Journal of International Social Studies, Vol. 6, No. 1, 2016, 53-73.

Teaching for Multifaceted Knowledge of Disputed Islands in Japanese Classrooms: Toward a Critical Border Dialogism

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Abstract: This study considers the teaching of historical and territorial issues between Japan and China for the current Japanese social studies curriculum. For research purposes, a lesson plan was designed and facilitated in Japanese elementary and junior high schools. This lesson addressed ongoing tensions between Japan and China over the sovereignty of the Diaoyu (China)/Senkaku (Japan) islands. Pre-tests and post-tests were administered, and results were analyzed through the lenses of border pedagogy and place-based pedagogies. Students' transformative understandings of their roles as global citizens and students' attitudes toward problem solving were considered.

Introduction

A dilemma facing the architects of Japanese social studies education is how to discuss conflict and promote global citizenship simultaneously. Furthermore, teachers have the responsibility for developing knowledge and skills needed for participation in democratic nationhood. For the purposes of this study, social studies lessons that addressed issues of global citizenship and border conflict were taught to ninth grade students in Japan. The students were attending a Japanese junior

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Website: ***http://www.iajiss.org*** ISSN: 2327-3585

high school located on Hokkaido, the northernmost of Japan's four main islands. The school site is approximately 45 kilometers outside of Sapporo, the capital of the prefecture of Hokkaido. The participating junior high school has one class in each of the three grades and two special education classes, in total, five classes. The school size is relatively small compared to ordinary junior high schools in Japan. This particular ninth grade class had 20 male students and 14 female students, for a total of 34 student participants. Social studies lessons that sought to develop greater understandings of Japanese and Chinese border tensions were facilitated during the timespan of September 2013 to October 2013. In all, a total of 12 social studies lessons were created and implemented with ninth grade students in one classroom.

Background

Currently, a territorial issue exists between Japan and China over a group of islands, known as Diaoyu in China and Senkaku in Japan. These islands are located between Taiwan and Japan. Since 1895, Japan has declared the islands as theirs. China claimed ownership in 1971, shortly after oil was discovered, but both sides agreed to let the next generation resolve the issue. Shintaro Ishihara, the former governor of Tokyo, re-ignited the dispute last year when he announced plans to purchase the islands from private owners. Amid increased tensions the Tokyo Educational Public System issued a text entitled *From Edo to Tokyo* for high schools that included a new description of the islands as an integral part of Japan.

Theoretical Framework

Banks (2006) argues that to guard against abuses of patriotism, teachers should emphasize critical patriotism. Critical patriotism encourages reasoned loyalty: pride in the rights of the nation alongside a commitment to correct its wrongs. Border pedagogy, in turn, provides critical lenses for considering the dynamics of ongoing tensions between Japan and China. Giroux (1991) put forth that border pedagogy utilizes diverse cultural resources that promote new identities within existing configurations of power. Border pedagogy teaches students the skills of critical thinking, debating power, meaning, and identity and a border pedagogy is essential in bringing about understandings of a region that exists between the two countries (Flores & Clark, 2002). The goals of transformative education are embedded within the discourses of border pedagogy (Garza, 2007; Giroux, 1991, 2005; Romo & Chavez, 2006). According to Romo and Chavez (2006), border pedagogy encourages tolerance, ethical sophistication and openness. Border pedagogy, in turn, offers opportunities for resituating one's positionalities on key issues and questions (Cashman, 2015).

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Place-based pedagogies provide lenses for an understanding of the various issues surrounding tensions between neighboring countries (Gruenewald, 2003; Smith, 2002). Gruenewald (2003) noted that there is an intimate connection between individuals and their inhabited space, and that a pedagogy of place can be a means of examining such important relationships. Smith (2002) maintained that place-based education seeks to ground learning in local phenomena and students' experiences. A pedagogy of place (Gruenewald, 2003; Smith, 2002) promotes understandings of social and ecological spaces. Moreover, it can serve as a flexible structure for examining the work and efforts of Japanese educators and their students.

By incorporating critical approaches into place-based pedagogies, “we challenge the assumptions, practices, and outcomes taken for granted in dominant culture and in conventional education" (Gruenewald, 2003, p. 3). Border pedagogy (Giroux, 1991, 2005), in turn, intersects with place-based pedagogies as border pedagogy engages a critical pedagogy of place in its discourses. Border pedagogy builds upon critical understandings of place and attempts to connect those understandings with larger contexts. According to Giroux (2005), border pedagogy involves a recognition and understanding of margins as affected by history, power, and difference. Moreover, an individual must contemplate historically and socially constructed limitations to become a border crosser who has developed new understandings of others (Giroux, 2005). Borders are considered boundaries of entities, while the act of crossing borders entails going beyond existing boundaries and broadening one's perspectives of others in locales near or afar. For the purposes of this study, the intersection of critical place-based pedagogies and border pedagogy was taken into account, for the results of the study and for the implications of further research.

Method

Pre-tests and post-tests were administered to ninth grade students in a Hokkaido, Japan, junior high school classroom. Both instruments were analyzed to contemplate students’ understandings of their roles as global citizens, students’ attitudes toward problem solving and the potential transformation of the students’ knowledge. Students were engaged in a lesson that provided them opportunities to share their background knowledge and discuss their feelings on issues of sovereignty for the group of islands. Data were subsequently collected, noted for frequency and categorized. The next step was to develop interpretive explanations (Creswell, 2007). Data analysis followed what Glesne (2011) refers to as thematic analysis, whereby the data was read many times in search of emerging themes or categories and subcategories. The research analysis also followed the recommendations of Yin (2003) for considering local meanings and foreshadowed meanings in their context.

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Based on the results of a pre-test, an instructional unit was designed and put into practice in a junior high school. Results of pre-tests and post-tests were analyzed for students' transformative knowledge and changes in their attitudes about problem solving. Accordingly, the design was structured with four key principles: complex issues of unity and diversity, global interdependence, human rights and putting democratic ideals into practice (Banks, 2006). To better contemplate Principle #1, complex issues of unity and diversity, students engaged in an activity entitled, "Games of Differences". To develop understandings of Principle #2, global interdependence, students discussed media representations of China and took part in role playing activities related to the disputed islands. Principle #3, human rights, was discussed as the basis of the Japanese Constitution, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Principle #4, putting democratic ideals into practice, engaged the student council or *Seitokai*, in a discussion of options and appropriate actions for Senkaku/Diaoyu islands issue (See Table 1).

