

The Impact of Middle School Students' "BOSAI Narratives" on the Community of Tosashimizu City

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Students of Shimizu Middle School, located in Tosashimizu City (Kochi Prefecture) has been writing short stories called "BOSAI Narratives" since 2016. In JpGU 2018, Nagamatsu presented on how the students themselves were influenced by writing them (Nagamatsu, 2018). This year, we will discuss the results of our study on how the narratives affected the students' parents and other people in the community.

About Tosashimizu City and the "BOSAI Narratives"

Tosashimizu City is a provincial city with a population of 14,000 people; 47% of it being over 65 years of age. In 2012, the Japanese government announced that in the Nankai Trough Earthquake, the tsunami height estimation of the city can be as high as 34 meters (Cabinet Office, 2012). The announcement was meant to increase people's awareness, but it resulted in leading some people to lose hope in surviving the earthquake (Sun, 2014 and Oki, 2017). However, the "BOSAI Narratives" seem to be changing the situation.

We developed the "BOSAI Narrative" with the teachers of Shimizu Middle School in 2016. It is a short story written by individual students imagining their own situation in the event of the Nankai Trough Earthquake. They could write about anything that they imagine to be happening at the time of the disaster, under the condition that they must end in hope.

Research Method

At the end of the school year 2017, we conducted a survey on all the parents of the community, who had read the "BOSAI Narratives" written by the students of that year. Out of the respondents, we selected 10 parents to interview individually in order to conduct further qualitative research on how they were impacted by reading the students' narratives.

Results

Through careful analysis of the survey and interview results, we discovered the following: 1) readers obtained and understood information concerning the occurrence of earthquakes, despite its uncertainty. In other words, the students played the role of "translating" scientific language into a daily context; 2) moreover, readers began to reconsider their everyday lives; 3) readers have trust in the disaster preparedness education program itself; 4) how the readers are impacted relies heavily on their individual backgrounds; 5) the narratives do not necessarily induce readers in perceiving earthquakes subjectively; 6) some readers learned to seek value in living the moment; 7) the narratives exposed the readers to other worlds and situations (term in Japanese: "guuyusei") (Yamori, 2007); 8) the narratives' setting to "end in hope" led some readers to imagine the opposite situation; thus 9) empowering readers to contemplate disaster (Yamori, 2007); and lastly 10) as for the interviewees in this study, most of them had already taken preventive measures prior to reading the narratives. Thus, only a few cases of behavioral changes were recognized in the narratives' readers.

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