

# CHAPTER 1

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## Voices of *Kakehashi*: The Role of Japanese Language in Constructing Intercultural Identity among Speakers of Japanese in Multicultural Canada

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## Introduction

In attempting to keep up with our rapidly globalizing world, companies and individuals have been forced to develop a more global mindset and we are increasingly aware that persons who live and work between cultures play a vital role in this process. Anil K. Gupta et al. (2002, 1) defines a global mindset as “one that combines an openness to and awareness of diversity across cultures.” In Japanese, such persons who bridge cultures are metaphorically referred to as *Kakehashi*, a term that literally means, “bridge across.” Given the globalization of business and current political realities, there is an urgent need for individuals with *Kakehashi*-like abilities. The present paper is inspired by this metaphor of the bridge and by its creator, Inazo Nitobe (1862-1933), arguably Japan’s most respected international diplomat. Nitobe is renowned for his life-long dedication to the promotion of understanding between nations and peoples with a diversity of cultural values.

The field of Japanese immigration history, especially those accounts centering on the importance of Japanese language and Japanese language schools for the overseas Japanese communities, provides us with rich historical resources on many concrete cases of *Kakehashi* (Sato, 1954; Adachi, 1976; Matsubayashi, 1985; Oshiro, 1985; Ichioka, 1988; Morimoto, 1989; Aoki, 1991; Kojima, 1993; Fujii, 1997; and Azuma, 2003). Since the first official Japanese emigration to Hawaii in 1885, discourses surrounding second-generation Japanese children have flourished in Japan. In fact, the *Kakehashi* concept became so pervasive among pre-WWII overseas Japanese communities that many second-generation Japanese came to embrace its tenets as well. Often such discussions took place amongst intellectuals, social critics, educators, and government officials and were circulated in the form of books, articles, and public lectures. There are three notable characteristics of the *Kakehashi* ideology that emerge from these discourses: 1) an emphasis on bicultural/bilingual development of “peaceful ties” between Japan and host countries; 2) an emphasis on Japanese language education for Nisei (Second Generation Japanese); and 3) an emphasis on *Yamato damashii* (Japanese spirit).

This paper explores diplomat Nitobe's legacy, and more specifically how his powerful metaphor of the "Bridge across the Pacific Ocean" has influenced the educational community in Canada. The Japanese language schools, known as *nihongo gakkō*, played a key role in keeping this metaphor alive. The *Kakehashi* metaphor as it is engaged in the present paper serves as an epistemological heuristic to reframe the significance and the role of the Japanese language in Canada.

## ***Kakehashi* – Prewar Period**

### Our Resolutions

Sumiko Suga, Alumni Association of Vancouver Japanese Language School

To achieve prosperity in the future, we must plan our future, since Canada is our place of permanent residence. We must share our lot with Canadians, by improving ourselves, understanding Canada and thinking for Canada. This way of thinking will lead to the ultimate expansion of the Yamato nation and represents our loyalty to our motherland, Japan.

Therefore we should, to the best of our ability, become exemplary Canadian citizens of Japanese origin. In doing so, we should demand that Canada acknowledge our ability, which could result in enfranchisement and employment equality. In addition, we should endeavour to build the civilization of the Pacific era, by introducing Japanese culture into Canadian culture. I believe that this is what the *Issei* generation was not able to accomplish, but what we, the *Nisei* are expected to accomplish.

(Suga, 1930, 48-55)

The passage above is part of a speech made by a female *Nisei* graduate of the Vancouver Japanese Language School at a Japanese speech contest held in 1930. Her speech encapsulates the very essence of Japanese language education for Japanese Canadian children; to raise Canadian-born children of Japanese heritage to become "Bridge(s) across the Pacific" by being fully bilingual in Japanese and English. Being fully bilingual in both languages presupposes that those children are also bicultural as both Japanese and Canadian or more broadly bicultural as both Japanese and Western.

Abiko Kyutaro, publisher of the *Nichibei Shimbun* Japanese language press in San Francisco, was one of the earliest advocates of *Kakehashi-ron* ("Kakehashi theory"), and, in the mid-1920's, he initiated an educational program for

sending Nisei students to Japan based on the *Kakehashi* ideology (Azuma, 2003). In 1925 and 1926, Abiko's *Nichibei Shimbun* newspaper sponsored *Nisei kengakudan*, or study-tour groups, which traveled throughout Japan on three-month excursions (Azuma, 2004, 5-6). Thereafter, the *Kakehashi* bridge concept became so pervasive in the Japanese community that both *Issei* and *Nisei* generations began to internalize the ideology. As Azuma (2003) states, *Issei* leaders convinced themselves that the centre of the world had been shifted from the Atlantic to the Pacific. They believed that history would enter into a new "Pacific Era," whence the United States and Japan would emerge as the pivotal powers. These two areas represented the West and the East, but in the immigrant vision they would fuse the best of the divided worlds into one.