Table 1. *Principles Introduced into the 9th Grade Curriculum*

Four principles		**Curriculum for international perspectives in social studies**	
		Courses and objectives	**Contents**
Diversity, Unity, Global Interconnectedness, and Human Rights	1. Students should learn about the complex relationships between unity and diversity in their local communities, the nation and the world.	Course 1—Students learn about the discrimination in their local communities, the nation and the world.	An activity of different games of differences: the students will notice the differences in various and diverse perspectives. During the discussion it must be remembered that none of the opinions are wrong. Because of this, they must understand that there are many problems that cannot be solved so simply.
	2. Students should learn about the ways in which people in their community, nation and region are increasingly interdependent with other people around the world and are	Course 2—Students learn about how we are interdependent on other people around the world and are connected to the economic, political, cultural, environmental and technological changes	The students learn about the interdependent relationships between China and Japan.
			Role playing activities about the Senkaku Islands issue: The goal of these activities is to search for a better solution.

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	connected to the economic, political, cultural, environmental and technological changes taking place across the planet.	taking place across the planet.	The students will learn that, along with the Senkaku Islands, the solutions for other international disputes do not depend on military force. These are things which will make them think further.
	3. The teaching of human rights should underpin citizenship education courses and programs in multicultural nation-states.	Course 3—Students learn about human rights.	According to curriculum guidelines, students will learn about: • How human rights have been established. • Basic human rights, which are the basis of the Japanese Constitution. • The Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which show us that human rights are universal.
Experience and Participation	4. Students learn ideals of democracy and democratic institutions and are provided with opportunities to practice democracy.	Course 4—Students practice what they learned.	The creation of an organization called *Seitokai*-student union, a place where students alone resolve problems that occur in their school and put into practice better activity systems.
			Students examine some examples from NGOs, which give them an idea of the process and the outcome that social participation or action can have.

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Results of Pre-Tests and Post-Tests

Pre-test results for 34 students revealed that many junior high-school students shared many pre-conceived negative impressions of China. Student impressions included Chinese nationalism, China's one child policy, the Great Wall, the Senkaku islands problem and China's air pollution as presented in the media and Chinese food. Few students reported having discussions with Chinese people or having accessed direct sources of information from China. No students could correctly identify the location of the Senkaku Islands. They knew very little about the historical claims of Japan and China. Thus, the negative impressions were not based upon substantial background knowledge and information.

Nonetheless, students expressed their desire to find a solution to the Senkaku Islands problem. Students expressed interest in better understanding about the Senkaku/Diaoyu issue. Also, 30% of the students felt that visions and ideals were prerequisites for societal change. Student participants were admininstered post-tests to determine the results of intervening lessons that explored the associations between China and Japan.

Post-test results indicated that student understandings of Japanese and Chinese relationships increased. For example, the number of students who answered *yes* to the question of whether they are aware that China is the largest trading partner of Japan, changed from 17 students in the pre-test to 24 students in the post-test. There was also an increased awareness of the territorial issue between Japan and China (Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands). The number of students who could correctly identify the claims of Japan/China on the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands doubled on the post-test (after students had been taught the lesson). Students who wished to have the territorial issues solved increased slightly from 20 to 24 students on the post-test.

Based on the results of the student responses, it can be inferred that students learned to evaluate and collect data from multiple sources; yet, overall, Japanese students held on to their negative images of China. Thus, students were interested in exploring issues of the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands, but the intervention of one unit of study was not enough to achieve the goals of transformative thinking as global citizens (See Figure 1).

Figure 1. Results of the Pre-Test and Post-Test

Hokkaido 9th grade students (n=34), implemented in September, 2013

Check all issues you know about between China and Japan. (You can choose multiple options)

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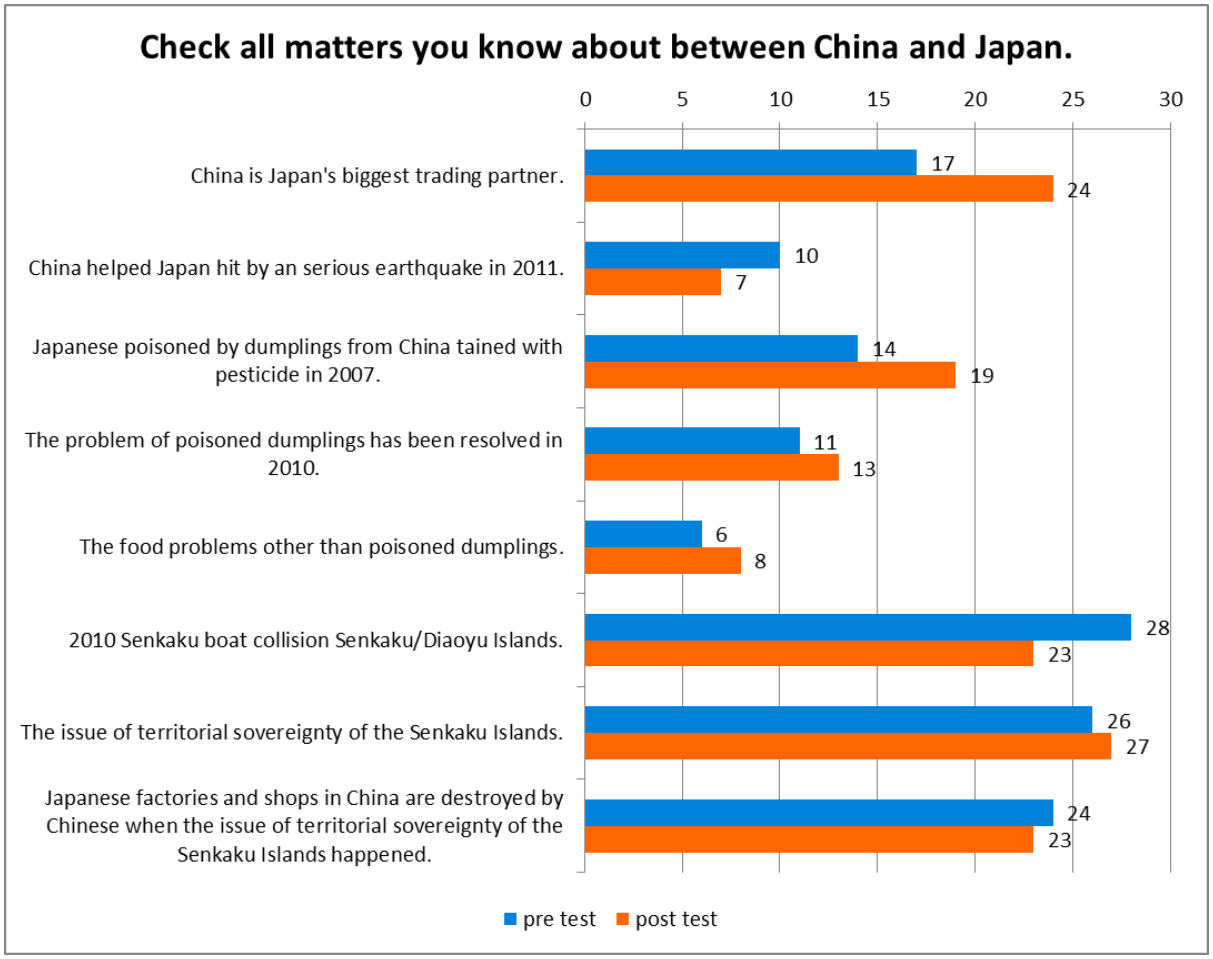

