

Uncovering Cultural Prototypes : Old Men in Japanese Folktales and Culture

Nevenka Nikolic-Hosonaka

This paper is a progress report on the preliminary stages of a larger project that aims to find out if Japanese children's concepts of old men would change through exposure to the images of old men in Western folktales. It is the old men's characterization that differs most in the two cultures, as seen in traditional folktales. Research showed both Japanese adults' and the 2-3rd graders' familiarity with the folktales representative of the Japanese culture. Their concepts of old men were compared with those of the non-Japanese 2-3rd graders in the USA, Sweden, Korea and former Yugoslavia. The children in these countries and in Japan seem to have the same opinion of their own grandfathers. In case of anthropomorphism, the opinions differed in showing a clear influence of the traditional folktales on the way children think. Japanese children differed most from their international peers in their perceptions of the old men's bravery and feelings of love towards the opposite sex. The implications of this research take into account contemporary changes in policies and practices of English language education in elementary schools.

***characterization *experiencing culture *conceptualization
*anthropomorphism**

0. Introduction

My interest in the old men in Japanese folktales comes from my role as a teacher involved in the teaching of English in Japan, particularly to Japanese children. Since the Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Technology introduced the "Period for Integrated Study" in the third year of elementary school in 2002, every individual school had to make a decision about what educational activities would fit the interests of the students. "International understanding" was one of the choices for this class.

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According to *Practical Handbook for Elementary School English Activities* published by the Ministry in 2001, the purpose of the International Understanding activity was to incorporate foreign language conversation into the studies for international understanding. Since this is a new school activity, it is obvious that significant research should be conducted on how to make this activity a success.

This paper is a comparative study on the concepts of the old men in Japanese and Western folktales, and their influence on the way elementary school children in Japan and abroad perceive the old men today.

I take Western to mean European. Folktales have been retold over and over again in Europe for thousands of years and are believed to have a common origin, most likely in India. Although there have been historical, geographical and other changes in Europe over times, it is believed that there is an obvious common store of narrative motifs and formal elements which we can call Western civilization (Thompson, 1977). The most famous collection of European folktales that have been read throughout Europe for centuries is the Brothers Grimm's collection *The Complete Fairy Tales*. For the purposes of this paper I take it as representative of European folklore and will therefore compare this particular collection with the Japanese folktales (Nihon Mukashi Banashi). What I hope to find out by doing this comparison are the cultural differences or similarities in folktale character conceptualization.

By juxtaposing Japanese children's concepts and Western concepts, it is assumed that there is a difference between the two. The first step of the larger research is to examine to what extent the characters of old men actually differ. The second step is to see if through teaching English as a foreign language the concepts of the old men that the Japanese elementary school children have can actually be expanded to encompass the Western concepts, too. This paper will deal with the first step of the research only.

1. Why folktales?

When summarizing what the scholars (Applebee 1978, Bruner 1986, 1990,

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2002, Stein et al. 1984, Riessman 1993, Paige et al. 1998, Smith 1989, among others) said about the role of folktales in education, it is the following assumptions that are most outstanding :

- a. Folktales provide experience.
- b. Folktales provide meaning.
- c. Folktales provide human interaction and communication.
- d. Folktales are a universal human activity, the form of which is easily recognized and accepted by children all over the world.
- e. Folktales have a great classroom value.

The following sections will discuss each of the above in detail.

1. 1 Experience

The new experience the folktales offer is the new attitudes and cultural values particular to a country other than one's own. "It is the feeling of being disconcerted which is an indication of a change of attitudes and concepts, of a modification of culture-specific schemata which cultural awareness teaching should bring about" (Byram, 1990: 24). It is the feeling a Japanese child might experience after reading Grimm's *Story of the Youth who Went forth to Learn what Fear was* (The Brothers Grimm 1997 edition). In the story, a man appears in front of a youth.

He was old, however, and had a long beard. "You wretch," cried he, "you shall soon learn what it is to shudder, for you shall die." "Not so fast," replied the youth. "If I am to die, I shall have to have a say in it." "I will soon seize you," said the fiend. "Softly, softly, do not talk so big. I am as strong as you are, and perhaps even stronger." "We shall see," said the old man. "If you are stronger, I will let you go-come we will try." (p. 38)

In Japanese folktales, on the other hand, the old men are depicted as good-natured and never in a situation where they fight, especially not with the young men. Calling an old man "a fiend," although appropriate in the above-mentioned folktale, would be a culturally new concept to a Japanese child. By reading this story for example, a child is not learning about the culture, but actually experiencing it.

Byram and Escarte-Serries (1991) introduced the concepts of learning the

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language and experiencing the culture. “Experiencing” the culture is a term that disagrees with the familiar term “learning” the culture. The approaches so far, which Byram and Escarte-Serries call *language for reading and language for touring* rely on learning language structures and language skills per se with the mere exposure to the foreign country and the way of life. These approaches regard culture as a static entity with learnable facts, such as food, clothes, holidays, weather, geographical locations etc. A teacher carries out the selection of the cultural materials to be learned. In other words, he is fitting new information into the already existing framework of expectations and norms of one’s own culture. In this way learners are not getting “preparation for the unpredictable” (Byram and Escarte-Serries 1991 : 10), which is what should be happening if we wanted them to cope cognitively and affectively with the new experience. Holliday also states that it “enables group members to make sense of and operate meaningfully within the changing circumstances” (2002 : 13). The changing circumstances would in this case be cultural experiences different from one’s own.

1.2 Meaning

As is the case with any new experience, a child is looking for its meaning. Bruner (1990) supports the legacy of stories in finding that meaning. He also, is against the teacher providing the explicit cultural information and states that the construction of a meaning and the processing of information are different matters : “In computational terms, information comprises an already precoded message in the system. Meaning is preassigned to messages”(p. 4). Bruner also argues that “such a system cannot cope with vagueness, with polysemy, with metaphoric or connotative connections” (1990 : 5), which actual communication is full of.

