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Teaching about *Othering* in the Intercultural Communication Classroom: An Example and Reflections

This research note explores classes on the topic of *Othering* taught as part of Intercultural Communication II at the University of Tsukuba during the academic year 2018-2019. It introduces the class and its structure, and offers reflections on data gathered from student assignments. The research note will argue that although students engaged in nuanced discussions about the history of intercultural relations, data collected from written assignments suggest that a large number of students believed that there are intrinsic differences between the Japanese and non-Japanese, and that the majority of students thought that potentially prejudiced depictions of the non-Japanese were permissible.

Introduction

In the academic year 2018-2019, I taught four classes of the course Intercultural Communication II to first year students at the University of Tsukuba. The course, which was taught in English, focused on the history of Japanese relations and intercourse with the West as well as present day issues pertaining to intercultural communication within the Japanese context. During the first half of the course students were introduced to the history of Japan's relations with the West and were presented with some case studies pertinent to intercultural communication in Japanese history. The second half of the course provided a space for discussion and essay writing classes that focused on common issues associated with historical and contemporary intercultural communication and relations. One discussion class focused on the topic of *Othering*. In this research note,[1] I will introduce the contents of that class and reflect upon student responses to and essays on the theme of *Othering*. The data presented in this research note suggest that there is widespread, anti-foreign sentiment amongst students.

What is Othering?

The term *Othering* is popular within the humanities and social sciences and will be familiar to those engaged in philosophy, psychology, post-colonial studies, history, Marxist and Feminist theory, and religious studies. R. C. Tripathi and P.

1 A former version of this research note was presented under the title "Teaching About 'Othering': Practical Examples and Reflections," at *The Asian Symposium on Education, Equity and Social Justice* (EQUIS) on March 22, 2019.

Singh describe *Othering* as follows:

> The term "othering"…is inevitably ubiquitous in every social situation. Perhaps it is logical to argue that if there is an "I" then there has to be an "other". The notion of "other" is as fundamental as the notion of "self" – it would not be an exaggeration to say that the concept of "self" is the sine qua non of any discussion on "othering". Unless the "self" has been defined, it cannot be differentiated from the rest. Differentiation is thus at the core of othering. Othering takes place at various levels. It can cause grave implications for society when it is experienced on the basis of ethnicity, religion and nation.[2]

Although Tripathi and Singh note that *Othering* could potentially have a positive side if we were, for instance, to focus on diversity,[3] the term commonly has a negative connotation. Generally speaking, the term *Othering* and its verbal counterpart "to Other" are used to refer to the act of viewing or treating '(a person or group of people) as intrinsically different from and alien to oneself.'[4] Related to this the noun *Other* refers to 'one considered by members of a dominant group as alien, exotic, threatening, or inferior (…because of different racial, sexual, or cultural characteristic).'[5] There is some overlap between the term *Othering* and other descriptors of discrimination such as racism or sexism, however, whilst *Othering* is inclusive of these descriptors it is also distinct from them. A. L. Kagedan writes that:

> Othering may be understood as the efforts of members of a politically dominant group to marginalize and subordinate a minority or politically weaker group. Xenophobia is a dislike of foreigners. Since Western countries are multiethnic, and since dislike of the unlike has included negative attitudes toward women and gay people, it is necessary to use a term that is broader than xenophobia. A preferable term to express this concept is othering.[6]

Despite this, *Othering* is much more than a term to describe some sort of boundaryless, cornucopian discrimination, it is also part of a process that helps to create common representations and knowledge of other peoples and groups, their histories, identities, and ways of life. Summarizing the work of Edward Said, E. Harmer and K. Lumsden note that historically:

> …Europe constructed a discourse of 'Otherness' in order to come to terms

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2 R. C. Tripathi and Purnima Singh, eds., Perspectives on Violence and Othering in India (New Delhi: Springer India, 2016), xiii-xiv.

3 Ibid., xiv.

4 "Other," Lexico, accessed October 10, 2020, https://www.lexico.com/definition/other.

5 "Other," Mirriam-Webster, accessed October 10, 2020, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/other.

6 Allan Laine Kagedan, The Politics of Othering in the United States and Canada (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 2.

