

# **A New Multicultural Pedagogical Approach: Participatory Filmmaking in the Classroom**

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## **Introduction**

It is of overriding importance in today's world that global citizenship is put into practice and diversity is acknowledged for the well-being of both men and women in multicultural societies. Canada is considered as one of the leading nations advocating global citizenship as a means to accelerate multiculturalism. Global citizenship has been emphasized as a core component in promoting diversity in terms of race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, class, and religion (Lionnet & Shih, 2005).

The case of Japan is inseparable from the discussion of multiculturalism. In Japanese society, various actors including Japanese citizens, the Indigenous peoples (e.g., the Ainu and the Okinawans), and immigrants coexist (Chan, 2008). In addition, taking account of advanced globalization, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, Japan (MEXT, 2013a) released a document entitled *White Paper on Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology*, and indicated the need to educate young people to gain a global perspective and become global citizens.

Although some attention has been paid to the relationship between global citizenship and multicultural education in Canada (e.g., Dei, 1996; Watson, 2000), such research in Japan is generally limited and incidental. In order to fill in this knowledge gap, I focus on higher education in Japan and Canada, and explore the following questions: What would be the ideal mode of multicultural education for Japan in promoting diversity and nurturing students to become global citizens? What would be the benefits when educators and learners practice this new pedagogy in the educational settings? Drawing on experts on the higher education systems in Canada and Japan as well as university students working on a participatory film project, this study seeks to show diverse conceptions of global citizenship and multiculturalism through writing and film, and thereby propose a new multicultural pedagogical approach that can accommodate diversity in the context of Japan.

## **Conceptual Framework**

In conceptualizing this study, I draw on the concept of the “rhizome” proposed by Deleuze and Guattari. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) describe its feature as

follows:

The rhizome is altogether different, a map and not a tracing. ... The map is open and connectable in all of its dimensions; it is detachable, reversible, susceptible to constant modification. ... Perhaps one of the most important characteristics of the rhizome is that it always has multiple entryways .... (p. 12; original emphasis)

Here Deleuze and Guattari suggest that the rhizome operates as a driving force to impede essentialization, categorization, and dichotomization. Therefore, I consider that the rhizome consents to diversity and it is useful for capturing a trajectory of diverse actors such as teachers and learners interacting with one another in the classroom. In this article, I apply the concept as such and introduce diverse voices by referring to professors specializing in multiculturalism and education in Canada and Japan as well as my seminar students working on a collaborative film project. In doing so, I aim to present an open map with voices of people coming from various backgrounds interwoven, thereby showing diversity literally and visually.

## **Methodology**

This study involves a total of thirteen participants: two university professors — Drs. O and Y (their names and institutions are in pseudonym) and eleven university students in Kumamoto. Their pseudonyms are: Blackpink; BOSS; Gonnies; K; Katy; Lay; Marie Antoinette; Nancy; Nimo; Orange; and Owl. I met Dr. O and Dr. Y in March 2019 and they lent their expertise to this research project. The eleven students belong to my third-year seminar and engage themselves in participatory filmmaking, one of the arts-based methods effective for dealing with the issues of diversity. Scholars demonstrate that arts-based approaches dismantle the conventional manner of generating single, absolute knowledge, and instead, offer the opportunity to pay attention to diversity in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, class, ability, religion, and so forth. Focusing on a practice of participatory filmmaking, I have described the process from its initiation to the development as well as its pedagogical possibilities (see Hara, 2020). Arts-based practices are ideal for fulfilling the objectives set by MEXT:

Fortunately, Japan possesses strong human bonds, which are highly valued worldwide, and also various strengths, such as a highly skilled and knowledgeable population. Based on these strengths, we need to

construct a mature society using a method other than seeking economic growth. To this end, we highlight the three key notions of independence, collaboration, and creativity based on diversity. (2013b)

I argue that practicing participatory filmmaking in class serves as a new multicultural pedagogical approach cultivating "... independence, collaboration, and creativity based on diversity" (MEXT, 2013b) among teachers and students.

### **A voice from Canada: Dr. O**

Dr. O received a M.A. and a Ph.D. in International Comparative Education from Stanford University. She is currently an associate professor in the Department of Educational Studies at AUC in Canada. Her research interests include human rights, social movements, feminism, antiracism, multiculturalism, and comparative education. Based on her expertise as such, she responds to my questions:

Researcher (R): Do you differentiate the terms "interculturalism" and "multiculturalism"? Which term do you use when you refer to the case of Japan? How about the case of Canada?