On the other hand, Bruner (1990: 49) continues to say, “the story will almost invariably be an account of a possible world in which the encountered exception is somehow made to make sense or to have meaning.” By the “encountered exception,” he means an attitude or a cultural value different from the learner’s own. “A possible world” just proves the point that children get cognitively and affectively

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involved in the story. Cashdan (1999 : 12) says, for example, that fairy tales “mirror the struggle that children wage against forces in the self”, and gives an example of *Hansel and Gretel* in which the children experience one of the challenges of childhood having to learn when enough is enough.

1.3 Human interaction and communication

So far we have seen that folk tales provide the right environment for the construction of the new meaning of old concepts, with the learners getting cognitively and affectively involved. That meaning, according to Paige et al. (1998), is being constructed through human interaction and communication. When talking about stories and plays, Culperer defines the process of characterization as “how we form impressions of characters in our mind - not just characters themselves or their personalities” (2001 : 2) and adds that it is triggered via what the characters in stories and plays say and do in the interaction. In the Japanese folktale *The Tongueless Sparrow (Shitakiri Suzume)*, for example, the old man worries about his beloved bird and says :

“Was she unhappy because I did not feed her this morning?” he wondered. “Have I done something to hurt her? Why would she leave me? Before long, the man gave way to tears.” (Magee 1995 : 92)

It is because of what he says and does that readers conclude he is a good-hearted man.

1.4 Universal human activity

Many scholars agree that stories are a universal human activity. Smith (1989) writes that through stories children feel acts of justice, honor, courage and love. The Japanese folktale that apart from a good man also features a bad old man, *The Old Man Who Made Trees Blossom*, is an example of justice. Due to his greed and cruelty, the man always ends up with terrible smelling garbage instead of gold he was searching for.

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Riessman (1993 : 2) adds to the argument of universality of stories by citing Nelson : “Telling stories about past events seem to be a universal human activity, one of the first forms of discourse we learn as children and used throughout the life course by people of all social backgrounds in a wide array of settings.” Applebee (1978) points out that the stories children hear help them to acquire expectations about what the world is like - its vocabulary and its people and places. Stein and Policastro (1984 : 117) state that “stories are forms of discourse that reflect experiences in everyday social interaction.” They are used to convey some form of social message with a role to play in the reorganization of personal experience. By social message they mean, “instructing others, explaining natural phenomena, conveying the predominant social and moral codes of a society, instructing children in the lessons of life and giving them insight into the motives for and patterns of human behavior” (1984 : 114).

It is my view that if stories in their own culture are believed to lead to acquiring their own language and their own country’s cultural values, it seems only natural that stories of other countries can lead to acquiring those countries’ languages and cultural values.

1.5 Classroom value

Apart from these salient characteristics of folktales, scholars also focus on the classroom value of stories as a part of curriculum. Cortazzi (2002 : 1) points out that “a narrative has particular structures and functions in social talk and in constructing meanings, memories and identities,” for which reason stories can be used to develop particular language skills and humane qualities.

In the same vein, Fenner (2001) sees reading literature in the target language, which in this case would be folktales, as a dialectic dialogue between reader and text as well as between two cultures within the social interaction of the classroom.

That is only possible, Byram and Escarte-Serries (1991 : 169) write, if the teachers “rely on learners’ ability to structure the information they receive so that it

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becomes knowledge about and understanding of the foreign culture.” The structuring occurs when a learner models himself on the ethnographer where it is assumed he learns the language and culture as a whole in order to understand the foreign people. The learner does so, Byram and Escarte-Serries continue, by turning to the native speaker of the target language and products of the native speaker’s culture. In this case it is the folktales. The result is that he eventually grasps the characteristics of the foreign culture by comparing it to his own.

Even the developmental psychologists, Piaget (1969) among others, says that instead of being given information, children should be given real problem-solving challenges and that only with the abundance of such experience they will be able to change their views and accept new information. Since stories, as stated earlier, are about human behavior, therefore human relations, it is believed that by experiencing how different people behave in different circumstances, children can change and develop.

All these statements provide a theoretical framework and support for the use of folktales as a means for experiencing the culture and learning a language.

2. Research Methodology

2.1 Procedures

2.1.1 Traditional Japanese folk tales selected for analysis

The focus of this preliminary study is on what I consider the first fundamental learning process : the learners’ exploration of their own culture. In the light of the above-mentioned, I selected traditional folktales as a starting point in discovering what the children’s concepts of the characters appearing in the traditional folktales are. To find that out, three books considered representative of Japanese traditional folktales were selected :

- (1) The first traditional folktales read to 2-year old children (*Nissai kara hajimaru yomikikase ehon - Nihon no meisaku*)
- (2) Collection of traditional folktales for elementary school children (*Nihon dowa hogyokusen*)

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(3) Collection of three volumes of traditional folktales, written in old-fashioned Japanese (*Takara-bon Nihon no minwa*).

The first of the three books consists of 10 stories. Nine of them feature old men. The second one consists of 92 stories. I asked a highly educated Japanese national, to recommend thirty most popular folktales. Out of the thirty she chose thirteen featured old men. They are the following :

- (1) *Hanasaka jiji (The Old Man who Made Trees Blossom)*
- (2) *Momotaro (Peach Boy)*
- (3) *Shitakiri suzume (The Tongueless Sparrow)*
- (4) *Kachikachi yama (Kachikachi Mountain)*
- (5) *Kasajizo (The Grateful Statues)*
- (6) *Urashima Taro (Urashimataro and the Kingdom Beneath the Sea)*
- (7) *Neko no na (Cat's Name)*
- (8) *Kaguyahime (Princess Kaguya)*
- (9) *Issunboshi (Little One-Inch)*
- (10) *Kintaro (Boy Named Kintaro)*
- (11) *Kobutori (The Old Man with a Lump)*
- (12) *Uriko Himeko (Princess Uriko)*
- (13) *Umi Sachihiko, Yama Sachihiko (Sea Boy and Mountain Boy)*

The old men appearing in the first traditional folktales read to 2-year olds were all included in the 30 tales my Japanese informant chose.

