Constructing Identity:
A Narrative Inquiry of Married Immigrants Learning Japanese

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Abstract

This research examines the relationship of marriage between Japanese men and native English speaking women and the identity construction of the women as they learn a second language. The qualitative research method known as narrative inquiry is used in this study.

Because of globalization and immigration, people all over the world are learning second and third languages. Japan is not excluded from this trend. Although the Japanese people tend to learn English, there are many people who are learning the Japanese language in and out of Japan. By researching about the identity construction of adult immigrants in Japan, contributions to the way language learning and teaching is carried out may possibly become more feasible. Telling the stories of the language learners may also help support and encourage the learners in their language endeavors as well as other learners with similar backgrounds.

The first chapter includes related literature on identity in second language learning as well as narrative inquiry. Initially, a basic definition of the word “identity” is given. This is followed by a definition of identity as defined in the field of second language learning. Next, information about the post-structuralist viewpoint which has influenced the research of identity in the field is presented. Also information about the theory of communities of practice and the construct of investment, which were used to explain the narratives of the participants in a later chapter, is given in detail. Finally, in this chapter information about narrative inquiry including why this approach was chosen and the position of my research is explained.

The second chapter explains the research design in depth. The following two research questions are addressed:
(1) How does the experience of marriage to a native Japanese man affect identity in the native English speaking woman?

(2) How do identity changes in the native English speaking woman influence learning the Japanese language?

Next, the background information of the participants who engaged in the semi-structured interview and co-constructed their narratives is described. A practice interview was held. The interview questions were revised based on feedback from this interview. The research design follows. In designing the narrative, justification is used. Personal, practical and social justifications are combined in the design. Positioning is also considered in the narrative design. Also ethical matters are considered as well as legal and procedural aspects of ethics. Finally the analysis of the data is examined. In the analysis of the data three terms referred to are: “iterative”, “emergent”, and “interpretive”. There are four main categories of analysis including: thematic, structural, dialogic/performance and visual analysis. Thematic analysis is used for the purpose of this research. There are six phases in thematic analysis. The six phases include: familiarize yourself with the data, generate initial codes, search for themes, review themes, define and name themes and produce the report. This process was followed as the data was analyzed.

The third chapter illustrates the co-constructed narratives of the participants in the study. The data of three participants in the study is analyzed and presented. The participants are Melanie from the USA, Charlotte from the United Kingdom, and Erinn from the USA. All of the participants are married to a Japanese native, have children and also are raising their children in Japan. Their narratives incorporate struggles,
community of practices and investment in the target language. The struggles include being restricted in what one can say in Japanese, and feelings of shyness because of insufficient vocabulary to stress what one wants to say. The struggles also include the level of formality used in Japanese compared to the participant's native language. Depression is also a struggle for one of the participants.

Also in this chapter, there are various communities of practice discussed as well as the investment of the participants. The participants participate in communities of practice with their spouses, with their mother-in-laws, with daycare staff, with other mothers, with co-workers, and Japanese class students. The participants are all invested in the Japanese language mostly for the sake of their husbands and children. Their investment is discussed in this chapter. The section is finished up with a summary of the participants' narratives.

The conclusion outlines the findings in the current research and presents some limitations of this study and possible enhancements for future studies.
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Introduction

To have another language is to possess a second soul. (Charlemagne)

You live a new life for every new language you speak. If you know only one language, you live only once. (Old Czech proverb)

If you wake up at a different time, in a different place, could you wake up as a different person? (Chuck Palahniuk)

This research explores the relationship of marriage between Japanese men and native English speaking women and the identity construction of the women as they learn a second language. The above three quotes reveal that even from the earliest of times it has been believed that a new identity is created with the acquisition of a new language.

An interest in the problem of identity issues in second language learning was sparked during the 1990’s when Norton stated the need for a solid social theory of identity in second language learning (Norton Peirce, 1995). A great deal of the initial information resulted from systematic and extensive borrowing from social science fields of inquiry (Block, 2007).

My personal interests in identity and second language acquisition (hereafter SLA) emerged after I married a Japanese native. As I carried out my role as a wife and mother in Japan, I realized that there were many significant changes occurring in me. When I first came to Japan as an individual, I was treated very kindly however; when I
got married to a Japanese national, it seemed like the people’s attitudes had now changed and I was expected to act Japanese.

