that they cannot be translated accurately. If it was translated to ‘independent activity’, the audience might not get the right image. Where that is the case, go ahead and use the word, ‘jiritu-katudou’; just be sure to define it (Fig. 2).

Thirdly, be prepared and be comfortable with
Question & Answer sessions. Getting questions is a great chance to get feedback and create audience interaction. Also, new ideas for your research may come up. It would help if you took some time beforehand to think from the audience’s perspective and think of the potential questions, and write down the key words in English. Also, knowing (or actually writing it down on your notes) quick phrases like the following will help you have some time to settle yourself down and think about the question: “Thank you for your question”, “The question is difficult to answer but...” or, “I’m sorry I missed that. Could you please repeat the question?” –if needed. For a non-native speaker, these phrases will not come out right away, especially when you are nervous and being asked a difficult question. If you cannot answer the question right away, do not be afraid to say so. Simply reply, “That’s a very interesting question; but, I am afraid I don’t know the answer right this minute”, or “May I come to you later and discuss this?”

Lastly, be interesting and entertaining. This may not be normal for ordinary conferences in Japan, but in international conferences, some flavor of entertainment can benefit audience attention and also, may work as an icebreaker to set off academic networking. Especially for ECR, leaving a positive impression will help you get in touch with different academics around the world.

Know your strengths and weaknesses and arrange your presentation according to it. Needless to say, good oral presentations will only come with lots of practice.

Ways of Disseminating Research Internationally (Dr. Paul Lynch)

This presentation focused on ways Japanese researchers can start to get their research published in international journals. Dr. P. Lynch gave some useful tips on what journal referees are looking for when they are asked to review papers.

Who is My Audience And Where Can I Publish?

Researchers have the opportunity to publish in a variety of ways in different publications–short research summaries in specialist publications for practitioners and end-users, national journals in Japan, policy briefs for government or to a much wider audience in international journals. It is possible to publish their work in different formats such as PhD abstracts, short research reports (3,000 words) as well as full length articles (6,000–9,000 words) in peer-reviewed journals. Most of the readers of peer-reviewed journals are usually university academics many of whom are also conducting educational research in specialist fields such as special educational needs and inclusive education. It is also possible to be invited to write an article for a special edition of a journal by guest editors who may already know your work.

It is important to do some preparatory exploration of journals in your field and also in the wider field of general education before submitting to a chosen journal. Make sure you read the instructions to contributors in a current journal or online (e.g., check number of words), read some published articles in the journal to get a better idea of the themes and main discussions. This should help you to decide if your research theme fits into the overall themes of the journal. It is useful to become familiar with the different discourses, a form of intellectual enquiry which runs throughout a specific journal, discussed in previous journals and perhaps make reference to them in your own paper. Make sure you do not reuse similar data already published in a journal in Japan as this is not allowed. Once you have published in a journal, you cannot re-use the same data unless there are significant additions to the data sets.

Some international journals receive large numbers of papers to review because they are highly rated by academia. Some journals publish 2 or 3 issues a year whereas some can publish up to 6 issues a year. It can sometimes take 6 months or longer to receive feedback from a journal editor. In some instances, the review process can take a very long time and this can be frustrating for authors who are keen to get their first paper published. It may be a good idea to aim for a lesser known journal with a lower impact factor when starting their publishing career and then target more competitive or esteemed journals later on.

Most journals require papers to have two referees who will receive the paper without the authors' names. Many journals allow authors to track the review progress of their submitted paper using an online tracker system. Referees can sometimes be unpunctual; not respecting the set time limit (usually 4 to 5 weeks) or do not have specialist background in the field and as a result do not provide good feedback
on the paper and helpful suggestions on how to improve the quality of the paper. It can take as long as 1 to 2 years before final proofs are completed and the article is published. Today, international journals are moving towards publishing online only and do not produce hardcopies of the journals. Online publications (for example Online First) count the same as published journals.

Some Examples of Criteria Used to Review Submitted Manuscripts

Referees are sometimes asked to score a paper (e.g., between 1–4) using set criteria. If a paper scores very low in relevance to the aims of the journal or to the importance of the subject, it is likely that it will not be accepted by the journal. It is essential that authors review the guidelines on submitting a paper to a journal before sending their papers to the editor. Sending a paper to the wrong journal wastes time and reduces the chance of getting your paper published in good time.