Although Azuma's argument centers on the prewar Japanese community in the United States, it could be applied to prewar Canada as well. Born as Canadian citizens of Japanese heritage, the *Nisei* inadvertently became saddled with the mission of facilitating this fusion process. As bridges of understanding between the two nations and the two worlds, their position was crucial especially as prewar Japanese language schools were under constant attack by anti-Japanese campaigners. Critics in mainstream society contended that the workload of daily classes at Japanese schools was an additional strain on the children and therefore conflicted with and hindered the public school program. More significantly, the Japanese language schools were viewed by many white British Columbians as agents for the fostering of Japanese nationalism in the Japanese community. Some British Columbians were convinced that the Japanese immigrants were nationalists, steadfastly loyal to the Japanese Emperor and therefore disloyal to Canada; they held a strong belief that these Japanese immigrants could never be integrated into mainstream society in the province. Such attitudes surely influenced the shift in advocacy for Japanese schools to become organs of supplemental rather than core education.

The Japanese language schools were so concerned about campaigns against them that by 1923 they had founded the Japanese Language School Educational Society in order to provide a forum for the problem to be discussed among the teachers and community leaders. The Society's first mandate was to encourage Japanese language schools to take responsibility for promoting better understanding and cooperation with white majority groups and, above all, with the general public (Sato, 1954, 58-88). Many of the Japanese language teachers already had a sense of multiculturalism being that Canada was a country to which people came from all over the world. They were attune to the fact that the best candidates for mediating the relationship between Canada and Japan were the Canadian-born *Nisei*, and it would be the *Nisei* responsibility to study the

Japanese language and culture and to further transplant their cultural heritage onto Canadian soil. Providing *Nisei* with Japanese language education was beneficial for both Canada and Japan and the mutual understanding between the two countries was a commonly cited reason for the operation of these schools.

Many teachers in Japanese language schools were keenly aware of the fact that *Nisei* had to be Canadian first and foremost. Through their direct engagement with public schools and interactions with anti-Japanese language school agitators, these teachers were aware of the prejudices faced by their students. They also saw their graduates experience issues with finding proper employment. It would have been very difficult for *Nisei* to confront the harsh reality of these prejudices unless they had had a strong sense of pride and self-worth as Japanese. There was a need to show how being a Canadian citizen of Japanese origin was a benefit rather than a stigma and the teachers felt this could be achieved through the teaching of language and culture. This was not to be an “either-or” approach of the kind that many people of the time fell into adopting. Mr. Aoki, a former principal of a Japanese language school in Cumberland, expressed his idea of “cosmopolitanism” at an Educational Society meeting as thus: “The concepts of citizenship and ethnic origin are often confused; being a Japanese national and having a Japanese ethnic background are two different things. Canadian citizenship can coexist in harmony with a Japanese ethnic background. The Japanese language schools teach *Nisei* pupils the virtues of Japanese culture so that they can become better Canadian citizens” (Sato, 1954, 178).

*Issei* parents had a slightly different desired outcome for sending their children to the Japanese language schools, but it overlapped with the schools’ goal to produce better citizens. The parents’ main hope was that the Japanese schools would be a powerful means of instilling in their children a sense of pride in their background. As Adachi states, “Without always being aware of the fact, the *Issei* were seeking to bring up their children as compromise Canadians, capable of living in two worlds (Adachi, 1976, 128). During my interview with Mr. Ogaki, a former student of one of the language schools, he remembered his teacher’s remarks about the Japanese spirit: “My *sensei* (teacher) used to tell us that having a Japanese background was nothing to be ashamed of. That is something we should be proud of.” He recalled his teacher’s lecture on the concept of *Yamato damashii* (Japanese spirit) and how *Yamato damashii* consists of *on* (a sense of gratitude and obligation), truth, sacrifice, honour and responsibility. Mr Ogaki attributed the enhancement of students’ identity and self-esteem to learning Japanese at the language school.