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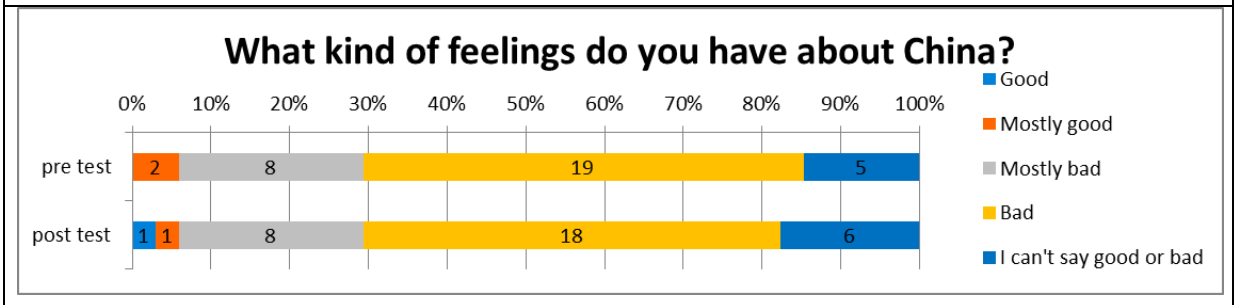

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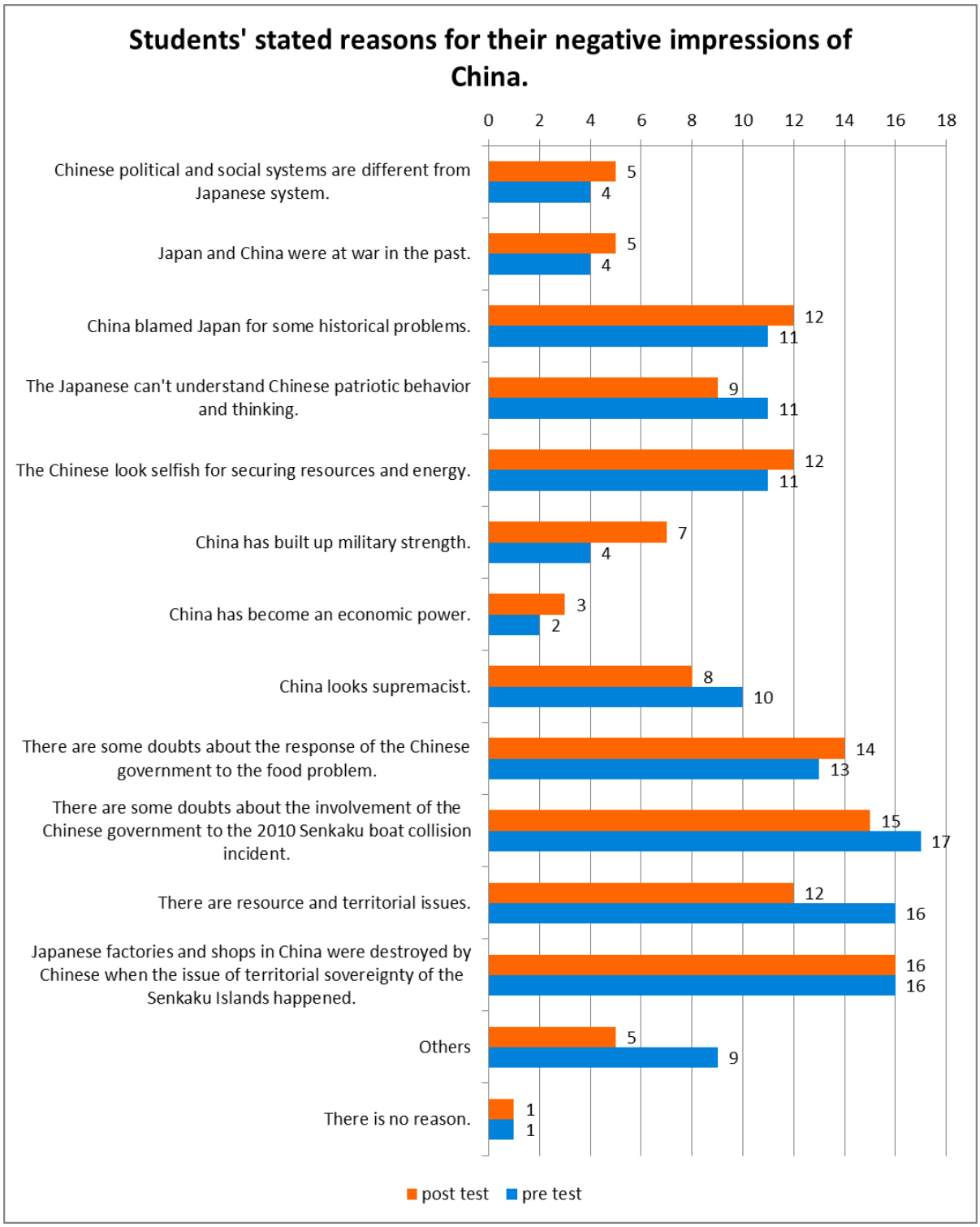