This started me thinking about my own identity as I learned a second language and culture. My core identity is still intact, nevertheless I sensed changes in how I identify myself. I started to ask myself: Is it possible for me to become Japanese? I knew in my heart that because of the way I looked and the way in which Japanese categorized being Japanese, the feat of becoming Japanese was unattainable, at least not like in the sense that foreigners in America become Americans. I did know that even though I would never become Japanese, I could try to adjust to Japan as much as possible by learning the language and customs.

In recent years there has been increasing interest in exploring second language (L2) practices in relation to learners’ life trajectories, their identities and issues of power (Kanno, 2000; Mckay & Wong, 1996; Norton, 2000). Many of the studies have focused on the socio-cultural aspects of language learning in ESL contexts. There is limited research on less commonly taught languages in the target language country from the point of view of an ‘insider’ who has shared similar experiences with the participants.

The adult migrant case carries the greatest potential of all the language learning settings for the ‘critical experiences’ (Block, 2002). In the adult migrant experience identity and one’s sense of self are most at risk. This is not least because most or all previous support systems in terms of history, culture and language have been removed and must rapidly be replaced by new ones (Block, 2007). According to the Japanese Ministry of Justice statistics of foreign residents in Japan (2008) there are 2,217,000 registered foreign residents living in Japan. A vast majority of these individuals are of Chinese or Korean descent, however many nations from all across the world are represented. From 1991 until 2008, the number of foreign residents had nearly doubled
(Statistics Japan, 2014). These foreign residents will inevitably learn the Japanese language. Although Japanese is not known as a world-language, interest in learning Japanese is rapidly growing because of its influence in the business and tourism world. (Brightside, 2014)

The research method used in this research is narrative inquiry. All of the participants have a story to tell, so it seemed fitting to use this approach. Narrative inquiry emerged as a discipline from within the broader field of qualitative research in the early 20th century (Riessman, 1993). Narrative has become both a legitimate mode of thinking and writing in research and the focal point of a variety of approaches that come under the heading of “narrative inquiry” (Barkhuizen, 2014).

The aim of this study is to investigate the relationship between second language acquisition and language learner identity of foreign women married to Japanese men living in Japan. Specifically, the following two research questions are concerned; (1) How does the experience of marriage to a native Japanese man affect identity in the native English speaking woman? (2) How do identity changes in the native English speaking woman influence learning the Japanese language?

Using communities of practice and investment as the theoretical frameworks and narrative inquiry as the research method, the identity narratives of three immigrant women who are married to Japanese and learning the Japanese language in a natural context are constructed and analyzed.
Chapter 1 Review of Related Literature

1.1 Identity Defined

In order to begin a study into the relationship between identity and second language acquisition it is important to offer a definition of the word "identity". According to the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary (2014), identity is the distinguishing character or personality of an individual. The relationship between identity and language learning has been studied in the fields of second language acquisition, language education, sociolinguistics and applied linguistics. Initially a predominantly psycholinguistic approach to SLA was used but as time passed, the sociological and cultural dimensions of language learning have become the focus.

The post-structuralist definition of identity as it relates to second language learning will be used for the purpose of this research. Norton (2014) defines identity as "multiple, changing and a site of struggle, frequently negotiated in the context of inequitable relations of power" (p. 60).

Although there is considerably less research on identity in the field of foreign language acquisition, it is important to understand how identity is defined in this aspect. Identity is understood to mean the accumulation of what a person believes privately and publicly about one's self and may differ from one context to another (Taylor, 2013).

The issue of identity has been researched from many different perspectives. Much of the work on identity in the field of second language acquisition has been borrowed from the social science fields and introduced to SLA by Norton. Norton is considered to be a post-structuralist, thus background information on the post-structuralist perspective is integrated into this thesis.

We can consider the concept of identity through various different theories. For the purpose of this research, communities of practice and investment will be used in
discussing theories used in explaining identity in terms of second language acquisition. The theory of learning called communities of practice starts with the assumption that engagement in social practice is the fundamental process by which we learn and so become who we are (Wenger, 1998). This theory explores the intersection of issues of community, social practice, meaning and identity. The construct of investment was coined by Norton (1995) who was inspired by the work of Bourdieu (1991). The construct of investment signals the socially and historically constructed relationship of learners to the target language and their sometimes ambivalent desire to learn and practice it (Norton, 1995).

1.2 Post-structuralist Identity

Post-structuralist theories of language have become increasingly attractive to identity and language learning researchers (Norton & Morgan, 2011). A post-structuralist approach to identity "has become the approach of choice among those who seek to explore links between identity and L2 learning" (Block, 2007, p. 864).