Dr. O: For me, interculturalism seems to suggest "between two cultures" whereas multiculturalism represents the mixing of several/many cultures. I prefer the term multiculturalism. I will use multiculturalism for both cases, because I think interculturalism is an older/outdated term.

What becomes clear here is Dr. O's view on the usage of the two terminologies. She describes the level of diversity in current Canadian society from a critical perspective: "Very high, but that diversity is almost exclusively framed and controlled by official discourses of multiculturalism. There is almost platform for dissent/alternative notions of diversity and multiculturalism." Regarding the case of Japan, she states: "Japan is more diverse than what most people think, but that diversity is not visible because of socio-political forces (media, public, and political discourses)." Her comments below suggest what is exactly needed in school settings in Japan:

R: MEXT aims to educate students to be "global human resources with a global perspective." Based on your expertise, what do you think are necessary for students in Japan to gain a global perspective?

Dr. O: Critical exposure to other cultures (including those existing within Japan i.e., minority cultures) and global issues; critical thinking; second and third languages; exposure to course contents concerning globalism (could be in politics, anthropology, sociology, law, etc.); media content that discusses global issues .... I think this list is endless!

R: What would be an ideal model of multicultural education for Japanese higher educational institutions?

Dr. O: Using a historical and critical approach of multicultural education that is beyond dance and food sort of approach to diversity.

In this way, Dr. O illustrates the new pedagogical approach that should be incorporated in education in Japan by giving several examples.

### **A voice from Japan: Dr. Y**

Dr. Y received a M.A. in Liberal Arts and Humanities and a Ph.D. in Linguistics from Ochanomizu University. She is currently an associate professor at the Faculty of Policy Management at X University in Kanagawa, Japan, and also a visiting associate professor at the Center of Japanese Research at the University of Canada. Her research interests include critical pedagogy of language (Japanese) and intercultural communication. Based on her experience as a visiting scholar at a Canadian university, she analyzes the situation of the country as follows:

Canada is a nation of immigrants, so basically, the level of diversity is higher, compared to other national societies. But it differs according to the subject of comparison. There are many interpretations regarding Canada's multiculturalism, and I consider the discourse of multiculturalism is functioning as a space where Canadian citizens negotiate their rights and interests with each other.

She also elucidates the situation of Japan concerning diversity:

R: How do you perceive the level of diversity in Japanese society at the present times?

Dr. Y: Compared to Canada professing to be a multicultural nation, the

level of diversity among members composing Japanese society is not relatively high. However, diversity has existed in Japanese society for all times. In particular, in the last 30 years, diversity among members composing Japanese society has become visible.

Moreover, her statement below is helpful in examining what is essential to raise awareness of diversity in Japan:

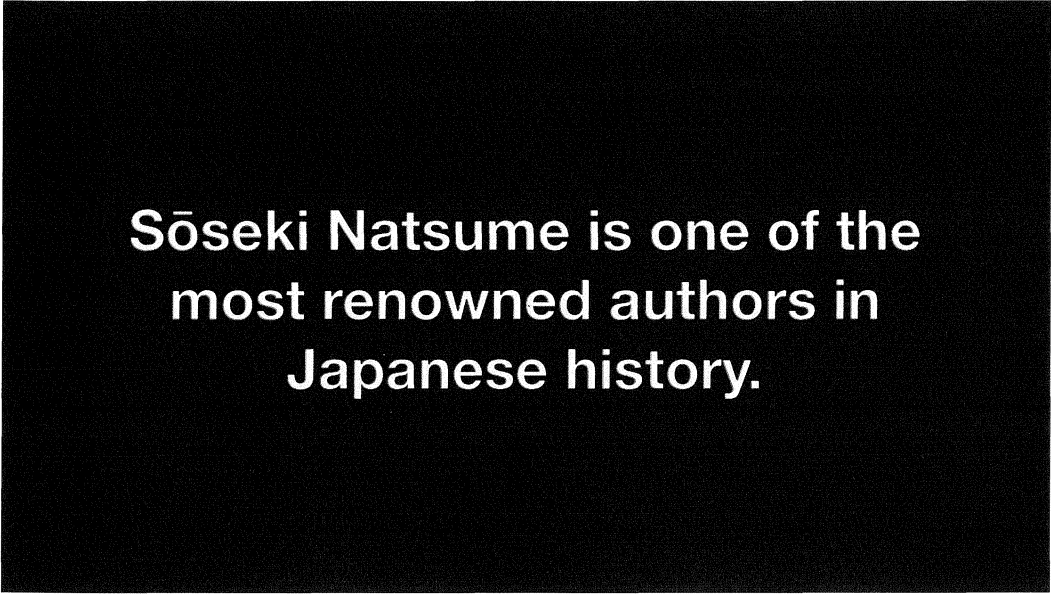
R: What can Japan learn from Canada's multiculturalism in terms of policy?