> with colonies in the Orient. This involved the recreation of their history of people 'outside of it', justifying colonial rule and explaining the fall of Oriental cultures…The representation of these civilisations as 'Other' thus operates to reinforce the power and superiority of those with control over processes of representation.[7]

Furthermore, in perpetuating the *Otherness* of other groups and people, representations of the *Other* may:

> be used to interpret actions and phenomena in a way consistent with a dominant discourse, rather than with what appear to be facts.[8]

Ensuring that students acquire an adequate understanding of these nuances is difficult, but it is essential that students gain an awareness of this issue during their education since they will, if they have not already, experience a personal encounter with the *Other* or more likely *Others* during their lives.[9] Understanding and developing awareness of the concept of *Othering*, is directly linked to students' abilities to communicate with people from other "cultures." S. Moncada Linares notes, for instance, that:

> …the need to foster in people a *critical cultural awareness* has emerged as a transversal component of their intercultural competence, so that they may reach a deeper understanding and appreciation towards the *others*.[10]

Additionally, addressing issues of *Othering* is particularly important in the foreign language classroom, where as H. Shin and R. Kubota, the promotion of '…recognition and affirmation of linguistic and cultural differences…often unwittingly construct essentialized representations of the Other.'[11]

A Class on the Topic of *Othering*

The syllabus for Intercultural Communication II in the academic year 2018-2019 allocated a single class and a week's worth of homework to the topic of *Othering*. The class on *Othering* was divided into three main parts:

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7 Emily Harmer and Karen Lumsden, "Online Othering: An Introduction," in *Online Othering: Exploring Digital Violence and Discrimination on the Web,* edited by Emily Harmer and Karen Lumsden (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 17-18.

8 David Palfreyman, "Othering in an English Language Program," TESOL Quarterly 39, no. 2 (June, 2005), 214.

9 Sthephanny Moncada Linares, "Othering: Towards a Critical Cultural Awareness in the Language Classroom," How 23, no. 1 (June 2016), 130.

10 Ibid.

11 Hyunjung Shin and Ryuko Kubota, "Post-colonialism and Globalization in Language Education," in The Handbook of Educational Linguistics, edited by Bernard Spolsky and Francis M. Hult (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell Publishing, 2010), 211.

1. Defining *Othering*.
2. Examples and discussion.
3. Short worksheet and essay writing. (To be continued as homework).

In the first part of the class, which lasted approximately 15 minutes, I introduced the concept of *Othering* by defining the term in both English and Japanese and offering some concrete examples through the use of images. I provided the following English definitions:

1. The *Other* (Noun) – something that 'is distinct from, different from, or opposite to something or oneself.'[12]
2. To *Other* (Verb) – to 'view or treat (a person or group of people) asintrinsically different from and alien to oneself.'[13]

Since *Othering* is a concept that can be difficult to understand I also offered a Japanese definition as follows:

1. '他人化。…ある物や人を未知のものや自分とは異なるものとみなす過程。'[14][*Othering.* … The process of considering a thing or a person as something unknown or different from oneself].

I then presented the students with some images which could be used as concrete examples, including an image of the villainous Siamese cats from Disney's *Lady and the Tramp* (1955) which are famous products of the U.S.'s Yellow Peril,[15] the potentially racist portrayal of African American's in the characters of King Louie and the monkeys in Disney's *The Jungle Book* (1967),[16] and a stereotypical British image of a Frenchman carrying baguettes and wearing a beret and scarf. Since Japanese students do not necessarily have detailed knowledge about the Yellow Peril, racism in the U.S. during the 1960s, or British stereotyping of the French, I provided brief explanations about each image, how they portrayed the *Other*, and their potential discordance with reality.

The second part of the class provided space for students to critically discuss examples of *Othering*. Examples around which students were able to base their discussions were drawn from three historical periods during which foreigners and the Japanese met and interacted. I showed the students visual representations (images and when available video) of the *Other* created in the chosen period and offered a brief explanation of each focusing primarily on the

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12 "Other," *Lexico.*

13 Ibid.

14 "Othering," *Weblio*, accessed October 10, 2020, https://ejje.weblio.jp/content/othering.

15 Kimiko Akita and Rick Kenney, "A 'Vexing Implication': Siamese Cats and Orientalist Mischief-Making," in *Diversity in Disney Films: Critical Essays on Race, Ethnicity, Gender, Sexuality and Disability*, edited by Johnson Cheu (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company, Inc., 2013), 50-66.