Old men appeared 54 times in 306 tales in the third set of folktales. I would like to conclude here citing Kawai when he writes that “We may count the emphasis on old men as a peculiarity of Japanese fairy tales” (Kawai 1996 : 151).

2.1.2 Analysis of the Japanese traditional tales

To analyze the most popular Japanese folktales, I chose three Japanese native speakers : a woman in her 30's, a man in his 40's and a woman in her 50's. The difference in age and sex is believed to provide a fair grasp of what an average Japanese national's cultural views would be. They were all given the 30 folktales

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chosen by my initial Japanese respondent as the most representative, and were asked to record all the characters they encountered in the tales as well as their own impression of them. The impressions were to be based on :

- a. the descriptions stated in the book, i.e. the adjectives describing their personality, like “once there was a kind old man...”
- b. what the characters said, like “Have I done something to hurt her?”
- c. what the characters did, like “Before long, the man gave way to tears.”

Later on, their answers were compared and similarities interpreted to be typical of the Japanese culture. They also formed the basis of the questionnaires I conducted with groups of children in different countries.

The analysis of the relationships the old men have with other people showed that they include :

- a. wife with whom he takes care of a dog or a sparrow (*The Man who Made Trees Blossom*) ;
- b. wife and a child who, almost as a rule, is not their biological child (*Little One-Inch, Peach Boy, Princess Kaguya*) ;
- c. only wife with whom he happily lives together, usually performing kind acts (*The Grateful Statues*) ;
- d. wife who has a bad character thus highlighting his good personality (*The Tongueless Sparrow*) ;
- e. other old men with an outstandingly bad personality thus highlighting the good old man’s personality (*The Man who Made trees Blossom*).

Parenthood is one of the important themes in Japanese folktales. In 30 stories I found only two examples with a “real” mother or a father, though, and in both examples they were heavily dependent on their child. Parents with biological children that I found in two stories did not fare well : one couple had eight daughters who get eaten by a dragon, and another couple’s child drowned because of his long name. Although it might be necessary to research what is considered “old” in Japanese folktales, the very fact that the “old” couple is hoping for a child, there is a possibility that they are of child-bearing age. Therefore, their ability to

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successfully raise their non-biological children might be an example of their wisdom.

Following the above-mentioned, it can be concluded that the old men, as represented in Japanese folktales, can be described as kind and fond of children.

2.1.3 Western European traditional folktales selected for analysis

Equally, I analyzed folktales which are read all over Europe, i. e. those collected by the Brothers Grimm, and those written by Andersen and Easop. In Grimm, in 210 stories, I identified 209 different characters, out of which old men appeared in only 13. Easop's 146 fables were mainly about animals. In Andersen, out of 16 stories there was only one about an old man. Yolen (1999) says that the reason there are so few stories starring the elderly is that children wanted to hear stories about other children or about adventurous young adults and that the concept of honoring parents and old people has survived mostly only in Far Eastern cultures. This might explain why there are so many folktales with old men in Japan.

2.1.4 Analysis of Western folktales

To find out how the old men are characterized in the Western folktales, I analyzed Grimm and partly relied on Yolen (1999) who wrote a book about the "gray heroes," by which she meant the old people depicted as heroes in folktales. The stories she analyzed can be categorized into four parts: those dealing with wisdom, trickery, adventure and love of the old men. The most positive characteristic of an old person is that of a wise man or a wise woman. Old men in western stories can be tricky, too. They succeed in tricking their own wife, thief, giant, master or the Devil himself. An example is *The Girl Without Hands* (Grimm). Yolen states that it is an old man who saves his grandchildren, a city, a kingdom, a castle, a king, despite the dangers, thus showing his adventurous spirit. In the end, she concludes that there are folktales that deal with older people's feelings of love (Greek story *Baucis and Philemon*). Stories with adventurous old men come from Russia (*Verlioka*), Hungary (*The Man who Lodged with Serpents*), Poland (*The*

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Poor Countryman and the Greedy Hag) or Finland (*The Magical Words*), for example. I find these characteristics very different from what I have found in Japanese folktales and therefore take them as representative of Western culture, too.

The old men in the Grimm's collection appeared in the following stories :

- (1) *The Story of the Youth who Went forth to Learn what Fear was*
- (2) *The Girl without Hands*
- (3) *The Golden Goose*
- (4) *The Old Man and his Grandson*
- (5) *The Water of Life*
- (6) *The Devil's Sooty Brother*
- (7) *The Old Man Made Young Again*
- (8) *The Glass Coffin*
- (9) *The Hut in the Forest*
- (10) *The Master-Thief*
- (11) *The Little Folks' Present*
- (12) *St. Joseph in the Forest*
- (13) *Poverty and Humility Lead to Heaven*

Here the old men were depicted as :

- a. evil (*The Story of the Youth who Went forth to Learn what Fear was*)
- b. getting revenge by corporal punishment (*The Girl Without Hands*)
- c. too old and clumsy (*The Old Man and his Grandson*)
- d. advisers (*The Water of Life*)
- e. grumpy (*The Glass Coffin*)
- f. little old men in the woods that order around and that can punish or reward. (*The Golden Goose*)

Although it can be said that there are old men in Grimm's collection who are wise and kind, the two characteristics that I find strikingly different from the old men in Japanese traditional folktales are being grumpy and fond of ordering around.

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Yolen, too, agrees that the old men are found to be wise and tricky, but also adds a couple of characteristics not found in Grimm, those of bravery and love towards the opposite sex.

