



# CHINA-JAPAN-ROK YOUTH DIALOGUE

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**Towards Shared  
Understanding of  
and Responses to  
Common Life  
Challenges**

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**November 14,  
2015  
Seoul, ROK**

Dialogue by  
**30 CJK Students,**  
including members of  
**KIP and GALF**



中日韩三国合作秘书处  
한중일 3국협력사무국  
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동아시아재단  
East Asia Foundation

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# China-Japan-ROK Youth Dialogue

**Towards shared understanding of and response to common life challenges**

## **Overview**

China-Japan-ROK Youth Dialogue was held on November 14, 2015 at the Trilateral Cooperation Secretariat (TCS), co-hosted by the TCS and the Japan Center for International Exchange (JCIE) with East Asia Foundation (EAF) as the sponsor. The Dialogue was organized by the participation of 30 university students of China, Japan, and the ROK including the members of Knowledge Investment Programs (KIP) and Global Asia Leadership Forum (GALF). Participants, who were divided into three mixed-nationality groups, shared understandings on the three countries' situations and prospects of youth issues of 1) education (early English education), 2) work (job searching culture), and 3) gender role (balance between family life and work), and discussed ideas of the trilateral cooperation in dealing with such matters. The China-Japan-ROK Youth Dialogue not only facilitated the networking among the youths of the three countries, but also the understanding of the similarities and differences of the issues that are closely related to their course of life, which motivated participants to think of cooperative ways to build a better future for the countries.

## **Presentation 1. Education**

### **Early English Education**

By

ENDO Akira, KIM Heejin, KIM Hyunji, LUAN Qing, PARK Geon, SATO Mana,  
SU Xin, SUN Gan, TAKEUCHI Yui and YOKOI Yuko

Early English education aims to promote people's broader understanding and the practical uses of English. In China, Japan, and the ROK, however, this good intention is distorted due to the English education system that is heavily focused on written aptitude, one of the most popular credentials for the nation's highly competitive university entrance and job hunting.

As an alternative to the existing education focused on enhancing written test skills, English education that cultivates speaking skills is promoted at an early stage, reflecting the theory that young children are flexible to learn foreign languages.

It is true that there are some possible side effects in early English education; including potential negative impacts on one's mother tongue as the children mix words between two languages and expensive tutoring fees. Yet this negative effect can be mitigated through gradual learning that fits to the course of language development, which starts from English songs at the early age to more advanced contents.

## Possible negative effects

- Negative effect on mother language
- Cost problem



<Source: Student Presentation>

In conclusion, early English education has been initially promoted for the good purpose of enhancing practical English skills, and thus is necessary. Efforts should be made by the three countries to reduce the side effects.

## **Presentation 2. Work**

### **Employment Problem in East Asia**

By

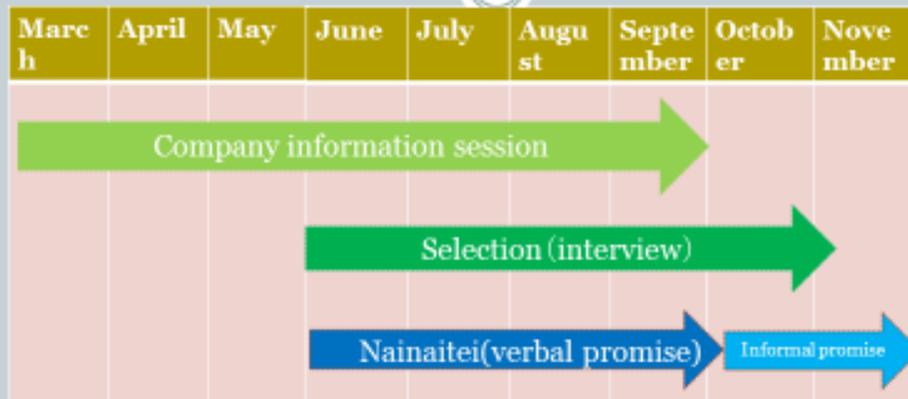
CHO Hongrae, CHO Sookyoung, HUANG Di, LI Yumo, MORIHARA Ayako,  
NAKAMURA Yuto, PARK Jihae, SANO Yumie, and ZHANG Wenli

#### 1. Situations of the job markets of the three countries

Employment is one of the pressing issues among the youths of China, Japan, and the ROK. Although they share similar difficulties in finding a job, the situations of each countries' job markets are different from country to country.