16 Mark I. Pinsky, *The Gospel according to Disney: Faith, Trust, and Pixie Dust* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), 91.

depiction of the physical features of the artists' subjects. Students were then asked to discuss the representations in their groups using English. They were given three points and a number of related prompts in order to guide their discussions. These were:

1. What do you think about the images? (Are they good or bad?)
2. How do the images portray the *Other*? (Are they accurate? What imagery do they use?)
3. Why do you think that the creator of these images chose to depict his or her subject like this? (What do you think the origins of the image are?)

After each discussion, a few groups were chosen at random to share their ideas with the class. The task was then repeated using visual representations from each of the remaining historical periods/contexts. In other words, the students engaged in three discussions with time to share their ideas with the class between each.

The three periods and representations that were chosen are displayed in the table below:

Period	**Representations Used**	**People(s) Subjected to *Othering***
Bakumatsu 幕末 , 1853-1867	Japanese portraits of Commodore Matthew C. Perry (1794-1858).	Westerners (Americans and Europeans)
World War II	Anti-Japanese propaganda made in the U.S.	The Japanese
The Present Day (2010-Present)	Japanese representations of foreigners in the media.	Non-Japanese

The history of each period, alongside the place of Western-Japanese relations and intercultural communication within them, had already been introduced in classes during the first half of the course. As such, there was no need for lengthy contextual explanations, although each set of visual images were shown with a brief contextual recap in the form of a single power point slide. For example, prior to viewing representations from the *Bakumatsu* period students were reminded that :

- The period was marked the opening of significant maritime relations with the West following over two centuries of limited overseas trade and travel restrictions.
- There was conflict with foreign nations such as the Anglo-Satsuma War (J. *Satsu-Ei Sensō* 薩英戦争 , 1863) and the Shimonoseki campaign (J. *Shimonoseki Sensō* 下関戦争 , 1863-1864).

- Political views such as *Sonnō jōi* 尊皇攘夷 (E. Revere the Emperor, expel the barbarians) were contemporaneously popular.

When listening to the groups which shared their thoughts with their respective classes, I noticed a general uniformity in the discussions. Commonly, students viewed representations of Commodore Perry (see an example below)[17] as innocent attempts by Japanese people, who had not seen foreigners before, to accurately portray Perry. Some students noted that the images were inaccurate, but believed the representations to be of the same innocent origins. In response to these themes, I pointed students to the *Tengu* 天狗 inspired imagery in some of the pieces of art[18] and asked how this influenced their conceptions of whether or not the images were accurate (or attempts at accurate) representations. I also noted that the Dutch had long frequented Japan and made yearly, overland trips to Edo,[19] which may suggest that not all Japanese would have been entirely unaccustomed to the sight of white people. Such comments and interjections do not, however, appear to have influenced class opinion.

One of the portraits of Perry.[20]

17 Most of the portraits used were taken from: John W. Dower, "Black Ships & Samurai: Commodore Perry and the Opening of Japan (1853-1854)," *MIT Visualizing Cultures*, accessed October 10, 2020, http://visualizingcultures.mit.edu/black_ships_and_samurai/bss_essay02.html. These images were selected to represent Japan's dominant discourses vis-à-vis non-Japanese during the late 19th Century, in spite of the politically powerful position of their subject matter (Perry) in the West contemporaneously.

18 Dower, "Black Ships & Samurai: Commodore Perry and the Opening of Japan (1853-1854)."

19 See: Grant K. Goodman, *Japan and the Dutch, 1600-1853* (Richmond: Curzon Press, 2000); Grant Kohn Goodman, *Japan: The Dutch Experience* (London: Bloomsbury, 2012); Michael Laver, *The Dutch East India Company in Early Modern Japan: Gift Giving and Diplomacy* (London: Bloomsbury, 2020).

20 Originally from the Honolulu Academy of Art, reprinted in: Dower, "Black Ships & Samurai: Commodore Perry and the Opening of Japan (1853-1854)."

American-made, anti-Japanese propaganda from the Second World War was generally met with revulsion. I showed students an array of anti-Japanese propaganda pieces including posters (see an example below),[21] cartoons by Dr. Seuss,[22] and some stills from Disney and Warner Bros. animations such as *Der Fuehrer's Face* (1943)[23] and *Tokio Jokio* (1943).[24] During their discussions students noted their shock, and many commented on how "terrible" the representations were. Students appeared to be particularly shocked and dismayed by the images made by Disney. Despite all this, when prompted to discuss the origins of the images students tended to argue that since the images were created in the context of war that they were "natural" portrayals of an enemy. This did not mean that the images were morally permissible – the students unanimously argued that they were bad and inaccurate images – however, their origins were easy for the students to understand.