Dr. Y: From Canada's multiculturalism in terms of policy, Japan can learn the following: examining what Japanese nationality should be (the case of Germany would be more appropriate rather than that of Canada) and offering classes so that people can learn the major languages (either English or French) as the second language, which are usually taught to immigrants and refugees in compulsory education.

She probes into this point and continues: "In the times when diversity has been enhanced in Japanese society, it is necessary to have the ability to consider how to operate Japanese society, while embracing new members coming from outside Japan." Besides acquiring a global perspective, Dr. Y thus clarifies the task assigned to people including the youth who will be leading the country of Japan in the future.

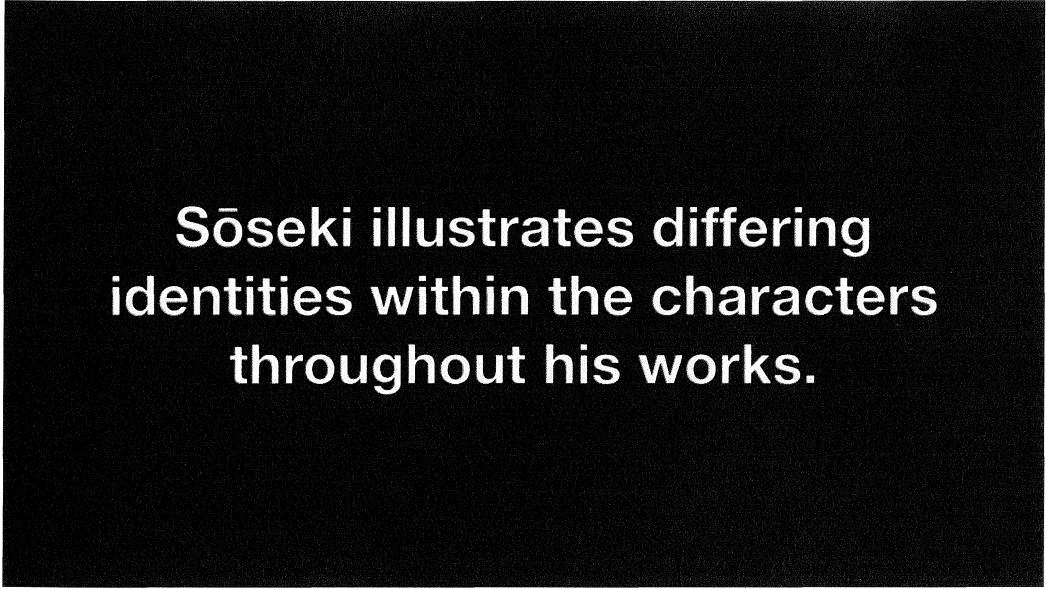
### **Voices from around the world: four writers and eleven students**

In my third-year seminar, the eleven student filmmakers came up with Sōseki Natsume as the theme for the film project. After reading *The Complete Works of Sōseki* (Natsume, n.d.), they focused on his short essays written in English, selected several sentences which were most impressive to them, and put them in the film. Placing Natsume and his works as the core of the storyline, they entitled the film *Sōseki in Our Life*, and also paid attention to the following famous thinkers: Paulo Freire, Gloria Anzaldúa, and Doris Pilkington. After discussions, they decided to put these four writers' words reflecting the voices of the oppressed around the world including Brazil, America, and Australia. In addition, the student filmmakers created and inserted their own messages in English in the film (see Figures 1-15).