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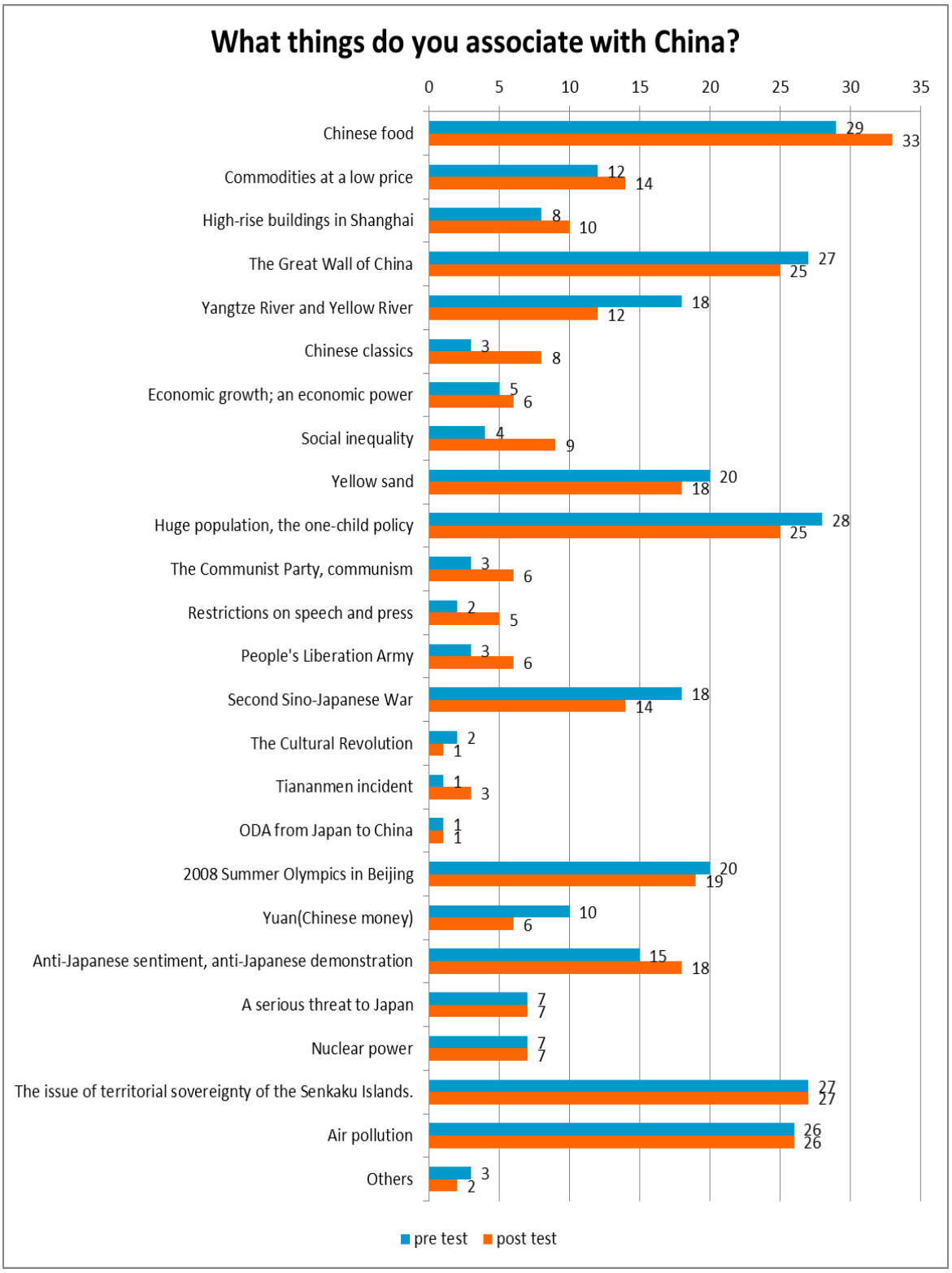

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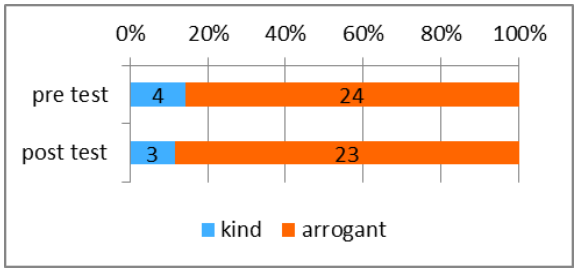
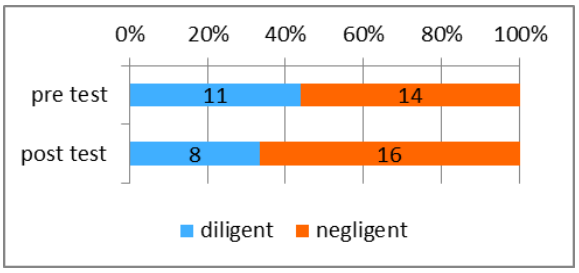
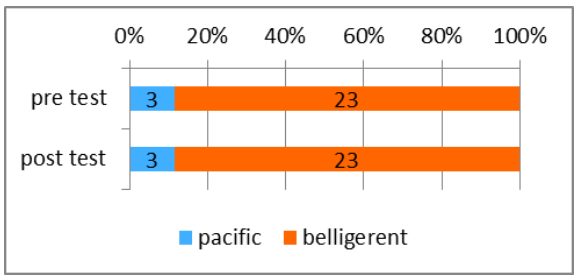
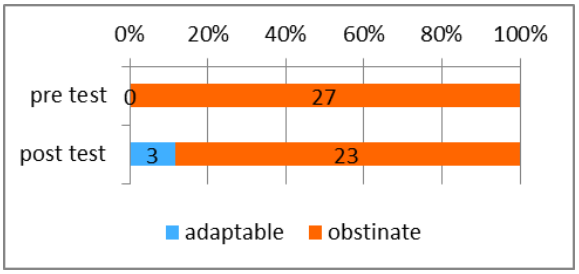
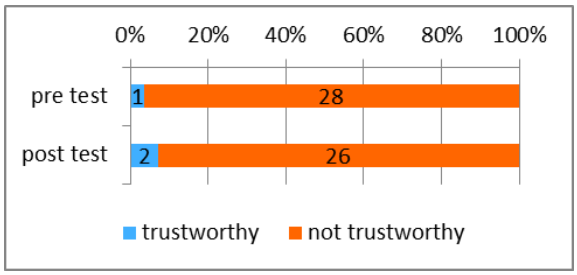
What do you think about the national character of Chinese?