As for Japan, it has an employment system called 'simultaneous recruiting system for new graduates,' which was rooted in the country for about 100 years. Although the number of mid-career recruitment is gradually increasing in the last few years, most Japanese enterprises prefer new graduates to those who have social experiences. Under this 'simultaneous recruiting system,' the starting time of company information session and interview is fixed, and the competition rate to get a job tends to be very high.

## Problems in Japan



- The starting timing of company information sessions and interviews is fixed.
- Enterprises want to recruit “new graduates”, although mid-career recruiting has gradually increased.

<Source: Student Presentation>

In the ROK, the job market requires several credentials called ‘spec’, including TOEIC scores, GPA, and computer-related license. The job applicants, on the other hand, have unconditional love for large conglomerates and foreign companies and do not wish to go to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). This results in a skewed concentration of highly qualified applicants all in one place. Moreover, less high school graduates are pursuing bachelor’s degrees because of high college tuition fees to immediately find jobs, even though earnings are not so high.

In China, ‘guanxi,’ or social network, is important to finding jobs because it guarantees better opportunities. For instance, some privileged students depend

on their parent's networks to get a job albeit the lack of qualifications. Due to the preference for state-owned enterprises that ensure higher statuses and better social welfare, foreign enterprises and SMEs still face recruitment difficulties. In addition, there is an increasing tendency among youths to start their own business, following such successful cases as Ma Yun's Alibaba. Yet some of them fail due to the lack of knowledge and skills on how to run a business. On the other hand, there is also a mismatch between students' expectations and reality. Approximately 77 % of inexperienced college students expect too high of salaries while only 19.3% of who engage in the works related to their major.

## 2. Problem and solution of job searching culture for each country

(Problem and solution for Japan from Korean perspective)

The main problem of Japanese employment system is that it is very simultaneous; there is one chance only after the graduation with a tacit age limit. As a solution, the government should expand the age limit to cover the people who lost the opportunity. Although it may not be a fixed solution, it can still be a starting step to cover more people who did not have enough time to make out the opportunity.

(Problem and solution for China from Japanese perspective)

The key problem of Chinese employment system is the unfairness of 'guanxi'. To resolve this problem, the government should conduct nationwide academic tests to evaluate students' skills fairly and help companies emphasize the importance of such test scores when hiring new recruits.

(Problem and solution for the ROK from Chinese perspective)

One of the major problems of Korean employment system is the inclination for 'high spec' to get into big conglomerates. In order to solve this issue, the

government should change people's mind and prohibit the concentration on the big enterprise. For example, it can support SMEs and raise the salary for labor-intensive jobs. In order to realize 'spec-free' recruitment, companies also need to evaluate the performance of job applicants with criteria other than GPA, university degree, and TOEIC scores by focusing more on their experiences.

(Trilateral cooperation for improving job searching culture)

Lastly, the three countries should work together to solve the difficulties in employment. Similar to an FTA, the three countries can come up with CJK Employment Free Agreement. Under this agreement, the three countries can launch a common CV format so that job applicants can easily submit their CVs to the companies around the three countries for recruitment. The countries can also support working holiday, which makes it to easier for students to learn cultures and languages of the three countries to get a job. Within this process, the three governments can facilitate all the flow.

