About Variability, Uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguity

1. Humanities and Social Sciences in a VUCA world

The topic of this issue is Humanities and Social Sciences in a VUCA world. VUCA is a concept prevalent in the business world, but still not familiar in university research, particularly in the Humanities and Social Sciences. However, VUCA is precisely a concise characterisation of contemporary society, and it is indisputable that a new generation of researchers in humanities and social sciences research must respond to this time of VUCA. VUCA is the acronym for Variability, Uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguity. It is no exaggeration to say that the history of humanity has been a history of VUCA in all its varying aspects. We have repeatedly experienced conquest and territorial expansion by destruction, unification and division of states by power, stability and crisis of social systems by governance, war and peace. And nowadays, advanced information technology and scientific advances have created an 'uncertain' and 'difficult to predict' social situation. Researchers are expected to constantly think, discuss and propose what issues need to be addressed and what problems need to be solved in this rapidly changing and value-unstable world. It is essential not to confine ourselves to 'the discipline' as an institution (e.g. university department, faculty), but to define the object of research and search for methodologies with our own research skills, that is to say, the ability to observe, decide and act!

Inter Faculty was first published in March 2010. The publisher was the Graduate School of Humanities and Social Sciences, and it was launched as a journal to disseminate the results of the Interdisciplinary Education in Humanities and Social Sciences for the Exploration of New Fields Project (IFERI Project), which was launched in 2008. It represented the challenging spirit of researchers in a VUCA era.

The manifesto of the IFERI project states :

> IFERI has the ambition to develop new fields of study, based on deep expertise, but also on a wide range of knowledge, culture and action. Above all, it values and nurtures students' awareness of the issues. This is the fundamental concept of IFERI. A student's awareness of problems is set as

a research theme, and research projects are developed according to this theme. The theme may go beyond a single specialisation or field of study and may require multiple specialisations, professional guidance and advice. The student transforms his or her problem from awareness, to thematisation, to project. Rather than deploring the lack of expertise of the student, faculty will appreciate the interest and depth of the problematic awareness. Guidance and advice. Thinking together and supporting. Faculty not only impart their own expertise, but also liaise with other faculty members with different specialisations to nurture a student's research. IFERI is designed to encourage intellectual exchange between faculty members across specialisations. Students are also involved in this exchange and form so-called research units. Each student in a research unit is supported by a main supervisor and an advisory faculty member who provides guidance and advice. The exchange between faculty members in the Humanities and Social Sciences is encouraged, and students are encouraged to explore research that breaks new ground. Students must acquire the methodology of the Humanities and the Social Sciences. They must engage with the field, carry out hands-on research and acquire a real feel for the field. They must read a great deal more literature than others. They must improve their language transmission and expression skills and be able to make leading statements at international conferences and international student intellectual exchange meetings.

(https://iferi.hass.tsukuba.ac.jp/about.html)

Inter Faculty, which started as a research dissemination tool for IFERI, is now an open journal published by the Institute for Comparative Research in Human and Social Sciences. It accepts submissions from a wide range of national and international sources to promote interdisciplinary research with an emphasis on internationality and diversity.

While academic journals generally categorise themselves into institutionally established disciplines, such as philosophy, history, literature and linguistics, *Inter Faculty* is characterised by the development of multidisciplinary approaches, engaging, collaborating, redefining and reinterpreting knowledge from different disciplines.

In this preface, we would like to indicate what type of 'cross-disciplinary' research each paper published in this issue addresses.

2. Aspects of interdisciplinary research

Eight research papers and six research projects are published in this issue. The research papers cover the fields of linguistics, language pedagogy, discourse analysis, archaeology, sociology and cultural anthropology. In general, social science research is interdisciplinary in its approach to the subject, as it analyses social phenomena from multiple perspectives.

Saori Isoda (Qualitative Analysis on the Progress and Difficulty of LGBT Politics in Latin America: Focus on Peru) discusses LGBT policy issues in Peruvian society. The issues are complex and diverse. Among them, Isoda recognises the problems of historical aspects of discrimination stemming from religious, cultural and other values, the situation of the LGBT promotion movement taking root in Peruvian society with international support in the contemporary period, and the economic and educational disparities between urban and rural areas which lead people living in rural areas to oppose gender diversity. It argues that there is a tendency. While some other South American states have successfully introduced legislation protecting the rights of LGBT people, it shows that in some societies, such as Peru, complex factors have meant that modernisation has not always been accompanied by the protection of human rights. Discriminatory attitudes towards sexuality, which are deeply rooted in the human psyche, make religious and cultural considerations inescapable. Political, economic and international trends must be analysed with regard to the acceptance of gender diversity in contemporary societies, and Isoda's research, based on a comprehensive examination of South American countries, considers the history, culture and social conventions of each local society and the complex political and economic factors of contemporary society. It attempts to capture the essence of a tangled phenomenon. This is a research topic that needs to be explored further, but the present research has established a multifaceted approach.

