Analyzing a Long Interview in Japanese with MAXQDA: Evaluation and Standardization in the Japanese Education System

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1. Aims of This Study

The purpose of this study was to analyze an in-depth interview of a Japanese school teacher, analyzed on basis of the grounded theory approach with the help of MAXQDA. The research question was what influence the emphasis on group activities might have on realizing the idea of inclusive education in Japanese schools.

In Japan, as in many others societies, social gaps have been widening in recent years, and the students have turned out more and more inhomogeneous. In consequence, tolerance in the classroom and relationships based on mutual respect have become more urgent than ever. How then do teachers manage to meet all the different needs, and what are the basic conditions framing their work?

2. Data and Variables

The in depth interview took place in August 2010. The interviewee was a senior teacher at a public elementary school, looking back at several decades of educational experience.

These experiences, his background, changes in the educational environment and in the relationship between teachers and pupils as well as his ideal of education make up for the main part of the interview. The transcription from tape recording exceeding even 40000 characters in Japanese language was used as data in this analysis.
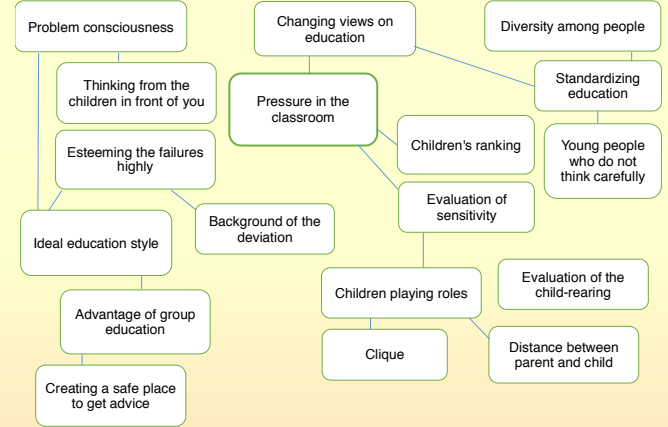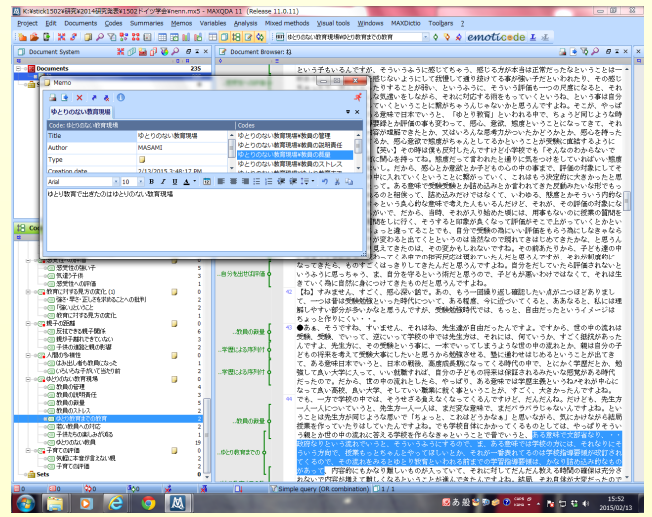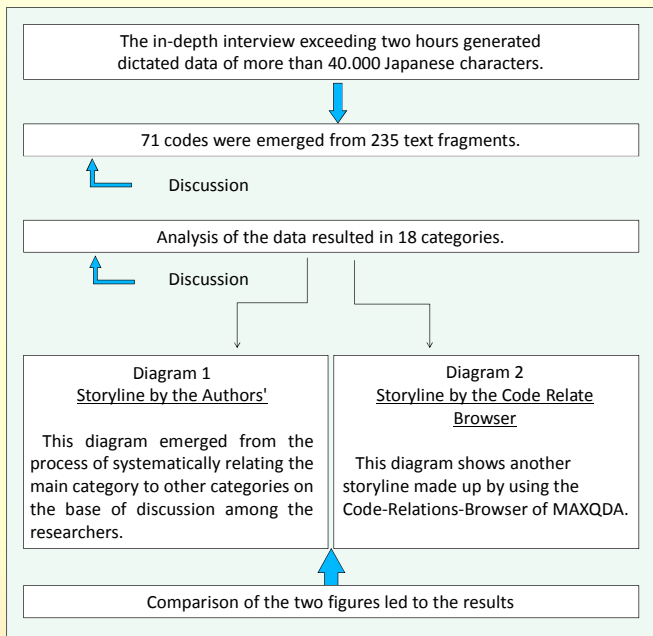
3. Analysis

The in-depth interview exceeding two hours generated dictated data of more than 40.000 Japanese characters.

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71 codes were emerged from 235 text fragments.

Discussion

Analysis of the data resulted in 18 categories.

Discussion

Diagram 1
Storyline by the Authors'

This diagram emerged from the process of systematically relating the main category to other categories on the base of discussion among the researchers.

Diagram 2
Storyline by the Code Relate Browser

This diagram shows another storyline made up by using the Code-Relations-Browser of MAXQDA.

Comparison of the two figures led to the results

The central findings drawn from this study are as follows:

1. Although the main categories of the diagrams differed, close analysis showed that the central content of the storylines is quite similar.

    The analysis points to the decisive influence of the grading system and of standardization in Japanese school education which tends to train students not to think, but rather to read the face of the teacher and give the "right answer". Nonetheless, the interviewee also presents hints to cope with the "problem", aiming to educate young people who are able to "read the atmosphere" and, at the same time, able to express their very individual thoughts.

2. The differences in the diagrams turned out to be related to different perspectives, ours being that of a "teacher", while that of MAXQDA seems to place children more into the center.

3. Another reason contributing to the differences in the diagrams could be the tendency of researchers to always look for the causes and background factors of a given problem.

4. Results and Discussions

MAXQDA was applied to an extended in-depth interview with a senior Japanese school teacher. It emerged from the analysis that the grading system is a decisive element in Japanese school education, leading students to cope with it by masking themselves.

By using MAXQDA it became possible for us to read the data from different perspectives and thereby more objectively. We also found that MAXQDA was as useful in the analysis of Japanese data as in that of data in Western languages.
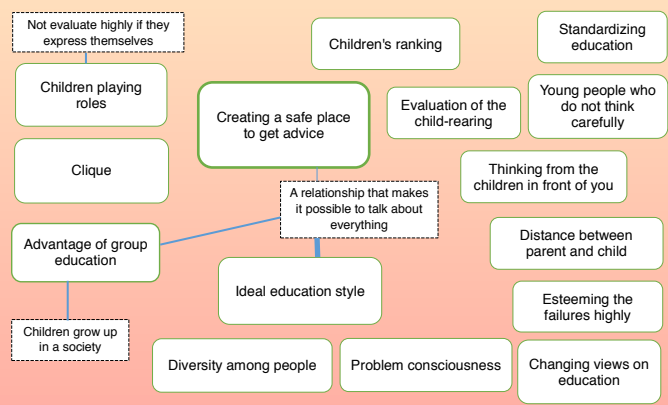

Diagram1. Storyline by Authors' Discussion

Diagram2. Storyline by Code Relate Browser

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