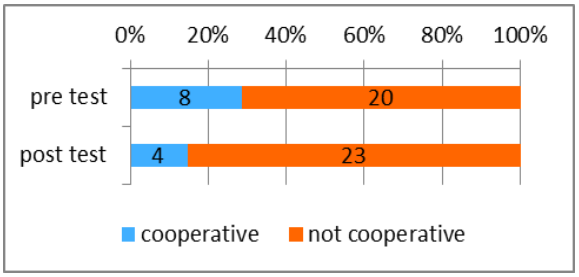


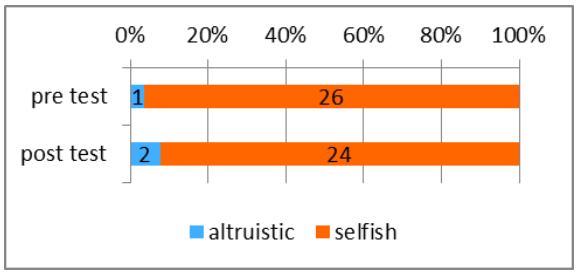


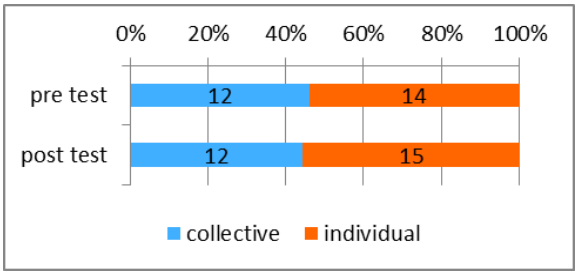












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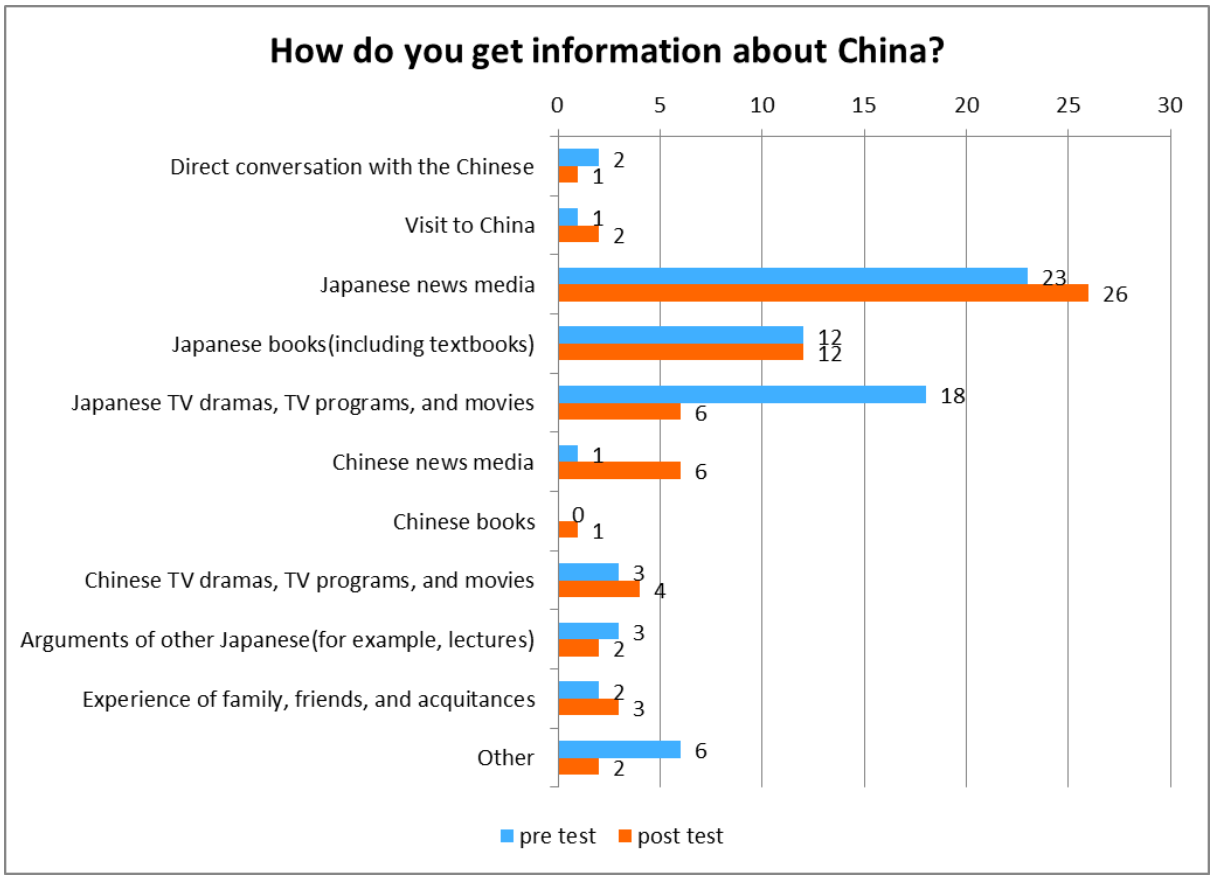

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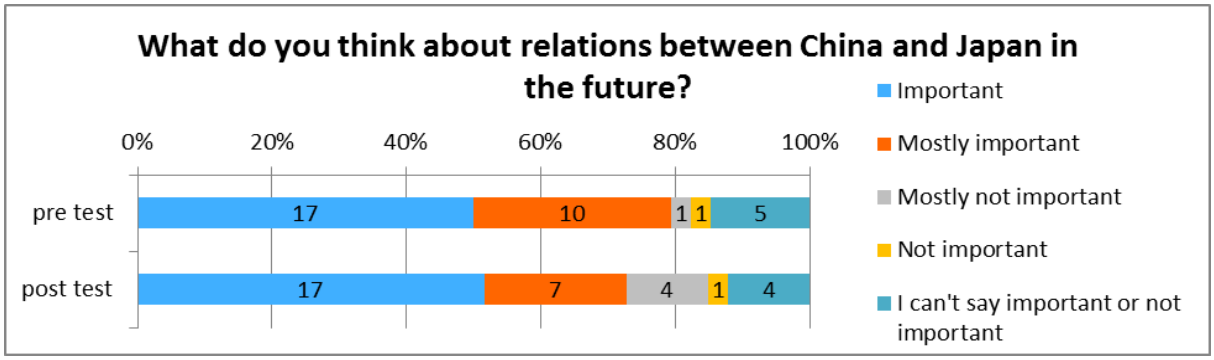

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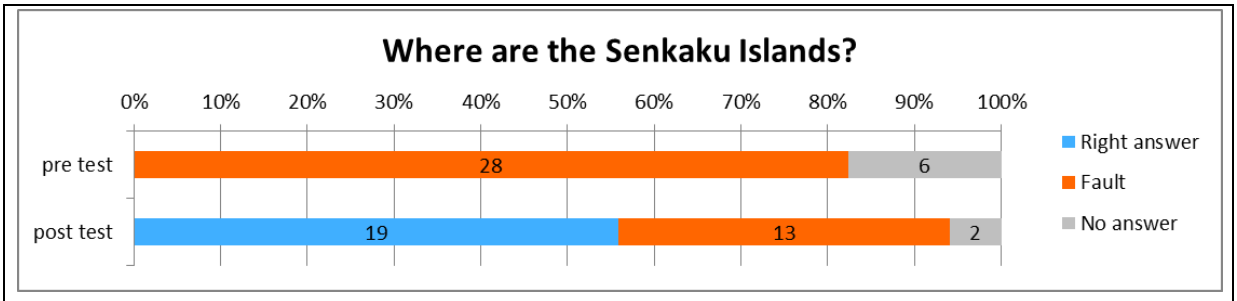