One piece of anti-Japanese propaganda.[25]

The final selection of images consisted of Japanese representations of

21 Mostly taken from: "World War II anti-Japanese propaganda posters from the United States," *Wikimedia Commons*, accessed October 10, 2020, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:World_War_II_anti-Japanese_propaganda_posters_from_the_United_States.

22 See examples in: Richard Minear and Sopan Deb, "The Dr. Seuss Museum and His Wartime Cartoons about Japan and Japanese Americans," *The Asia Pacific Journal: Japan Focus* 15, Issue 16, no. 3 (August, 2017), 1-8.

23 See description in: Tracey Louise Mollet, *Cartoons in Hard Times: The Animated Shorts of Disney and Warner Brothers in Depression and War, 1932-1945* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2017), 122-126.

24 Mollet, *Cartoons in Hard Times*, 162-165.

25 "US propaganda Japanese enemy," *Wikimedia Commons*, accessed October 10, 2020, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:US_propaganda_Japanese_enemy.jpg.

foreigners created during the past decade. These included some still images taken from television stetches and advertisements in which Japanese people engaged in blackface and whiteface to portray foreigners,[26] and a short clip showing a stereotypical representation of an American from an anime.[27] Generally, students thought that representations from the modern period were comedic and amusing. Many indicated that the images were acceptable portrayals of foreigners because they were not supposed to be accurate nor made to be malicious. Although accepting of the viewpoint of his peers, one student added that some foreigners might view these images as racist. Following this final discussion, I asked the class to discuss whether there were any links in terms of origins, purpose, accuracy, meaning, or theme between the different representations of foreigners from the three periods. Generally, the selected groups did not see any potential links between the three sets of media.

In summarizing the second part of the class, it could be suggested that students viewed different representations of the *Other* as having different origins, purposes, and permissibility. In the examples discussed, students thought that potentially negative portrayals of non-Japanese within the Japanese context were created innocently and without malicious intent. Negative portrayals of the Japanese, however, were met with reactions of shock and revulsion. In other words, the students posited a complicated view of history in which different representations of the *Other* could have different origins, purposes and permissibility. In order to facilitate students' discussions and allow them to reach their own conclusions I did not share my own thoughts or opinions on the images beyond the aforementioned comments, prompts, and contextual explanations. Through the juxtaposition of each set of representations, I had thought that students would garner some sense that all the media they were given portrayed the *Other* in a negative fashion although each had a different origin, purpose and moral permissibility. As such, I was surprised to find that students generally rejected the idea that the Japanese were contemporaneously portraying or had historically portrayed foreigners negatively.

During the final part of the class, which lasted approximately 15 minutes, we read an excerpt from George Elison's translation of the *Kirishitan Monogatari* 吉利支丹物語 (1639).[28] Following the class the students were expected to answer a series of questions and write a short, single-paragraph essay on the excerpt for homework. The *Kirishitan Monogatari* is a piece of anti-Christian and sometimes anti-foreign propaganda which explores the history of Christianity in Japan, its proscription, and the genesis of the anti-*Kirishitan* inquisition.[29] he excerpt which

26 Images included Hamada Masatoshi and Momoiro Clover Z appearing in blackface for television appearances, and the use of whiteface in commercials for Tōshiba's SuiPanDa (2013) and All Nippon Airways (2014).

27 "My Favorite American Stereotype From Japanese Anime," *YouTube*, accessed October 10, 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_0dTG1_x-K8.

28 George Elison, *Deus Destroyed: The Image of Christianity in Early Modern Japan* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973), 321-374.

