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Special Invited Speech

Foreign Language Education in Japan—Need to Reconsider the UCHI vs. SOTO Preconception

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Foreign language education in Japan is largely divided into English and languages other than English. Since Japan is basically a monolingual country, aside from Japanese which is the native language (UCHI -inside-language), the only language other than Japanese considered to be of importance has been the language necessary to connect Japan with the rest of the world (SOTO-outside-language). At present that SOTO language happens to be English. However, Japan is not only a member of the GLOBAL community, but also a member of the GLOCAL communities in Asia, Europe, South America, and Africa Furthermore, with the recent need to 'diversify' not only the political-diplomatic but also the economic and cultural relationships with countries and peoples around the world, Japan needs to adopt at least a three language-three perspective policy (cf. Faculty of Foreign Studies, Sophia University) for its survival and development. Japanese is essential for the cultivation of identity as a Japanese, English as an International Language is necessary for global and international communication, and a third language is necessary to secure and meet the actual needs of Japan and the Japanese in the GLOCAL environments. Although the three language policy is not new (e.g. EU), the interesting thing is that very often, English is mentioned as an International language, but not as a local language. In Japan this is the case and the Japanese course of study is very vague on the status of English in this respect. In this presentation I will discuss this issue and suggest the need for the Japanese to study three languages--with English included with all other foreign languages as a local language, different from English as an International Language.

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