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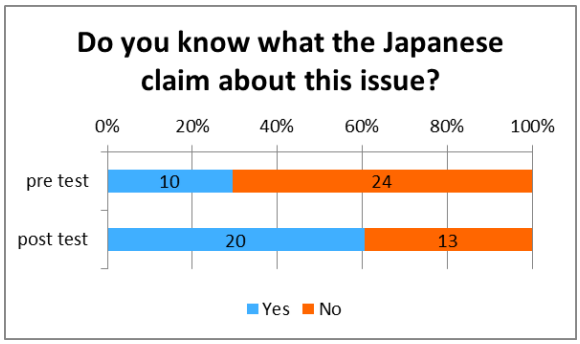

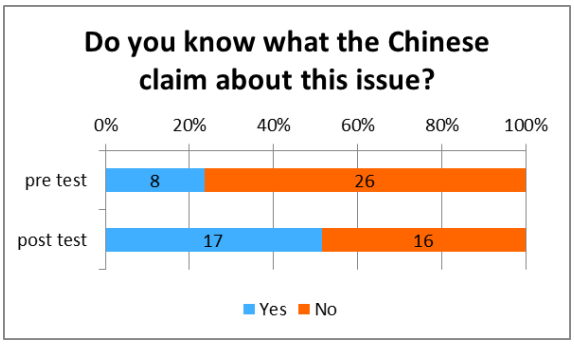

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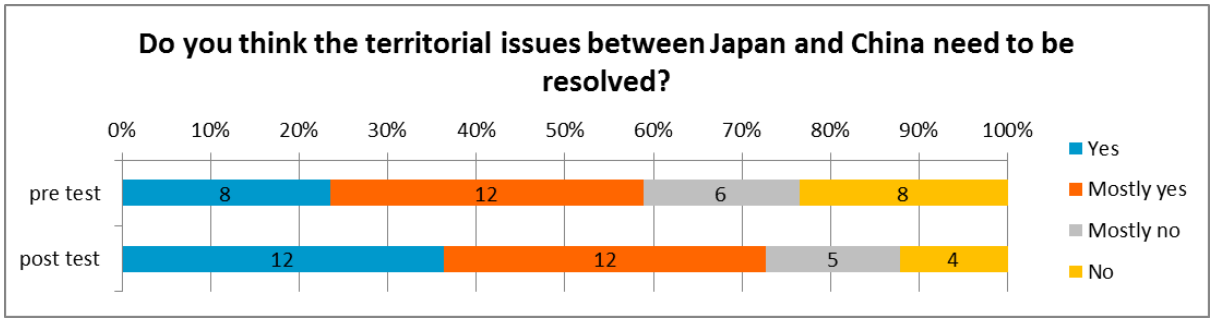

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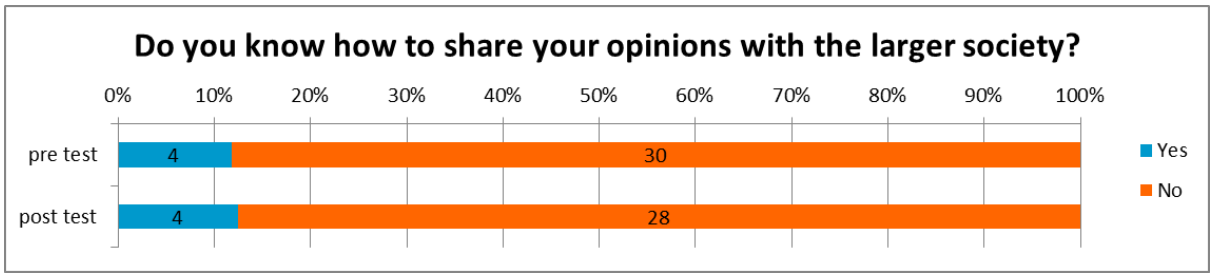

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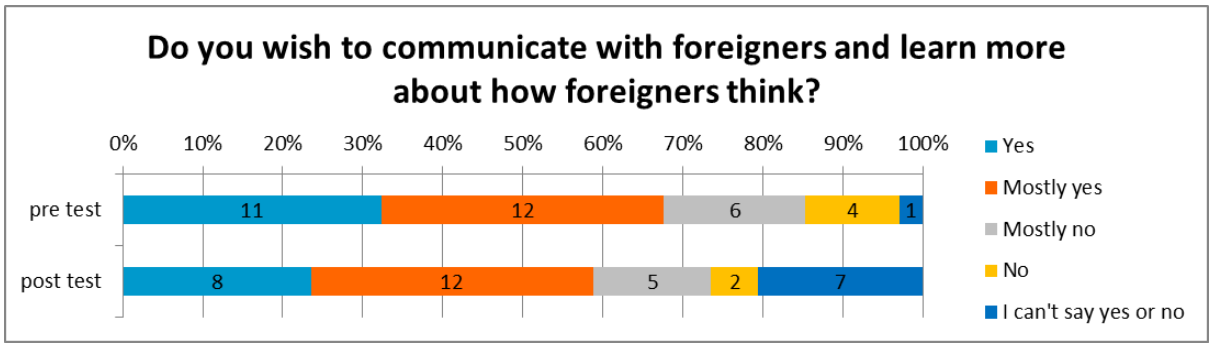

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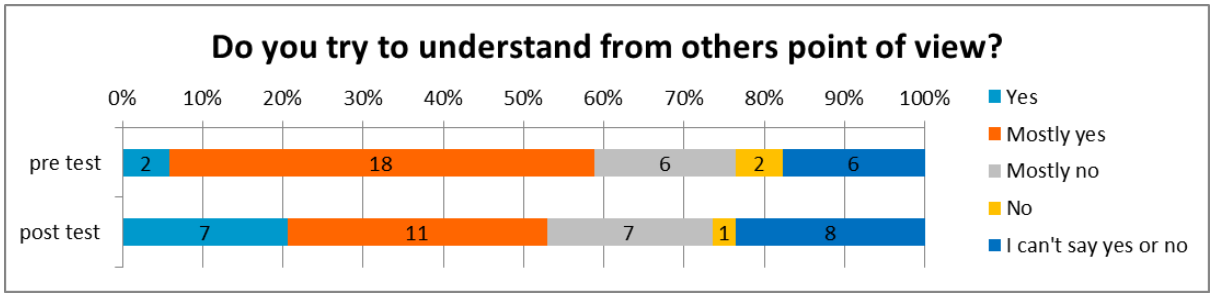

