

My advice to a younger generation: Eyes toward the world!

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Abstract

One of the strongest points of Sophia University is its power in the world competition. However, in reality, even graduate students of Sophia don ' t take this advantage. Reading books in library or researching with PC is important, indeed. Though, there are chances and opportunities they are just missing: presenting paper in international conference, posting article on the newsletter of international association and so on. By becoming active and dive into those opportunities, we can get precious suggestions from other point of view, which are not written on any how-to kind of textbooks.

Through my attendance of almost two years in graduate program of Sophia, I already have presented a part of my study in such occasions, and there, I saw many students, needless to say from doctor ' s, but also master ' s or undergraduate program, were proudly presenting their studies. In Japan, I feel people tend to consider that the ones who are to appear in those places must have solid academic background and must be fluent in foreign languages, but it is not always necessary. Even though we are not, we learn them by the process of struggle and trial, just as " trial and error. " Moreover, what is important is the content of the study, neither on the ones ' academic status nor language abilities.

In this essay, I shall introduce my idea that students in Japan must keep their eyes not within this country, but outside of this country, by quoting my personal experiences. Also, I shall mention the problem of the social system itself, which do not easily allow the students to take their chances. The chances to give a try for the international based competition must be widely opened to all students, regardless of academic area or grade, also any necessary support must be provided. Strengthening those points to developing more internationally is

beneficial for both students in this university, and for Sophia University, as an “internationally opened” study institution.

Having a dream to be successful on the research and reach the highest point of the one’s ability is the duty to be responsible for him or herself and for the society, above all.

Introduction: about my research and background

Dear the person, who is willing to go for the research truck in the future,

I have some suggestion and advice to you, which might help your research. Let me start introducing myself.

My area of study is the life of minority groups, living in international border area. Currently, I am studying and researching a tribe, called “Pascua Yaqui Tribe” in Arizona, USA. Their birthplace is in Sonora, Mexico, and they were living peacefully in eight mission villages built along the Yaqui River by Jesuit missionaries in 16th century. However, by the massacre and enslavement by past Mexican government, they came to cross the international border, early in 20th century. Now, they the Yaqui Tribe is divided into two nation states: Mexico and USA. The ones who remained in Mexico are called “Rꞑ Yaqui,” an indigenous tribe of Mexico, and others crossed the border are “Pascua Yaqui,” a federally recognized Native American Tribe of the USA.

I first met them through Internet in the summer of 2003, and came to visit their communities for research. It has been three times now. There was a researcher Dr. Edward Spicer, who lived in one of their community and kept writing books about Pascua Yaqui Tribe until early 1970’s, but after he passed away, there was not much researchers who wish to study about their culture deeply and continuously.

One reason, which they were “forgotten” from the world for almost 40 years, was because of the stream of the academic world, which is showing more interest in business or technology, not in minority culture or marginalized people. Another reason was that through the tough history of Pascua Yaqui people: they are very careful about “outsiders,” who gave their ancestors and family members struggling time or even killed them. Therefore, the tribal members and who were called “researchers” were not very close for decades: this is quite understandable, however, without cooperation of the local people, the research cannot be continued. It led the researchers to stay away from the tribe and work with another community.

However, the time has changed. After the Federal Recognition as a Native American Tribe, they came to be protected legally, and are given equal opportunity as other US American citizens, so many tribal members have received higher education: four years in college or higher. Consequently, the tribe has come to be recognized the value of education, which can bring benefit for them as well as other world academic field and other minority groups.

After 25 years from the Recognition, I met them and came to study about their culture and society in my Master ' s course in Sophia, in Area Studies Program. However, at first I didn ' t know the way to " prove " that I was not visiting their community with just a curiosity to bother them, since result of each field research were presented in the seminars in Japanese, as the education in Sophia is mainly done in Japanese. Then, I came up with the idea and thought, " How about I present my study in English? So the local people can understand and we can share the result. "

It was just after the summer vacation of my first year of Master ' s program, in 2003. Then, I started to search any conference to be carried out in English, and can provide me an occasion to present my study. I was fluent in English, but being fluent in daily conversation and having compatible skills in academic field is another story. I asked for professors' advice for review and rewrite, and finally, my proposal was accepted by an association, and my first presentation in my life in front of public was done in April 2004. As I was just turned to be in the second year of the Master ' s program; with no fame as a researcher, with nothing to declare as academic background, there was no financial support from anywhere, nor any feed back from anyone from Japan, but from Pascua Yaqui people and other researchers and associations abroad of related research field. I myself am content enough with encourage and support from Pascua Yaqui Tribe and other researchers of minority groups in the world. However, should it to be concluded only within the limit of my study and myself? This is my question.

Importance of feedback: relationship with the local people and other researchers

Well, you the future researcher, now let me tell you what I noticed in the process of research until today. Don ' t forget to feed back your research result to the people of the subject. Human network will bring you so much merit to you.

Especially to the ones, who are doing " deeply-human-related " research as me, it is important and almost a duty to make some time and space for feedback. Otherwise, the people of subject might start wondering if we are

seriously willing to know about them and willing to be dedicative in academic field, or we are just “ sniffing ” around their community, culture and so forth. With conscious of doubt, it is very possible that the people wouldn ’ t feel comfortable of cooperating with you or providing any necessary information for your research.