Minori Takahashi (The Inuit of Greenland: Doing Area Studies on the Compromise between Reciprocity and Utility) is a study of the various aspects of the Inuit of Greenland. He examines the 'conflict' between the values of the Inuit, a traditional

people living over a wide area from Alaska to Greenland, and the values of Greenland, a nation with deep political and economic ties to Denmark. Arctic Inuit research is often based on cultural anthropological, religious and ethnographic approaches. Particularly in recent years, Inuit cultural values have often been highlighted and re-evaluated from the perspective of symbiosis with nature and ecology. On the other hand, the Inuit of Greenland, a Danish colony in the past, are said to have a utilitarian view of nature and Takahashi seeks to identify the causes of this through a combined consideration of the market economy, Christianity and modernisation. This study differs from that of Saori Isoda in terms of themes and issues, however, they share two points in common. One is that both examine in depth the historically and culturally rooted mentalities and values of ethnic groups. The second point is that they consider the complex relationship between regional characteristics, political and economic factors. The two papers can be described as a multi-disciplinary approach.

Kay Aoki (Revisiting *Saiko Dayo*, the Japanese Fishermen's Song of Cabo Verde, its Societal and Creative Values) is a study of the Japanese deep-sea tuna fishermen in the 1960s. It discusses the music and lyrics of *Saiko Dayo*, which emerged from the interaction between the Japanese fishermen and the inhabitants of Cape Verde. Without contact between the two cultures, the song would not have been created. Thus, a new value was created. From the 1960s to the present day, the image of *Saiko Dayo* has changed and spread to many regions. Here, creation, flow and diffusion of value are the subjects of this study. In order to capture the essence of this change, Aoki's research, in which he collects and analyses the testimonies of musicians and artists who sing *Saiko Dayo*, is a search for a cross-disciplinary methodology to capture what could be called the creole nature of *Saiko Dayo*.

Ikuko Okugawa's research (Atomic Bomb Survivor Testimonies as Sociolinguistic Data: An Approach from Discourse Analysis) is a discourse analysis of the testimonies of atomic bomb survivors, victims of the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945. It was civilians, i.e. individuals, who were killed by the atomic bomb, the most devastating weapon of mass destruction in human history. Surviving *hibakusha* recount their experiences, question the social and psychological significance of their atomic bomb experiences and continually confirm their identities. Since this testimony is primarily given through 'narratives', Okugawa undertakes a structural analysis of 'testimony = narrative' to highlight the

diversity and specificity of this narrative. In contrast to Kay Aoki's research, Okugawa's does not methodologically seek to cross-discipline; rather, the research is based on the experiences of the survivors themselves. However, the analysis of the content of the testimonies themselves contains diverse meanings, making a multifaceted perspective inevitable.

Tinka Delakorda Kawashima (The Intangibility of the Intangible in Cross-cultural Contexts: Assessing the Value Gaps in Heritage Protection) is a study of Hidden Christians in Japan since the Edo Shogunate banned Christianity in the seventeenth century. The Hidden Christians are precisely the history of a group with Christianity that is invisible and not publicly visible. Traces of Hidden Christians are captured by the landscape of the settlement and the unique rituals of the faith, some of which have already disappeared while others have been passed down continuously to the present day. Delakorda Kawashima discusses the ICOMOS (International Council on Monuments and Sites) evaluation criteria, the evaluation criteria of the Japanese Agency for Cultural Affairs, and the criteria for cultural heritage in the process of inscription on the World Cultural Heritage List. Differences in local values are noted according to the criteria of each organisation. It specifically discusses how objectively difficult it is to assess whether something is tangible (architecture, landscape) or intangible (faith, rituals). The subject of Hidden Christians is assessed differently in terms of cultural heritage. Delakorda Kawashima conducts cross-disciplinary research in terms of comparing multiple evaluation criteria.

Anubhuti Chauhan (A Quantitative Study of Transitive and Intransitive Constructions in Hindi and Japanese) is a typological comparative study of Hindi and Japanese languages. The object of the study is the grammatical category of 'transitivity'. Her question is: what similarities and differences can be seen when Hindi and Japanese languages are observed from the perspective of 'transitivity'? To answer this question, she takes the two languages, Hindi, an Indo-European family language, and Japanese, a non-Indo-European family language. In other words, the object of the research is a heterogeneous language, and future research methodology will need to introduce multidisciplinary perspectives, such as social factors (power and its exercise, and so on), cultural background (lifestyle, values of justice) and cognitive psychological mechanisms, in addition to comparisons of language structure and function. The first step towards such research could be typological comparative research.