### Presentation 3. Gender Role

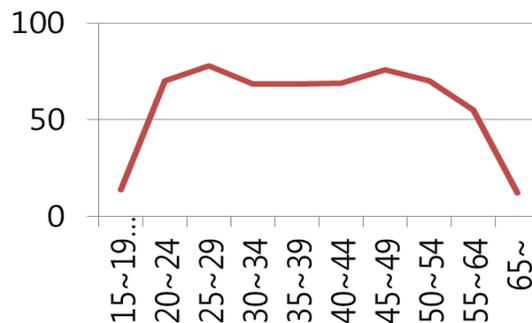
#### Gender Equality of China, Japan, and the ROK

By

ARAI Shun, CHO Junghyun, GONG Weina , INAGAKI Risa, KIM Euiyoung,  
KIM Gawon, KIM Jiyon, KOZAKI Manae, LI Nian Wei, WANG Jingman,  
and ZHAO Kailin

#### 1. Current situations of gender inequality of the three countries

In Japan, the interruption of women's career due to childcare is one of the major issues of gender inequality. In 2013, there were about 1 million women who unwillingly left their jobs for childcare and 74.6% of women said that they wanted to continue working after having a child. There are sufficient laws for working mothers but the effect is still limited.

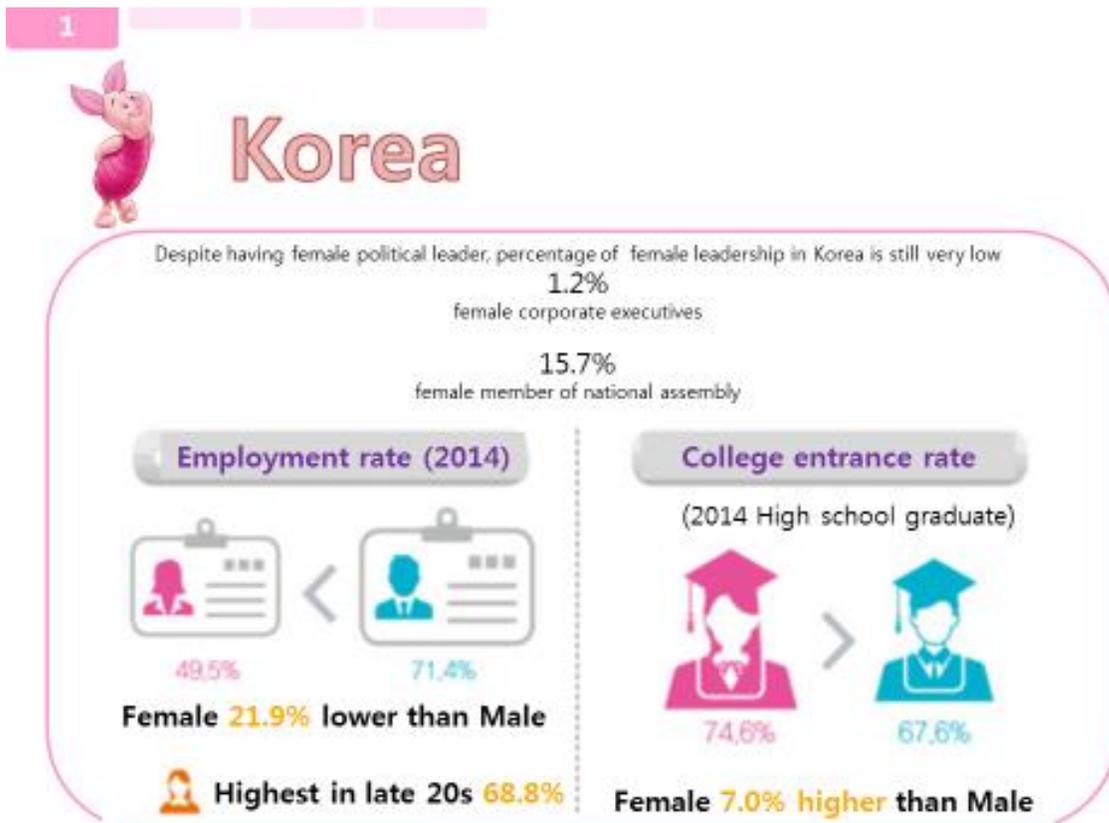


Women's labor participation rate by ages in 2012

<Source: Student Presentation>

China on the other hand adheres less to traditional gender roles, due to the one-child policy, which allows parents to give birth to only one baby and prohibits sex selection. As parents raise girls and boys equally, the one-child policy affected women's empowerment, which changed the views on marriage, childbirth, housework, and decision making.