On the other hand, your research and study may be carried out smoothly, when the people around know the aim and subject of your research, and how the research result might be turned out. Whether your research result would be turned out as a well-done paper to lead an admirable theory, or a five-paged term paper to report in the seminar is not a weighty matter. The problem is, you actually show the fact that you are serious and honest about your research and to the people, or not.

Probably it is better to hand them a concreted thesis in the language of the subjective people, though, even showing them a chapter of a small paper, or writing to contact with them how you are doing with your study in Japan, struggling with the data you have collected, or being in the middle of chunks of study related books in the library etc. make difference. In my case, I searched a conference to be held close to their community and invited the local people.

Also, the close contact with the local people back in Japan is important for the other reasons. Firstly, you will have less possibility to be forgotten by them. Keep showing them that you are still there. People may laugh, however, as I have mentioned already, when it comes to “ deeply-human-related ” study, the subject of the study is also the people, with their daily life, most of time being busy with their matter. When you are around them in the field research, you must be recognized as “ someone ” from “ somewhere outside, ” although, you cannot occupy their mind all the time. Especially when you are in Japan, away from their place, very possibly your existence is out of their mind. Also, the local situation may change. By political or personal reason, the certain person you trust in the community may not be there for your next research. It actually did happen to me; there was an election of tribal council of my subject people, and I founded out in the next field research that some people who were taking care of me were not working at the same place from three months ago, in my last research. However, my personal contact with them helped me to find some of those people. Therefore, to maintain relationship, at least until your final research has done, I strongly recommend you to keep close contact with local people. People connection will help you in many ways, I bet.

Moreover, it is beneficial for another researchers, who would visit your subjective people. If you always keep contact with subjective people, they must start understanding that in today ’ s academic society, “ research ” can be

beneficial for them, and “ researcher ” can do something to them as well. It means, the researchers, who will follow you must be appreciated to the cooperation and friendliness of the subjective people, and you, who built that relationship between them and the world outside.

Furthermore, it may make you to be able to cooperate with another researchers to accomplish deeper research and study. Any research cannot be a “ patent, ” especially in the human-related study: you should share the result with the others, with local people and other researchers, and by that, your study will develop. On the contrary, by being a loner and “ guard ” what you have doesn ’ t always lead you to the higher place.

Make a win-win research environment, with the local people, and with the other researchers.

Importance of promoting yourself: What you can do now

As I wrote above, the younger researchers, it is better sharing the result with the others. Another important factor to be successful is, building your ability of self-promoting. It might sound a bit strange, but just imagine the movie stars and musicians: although most of them have their agency and secretary, but I am sure you have ever seen they are doing “ fan-service ” besides their work, to promote themselves. In academic field too, you have better known your existence by the others.

People may say they wish to study abroad, because there would be more chances. However, in my opinion, it is not true. What you cannot do in the situation given right now cannot be done, just by changing your affiliation nor living place or country.

As I mentioned before, feedback is a “ must ” after you complete your research and finish submitting your thesis for degree. Probably the easiest way for that is presenting your study in a conference, which is to be held at somewhere close to the people of subject, or, any publication, which can be sent to them.

Somehow it seems it is widely considered in this country that people presenting at a conference or submitting any piece of writing to academic magazine have to be someone who have already reached to a certain degree, regarding to their researches, and preferred to have had solid academic background, also skills in foreign languages, if the conference were to be held abroad. In addition, conference or academic publication seems a place to be criticized and scold.

I myself believed this “ myth ” at first and was afraid to be in public. However, things came to be seemed different, when I experienced my

first presentation in public in a conference abroad. Though I heard some conferences are very conservative and like to criticize students, the presenters of the conference I attended started from undergraduate student, graduate student, then, up to well-known professors, including people with no academic affiliation. As it is, the content, method and topic of each presentation was so different: some of them were presenting their “ plan ” of their future researches to see the reaction of the audience, contrarily, some were “ report ” of their completed “ professional ” research projects. Some were used to speak and perform in public, and some read up their speech draft. However, as long as I saw, regardless of their background, way of presenting, or level of the research, everyone was treated the same, as a presenter, as a future or current researcher, and not much criticism or unpleasant comments to feel presenters down were not made. Neither their accent nor usage of the word was the subject of the discussion, as long as the presentations were good enough to be understood. Thus, there is no need to be afraid to give a try to a conference abroad or international conference in Japan.

There is another profit to be active in public other than the merit of feeding back. You can show your existence to the others: by appearing in public and promoting your study, it is well likely to be able to meet someone, who is doing related study. If you were lucky, you might be able to join a network of people of related study field, in Japan, or another countries. As I already mentioned, human network does have power.

Even if you have completed a praiseworthy thesis, there is no use just hiding it in your portfolio. Promote it, and promote yourself, and your study may flourish more. It is good for your research, for yourself, and for your loving subject people.