29 See description in: Kiri Paramore, *Ideology and Christianity in Japan* (London: Routledge, 2009), 59-61.

I gave to the students is a description of the *bateren* 伴天連 , a term that usually refers to Catholic priests (Padre), Christianity, or converts to Christianity in the 16th and 17th centuries,[30] but which is used in the chosen passage to describe "a sort of being" which may be viewed by modern readers as analogous to a national or racial category. It comes in part of the text that provides an overlapping and blended account of the arrivals of the Jesuit priests, Francis Xavier (1506-1552), Gaspar Vilela (1526-1572), and Gnecchi-Soldo Organtino (1530–1609) to Japan,[31] as well as a description of their personages. Students were, however, not privy to any of this information – they knew only that the text was a description of a foreigner and that it came from a book called the *Kirishitan Monogatari* which had been written in 1639. Beyond a reference to Elison's translation, other contextual information about the book and the chosen passage was not provided. There were several reasons for withholding this contextual information. Firstly, students had already participated in two classes on Japanese relations with Europe during the 16th and 17th centuries. These classes had explored not only the spread of Christianity during that period, but also issues pertaining to the ban of the religion and persecution against its followers. As such, students were expected to have had some familiarity with the issues present in the passage and the context in which the passage was written. Secondly, I hoped that withholding additional contextual information would encourage students to think critically about the passage, its origins, and purposes. Although this likely increased the difficulty of the task, it also ensured that students would not simply regurgitate my own explanations of the text and its context.

The excerpt used in class reads as follows:

> …From this ship for the first time emerged an unnameable creature, somewhat similar in shape to a human being, but looking rather more like a long-nosed goblin or the giant demon Mikoshi Nyūdō. Upon close interrogation it was discovered that this was a being called Bateren.
>
> The length of his nose was the first thing which attracted attention: it was like a conch shell…attached by suction to his face. His eyes were as large as spectacles, and their insides were yellow. His head was small. On his hands and feet he had long claws. His height exceeded seven feet, and he was black all over; only his nose was red. His teeth were longer than the teeth of a horse…What he said could not be understood at all: his voice was like the screech of an owl…all agreed that this apparition was even more dreadful than the fiercest of goblins could ever be.[32]

I read the passage to each class line-by-line, offering paraphrased versions of each sentence and explanations for potentially unfamiliar words as I progressed. In some lower-level classes, I drew an example of the description that features

30 "Bateren 伴天連 ," *Kotobank*, accessed October 10, 2020, https://kotobank.jp/word/%E4%BC%B4%E5%A4%A9%E9%80%A3-603150.

31 Elison, Deus Destroyed, 475-476, n. 1 and n. 3.

32 Ibid., 321.

in the passage on the white board. Students were given the opportunity to ask questions about the passage and to discuss it with the members of their group during the last few minutes of the class. Beyond this, there were no in-class activities to check students' comprehension of the passage or the terminology used therein.

For homework, students were asked to answer a worksheet consisting of four simple questions about the passage and to write a short, one-paragraph essay in response to the question: *Why do you think that the author decided to describe the bateren in this way?* This was explained both verbally and in writing. Students were also verbally instructed that they could not argue that the text was a description of the first time that the author had seen a foreigner. Such an answer would be unacceptable, I explained, because the text had been written in 1639 following almost a century of interactions between the Japanese and Europeans.

Analysing Student Assignments

A total of 131 (of 166) students submitted the assignment.[33] Their responses to the essay question provide potentially interesting insights into their thoughts on the foreign *Other* and representations of Europeans more generally. First, I will explore the factors that students believed to have influenced the author and the reasons that they thought he had chosen to describe Europeans as inhuman, demonic creatures. Within the 131 submissions a combined 255 reasons or factors were discussed. This means that on average every student gave almost two (1.947) reasons. Of course in reality, there were a number of students that gave three reasons or only one reason. I categorized the reasons according to the content and have displayed them within the following table:

Content	Instances
Foreigners different from Japanese	62
Fear	46
Never seen Foreigners Before	27
Foreigners not Human (Implied)	18
Author thinks that Foreigners are not Human	16
Surprise	13
Attempt at Accurate Description	10
Author's Lack of Understanding of Foreigners	10
Author's Natural Impression	10

33 Most of the students who did not submit the assignment were absent or had already dropped out of the class.

Author dislikes Christianity	9
Author considers Foreigners an Enemy	8
Author is Prejudice	8
Author's Obeying of the Law	3
Foreigners not Human	3
Foreigners seemingly not Human	3
Author's Stupidity	2
Foreigners Lack Respect for or Understanding of Japan	2
To Prevent Confusion/Shock of Others who see Foreigners	2
Due to Word of Mouth	1
For Humour	1
Author's Hate of Foreigners	1
Totals:	255