2.1.5 Comparison of the characters appearing in Japanese and Western folktales

Since children learn most from human behavior, I compared only human characters that appear in both Japanese and Western folktales. There are similarities. For example, in both Japanese and Western folktales, two or three brothers or sisters seem to have the same characteristics: the oldest are conceited, greedy, and even cruel, whereas the youngest are kind-hearted, modest, loving and usually seem to fare best in the end. Examples of Japanese folktales are *The Sea Boy and the Mountain Boy (Umi Sachihiko, Yama Sachihiko)* and *The Star Festival (Tanabata)*. Examples of Western folktales are: *The Golden Goose and The Three Little Birds*.

For the purposes of finding out how school children would react to the cultural concepts different from their own, I selected the old men since they appear in both Japanese and in Western folktales and are the only human characters found to be differently characterized. It is therefore assumed that one can observe the change in children's views if the foreign language instruction presents children with a character behaving differently than the one behaving according to their own cultural framework. Stories highlighting those different attitudes and behavioral patterns will be presented to the children in a longitudinal study. Their reactions will consequently be analyzed to see if the change has occurred. This is the aim of the larger research this paper is only a part of.

2.2 Participants

Six groups of participants were chosen for the research:

- (a) Fifty six young Japanese adults between the ages 18 and 20 (vocational school students, future English language teachers);
- (b) One hundred and seven Japanese 2nd graders of an elementary school;

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- (c) Eighty Korean 2-3rd graders ;
- (d) Twenty six Swedish 3rd graders ;
- (e) Twenty five 3rd graders in Serbia & Montenegro (former Yugoslavia)
- (f) Fifteen 3rd graders in the USA(The children were of mixed originsix were Mexican American,four were African American, one was Indian,one was Argentinan, two were Mexican, and one was El Salvadorian American.)

2.3 Questionnaires

Two questionnaires were conducted. The first questionnaire had a purpose of finding out how familiar the Japanese are with the traditional folktales. The folktales I used were the following eight: *Princess Kaguya*, *Little One-Inch*, *Peach Boy*, *The Old Man who Made Trees Blossom*, *The Tongueless Sparrow*, *The Grateful Statues* and *Kachikachi Mountain*. They were chosen from the first collection of folktales read to 2-year old children, *Nissai kara hajimaru yomikikase ehon*. It was my assumption that the stories chosen for this kind of book were the most known ones. Although the book contained ten stories with nine featuring the old men, I omitted *Urashimataro and the Kingdom beneath the Sea*, since the main character only turns into an old man in the end of the story and does not really reveal any characteristics of the old men.

There are 8 different old men in these stories, out of which only two are depicted as bad, one of the old men in *The Old Man who Made Trees Blossom* and the old man in *Kachikachi Mountain*. If the respondents guessed which were good or bad, I regarded it as knowledge of the stories' content.

The second questionnaire was administered to groups of children in different countries. Its purpose was to find out how much folktales, being representative of particular countries' cultures, influence the concepts children in those countries have about the old men. There were four questions and they were as follow. (Children were also to give reasons for their choice.)

(1) How can you best describe your Grandfather?

There were four choices : kind, fond of children, grumpy, fond of ordering

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around. If the respondents circled the first two choices (kind and fond of children), I would take it as being representative of the Japanese folktales and the latter two (grumpy and ordering around) of the Western folktales. Only one answer was to be circled.

(2) If your Grandfather could change into something else, what do you think he would change into?

There were six choices : raccoon dog, fox, snake, frog, horse and devil. The first three choices were common in Japanese folktales and the latter three in Western folktales in general. Again, only one choice was to be circled. Here I was hoping to see the influence of folktales since anthropomorphism does not happen in real life.

(3) How can you best describe other old men? The reason for asking this question was to avoid subjectivity.

(4) If other old men could change into something else, what do you think they would change into?

The choices were the same as for the questions one and two.

The purpose of the second questionnaire was to find out how the Japanese adults, Japanese children and their international counterparts would rate the old men on their wisdom, bravery, trickery and the ability to fall in love on the scale of five : all of them are, most of them are, half of them are, hardly any of them are and none of them are.

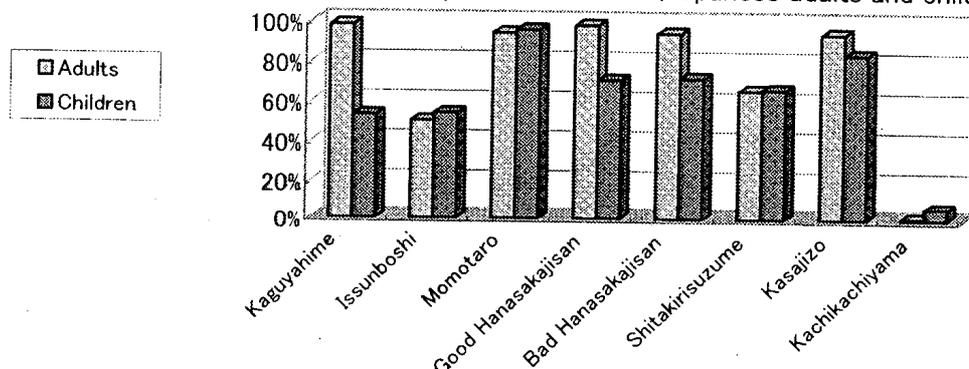
3. Results and discussion

The following graphs will represent the results of the above mentioned questionnaires. First, there will be a comparison of the Japanese adults with the Japanese 2nd graders, and then of the Japanese 2nd graders with their international counterparts.

Figure 1 shows the results of the first questionnaire, i.e. the Japanese respondents' (both adults and children) familiarity with the traditional Japanese folktales. I am taking this familiarity as a possible source of influence on the respondents' concept of the old men.