Examples of criteria used when referees review papers:

- Relevance to aims of journal
- Importance of the subject
- Originality of the approach
- Justification and relevance of methodology (if required)
- Soundness of the scholarship
- Clarity of the organisation
- Strength of the argument
- Writing style
- Formatting according to the guidelines

Possible Recommendations

Referees make one of the following recommendations based on their review of the submitted paper.

- Accept as it stands
- Accept with minor revisions
- Resubmit/Requires major revisions
- Reject- More suited to another journal
- Reject

It is rare that an article is accepted without any revisions (‘accept as it stands’). If it is, perhaps the author has aimed too low! Unfortunately, a high proportion of papers are rejected because authors have not respected the journal’s guidelines for submission or do not match any of the journal’s themes. If an article is accepted but requires minor or major revisions, it is important that the authors respond to all the comments made by the referees. Failure to respond to all the questions or comments could delay the publication of the article. It is not necessary to agree with these suggestions but you will be required to justify your arguments.

Extract Taken from a Referees Comments

A referee may find an article relevant to the journal’s aims but the methodology or structure could be unclear. They may feel that there is insufficient empirical data presented or discussed, or the study discussed is not based on sufficient data e.g. small number of case studies.

An example taken from a referee’s report:

‘This article is relevant to the journal’s aims and has useful elements but does not have clear research aims, methodology or structure. The details of the study are scattered in the different sections making it difficult for the reader to understand the purpose of the study. The article needs to be completed, restructured and reduced in length’ (British Journal of Visual Impairment).

Experience as a Guest Editor

I was invited to co-edit two special editions of the ICEVI journal–The Educator with Dr. Steve McCall on inclusive education. This is a specialist journal on visual impairment which is aimed at a practitioner readership, mainly in low income countries. As guest editors of two special editions on inclusive education we were interested in identifying international practices in how children with visual impairment access the curriculum. For example, we were particularly interested in learning about how science is taught to blind students. This was an opportunity for Japanese authors to share some of their practices with an international audience who work in the same field. All articles were reviewed based on simple criteria sent to all invited contributors.

Increasing International Readership of Specialist Japanese Journals

International audiences working in Special Educational Needs (SEN) are interested in what is happening in Japan such as the history of special schools, innovative learning pedagogies, different interventions (e.g., autism, visual impairment), debates about SEN and inclusive education and how the two systems
work or do not work together, or Japan’s response to international statements on inclusive education. If you don’t publish we cannot find out about what is happening in Japan!

**Internationalization of Japanese Special Education Research (Professor Divya Jindal-Snape)**

This presentation focused on the significance of internationalization and ways of internationalizing Japanese ECRs’ work. D. Jindal-Snape presented her experience in this area.

A quick search of international databases showed that there are approximately 10,000 hits for the key words ‘Japan’ and ‘Special Education’ in the database SCOPUS and just over 760 for ‘Japan’ and ‘Inclusive Education’. At first glance it might suggest that Japanese researchers normally do not publish in international journals. However, a quick search using keywords ‘Japan’ in databases related to Engineering and Physical Sciences revealed approximately 3,500,000 hits. Now obviously we cannot get carried away as this is a very crude way of assessing how many papers with keyword ‘Japan’ were published. This will include papers by Japanese authors based in Japan, other Japanese who might be based in international universities or research institutes, and those international researchers who are doing work related to Japan. However, it still makes you sit up and wonder what is happening for there to be such a big difference in these disciplines.

**Significance of Internationalising Japanese Special Education Research**

From my experience, I am aware that ECRs in Japan see several barriers in terms of publishing or collaborating internationally, including the questions: why would anybody be interested in my research, will I be able to write in English, and should I not be reaching local academics and practitioners through local journals. The first and last are not any different from ECRs across the world. However, the reality is that of course the international community is interested in hearing about your research and collaborating with you. There are several reasons for this. For the assessment of our research for instance, we in the UK have to show that our research is internationally recognised and of very high quality. These days most journals that have high impact factor look for multiple datasets, preferably international datasets. Most importantly, international researchers are genuinely interested in what they can learn about Japanese special education and hear your unique views about it. The world looks upon you as respected colleagues who have an important role to play in the understanding and implementation of inclusion. You, as members of a research community, also have a responsibility towards your colleagues not only locally but also internationally.