## ***Kakehashi – Postwar period***

Anti-Japanese hysteria climaxed with the outbreak of World War II. On February 26, 1942, the Dominion Government announced a complete evacuation of all persons of Japanese origin from the Pacific Coast. Of the 22,000 Japanese Canadians forced to leave, more than half chose to stay in the mountainous interior of British Columbia (B.C.). The British Columbia provincial government refused to offer education for the Japanese Canadian children. It was the B.C. Security Commission, the federal agency created to move and resettle the evacuees, which took responsibility for establishing and administering schooling in the internment camps. The Security Commission placed a ban on the use of the Japanese language by pupils and teachers in camp school facilities. This historical event robbed prewar Japanese Canadians of their sense of community and, in that moment, Japanese as a heritage language in Canada was destroyed completely. Consequently, Japanese was not passed on as a heritage language from second generation Japanese Canadian parents to their third generation Japanese Canadian children.

As the war was approaching its close, the federal government ordered the dispersal of the Japanese across Canada further shattering their sense of community. In the House of Commons in 1944, Prime Minister Mackenzie King announced that:

They will have to settle in such a way ... that they do not present themselves as an unassimilable or colony which might again give rise to distrust, fear and dislike...

The sound policy and the best policy for the Japanese-Canadian themselves is to distribute their numbers as widely as possible throughout the country where they will not create feelings of racial hostility. (Canada, House of Commons Debate, 1944, 5917)

Responding to the “dispersal policy,” the Japanese were again either forced to move and re-establish themselves in areas other than the West Coast, or be repatriated to Japan. Even before the dispersal policy of 1944 was enacted, the Ministry of Labour had attempted to persuade evacuees to move eastward. In 1943, 1,084 evacuees moved to Manitoba for beet farming and by the end of the year, 1,650 were in Ontario. The number of Japanese Canadians in Ontario escalated upwards to 8,581 within a decade and the city of Toronto became the largest center of Japanese Canadian re-settlement by the early 1970’s. Prior to World War II, Vancouver had the largest concentration of Japanese Canadians but it was not until 1949, with the removal of the final restrictions imposed under the *War Measures Act*, that they were finally able to gain full rights of citizenship

and move freely anywhere in Canada including being able to return to Vancouver and the coast. With the return of Japanese Canadians to the West Coast, the Japanese Canadian Citizens' Association was created in 1954 to help facilitate the rebuilding of the Nikkei community in British Columbia.

Regardless of the restrictions being lifted on Japanese resettlement on the coast, Toronto still retained the highest concentration of Japanese Canadians. Subsequently, in 1956, after a moratorium of 26 years, immigration from Japan resumed and three distinct groups began to emerge in the Japanese community in Toronto: 1) prewar immigrants, the first generation and successive generations; 2) the postwar immigrants and their families and; 3) expatriate Japanese citizens and their families on overseas business assignments. Although these three groups appear very similar to outsiders, there are clear divisions according to social class, occupation, and socio-historical background. The prewar immigrants group is the product of the dispersal policy the government implemented at the end of World War II. This policy and its consequences hindered the development of a sense of community usually characterized by an understanding of common needs and mutual assistance. For example, in the 1950s, more than half of the nation's population of Japanese Canadians resided in Toronto but studies show that they maintained a low degree of Japanese residential concentration and also a low degree of social interaction. (Wangenheim, 1956).

The virtual closure of immigration from Japan between 1930 and 1956 resulted in a socio-cultural gap between the prewar immigrants group and the postwar immigrants group. The average postwar immigrant did not experience World War II. They grew up with postwar Japan's economic recovery and development. Whereas the prewar generation of Japanese Canadian immigrants needed to support one another in order to survive economically under anti-Japanese discrimination, the postwar generation of Japanese Canadian immigrants were very independent and economically self-sufficient. As a group, they tended to be highly educated professionals and were employed in various areas of the Canadian occupational structure.

Most of the postwar immigrants were drawn to urban areas. According to Ueda's study of the Japanese community in Toronto (1978), 72.3 percent of the postwar immigrants among her respondents were employed and 14.4 percent of them were self-employed. These immigrants were characteristically highly educated and technically qualified. They tended to be independent, individualistic, and competitive. The postwar immigrants exhibited a diverse range of occupational backgrounds and they were also dispersed throughout the metropolitan area. This residential dispersion cannot be attributed to the



dispersal policy enacted by the government at the end of World War II. Rather, such dispersion should be regarded as one of the group's natural characteristics: They choose where to live based on factors such as proximity to place of employment rather than proximity to ethnic networks.