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Figure 1: Familiarity with Japanese Folktales (Japanese adults and children)



Both Japanese adults and the Japanese elementary school children seem to have fair knowledge of the most famous Japanese folktales with the exception of *Kachikachiyama* (*Kachikachi Mountain*). The main character is a bad old man, and the story is not taught in Japanese elementary schools, which can possibly be taken as a reason for poor showing. Since the other characters are mainly kind and fond of children, the resulting opinions children might have of old men might be interpreted partly as the influence of the folktales. Other media influencing children's opinions will be dealt with in a further study.

Figure 2 shows the Japanese respondents' (adults and children) congruity with Japanese traditional concepts of old men, when describing their own grandfathers, and is a result of the first question in the second questionnaire.

Figure 2: Congruity with Japanese traditional concepts of old men (Japanese respondents' view of their own grandfathers)

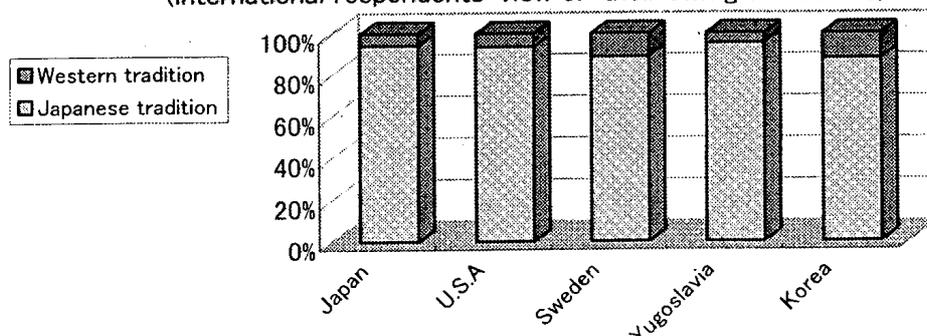


Both Japanese adults and children show their preference for the kind old men. Higher percentage of Western tradition in adults can be interpreted as a result of more exposure to other influences.

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Figure 3 shows the agreement of the international respondents with the concept of old men (their own grandfathers) being kind and fond of children.

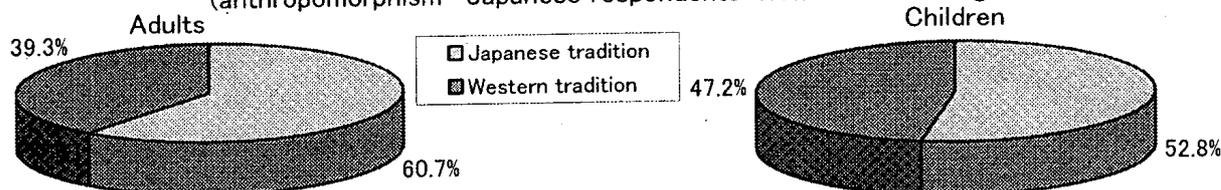
Figure 3: Congruity with Japanese traditional concepts of old men (international respondents' view of their own grandfathers)



It is not surprising that even the international respondents share high esteem for their own grandfathers. The influence of the negativity Western folktales attribute to old men is not noticeable, possibly due to the subjectivity factor.

Figure 4 shows the comparison of the Japanese adults and children and the congruity of their views with the Japanese traditional concepts, when anthropomorphism (attribution of human motivation, characteristics or behavior to inanimate objects, animals or natural phenomena) is concerned. I presume that there is less subjectivity involved in discussing the animal transformation of old men mainly due to the fact that it only happens in folktales. This is the area where the direct influence of folktales and beliefs deeply rooted in culture are expected to be felt.

Figure 4: Congruity with Japanese traditional concepts of old men (anthropomorphism - Japanese respondents' view of their own grandfathers)



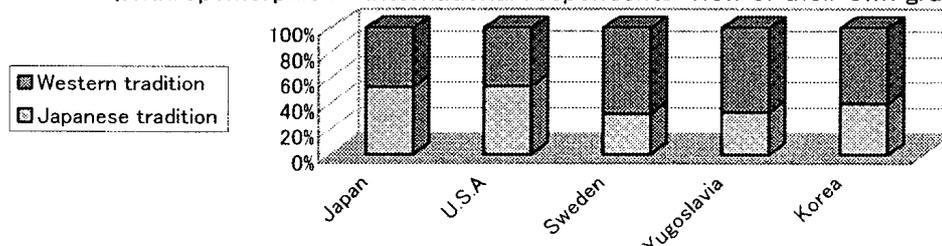
Although both charts show the prevalence of the Japanese traditional view of anthropomorphism, i.e. the belief that it is the snakes, raccoon dogs and foxes people transform into, the Western view (where people turn into frogs, horses and devils) is also present. The children's lower percentage of the "Japaneseness" might

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be attributed to the insufficient exposure to the folktales with transformations.

Figure 5 shows the international respondents' view of anthropomorphism and their own grandfathers.

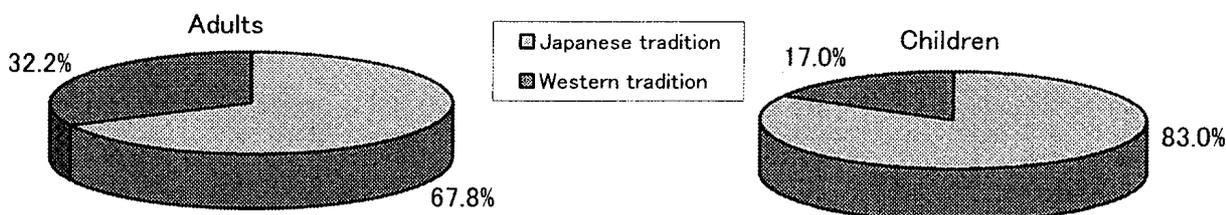
Figure 5: Congruity with Japanese traditional concepts of old men (anthropomorphism -international respondents' view of their own grandfathers)



Swedes and Yugoslavs scored high on Western tradition. Many Swedish children chose “a devil” for an answer. According to Klein (1980 : 195), the Swedes were not allowed in old days to mention the devil’s name and would instead call him “the old man”. The US children (with a very diverse cultural population) scored the same as the Japanese. In Korea, I was informed, the most common transformations characters undergo in folktales are the ones of young girls changing into foxes. Since a fox was one of the choices, the Korean children’s scores were slightly higher when compared with the Swedes and Yugoslavs.