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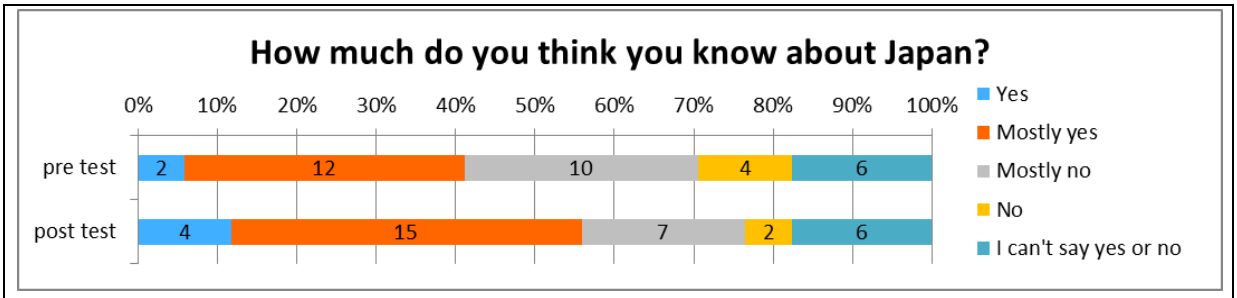

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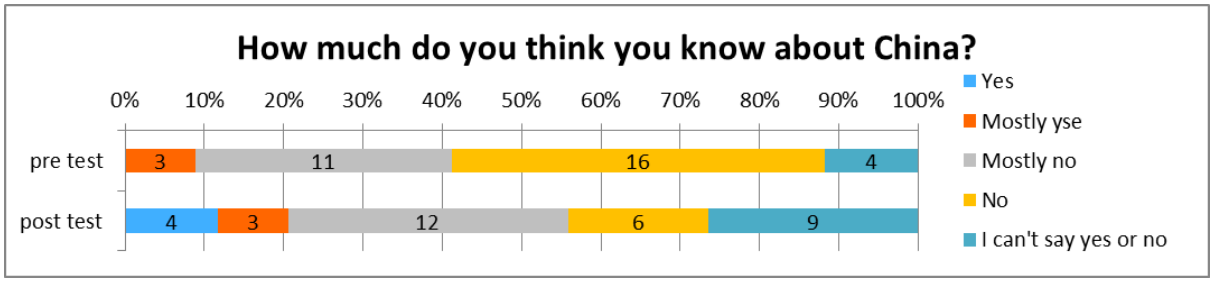

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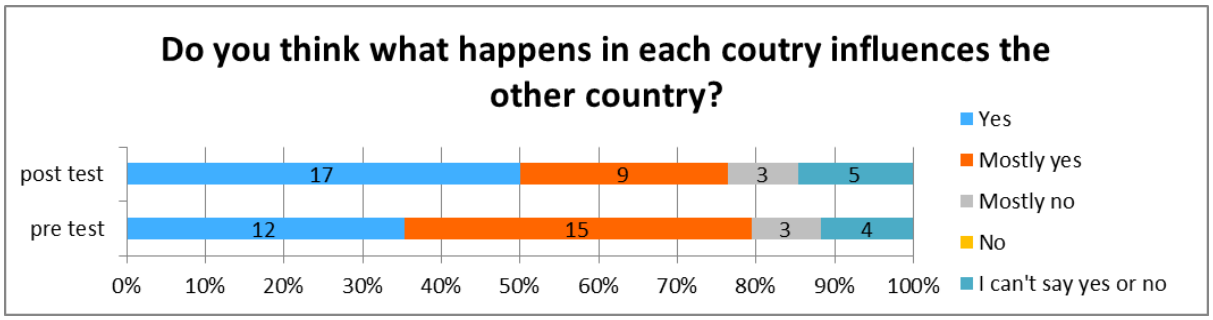

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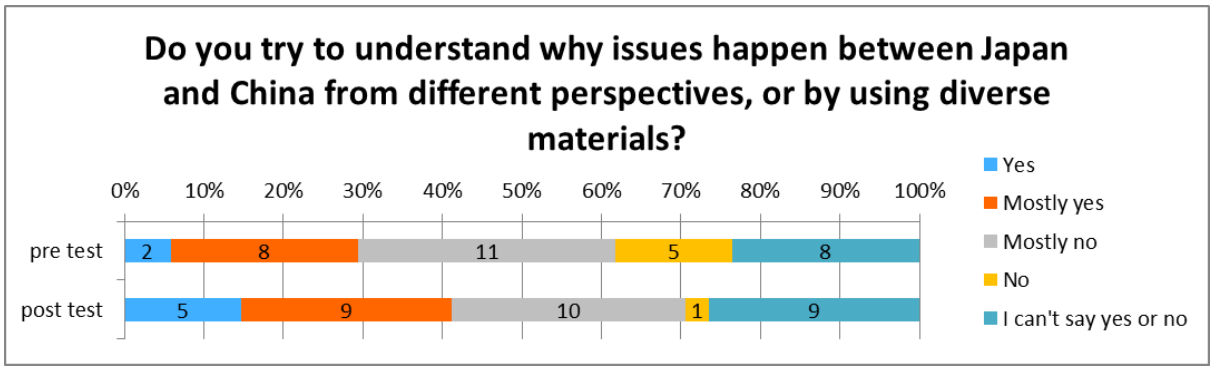

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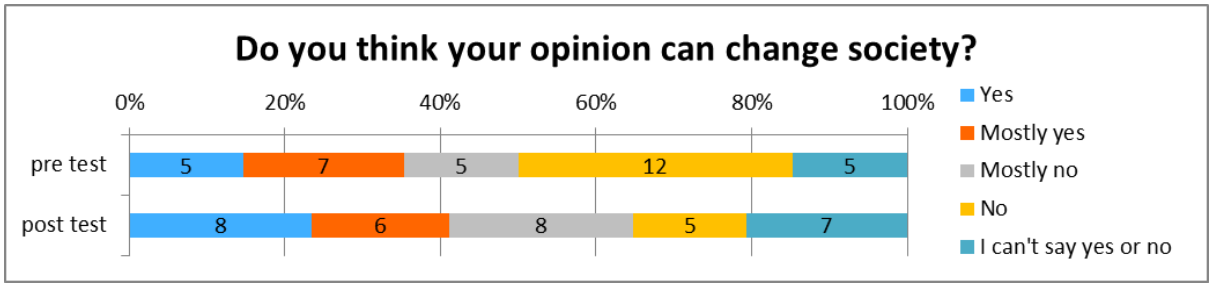

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Discussion

On the basis of student responses to the pre-test questions and post-test items, the following categories of data emerged in this study: (1) issues of unity and diversity; (2) global interdependence; (3) human rights; and (4) putting democratic ideals into practice. Student participants were administered pre-tests and post-tests to evaluate the results of intervening lessons that facilitated understandings of the associations between China and Japan.