Although the situation has improved over the last decades, Korean women still face difficulty in social participation. Although there are more women college graduates than men, the employment rate of female is lower than that of male.



<Source: Student Presentation>

## 2. Comparison of the gender equality in the three countries

The three countries in fact have many similarities in gender roles because they share the same traditional Asian values of patriarchy with a belief that women are more suitable for child rearing than men. As more women gain greater academic status and succeed in their careers, the situation has been improving. Yet, the three countries still face many issues of gender inequality, including the low rate of women holding leadership positions.

On the other hand, the three countries have differences. Compared to China and the ROK, full-time house wives are more acceptable in Japan because women are less demanded to be successful both in career and domestic works. Another difference is that more Chinese women have leadership positions under the influence of the one-child policy. In addition, the relationship between fertility rate and gender equality differs among the three countries. Whereas the ROK and Japan attempt to improve gender equality and increase birthrate altogether to resolve depopulation, China, with a huge population, focuses more on developing measures to support women to be more successful in their careers.

### 3. Suggestions for improving gender equality

There are measures that the three countries can jointly undertake to improve gender equality. Firstly, it is necessary to promote male participation in family care through media in order to balance gender roles. All three countries have government programs and gender-equality measures in companies, yet not many people are taking advantage of them. In this sense, the notion of gender roles in the society should be changed first to make a difference. For example, the

television program <Dad Where are you going?> has shown changes in male gender roles by portraying that men can also take care of their kids. Similarly, all three countries can come up with a program that allows representatives to travel to each other's countries and promote male participation in childcare.

Secondly, the three countries need to establish a trilateral cooperation organization related to gender equality, have regular meetings, and share information about the implementation and results of policies. Since all three countries share similar backgrounds of adhering to traditional Asian values, all three countries can get together to hold regular meetings and share the information and experiences on effective gender equality policies. This will stimulate a positive competition among the three countries so that they can develop together.

The third solution is to introduce a gender quota to increase women's leadership and make women's voices heard. Despite the first female president taking leadership in the ROK, there is still a low rate of female leadership in society, providing a reason why women's voices are not being effectively heard. In this regard, all three countries can adopt a gender quota at the national assembly or for corporate executives, so in that way more opinions and voices of women can be heard. Supporting women to start their own business can also be an effective way of increasing women's leadership. Providing financial discounts and lower loan interest rates for female entrepreneurs can also be a good solution for getting more women into leadership positions.

## **Discussion 1. Education**

### **1. In your opinion, do you believe studying a foreign language during adolescence or at a later age is better?**

- Due to competition from the job market and society, young adults focus more on the written skills when learning a foreign language in preparation for these pressures. This differs from early language education, which focuses more on an individual's speaking abilities. Therefore, the problem stems from post-primary language education and not early language education.

### **2. Should an individual become fluent in one's mother tongue before proceeding to learn a secondary language?**

- A person should perfect his mother tongue first because of difficulties adjusting to cultural differences and potential feelings of disparities in self-identity upon returning to his parents' native country.

### **3. Has anyone experienced bilingual schooling?**

- In Singapore, the language education system requires individuals to learn English as their first language and supplement English with a secondary language, which is why people are bilingual in Singapore.

**4. Do you remember the number of English classes you had to take in 5th or 6th grade? Is it not common for students in junior high school to have English class every day?**

- In Japan, probably once to twice per week. However, it is not only the number of classes you take academically in school that should be considered. For instance, Koreans spend most of their time outside of school learning English, such as in private English schools or classes.

