

Appendix A

Example duoethnography: Exam pressure

Introduction

In Japan, pressure to perform well in school exams is often said to be a big problem for many students. Pressure can come from many different places, including friends, parents, teachers and wider society in general (Bossy, 2000). Some theories say that pressure is a good thing because it helps to increase motivation, which can push students to work harder and get better results. On the other hand, too much pressure can have the opposite effect and lead to demotivation in students.

Dialogue 1: Pressure from parents and peers

In this first dialogue, we discuss where pressure came from when we were high school students.

Mariko: Can I ask, did you get a lot of pressure to do well in exams from your parents?

Rio: No, not really. Of course my parents supported me, but I don't remember them ever pressuring me. Actually, the biggest pressure came from my friends. My best friend at high school was always studying and was the best student in the class. She was always telling me how important the exams were and they could affect the rest of our lives.

Mariko: Really? That's surprising to hear, I didn't really talk about exams with my friends. I had so much pressure from my parents and teachers that when I was with my friends I didn't want to talk about exams at all.

Rio: So, you did get pressure from your parents?

Mariko: Yeah. I think it's because I'm an only child. They had (and still have) pretty high expectations of me.

Analysis

We found that pressure came from different places. For Mariko, the main pressure was from her parents and teachers. However, for Rio, pressure came from her high-achieving friends.

Dialogue 2: Pressure and motivation

In the second dialogue we talk about whether or not pressure motivates us.

Mariko: Have you felt any positive effects from exam pressure?

Rio: In some ways, yes. I'm not very motivated to study, and when I was in high school I was often daydreaming in class instead of listening to the teacher. However, because of the pressure to do well in exams, I started studying hard so that I could enter my first choice of university. I think in some ways, pressure can be a good motivator!

Mariko: I think I had the opposite experience. I've always been very motivated in my studies, but the pressure to do well in entrance exams was too much for me. I worked hard to enter university, but now I have no energy left. I think too much exam pressure can take away the energy and enthusiasm of students.

Rio: That's interesting, I hadn't thought about that before. So maybe pressure can affect different people in different ways. Some people need pressure to be motivated, while others might lose their motivation if they feel too pressured.

Analysis

We found that motivation can be affected by exam pressure. For Rio, exam pressure was a positive source of motivation. However, Mariko felt it drained her motivation to study.

Conclusion

In this duoethnography we explored our experiences with exam pressure, and found that it influenced us differently. First, we found that for some people pressure can come from parents and teachers, and for others it comes from their high-achieving friends. Secondly, we found that exam pressure can have both positive and negative effects on motivation. Everyone has to take exams, so teachers, schools, and governments should consider points like these carefully when planning exam systems.

References

Bossy, S. (2000). Academic pressure and impact on Japanese students. *McGill Journal of Education*, 35(1), p. 71-89.

Appendix B

Suggestions for topics

Peer pressure
Studying English
Exam stress
Sempai-Kouhai relations
Beauty standards
Smartphone addiction
Parental expectations
Cyber-bullying
Exploitative part-time jobs
Studying abroad

Appendix C

Example of transcript coding

Original transcript:

Rio: Um...yeah, so that was the main reason why I chose....erm...this university

Mariko: Oh wow, I didn't realize that

Rio: Yeah, sorry it was such a long story!

Mariko: No no no, um... Have you felt any positive effects from exam pressure?

Rio: In some ways, yeah. I'm actually not very motivated to study, and when I was in high school I was often daydreaming in class instead of listening to the teacher.

Mariko: Yeah, I know exactly what you mean, my sister is like that actually...

Rio: ...so, I guess because of the pressure to do well in exams, I started studying really really hard so that I could enter my first choice of university.

Mariko: Sorry to interrupt, but do you erm...think...do you think that the pressure motivated you to study?

Rio: Yeah, I think so, that's a good point. How about you?

Mariko: Umm..I don't know really, I think I had maybe the opposite experience. Like, I've always been very motivated in my studies, well sometimes! but the pressure to do well in entrance exams was too much for me. I worked so so hard to enter university, but now I have no energy left. I think too much exam pressure can take away the energy of students.