Under the category of issues of unity and diversity, students demonstrated pre-conceived superficial and negative impressions of China on the pre-tests and in their discussions. Students noted Chinese nationalism, China's one child policy, the Great Wall, the Senkaku islands problem, media coverage of China's air pollution and Chinese food. Students' ideas divulged gaps in their background knowledge and understandings of Chinese history and culture. Based on data obtained from the

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post-tests students learned to evaluate and collect data from multiple sources. Nonetheless, on the same post-tests Japanese students held on to negative images of China.

Within the subset of global interdependence, students expressed their hopes of resolving the Senkaku Islands problem. On pre-test items students indicated an interest in better understanding Senkaku/Diaoyu issues. Post-test results indicated that student understandings of Japanese and Chinese relationships increased. There was also an increase in overall awareness of existing territorial issues between Japan and China. More students correctly identified the separate claims of Japan and China as a result of the intervening lesson. The number of students who wished to have the territorial issues resolved also increased in the post-test.

Under the theme of human rights, pre-test responses uncovered student interest in visions and ideals as the foundations of societal change. Through their participation in role-play and subsequent debriefings, students demonstrated a degree of multifaceted thinking and the ability to put themselves in the shoes of others, which signified an attempt to facilitate forms of border pedagogy.

Finally, in the category of putting democratic ideals into practice, student responses on post-tests revealed that students developed skills in interpreting and analyzing multiple sources. Students were also interested in exploring issues that encompass the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands, yet the intervention of one unit of study was not enough to alter students' negative images of China. The lessons that served as interventions did not promote a discovery of the roles of global citizens or achieve the desired goals of transformative education.

The implementation of border pedagogy was limited by key factors. For instance, the fact that there were no Chinese nationals in the classroom affected the perspectives that were presented: both the teacher and the students were Japanese in this classroom example. Informed positions through diverse Chinese lenses were omitted. Thus, Japanese students depended on Japanese sources of information when considering multifaceted aspects and forming personal judgments. Another factor was the lack of media literacy education combined with border pedagogy in attempts to provide enriched understandings of border issues.

Considerations for further implementation of a border pedagogy are numerous. Giroux (2005) lists three essential components of border pedagogy. Accordingly,

1. Border consists of epistemological, political, cultural and social margins that structure the language of history, power and difference. Border crossing prefigures cultural criticism and pedagogical processes and signals forms of transgression in which dominant, existing borders can be challenged and redefined.

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2. Border pedagogy speaks to the need to create conditions in which students become border crossers in order to understand otherness in its own terms, so that borderlands with diverse, new identities with existing configurations of power are created.
3. Border pedagogy allows students to recognize "the historically and socially constructed strengths and limitations of those places and borders we inherit and that frame our discourses and social relations" (Giroux, 2005, p. 20).

In this study, there was a limited time for the classroom interventions. Nagda (2006) recommends the development of critical self-reflection in terms of understanding one's own experiences in the context of social positions and building alliances for greater social justice. Accordingly, students could be afforded more time to engage with a question such as: how do rhetoric from the mainstream media and dominant institutions influence our abilities to build alliances across differences? It is also possible that the limited duration of the contact may not have been ideal for fostering substantive actions. If additional lessons were possible, projects that link dialogue and action should be included. For example, given the opportunity for follow-up interventions, student participants could role play in additional transnational conflict situations and to partake in supplementary active interventions. Applied learning and personal reflections could generate a wide array of concrete actions as well as further dialogue on transnational understandings. Alliances develop from collaborative actions, and are crucial for any transnational relationship. Nagda (2006) put forth, "Inclusive, caring, and critically tended alliances allow for mindful, affective actions that can empower all participants" (p. 573).

Border pedagogy is continuing consideration for all classroom interventions. Giroux (1991) put forth that border pedagogy teaches students the skills of critical thinking, debating power, meaning and identity. Border pedagogy can be used to teach students the skills of critical thinking and debate as well as develop self-identity with regard to their sense of place, both locally and globally. Border pedagogy puts forward a means of providing students with better contemplation and clarification of their positionalities (Flores & Clark, 2002). The discourses of border pedagogy correspond with the goals of melioristic, transformative education (Garza, 2007; Giroux, 1991; Romo & Chavez, 2006). According to Romo and Chavez (2006), border pedagogy encourages tolerance, ethical sophistication, and openness. Border pedagogy particularly engages learners in "multiple references that constitute different cultural codes, experiences, and languages to help them construct their own narratives and histories, and revise democracy through sociocultural negotiation" (Romo & Chavez, 2006, p. 143). In the case of Japanese students learning about China, border pedagogy entails interdisciplinary,

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longer term reflections on positionalities and situatedness within current power configurations. Hence, problem solving and conflict resolution are integral pieces of interventions and learning.

Recommendations

To go beyond the lessons learned through classroom interventions, we recommend more policy-driven decisions that allow for substantial consideration of border conflicts in classrooms. Decision makers and policies should consider the necessity of developing knowledge through an implementation of the principles of border pedagogy and place-based pedagogies. The findings of this study, indeed, reinforce the recommendations of Zhao, Lin and Hoge (2007) for comparative and transnational studies on how well students know each other and each other's histories and cultures. There is a call for a critical border dialogism (Cashman, 2015) that draws upon border pedagogy and is based on the following principles: (1) heteroglossia, as it counters any sort of unilateral and unidirectional voices. (Abraham, 2014; Bakhtin, 1981; Clark & Holquist, 1984; Holquist, 2002); (2) meliorism, holds that better futures become reality through our efforts (Kliebard, 2004; Koopman, 2006; James, 1906; Wilson, 2003); (3) critical cosmopolitanism, which serves as an argument for globalization from below, and it argues for the geopolitical diversal (Delanty, 2006; Mignolo, 2000b); (4) nepantla, which characterizes border surroundings as dynamic and fluid (Abraham, 2014; Anzaldua, 2002; Maffie, 2007; Mignolo, 2000a); (5) dialogic feminism, as it is exemplified by its renunciation, resistance and counter-hegemonic actions to patriarchy and other borders (Puigvert, 2012; Yaeger, 1991); and (6) pragmatic hope, as it offers possibilities for a transcendence of the limitations currently imposed on schools and educational systems (Koopman, 2006; Nolan & Stitzlein, 2011; Rorty, 1999; Shade, 2001).

It is through a critical border dialogism involving educators, students, cultural workers and policy makers that we contemplate the multiplicity of voices that help constitute heteroglossia. In this manner, stakeholders develop greater understandings of our societies and are, in turn, better informed to counter hegemonic systems that seek to dictate teaching and learning within our societies.

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