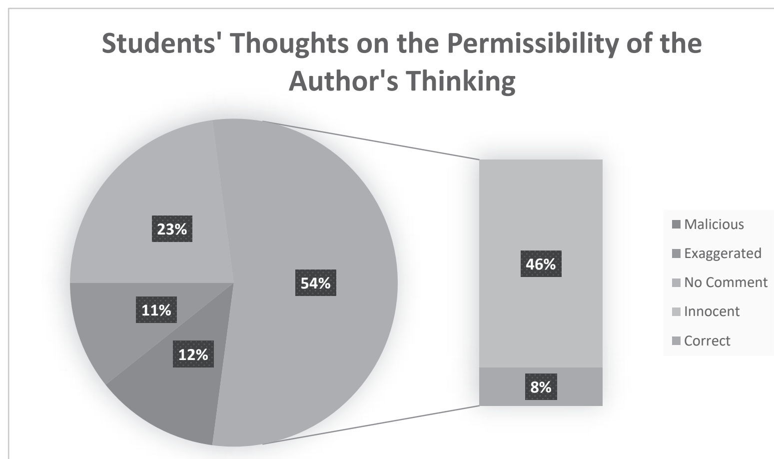
As is illustrated in table, some 47.3% (62) of students believed that the difference between foreigners and Japanese was a contributing factor to or reason for the author's comments, 35.1% (46) attributed it to fear, and 20.6% (27) ignoring my instructions argued that the comments resulted from the author's first interactions with foreigners. Of these 27 students, five, taking the part of the passage quite literally, stipulated that whilst this was not the first time that the author had seen foreigners it may have been the first time, he had ever seen a black person. Students gave an array of other potential factors and reasons, but in less significant numbers than the above noted ideas.

A number of students made comments related to the opening truth claim of the passage, namely that the *bateren* is an 'unnameable creature, somewhat similar in shape to a human being, but looking rather more like a long-nosed goblin or the giant demon'[34] or in more direct language not a human being. Overall, 12.2% (16 students) noted, without personal value judgment, that the author did not believe that foreigners were human beings. Around 7.6% (10) of the students believed that the author's description of foreigners was an attempt at accuracy, whereas 3 students embraced the claim that foreigners are indeed not human. A further 13.7% (18) of students implied, but did not outrightly state, that the author was correct in his statements about the inhuman nature of foreigners. As such, 23.6% (31) of students believed that the reason that the author had made such claims was that said claims were in some way accurate. In comparison, only 6.1% (8) of the students thought that the author may have been prejudiced against foreigners.

34 Elison, *Deus Destroyed*, 321.

Content (Permissibility)	Instances	Percentage
Malicious	16	12.2%
Exaggerated	14	10.7%
No Comment/Neutrality	30	22.9%
The Author is Innocent	60	45.8%
The Author is Correct	11	8.4%
Totals	131	100%

Most students (77.1%, 101 students) made some sort of claim or statement about the permissibility of the author's thoughts within their essay. As displayed in the above table and below chart, 22.9% (30 students) made no mention of their feelings in regard to the author's position. Similarly, 22.9% judged the author's comments negatively. Of this group 10.7% (14) claimed that he was guilty of exaggeration and 12.2% (16) claimed that he had written with malicious intent. The most popular claim made by some 45.8% (60) of students was that the author was innocent, that his thoughts were permissible, or that his claims were the natural result of external factors such as fear or the inherent difference between foreigners and the Japanese. Furthermore, 8.4% (11) of students claimed that the author was correct in his thinking. As such, a total of 54.2% (71 students) thought that the author's thoughts were permissible.



Some anonymized examples from essays may aid in elucidating students' thoughts on the passage further and clarify what students meant when they argued that the author's thoughts were permissible, innocent or correct. One student argued that contemporaneous readers of the passage may have had a difficult time imagining foreigners if the author had described them as humans, since the readers may have simply imagined tall Japanese people or Japanese

people with long noses. The student wrote that the methods of the author were 'a valid way to describe their [foreigners'] features.' This sentiment was echoed by other students, although never as clearly articulated. One, for instance, argued that;

> The author wanted to tell readers the characteristics of the *bateren* clearly…he enabled readers to imagine what the *bateren* looked like with ease…

Other students were more candid in their opinions arguing that the author desired to share accurate information about foreigners. One student wrote that 'I think that the author expressed things in this way because he wanted to accurately describe foreigners.' Another stated 'I think the author wanted to convey facts to people.' Others focused on the differences between foreigners and the Japanese, which as discussed above was a highly popular theme in the essays. One student wrote that '[Foreigners] look savage and different from Japanese people.' Another wrote that:

> Foreign people are completely different to Japanese people. So, maybe he couldn't think they were human beings like us.