Awareness of belonging to the internationally recognized study institution

Haven ' t you forgotten that you are attending to Sophia University, which is quite well known study institution in the world basis? There is no way using this advantage. Though it is true that there are barriers in reality...

Finding a conference abroad, send application form and abstract, and writing the paper body and speech draft. There are many things to do to be prepared for the conference. Especially if it were held abroad or main language to be used were not your native one, it requires more time and effort.

However, Sophia University does have many native speakers of many foreign languages, and many professors have experienced such occasion, so they can provide you quite useful information and advice. For my first time of

the presentation abroad, I was nervous and asked for re-checking of my speech draft, advices of small concerns, such as appropriate clothing and what is must to bring to the conference. Although all professors were busy and some of them were whom I knew a little, only by taking a course in undergraduate and so forth, no one seemed to be bothered. If I were a professor, probably I would treat the student as such: there is a student motivated enough to try for an international conference, but only doesn ' t know how it is. There is no reason to be mean to him or her.

So, the things must go easier, as long as you are dedicative to your study and research, and what you are willing to present in public is clear. Talking about content, it is something no one can help, but you have to work out by yourself.

Although, there still is a realistic problem: financial support. So far, I haven not got any financial support to speak at the international conference. It does cost for airfare, hotel, conference fee, any necessary thing to bring over and so forth. However, most of Japanese foundation does not support " young " researchers under master ' s degree. Also, the study subject matters: students who are researching something considered to be " beneficial " for the society may meet more chances to be founded: who majors subject, such as medicine, science, or technology. My study is about minority people and their cultural conservation, and so may times I was told that my application was not acceptable, because " it is less possible to contribute to the society. " Also, if you are doing field research abroad, either advanced countries or developing countries are more likely " preferred. " Again, since my research field is international border area between USA and Mexico, my study is eligible to fond neither to American studies nor to Latin American studies. This situation is sad, since I believe that new horizon of academic field will be brought from which doesn ' t fit in the frame that is already set and prepared, but this is reality I saw. Therefore, if you are having serious financial problem or not brave enough to spend most of your money, which can be spent for trendy clothing for each season or drinking party with friend, probably you would better be careful about choosing your study subject or field research place.

In this point, for me, it seems Sophia University is not being conscious enough. When a student from the university appears as a presenter of an international conference or a writer of an article of a publication, the name of affiliation, " Sophia University " will appear automatically. It is just as an advertisement toward the world or certain academic field. Therefore, I have heard many attendees, nevertheless of countries or study level, they were supported by their study institution for their attendance to the conference: because they are considered as " role model " within the university, and " public speaker " for the outsiders. So, I see many universities have sites, on line or not,

to announce to the student about the conferences and publications which are currently accepting proposals, and encouraging students to try them out. Some of them come with fond to cover a part of the attendance fee, if the proposal was accepted. For instance, McGill University, one of the Sophia ' s sister school and within the Jesuit school network, offers up to 1000 Canadian Dollars for student presenting in an international conference[1]

<mhtml:mid://00000008/#_ftn1>, another institution close to Sophia, Georgetown University also offers grants for attending conferences[2]

<mhtml:mid://00000008/#_ftn2>. Even without granting fund, giving them a word of encouragement and honor does make difference: it doesn ' t cost any. However, I don ' t see much of those scenes in this university. It is such a pity, as it holds many talented young scholars, Japanese or from other countries, and some of them cannot appeal their result of study in public, only because of financial problem.

Holding talented young scholars as “ treasure ” of the university, and just keeping them as a “ hidden treasure ” in Tokyo is nothing but a pity. It is beneficial both for students and this university to send more student, undergraduate, master ' s, doctor ' s and postgraduate students to the international-based stage. Especially Sophia is known as an international institution in Japan, both students attending and university itself have gotten a responsibility to respond to the public for its honorable fame.

Conclusion: eyes toward the world!

As I have written above, being active in international-based academic field to feedback one ' s own study to the people of subject, promoting him or herself to the researchers in the world, is beneficial to him or herself. Also, it can be a way to contribute to our alma mater, Sophia University, or Japanese academic society.

Having a dream to be successful on the research and reach the highest point of your ability is the duty to be responsible for yourself and for the society, above all. Since you are the one of very few people to be able to accomplish higher education: Even in Japan, which is known as one of the countries with highly developed educational system, only 13.5% men and 6.9% women can go to graduate school[3] <mhtml:mid://00000008/#_ftn3>! Your responsibility is heavier than what you think.

*With my best wishes for your success and bright future,
Yuka Mizutani*

[1] <mhtml:mid://00000008/#_ftnref1> “ McGill University, Alma Mater Student Travel Grants ”

<<http://www.mcgill.ca/gps/fellowships/travel/am/>>

[2] <mhtml:mid://00000008/#_ftnref2> “ Communication, Culture & Technology Program, Georgetown University ”

<<http://cct.georgetown.edu/resources.cfm>>

[3] <mhtml:mid://00000008/#_ftnref3> “ Gakkou Kihon Chousa ” by Japanese Ministry of education, culture, Sports, Science and Technology.

<http://www.mext.go.jp/b_menu/shingi/chousa/shougai/008/toushin/030301/07.htm>