Fig 6 shows the comparison of the Japanese adults with children and the congruity of their views of old men in general, other than their own grandfathers with the Japanese traditional concepts.

Figure 6: Congruity with Japanese traditional concepts of old men (Japanese respondents' view of other old men)

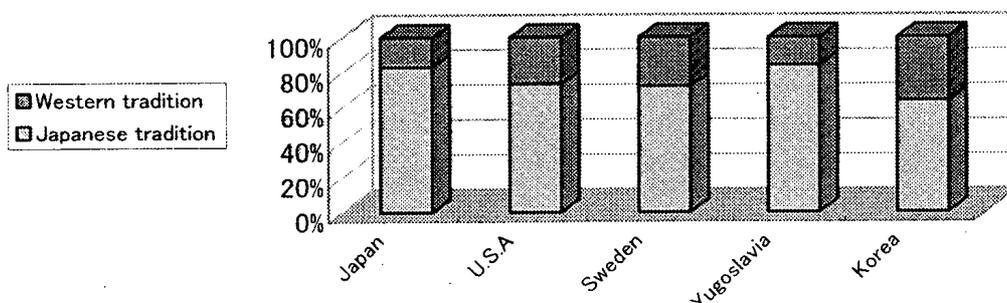


The Japanese respondents' familiarity with the traditional concepts of old men can be observed. However, the percentages are lower than in Figure 2 possibly due to more objectivity.

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Figure 7 shows the international respondents' views of other old men.

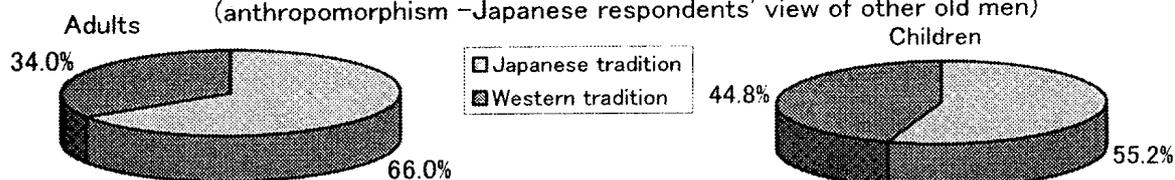
Figure 7: Congruity with Japanese traditional concepts of old men (international respondents' view of other old men)



Although the percentages are lower when compared with own grandfathers, possibly due to the objectivity reason⁴, influence of the media other than folktales, for example one can observe the positive attitude towards old men in general.

Figure 8 shows the Japanese respondents' views on anthropomorphism and old men in general, other than own grandfathers.

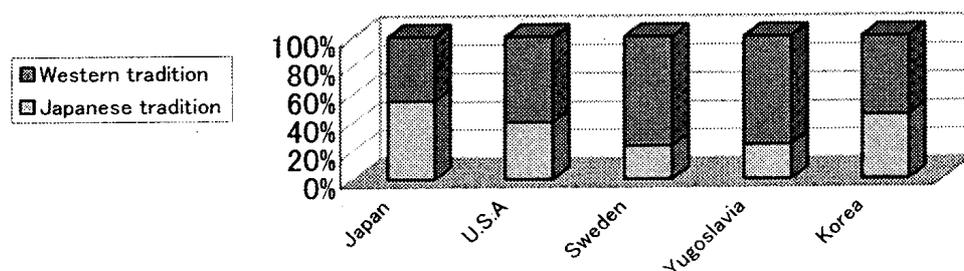
Figure 8: Congruity with Japanese traditional concepts of old men (anthropomorphism - Japanese respondents' view of other old men)



The percentages are similar to the ones in Figure 4. Views on anthropomorphism can possibly be interpreted as something culturally rooted therefore less prone to change.

Figure 9 shows the international respondents' view of old men in general and anthropomorphism.

Figure 9: Congruity with Japanese traditional concepts of old men (anthropomorphism - international respondents' view of other old men)

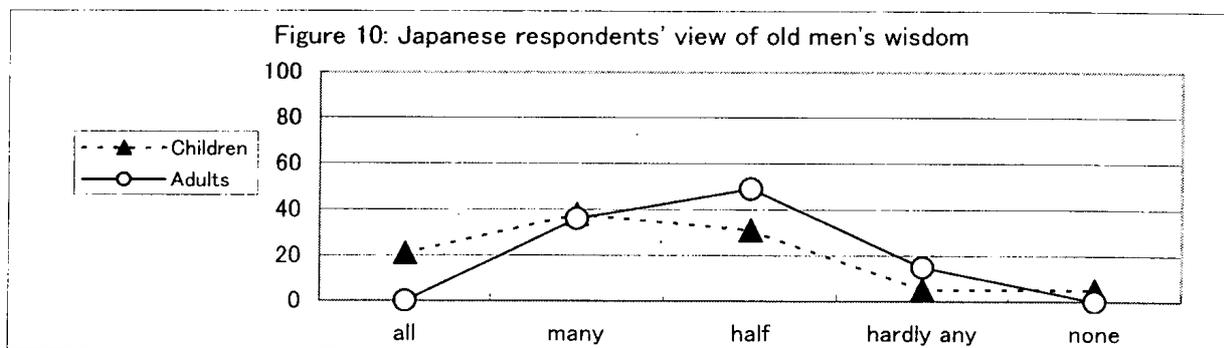


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Whereas the Japanese children show inclination toward the traditional Japanese concepts, all of the foreign respondents show the opposite, i. e. the inclination towards the Western folktales' concepts of anthropomorphism.