Unlike the prewar immigrants that relied on the support of organizations like the above-mentioned Japanese Canadian Citizens' Association, postwar immigrants did not feel the need to establish an institutionally complete social organization in order to secure employment. In general, immigrants that are equipped with adequate vocational training in technical and professional skills and that have a good command of English are far more likely to be able secure employment without help from their ethnic community. As evidence of this, the participation of postwar immigrants in associations and clubs is quite low. Most of those who are involved in ethnic associations or clubs do not belong to ones formerly established by the prewar Japanese Canadian communities. They tend to belong to organizations founded by the postwar immigrants themselves. It can be concluded that in Toronto the formal interaction between the prewar immigrants group and the postwar immigrants group is very small. Not only in the formal sphere, but also in the informal sphere, the interaction between these two groups is rare.

It is difficult to draw a boundary between the second and third group of immigrants in the Japanese community. Both the postwar immigrants and the expatriates on overseas business assignments speak Japanese and share a common culture. They are also highly educated. Although the material status of immigrants may generally be characterized as "middle class" (Ueda, 1978), the dividing line between the two groups cannot easily be drawn based on their socio-economic state of living. Regardless of the similarities, there is a division that stems from the stigmatized class relations that are historically rooted in the development of Japanese capitalism (Ueda, 1986). In the prewar era, the Japanese who emigrated to North America and Latin America were poor farmers and fishermen who left the country because they could not find any other means of survival. They became stigmatized because they migrated and the stigma remains to this day. Despite the fact that postwar immigrants did not emigrate from Japan to Canada for reasons of economic survival, they are still viewed as having given up their home country because they failed to fit into society. By contrast, expatriate Japanese on overseas business assignments are considered to be "elites" because they were chosen by their organization to be stationed abroad.

Ueda (1986) points out that, in Japanese organizations, positions for overseas work were typically very competitive, and those who were selected

were treated as, and expected to be, representatives of Japan. They took pride in their status not only as business personnel of a particular corporation but also as goodwill envoys of Japan. The people of Japan used to place a high value on the experience of overseas work and it was treated as a great undertaking; a fact that created and reinforced the glamorous image of the life of expatriate executives and managers. Among corporate expatriates and their families a sense of being an elite was internalized through this process of selection and perceived moral obligation.

The members of the expatriate corporate community have a strong “we” consciousness. Although they work for different companies that are often in intense competition, their cultural characteristics, social class, common language, their way of life and their goals as corporate expatriates bring them together. As of 1983, the Toronto Japanese Association of Commerce and Industry (Shoko-kai) lists 101 firms and its membership is exclusively for Japanese citizens on business visas. Except for honorary members of the diplomatic community, it is not open to local employees who work for the firms, nor to Japanese Canadians or postwar Japanese immigrants who operate small businesses in Toronto. Although it does not have a specific geographical area, the Toronto Japanese Association of Commerce and Industry (Shoko-kai) exists exclusively for members of the expatriate corporate community. Thus, this community exists as a distinctive group separate from Japanese Canadians and postwar Japanese immigrants.

This diversity amongst the Japanese immigrant and expatriate communities has had a significant impact on the development of Japanese language schools throughout Canada. The impact can be illustrated by looking at the history of one particular Japanese language school, the Toronto Japanese Language School, opened in 1949 and the first of its kind in the province of Ontario. Founders established the school because they believed in the importance of Japanese language maintenance in raising their children as Japanese Canadians. The school was very successful and in subsequent years it expanded to include two campuses. By the late 1960s and the early 1970s, two main factors led to an increase in the Japanese population in Toronto that would change the course of Japanese language education in the city: 1) a relaxation of immigration laws after 1966 attracted new immigrants to Canada; and 2) an increase in the number of Japanese expatriates employed at overseas branches of Japanese firms as described above. Initially, both the postwar immigrants group and the Japanese expatriate group sent their children to the Toronto Japanese Language School, which had originally been established for the descendants of the prewar immigrants group. However, the three groups had little in common with one another with respect to their expectations for the school and their preferred

educational ideology. Subsequently, both the postwar immigrant community and the expatriate community set up their own schools.

In 1974, the Japanese School of Toronto Shoko-kai Inc. was established to help the children of expatriate members keep up with the Japanese public school curriculum during their stay in Canada. One of the important missions of the Association is to manage the Japanese Saturday School. In addition to helping members' children keep up to date with the Japanese school curriculum, it also assists in the re-integration of students when they return home to Japan. The school, known as *Hoshuko*, includes over 400 students from kindergarten to high school and employs approximately 40 teachers. A board comprised of Shoko-kai members and headed by the Director of the Education Division manages the school. The Board works closely with the Principal and Vice Principal who have been seconded by the Japanese Ministry of Education for three-year terms.