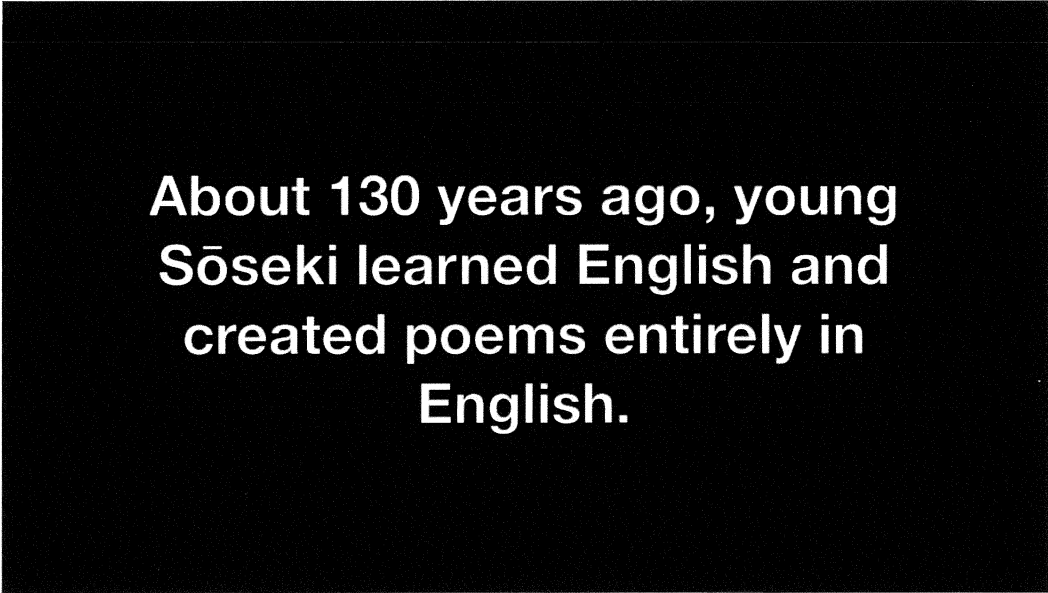
**Sōseki Natsume is one of the  
most renowned authors in  
Japanese history.**

*Figure 1.* Student filmmakers introducing Natsume 1.



**Sōseki illustrates differing  
identities within the characters  
throughout his works.**

*Figure 2.* Student filmmakers introducing Natsume 2.



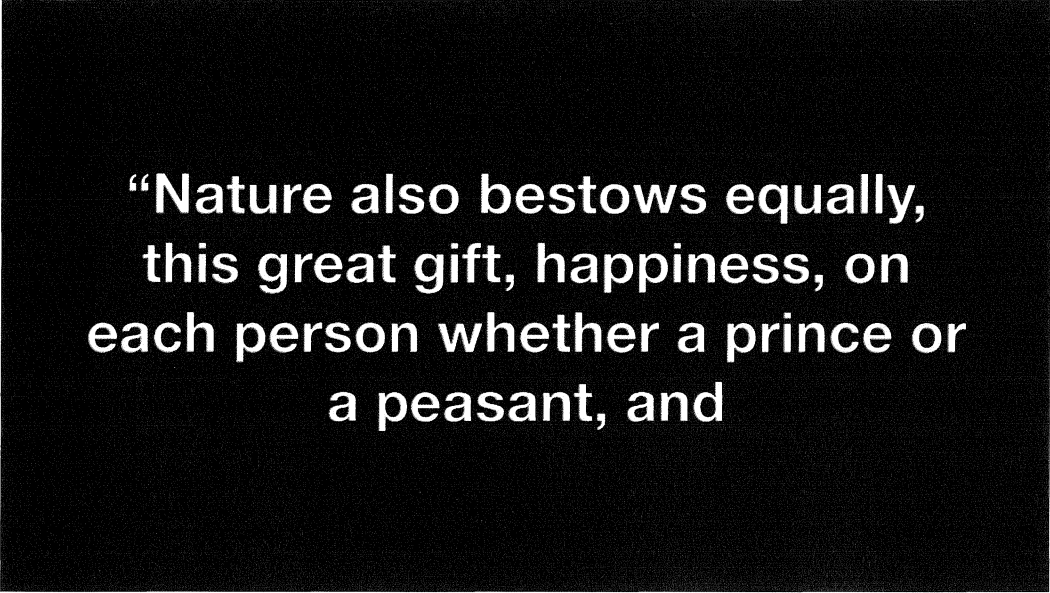
**About 130 years ago, young  
Sōseki learned English and  
created poems entirely in  
English.**

*Figure 3.* Student filmmakers introducing Natsume 3.