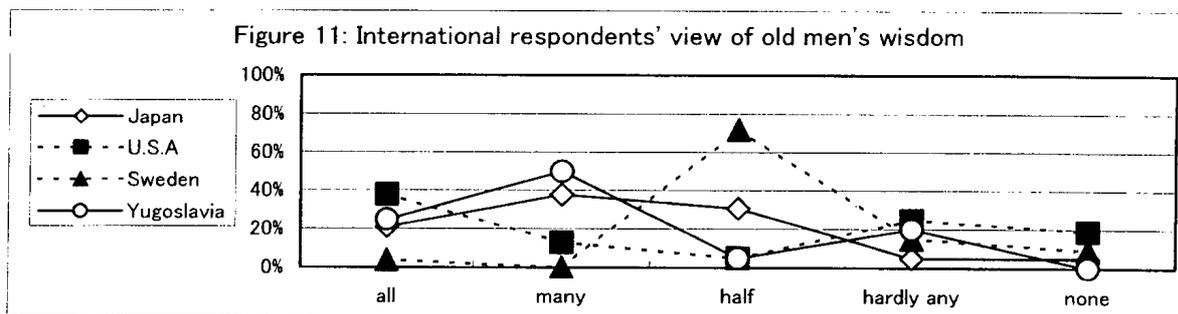
The following graphs will show the results to the second questionnaire, first of the Japanese respondents, adults and children, and then of Japanese children compared with their foreign counterparts.

Figure 10 shows how the Japanese adults compare with the Japanese children on the subject of old men's wisdom.



It can be clearly seen that both Japanese adults and children share the views of old men's wisdom judging by the low percentages for "hardly any are wise" and "none are wise." It agrees with the Japanese cultural concept of the old men being wise.

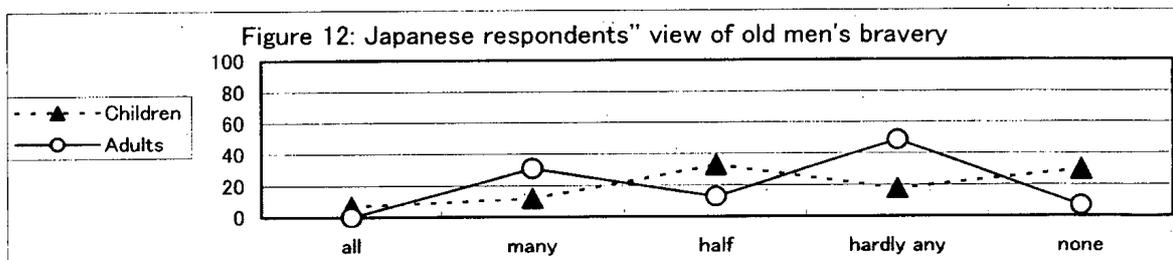
Figure 11 shows the international respondents' view of old men's wisdom.



The fact that old men are wise in both Japanese and Western folktales can also be seen on this graph. Although there are variations among countries concerning the number of wise old men, they all agree that numbers for "hardly any are wise" and "none are wise" are equally low.

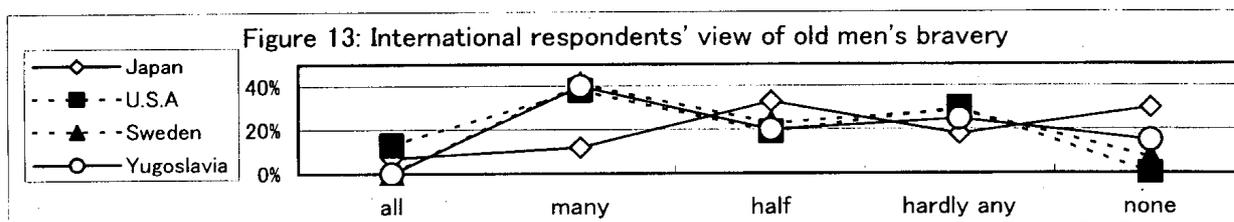
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Figure 12 shows the Japanese respondents' views of old men's bravery. None of the stories I analyzed featured brave old men since bravery is usually a prerogative of young men.



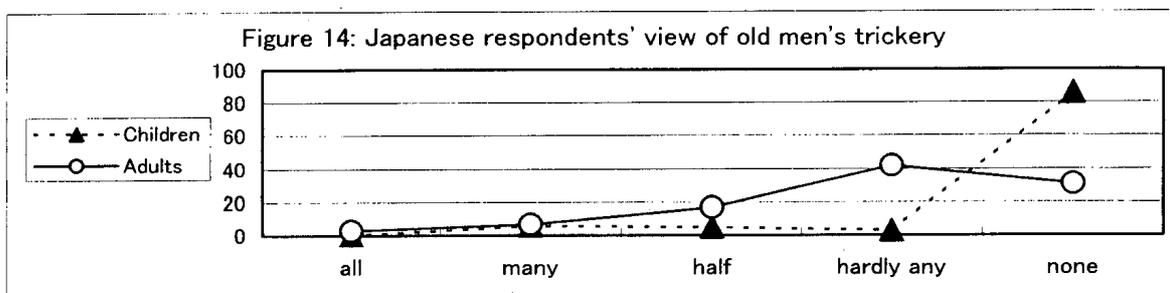
The results show that neither the Japanese adults nor children find the old men to be very brave, which is opposite of the concepts found in Western folktales.

Figure 13 shows the international respondents' view of old men's bravery, the characteristic attributed to the old men in Western folktales.



A big discrepancy can be seen between the Japanese children and their international peers on views of the old men's bravery. The result coincides with the analysis of the Western folktales which indicate that there are brave old men.

Figure 14 shows the Japanese respondents' view of old men's trickery, a characteristic attributed to the old men in Western folktales.