In 1976, the postwar immigrants group founded the Toronto *Kokugo Kyoshitsu* (Toronto Japanese Language Classroom). The school was designed for children that had already acquired Japanese language skills in their home environment. This group did not agree with the policy of teaching Japanese as a second language that was implemented in the Toronto Japanese Language School. As the number of students increased, the parents' opinions and expectations concerning Japanese language education came into conflict, resulting in the creation of a number of different schools for the Canadian-born children of the postwar immigrant group.

During the same period, the educational system began to respond to increased diversity amongst Canadians by expanding heritage language programs in the public schools. The support for heritage languages was directly related to federal and provincial multiculturalism policies. Heritage language education was seen as an essential part of the Canadian cultural mosaic. It also reflected a response to pressures from various cultural groups, especially Ukrainian Canadians, for inclusion and recognition (Tavares, 2000). Throughout Canada in the 1980s, newer ethnocultural groups were emerging as important demographic and political factors. Thus from the mid-1980s to the early 1990s, there was a significant growth in the number of heritage languages offered. For example, in Manitoba between 1984 and 1990, new curricula for Portuguese, Filipino, and Mandarin were developed and implemented, primarily in Winnipeg School Division No. 1. These languages were offered in addition to the "older" languages such as Icelandic, German, Hebrew, Spanish, and Ukrainian already taught as "language of study" programs in various public schools. In Saskatchewan, a system was devised whereby students could receive high school credits for

heritage languages taught by community groups or organizations that followed the guidelines of Saskatchewan Education (Tavares, 2000).

During this period, the term “heritage languages” came to be preferred by ethnocultural communities and multicultural education activists. It tended to reinforce the idea that languages other than English or French were not “foreign” languages, as they were spoken by many Canadians and were part of their Canadian heritage. The maintenance of these languages was presented as a rational extension of the efforts to recognize and celebrate Canada’s multicultural heritage and was in keeping with multicultural policies espoused by various levels of governments.

Changes in immigration policies and federal support for official multiculturalism led to a florescence of heritage language education. The main clients of the newly established Japanese language schools were the offspring of postwar Japanese immigrants. At its peak in the early 1990’s, there were twenty privately run Japanese language schools operating in Vancouver. The oldest and largest of these schools was the Vancouver Japanese Language School, with over 400 students enrolled.

### ***Kakehashi* – Diversity, Hybridity, Inclusiveness**

Japanese language as a heritage language in Canada displays the intricate balance of opposing forces of language preservation and language attrition. In the case of the Japanese Canadian community, generational words like “*Issei*,” “*Nisei*,” and “*Sansei*” (first-generation, second-generation, third-generation respectively) are no longer appropriate for future generations. For example, at most of these Japanese language schools, more than 50 percent of the students come from interracial families where one parent is a Japanese native. As the Japanese Canadian community expands in new directions, the culture and the identity of “Japanese Canadian” naturally evolves as well. In response to changing student profiles, Japanese heritage language schools have also evolved.

Beginning in the early 1990’s, another factor that has led to changes in Japanese language education is the strengthening role of Japan in the global economy. At the height of Japan’s economic boom, the Japanese language attained its global status. Interest in Asian languages, such as Japanese, Mandarin, and, to a lesser extent Korean, resulted from a growing awareness of the impact of globalization and the significance of Asia in the new global economy. Japanese and Mandarin language programs were introduced to public schools in British Columbia. The significance of these programs is that they were not introduced as “heritage” programs targeted at Canadian students of Japanese or Chinese origin, but were primarily directed at students with no heritage connection to either

language or culture but with an interest in Asia-Pacific studies. In fact, the Asia-Pacific Foundation of Canada, a joint business and government-funded agency, promoted the introduction of Japanese language curricula throughout Canada, as did the Japan Foundation. For example, the Asia-Pacific Foundation funded the development of the Alberta Japanese Language and Culture Program. Increased trade and growing investment by Japan in British Columbia means that Japanese language and cultural knowledge have taken on new importance in this province. As Japan's global role widens to include business, science, politics and social development, individuals require cultural and linguistic knowledge about Japan. The involvement of the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada in promoting Japanese and other Asian languages points to another emerging trend of corporations and business organizations beginning to actively support and promote "international" language education. Interestingly, there was not the same level of interest from this sector during the push for heritage language education.