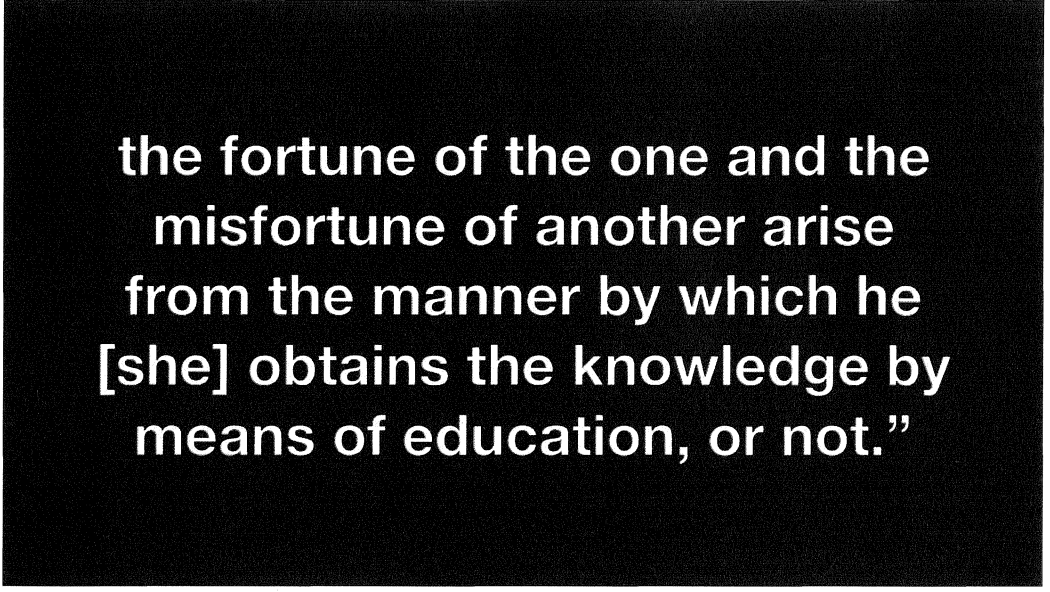
**“What makes us prosperous,  
wealthy, and rich is happiness.”**

*Figure 4.* Student filmmakers referring to Natsume 1.



**“Nature also bestows equally,  
this great gift, happiness, on  
each person whether a prince or  
a peasant, and**

*Figure 5.* Student filmmakers referring to Natsume 2.



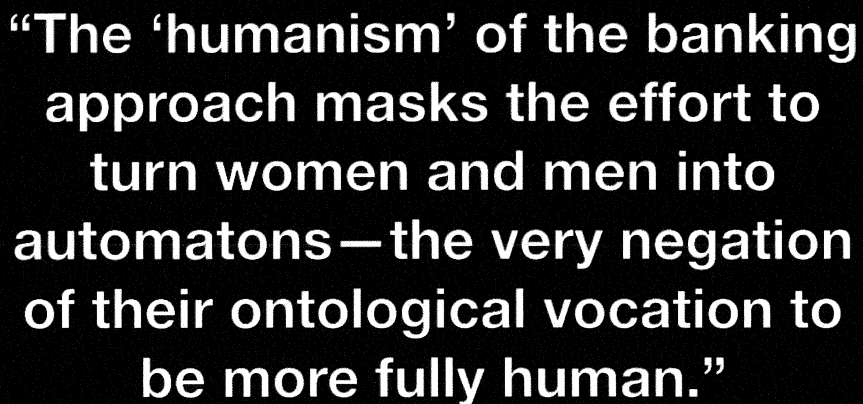
**the fortune of the one and the  
misfortune of another arise  
from the manner by which he  
[she] obtains the knowledge by  
means of education, or not.”**

*Figure 6.* Student filmmakers referring to Natsume 3.



**(Sōseki Natsume, n.d., p. 24)**

*Figure 7.* Student filmmakers referring to Natsume 4.



