

DIJ Social Science Study Group

3 February, 2016, 18:30

Zi Wang, University of Duisburg-Essen



Language and Institutions: Exploring the origins of seniority-based hierarchical relations in Japanese school club activities

Seniority-based hierarchical relations (*jouge kankei*) are prevalent in Japanese group dynamics. But where do they come from, and how are they constructed and maintained? *Considering jouge kankei* as an institution, this research project shows that secondary school club activities (*bukatsudou*) are places where such forms of hierarchies are introduced to young social actors through various forms of language use and social practices.

Based on ongoing ethnographic research, this talk will address the discursive construction of hierarchical relations between upper-grade and lower-grade students in daily activities in musical clubs. I show that upon entering secondary school, young children in Japan experience immediate socialisation and acquaint themselves with values and behavioural norms, in particular when dealing with seniors (*sempai*) and juniors (*kouhai*) in club activities.

Anchored in the new institutionalism in the sociology of education (Meyer/Rowan 2006), the project adopts a discourse analytic approach (Heritage/Clayman 2010) to examine how institutional *jouge kankei* are constructed, reified, and legitimised by social actors through language use and supplementary social practices. The analysis draws from text analysis of school documents, participant observation in student groups and interviews with students and teachers.

Zi Wang is a doctoral fellow at the Institute of East Asian Studies, University of Duisburg-Essen. He holds a BA in Liberal Arts (sociolinguistics major) from Waseda University and a MA in International Affairs from Sciences Po Paris. His research interests include educational discourse, social relations in youth groups in Japan, and new institutionalism in education.

Presentation and discussion will be in English. All are welcome to attend, but prior registration (heinrich@diptokyo.org) is appreciated.

The DIJ Social Science Study Group is organized by Steffen Heinrich, Phoebe Holdgrün and Daniel Kremers.

Venue is the German Institute for Japanese Studies Tokyo (DIJ)
Jōchi Kioizaka Bldg. 2F, 7-1 Kioichō, Chiyoda-ku, Tōkyō 102-0094, Phone: 03-3222-5077
For directions visit <http://www.diptokyo.org/access&lang=en>