The Japanese heritage language schools in British Columbia, especially in Vancouver, have survived both the competition from the provincially run Japanese language programs and a decline in population among Japanese Canadian children born to postwar Japanese immigrants. They did so mainly by opening their doors to learners without a Japanese background and by expanding their programs to incorporate two streams of curricula, namely a heritage language stream and an international language stream.

In contrast, the Japanese heritage language schools in Toronto have continued to emphasize their role of educating the offspring of postwar Japanese immigrants by focusing their attention on the importance of Japanese spoken at home. Unlike the schools in Vancouver, they did not opt for opening up their programs to include non-Japanese speaking students. One exception is a Japanese language school originally designed for the descendants of prewar Japanese Canadians. This school is the oldest among the schools in Toronto and is still in operation. Its curriculum is intended for non-Japanese speakers to learn Japanese as an international language rather than a heritage language.

New clients at Japanese language schools in Greater Vancouver are not only from inter-married families, but also from non-Japanese Asian families. Many of them came to the city with their parents when they were young. They are from Taiwan, Hong Kong, China, Singapore, and Korea. They are familiar with Japanese pop culture such as Japanese animation, comics and pop music. They are so immersed in the Japanese pop culture that they feel more comfortable with the Japanese language and culture than the English language and Canadian culture.

The Japanese language schools in Vancouver have constantly adapted to societal and political shifts. For instance, during the prewar anti-Japanese period, they functioned as community centers offering moral and practical support to Japanese immigrant families. They were central agents in constructing and negotiating the ethnic identity of the community. With the decline in population of Japanese Canadian children, they have sought a group of new clients from non-Japanese Asian families. They draw nourishment and vitality from both the historical and contemporary landscapes related to Japanese and Japanese Canadian cultures. In addition, the Canadian policy of official multiculturalism seems to have taken root among the wider population. It tends to reinforce the idea that languages other than English or French, i.e., Canada's two official languages, are not "foreign" languages, since they are spoken by many Canadians and are part of their Canadian heritage. Learning these languages is presented as a rational extension of the efforts to recognize and celebrate Canada's multicultural heritage and is in keeping with multicultural policies espoused by various levels of government. The attention to the diversity within the specific culture/language group and making sense of the group's contemporary social and political condition demonstrates an attempt to achieve a meaningful and less stereotypical approach to exploring culture.

## Conclusion

Since their inception, Japanese language schools in Canada have experienced both continuity and change. They have adapted not only to historic and political change but also to the shifting dynamics of their students' profiles as evidenced in the development of curricula that reflects a diversity of needs for Japanese language study. According to Kitahara (2012), it is the Japanese language that ties together people of diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. As briefly evidenced above, Japanese language and the Japanese language schools have served to bridge speakers (more precisely, "the users") of Japanese on a number of levels, namely cognitive, interpersonal, communicative, affective, and social.

In more recent years, Japanese language schools have undergone a transformation from being educational institutions specifically intended for Canadian-born Japanese *Nisei* to ones promoting Japanese language and culture among non-Japanese learners. While there have been many changes, there are a few elements that remain constant, namely the passion for Japanese language and culture education among teachers and parents and the adaptability of the language schools. They have also remained a constant for the students who view the Japanese language schools as places where they can nourish long-

term friendships; a place where they can meet with people from a similar family culture with respect to customs and foods.

Dr. Ted Aoki, a renowned scholar and educator in curriculum studies as well as a Japanese Canadian that spent his life living between two cultures and languages, popularized the concept of “in-betweenness”, a discourse that helps us to conceptualize the very nature of *Takehashi* Described by Smith (2003) as “the master of in-between”(xv), Dr. Aoki’s main concern was the rejection of divisive binary approaches, that he felt forced us to choose between “this” or “that”, resulting in a social structure based on insider vs. outsider delineations. Drawing from the explanation presented by Dr. Aoki and his disciples, “in-betweenness” can be understood as closely related to our concept of *Takehashi*; a bridge is neither here nor there, but at the same time it is here and there as it exists in-between two points of contact. Homi Bhabha’s notion of “the third space” (1994), where identity negotiation takes place through projecting an outlook in which one sees and identifies with others’ perspectives is also very closely related to the concept of *Takehashi* that shapes this paper. In order to map the realities of *Takehashi* of diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds and to conceptualize *Takehashi* identities, we need to gather concrete cases based on individuals who are not only of Japanese origin, but also individuals of non-Japanese origin who have achieved high linguistic proficiency in Japanese.

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