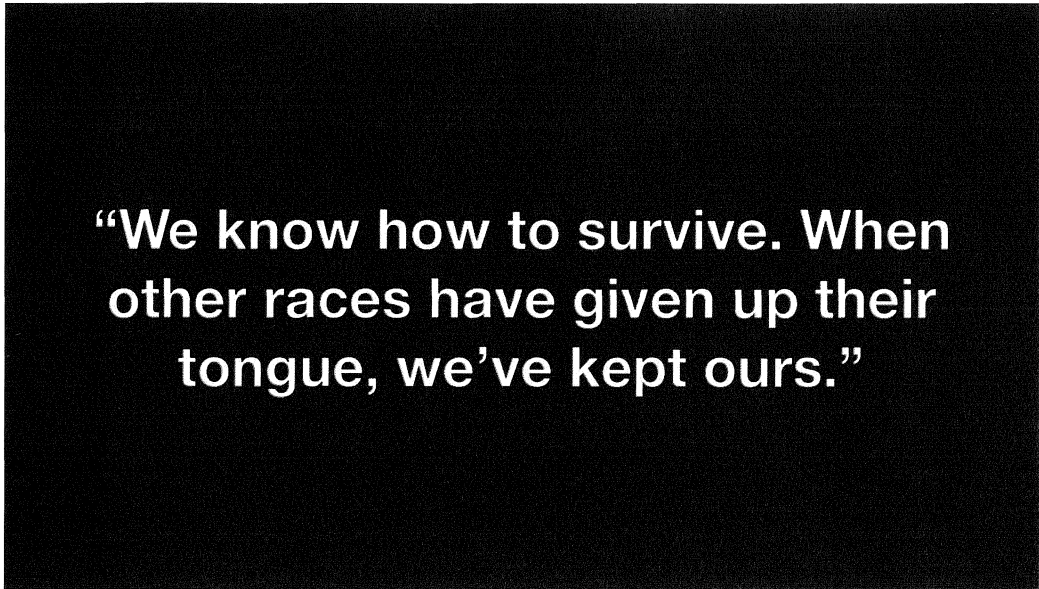
**“The ‘humanism’ of the banking  
approach masks the effort to  
turn women and men into  
automatons—the very negation  
of their ontological vocation to  
be more fully human.”**

*Figure 8.* Student filmmakers referring to Freire 1.



**(Paulo Freire, 1970, p. 74)**

*Figure 9.* Student filmmakers referring to Freire 2.



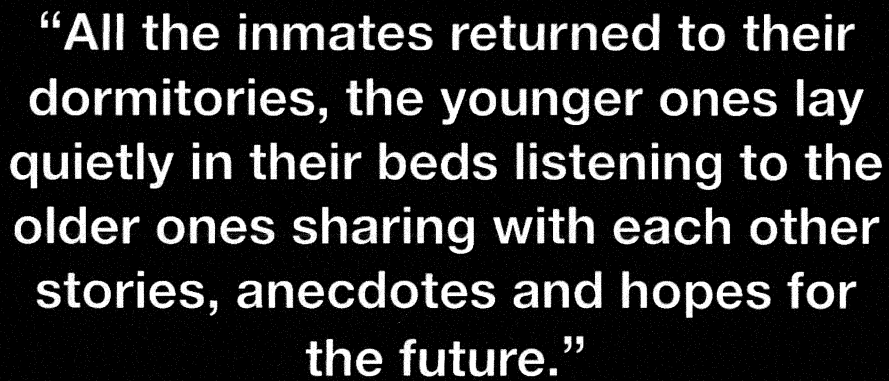
**“We know how to survive. When  
other races have given up their  
tongue, we’ve kept ours.”**

*Figure 10.* Student filmmakers referring to Anzaldúa 1.



**(Gloria Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 85)**

*Figure 11.* Student filmmakers referring to Anzaldúa 2.