Miho Iriyama and Keiko Sugimoto (The Experiences of International Students in Japanese Bachelor Programs) examine the correlation between the Japanese language skills of international students and university campus life. Campus life includes not only specialised subject study, but also part-time work, health (e.g. sleep quality, and so on) and future career plans. A clear correlation was found between Japanese language proficiency and campus life. The validity of such a study is that it introduces a variety of criteria to capture campus life. The approach of considering campus life as a whole living space and studying the relationship between learning and life opens up possibilities for unique, interdisciplinary research.

Takamune Kawashima (Processing Technologies and Production of Food in the Jomon Period) is a discussion of Japanese archaeology. Archaeology is, in effect, the reconstruction of an object based on a variety of specialist knowledge. In this sense, it is the most clearly interdisciplinary research. Kawashima thus draws on a wide range of knowledge to shed light on the productivity of people's lives during the Jomon period.

The above is an overview of the relationship between the various research objects and methodologies in the eight papers. The six research projects described below are projects that have the potential to develop serious consideration in the future.

Takashi Furuta (The Correlation Between Literature, Drama and Film: A Discussion of A Wife in Musashino) explores the relationship between artistic expression and film between Ooka Shohei's novel *A Wife in Musashino*, and its adaptions in Fukuda Tsuneari's play and Mizoguchi Kenji's film. These three artists are representative of Japan, and the question of how the same motifs are expressed through different media in different ways is an extremely interesting research question.

Nozomi Waku (Metaphysics and Metaphysical Poetry in the Eastern Jin Dynasty), discusses the fourth-century Chinese poet Sun Chuo who combined Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism and proposed a "theory of the unity of the three religions". Although this research theme is completely different from Takashi Furuta's work, the study of Sun Chuo's idea of synthesising three different schools of religion and creating his own poetry can be seen as an isomorphic relationship to Furuta's research subject, which compares three artists.

Yu Tanaka (Cooperation between Japanese Linguistics and Japanese Language Education) is a study of Japanese language education. It deals with the issue of 'citation' in textbooks. From the title alone, it is difficult to understand where the disparity lies, but the reality is that there is little interaction between Japanese linguistics and Japanese language pedagogy. Yu Tanaka's attempt is to link Japanese linguistics and language pedagogy, and to go beyond this to develop new research.

Hideaki Ito (Development of Japanese Language Learning Content Using Immersive Virtual Reality) is an attempt to develop new teaching materials, applying virtual reality to the field of Japanese language education for foreigners. Hideaki Ito's study represents a new type of research as technology transforms the field of education and diversifies the market for the development of teaching materials.

Tingjie Xu (A Comparative Study of Blended Learning and Face-to-Face Instruction in University-Level Chinese Language Education) has found that Japanese students' learning of the Chinese language has been influenced by a variety of factors. This is a comparative study of the learning effectiveness of online, face-to-face and hybrid (online + face-to-face) teaching, respectively. This issue is a pressing concern for universities under the present pandemic environment. Further research will be required to develop teaching materials and propose pedagogical methods best suited to these forms of learning.

Takamune Kawashima (Archaeology for Disaster Management) shows how knowledge (archaeology, geology, etc.) and technology (geotechnology, GPS) used by archaeology can be useful for disaster management in response to catastrophes in contemporary society. Kawashima shows that, from a disaster management perspective, the collaboration of engineering and archaeological/historical perspectives can be effective.

In conclusion, although it may seem quite banal, the challenge for humanities and social science research is in the constant reflection on the values of people and society through the diversity of its research subjects and methodologies. It is therefore difficult to accept the current trend that humanities and social science research is of no use, or even of no use whatsoever.

Even a cursory review of this small number of studies shows that the research subjects addressed by individual researchers can be a variety of historical facts leading to the present, or a wide geographical and spatial range relating regions to regions. The approach may also be a quantitative or qualitative approach. In conclusion, although it may seem quite obvious, the task of humanities and social science research, through its diversity of research subjects and methodologies, has one thing in common: the constant reflection on the value of humanity and society. It cannot be overemphasised that this is the very basis of humanities and social science research.

It is precisely in a world of VUCA that new humanities and social science research is needed, and this journal has a role to play in meeting that need.

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