**5. Having said that, why do you think parents send their children to private language classes outside of school? Is it because parents feel that public schools are not the ideal environment for their children to learn a foreign language or do they simply want to give their children that extra “push?”**

- Both play a role in a parent’s decision to send their children to private language schools. In Korean culture, although not in all cases, parents withhold a mentality that there is a correlation between the number of hours spent studying a language and one’s proficiency of that language. Therefore, in some cases, a student’s typical schedule would include regular schooling during the day, followed by private lessons afterwards.

**6. How about in Chinese culture and society?**

- In a normal Chinese public school, parents believe that the pronunciation of English teachers is not very accurate. Therefore, in order to improve their

children's pronunciation skills, many parents send their children to private English schools to be taught by foreigners who are native in English.

### **7. How about Japanese parents?**

- It depends on individual cases, but I started by learning the English alphabet in junior high school. It is said that after the age of 13, people who learn a second language have a tendency to translate from one's native language to the secondary language, which is not an efficient way to learn a foreign language. Thus, it is important to start learning English in school earlier in order for people to gain a greater command of the language.

## **Discussion 2. Work**

**1. According to the research, there seem to be differences in the recruitment periods for each country. In Japan's case, students undergo simultaneous recruiting in which they recruit while attending their last year of university. In Korea and China, how many months or years do students normally have to prepare for the recruitment process?**

- In Korea, it depends on the individual's major and gender. For instance, for students in the liberal arts, they probably have about one to two years to prepare, especially if they want to pursue licenses for certain skills (i.e. accounting certifications). However, it ultimately depends on the type of job. In China, due to a special two-year program, called the National Training Program, facilitated by large corporations, many students begin job hunting before their last semester. During the first year of the program, students are placed in a rotational system in which they work in different positions for different companies. Subsequently, by the second year, students are given the position deemed most suitable by the employee. Further benefits include smoother transition into a company and more opportunities for promotions and career advancement.

**2. So after graduating, do students attend private institutions to prepare for examinations in order to obtain certain licenses and certifications as well?**

- Korean companies generally prefer students who are still enrolled in university. Consequently, many students postpone their graduation to maintain their student status by attending these private institutions or participating in exchange programs.

**3. From a company's perspective, in the case of graduate students, do you feel that they are not as strong contenders compared to their undergraduate competitors when applying for jobs? In your opinion, who do you think are the strongest candidates, penultimate undergraduate students, graduate or Master's students, or PhD students?**

- This will depend on the position and the qualifications for the position. The current trend in Korea is that most students now are pursuing graduate degrees due to the increasing competition in highly-saturated job markets. At the beginning of graduate school, two years of experience are taken into account. In other words, students compete based on experience and not based on what type of student they are or which degree they are pursuing.

**4. Do you think students have difficulty maintaining their academics while undergoing preparations for the recruitment process?**

- There are rising concerns that Korean universities are now institutions only for job preparation and not for academic studies. However, because of the unfavorable economic situation in Korea, there have been difficulties in

addressing these concerns fully. Furthermore, there is a problem for people wanting to continue their studies or pursue jobs in academia because of limited positions offered to new graduates.

### **5. What about the situation in Japan?**

- The same applies to Japan. Students begin applying for jobs in their third year of university. Consequently, it becomes very important, perhaps more important than their studies. Yet, it also depends on the individual in terms of whether or not it is an issue when job hunting outweighs one's studies.

### **Discussion 3. Gender Role**

**1. It is expected that if the government ensures entitlement to return to the previous job position after parental leave, the fertility rate of the society can be increased. If you find your government fully ensuring your status to come back to the same position, will you apply for such process?**

- Although government and corporate policies on parental leave are now available, not many people take advantage of them. In fact, the logic that policy on parental leave can directly result in the increase of fertility rate is misleading. That is, it is not the policy but social constructs that matter in making parental leave acceptable at workplaces. For example, some women who go back to work after the leave voluntarily quit their job because of the peer pressure. Thus, the desirable solution is to promote the idea that it is perfectly normal for everyone to take parental leave. It should also be encouraged that men can take leave for raising their kinds.