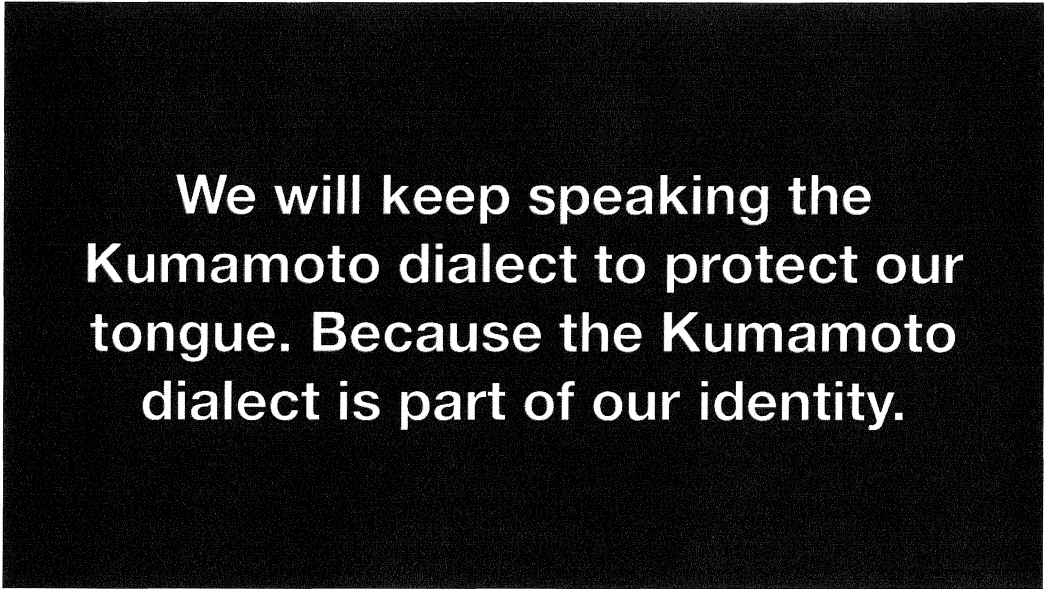
**“All the inmates returned to their dormitories, the younger ones lay quietly in their beds listening to the older ones sharing with each other stories, anecdotes and hopes for the future.”**

*Figure 12.* Student filmmakers referring to Pilkington 1.



**(Doris Pilkington, 1996, p. 74)**

*Figure 13.* Student filmmakers referring to Pilkington 2.



**We will keep speaking the  
Kumamoto dialect to protect our  
tongue. Because the Kumamoto  
dialect is part of our identity.**

*Figure 14.* Student filmmakers' message 1.



**We are now the future leaders of  
Kumamoto. So, let's be the hope  
for the next generations.**

*Figure 15.* Student filmmakers' message 2.

As shown above, the voices of Natsume, Freire, Anzaldúa, and Pilkington are compounded with those of the student filmmakers into the film. A group of BOSS, Marie Antoinette, Nimo, and Owl chose the sentence by Freire (Figure 8) since they consider that it summarizes his theory perfectly. According to a group of Blackpink, Gonnies, Katy, and Orange, referring to Anzaldúa (Figure 10) is vital; her words remind them that speaking their native tongue, that is, the Kumamoto dialect means living in their own way. A group of K, Lay, and Nancy selected the sentence by Pilkington (Figure 12), for they suggest that the girls in the story overlap with themselves in Kumamoto in terms of having a hope for the future. In this way, it is obvious that the film *Sōseki in Our Life* is showing diversity, namely, diverse voices beyond national, cultural, and language borders.

## **Conclusion**

In this article, I have drawn on the voices of the thirteen study participants in Canada and Japan and presented their various conceptions of global citizenship and multiculturalism through the text and the film. Borrowing the concept of the rhizome discussed by Deleuze and Guattari (1987) has made it possible to propose an open map with the views of the diverse actors interwoven, thereby

illustrating diversity literally and visually. The comments of the two university professors below suggest what is indispensable for practicing a new multicultural pedagogical approach in the university classroom in Japan. Drs. O and Y answer my questions respectively:

R: Based on your expertise, what's the teacher's role in promoting diversity in the classroom in higher education?

Dr. O: HUGE — in making sure the teaching corps itself is diverse/representative; in ensuring curriculum is multiculturalism; in ensuring respect of diversity in the classroom; in promoting any talks/lectures/activities/collaboration that promote diversity; in ensuring the university has a supportive policy framework that is not an empty piece of document, etc. So much to do!

Dr. Y: It is to fully examine the contents of the course and create a space where students can speak up safely.

R: Based on your expertise, what's the students' role in promoting diversity in the classroom in higher education?

Dr. O: ... [I]n ensuring participation among diverse students is equitable; in pushing for multicultural curriculum and course choices; in pressuring the university to have a policy framework and action, etc.

Dr. Y: It is an active commitment to class.

Here the two experts point out that both educators and students should be responsible and active in developing an alternative educational practice to accelerate diversity. This study has affirmed practicing participatory filmmaking in class as a new attempt as such. It can deal with diverse topics and be employed in various fields of studies at the university level. In order to further examine its possibilities, a good number of participatory filmmaking practices need to be done hereafter.

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