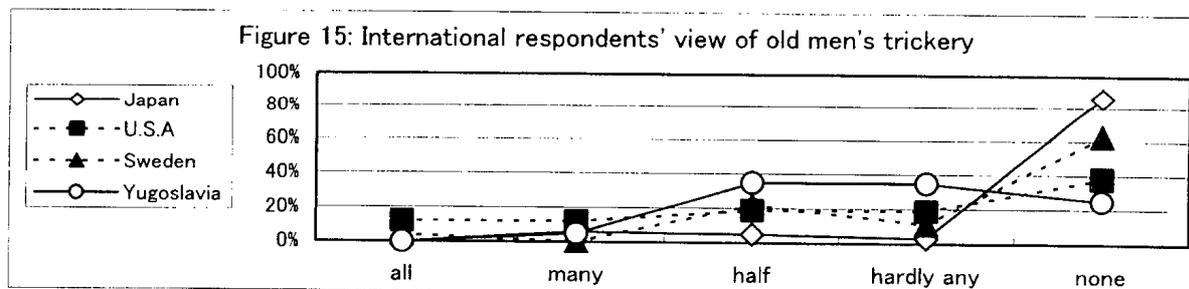


More Japanese adults think the old men are tricky, although the percentages

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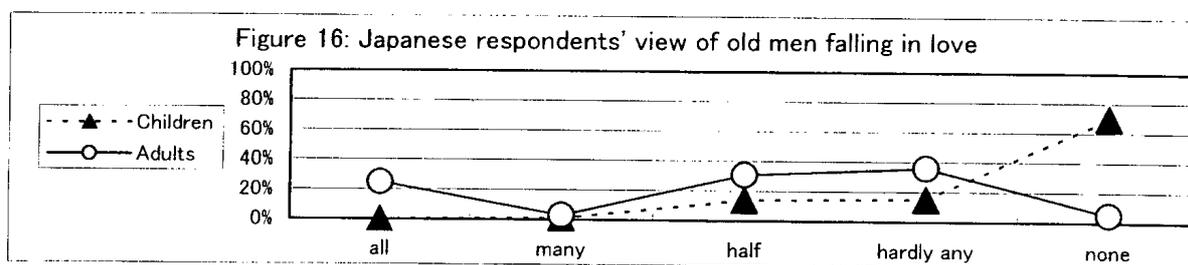
for “all are tricky,” “many are tricky” and “half are tricky” are very low. Old men in Japanese folktales are never tricky.

Figure 15 shows the international respondents’ view of old men’s trickery.



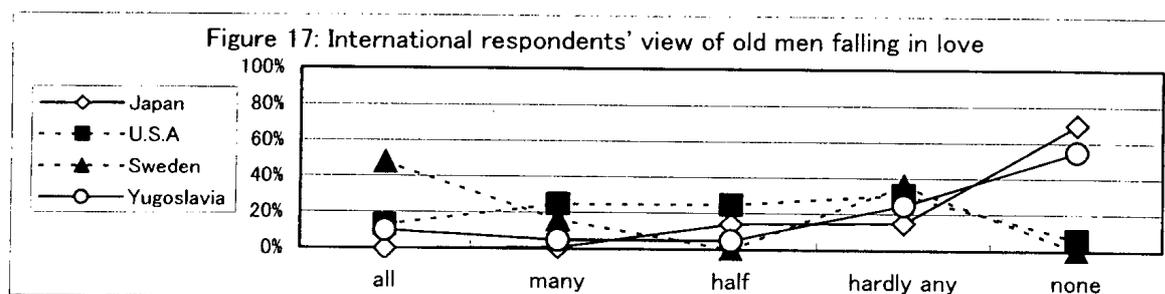
The graph curves show the similar trend with almost all respondents, apart from the Yugoslavians. The Japanese respondents scored the highest on the “none are tricky” level, which agrees with the view old men enjoy in folktales.

Figure 16 shows the Japanese respondents’ view of old men falling in love, a characteristic not found in Japanese folktales.



Some discrepancy can be seen between the adults and children, but it can be taken to be the result of the difference in their concept of “love.”

Figure 17 shows the international respondents’ view of old men falling in love.



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A big discrepancy can be seen between the Japanese informants and their international peers (except for Yugoslavians). It can be interpreted as a difference in the concept of “love,” since the reasons children stated for their answers show that the Japanese children’s concept of the old men falling in love (*koi wo suru*) indicates “cheating on their wives” (*uwaki wo suru*).

5. Conclusion and implications

This paper is a part of a bigger project. The results point us into the direction of aspects of adventure and love of the old men that the children in two cultures differ on. This is an area where, through foreign language instruction, possible changes in the Japanese children’s viewpoints can be observed. Stories especially written to trigger this change focus on the characteristics of old men that are different from the ones culturally accepted. The new questionnaires in the end of the research will tempt to find out if such concepts as bravery, love, wisdom and trickery have been internalized enough to show the shift towards expanding of the children’s horizons. It is anticipated that the children will realize that the old men are kind but also recognize that they can be tricky, adventurous and that they can also fall in love.

There is a fear among parents of young children as well as among school authorities that introducing cultural concepts alien to their own culture will endanger children’s own cultural identity. As far as that fear is concerned, I am taking the view of Byram and Escarte-Sarries (1991 : 171), when they say that “a change assumes not abandoning native culture viewpoint, but acquiring an understanding of another culture by perceiving its values, meanings and behaviors from the standpoint of a member of that culture.” It is through foreign language teaching that these authors think it is possible, leading to the learners’ understanding of themselves and their own culture, at the same time.

Although this study deals only with the old men in folktales, it will, at the same time, on a much larger scale, attempt to show that it is possible, by utilizing the experiential value of stories, both traditional and modern, to understand other people’s values and reflect on one’s own. The narrative techniques and the

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awareness of them can be useful as methods in teaching since they offer, according to Cortazzi (2002 : 25) “a reflexive sense-making approach to developing learners’ awareness of their own learning.” In that respect, in an FL environment, like Japan, stories offer a reality, and authenticity hard to find in the already existing instructional materials.

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