**Strategies for Internationalizing Japanese Special Education Research**

Now let us look at the common worries ECRs have and see how I have overcome them myself, and discuss some ideas of how you might be able to do so. For those of you who are worried about publishing in international journals on your own in English, how about starting with international researchers from day one? This can be achieved through research collaborations with international researchers. There are several funding bodies that support such interaction, namely The Daiwa Anglo-Japanese Foundation, The Great Britain Sasakawa Foundation, Japan Society for the Promotion of Science, etc. The funding can be used to visit other countries as well as inviting others to Japan and you could start off with working on joint projects and creating international datasets.

Secondly, you could co-author papers and books with others. If you look at my international networks, most were created through a book I recently edited. I was keen to cover as many continents as possible to gain different perspectives and wrote to several leading international researchers in this area to contribute a chapter to this book. I had thought that these famous researchers will turn me down. However, apart from a couple who could not work within the time frame due to other commitments, everybody agreed to contribute. However, I think starting with a unique idea that others saw as worthwhile was important. Recently for another book, I contacted several international researchers around midnight one day. By next morning, I had twenty or so acceptances. In this book I have made a conscious effort to pair people from different countries for the chapters as well as including a mix of leading academics, ECRs and practitioners. When publishing papers, I have also consciously published in a range of journals from...
around the world. I think this helped when inviting others to contribute to the books. If any one of you invited me to contribute a chapter to your book, I for instance, would immediately grab that opportunity.

It is also a good idea to put yourself forward to become a reviewer for international journals. I remember wondering ‘what can I offer?’ when I started my research career. Actually every one of us can offer a lot as we bring a different perspective and way of doing research. Also, it is a great learning experience for when I am writing a paper as I can learn what to do or not do. Similarly, it is a good idea for Japanese journals to be open to international researchers and reviewers.

Attending international conferences is another step of forming these international networks as well as disseminating your work to an international audience. It is important to make sure your presence is felt there by possibly several researchers attending each conference as well as doing multiple presentations. From my experience, Japanese academics are very good at taking their students with them and thereby exposing them to an international audience. It is quite important for Japanese students to start this process as it will be beneficial for them throughout their academic life. Also Japanese universities have students and visiting academics from across the world. It is worth proactively publishing with them as well.

You can of course, also join international professional organisations that might provide support with writing or join international research networks such as ‘Transformative Change: Educational and Life Transitions’ which I convene (see http://www.dundee.ac.uk/ewsce/research/critical/tcelt.htm). We already have several international collaborators and you are welcome to join us. We have a writers’ group which includes research students, ECRs and professors. We meet to work on our papers and provide each other feedback on our work with the aim of publishing in very good journals. You could join us virtually through emails and web conferencing. We also provide a forum for peer reviewing each other’s funding applications. Alternatively, you could set up your own writing groups where you could support each other through the processes involved in writing for submission.

So how can you ensure that others will be interested in your research? If we take the analogy of an hour glass, the idea is to make your potentially narrow piece of research widely applicable (see Fig. 3). To be able to do this, you would start the introduction in your paper or presentation with a focus on international literature; then move to the Japanese context and literature; present your study; and after presenting the implications for your own context; you would move towards implications of your study nationally and internationally.

Finally, I think the important message is that it is possible to establish yourself in an international arena. It is not as difficult as you might think it is. International researchers are waiting to hear about your research and to collaborate with you; so please grab this opportunity.
Conclusions

Y. Toriyama, one of the researchers who facilitated this symposium, concluded by reiterating that Japanese educators and researchers in special needs education can overcome the language barrier and have the potential to establish themselves internationally. Based on her experience to assist educational development of science education for people with visual impairments in developing countries, she said that Japanese ECRs need to be mindful of international perspectives and disseminate their outputs internationally. She suggested that this symposium needs to be held periodically, preferably as a workshop, to help ECRs develop positive attitudes and strategies towards disseminating their outputs internationally.

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