**2. As a way of solving the population aging problem to raise birthrates, the governments are struggling to encourage parental leave. The biggest problem is to change people's perception. Do you have any good ideas to change people's thinking on parental leave?**

- It is very difficult to change people's mind through a policy. Although one has a right to take parental leave, they cannot avoid tacit pressure from colleagues and bosses. In addition, because the market changes rapidly nowadays, the ones taking leave face difficulty in catching up with the work. Thus, it is necessary to come up with other practical measures to support women's career and

childbearing by allowing female workers to work in a limited time (e.g. 3 days a week) or providing them with a subsidy. Another effective way to change people's perception is to make parental leave as a normal practice within a company. If male bosses take the lead in taking the leave, it would be much easier for younger employees to take the advantage of the system. Moreover, what is important is that we need to fix the problem of gender equality starting from questioning subtle notions that are taken for granted. For example, a woman who majored in food and nutrition was appointed as the first minister of the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family of the ROK, which suggests the reflection of social implication that associates women with food. Considering the subtlety of the issue, it is required to make continuous effort to change people's perception on an everyday basis.

### **3. What about the situation in China?**

- Due to China's large territory, discrepancies between northern and southern China regarding gender quality issues continue to widen. Women in the southern area tend to be more empowered compared their northern counterparts. The situation is also different according to the characteristics of workplaces. For example, Chinese women in state-owned enterprise take better advantage of maternity leave than those in other business sectors. In order to cope with diverse situations of gender equality in China, it is crucial for government and other organizations to work together.

## CJK YOUTH DIALOGUE SUMMARY

Topic	Situation	Solution
Education: Early English Education	Good intention of early English education to promote the practical uses of English distorted due to the English education system which is heavily focused on written test for university entrance and job hunting	Promotion of early English education as an alternative to written test by mitigating possible side effects through gradual learning that fits to the course of language development
Work: Employment Problem in East Asia	<p><b>(Japan)</b> Simultaneous recruitment system for new graduates that allows one chance only after the graduation with tacit age limit</p> <p><b>(China)</b> Unfairness of ‘guanxi’ privileging the ones with social network to get better opportunity for job hunting</p> <p><b>(ROK)</b> Inclination for ‘high spec (credentials)’ to get into big conglomerates</p>	<p><b>(Japan)</b> Government measures to expand the age limit to cover the people who lost the opportunity</p> <p><b>(China)</b> Establishment of nationwide academic tests to evaluate students’ skills fairly and make the companies to put importance on those test scores</p> <p><b>(ROK)</b> Changing people’s perception to promote the employment at small and medium-sized enterprises and of recruitment system to evaluate the performance by means other than credentials</p> <p><b>(Way of trilateral cooperation)</b> Establishing CJK Employment Free Agreement</p>
Gender Role: Gender Equality of China, Japan, and the ROK	<p><b>(Japan)</b> Female career discontinuity</p> <p><b>(China)</b> One-child policy affecting women’s empowerment</p> <p><b>(ROK)</b> Low rate of women in leadership positions</p> <p><b>(Similarity)</b> Sharing the same traditional Asian values of patriarchy</p> <p><b>(Differences)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Full-time house wives more acceptable in Japan</li> <li>- Many Chinese women in leadership position</li> <li>- Matter of fertility rate connected to gender equality in the ROK and Japan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Promotion of male participation in family care through media to achieve changes in gender role</li> <li>- Establishment of a trilateral cooperation organization related to gender equality to hold regular meetings and share information about effective policies</li> <li>- Adoption of gender quota to increase women’s leadership</li> </ul>

# CJK YOUTH DIALOGUE AT A GLANCE



Edited by the TCS and JCIE