Another student followed a similar logic arguing that 'the author couldn't believe the *bateren* are the same as humans, because they are so different from the Japanese.' Other students focused on fear, with one student explaining that because foreigners are on average larger than the Japanese and therefore scary that 'Japanese cannot think that Americans are human.' Another student offered the opinion that the author described the foreigner in this way because he was describing a black person.

Reflection

The data collected through the student assignments suggests that:

1. A large proportion (47.3%) of the students surveyed believed that the Japanese and non-Japanese are inherently different.
2. The majority (54.2%) of the students believed that the author of the *Kirishitan Monogatari*'s anti-foreign description was morally permissible.
3. A small number of students (3 outrightly) deny that foreigners are human beings.

These findings are concerning and potentially unexcepted, since the acceptance of ethnocentric and/or racist viewpoints is not usually associated with young, highly educated people. Despite this, the data, which attest to the potential prevalence of xenophobic views within the classes or at least the prevalence of the viewpoint that the Japanese and non-Japanese are inherently different, is supported by recent scholarship on attitudes towards foreigners (particularly

other Asians) in Japan and the difficulties of integration.[35] The data may indicate that students in the class had inadequate education in intercultural communication or a lack of opportunity to reflect on the issues explored in the class prior to coming to the University.

Although I believe that explaining unknown vocabulary and drawing the description for students in lower-level classes limited potential misunderstandings, there is a possibility that some students did not adequately grasp the meaning of the text. At least one student appeared to believe that the description was a factual description, rather than something fictional. Given that the passage is very clearly not a real description of a foreigner, it is likely that said student did not fully understand the passage. The student wrote 'I think that it is because bateren are very different from the Japanese…they have yellow eyes and long noses.' Furthermore, the fact that 27 students theorized that the description resulted from the author's first interactions with foreigners, in spite of being given instructions to avoid this argument, suggests that a sizeable portion of students failed to fully understand the instructions that they had been given. As noted above, some of these students had understood the instructions acknowledging that it was not the first time that the author had seen a foreigner, but arguing instead that it was the first time that the author had seen a black person. It is also possible that some of the students who produced this sort of answer did so not because they misunderstood the instructions, but because they found it difficult to think of other possible reasons that the author would describe foreigners in this way. Although some students appear to have misunderstood the above-noted instruction, answers to the non-essay questions on the worksheet did not indicate the presence of widespread misunderstandings about the contents of the passage. It is also possible that some students did not fully grasp the meanings and implications of their own answers. In the future, it would be interesting to have had students translate their essays into Japanese and see what they thought of their positions in their native language. It must also be noted that several students, whose work has been included in the above data, failed to adequately fulfil the task. Although students were requested to write a single paragraph, a small number offered only one or two sentences. Misunderstandings and inadequate essays likely contributed to the shape of the data, but it is unlikely that this significantly affected the expression of students' viewpoints vis-à-vis foreigners. It is not an adequate explanation of the data to assume that all students failed to understand the passage or what they wrote in response to it. Additionally, the number of students who thought that the author's comments were permissible is too large to be grounded solely in error or anomaly.

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35 See: Debito Arudou, *Embedded Racism: Japan's Visible Minorities and Racial Discrimination* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2015); Sara Park, "Inventing Aliens: Immigration Control, 'Xenophobia' and Racism in Japan,' *Race and Class* 58, no 3 (Jan., 2017), 64-80; Jie Zhang, "The Less Favored Foreigners: Public Attitudes toward Chinese and South Korean Residents in Japan," *Journal of Asia-Pacific Studies*, no. 33 (March, 2018), 205-217.

Conclusion

This research note has explored a class on *Othering* which was taught to first year students on the course Intercultural Communication II during academic year 2018-2019. Students were introduced to the concept of *Othering* and discussed various representations of *Othered* foreigners and *Othered* Japanese. During discussions students provided interesting and nuanced views of history in which visual representations of the *Other* were understood to have varying origins, purposes, and permissibility. An essay task completed for homework indicated that a large number (54.2%) of students in the classes believed that anti-foreign statements in a passage from the *Kirishitan Monogatari* were permissible. In addition, 47.3% of students argued that anti-foreign statements in the passage resulted from the inherent differences between Japanese and non-Japanese people. This may suggest that many first-year students have not had the opportunity to reflect critically on issues of *Othering*, race, and ethnocentrism.

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