The term post-structuralism refers to the works of a series of philosophers and critical theorists who became well known internationally. A major theme in post-structuralism is that human complexity causes instability in the human sciences and we cannot escape structures. Post-structuralism is a reaction to structuralism. Structuralism argued that human culture may be understood by means of a structure. The structure is modeled on language (i.e., structural linguistics) and differs from concrete reality and from abstract ideas. Structuralist see meaning as relatively fixed as opposed to post-structuralist who see it as never fixed once and constantly deferred (Weedon, 1997).

Much of the modern day research on identity and second language acquisition
has been modified from the post-structuralist viewpoint. In creating the term investment Norton uses the sociologist Pierre Bourdieus notion of Cultural Capital which will be briefly explained. In addition, the post-structuralist theory of subjectivity coined by the anthropologist Weedon, which greatly influenced the identity work of Norton, will be outlined.

When Norton invented the term investment, she was inspired by the work of Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) and their notion of cultural capital. Cultural capital is an economics metaphor referring to the knowledge and modes of thought that characterize different classes and groups in relation to specific sets of social forms (Norton, 2000, p.10). The argument is that some forms of cultural capital have a higher exchange value than others in relation to a set of social forms which value some forms of knowledge and thought over others. If learners invest in a second language, they do so with the understanding that they will acquire a wider range of symbolic and material resources, which will in turn increase the value of their cultural capital (Norton, 2000, p. 10).

Weedon's theory of subjectivity inspired Norton's work and helped her to formulate a concept of identity. The term 'subjectivity' is used to refer to the conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions of the individual, her sense of herself and her ways of understanding her relation to the world (Weedon, 1997, p. 32). In creating her concept of identity, Norton used three defining characteristics of subjectivity. They are: the multiple, nonunitary nature of the subject, subjectivity as a site of struggle and subjectivity as changing over time (Norton, 2000, p. 125).

Post-structuralists have influenced research on the concept of identity in second language acquisition. Identity is considered to be a sociocultural practice.
1.3 Communities of Practice

Communities of practice is a social learning theory that begins with the assumption that engagement in social practice is the fundamental process by which we learn and so become who we are (Wenger, 1998). Social learning theory was developed by Bandura (1977). This theory emphasizes that people actively process information and think about the relationship between their behavior and its consequences.

Communities of practice was coined by Lave and Wenger when they were originally trying to rescue the idea of apprenticeship (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Their work was motivated by their own earlier work on craft apprenticeship in West Africa, on intelligent tutoring systems and on the cultural transparency of technology.


This learning theory can be applied to the learning of a second language. Figure 1 shows the four components of a social theory of learning.

An explanation of the model follows: Wenger attempts to clarify how Meaning is a way of talking about our (changing) ability—individually and collectively—to experience our life and the world as meaningful. He goes on to emphasize how Practice is a way of talking about the shared historical and social resources, frameworks, and perspectives that can sustain mutual engagement in action.
Figure 1. Components of a social theory of learning: an initial inventory (Wenger, 1998, p. 5)

Further, he illustrates that Community is a way of talking about the social configurations in which our enterprises are defined as worth pursuing and our participation is recognizable as competence. Finally, he reveals that Identity is a way of talking about how learning changes who we are and creates personal histories of becoming in the context of our communities. Identity is a crucial component in a social theory of learning such as communities of practice.

In terms of identity, Wenger (1998) specifies “Our identity includes our ability and our inability to shape the meanings that define our communities and our forms of belonging....Building an identity consists of negotiating the meaning of our experience of membership in social communities” (p. 145). This is based on his assumption that we create our individual identities through our understanding of our participation in social communities.
Wenger (1998) suggests that the formation of a community of practice is also the negotiation of identities. He also emphasizes that we not only produce our identities through the practices we are involved in, but we also define ourselves through practices we are not involved in. Our identities are sculpted by the combination of our participation and non-participation in communities of practice.

Another aspect of communities of practice is the concept of modes of belonging. In order to make sense of the processes of identity formation and learning, Wenger includes the three distinct modes of belonging called engagement, imagination and alignment. Wenger’s figure of these modes is included below along with an explanation of the figure to follow underneath.

![Figure 2. Modes of Belonging (Wenger, 1998, p.174)](image)

Figure 2 shows Wenger’s three modes of belonging: a) engagement, which concerns
active involvement in mutual processes of negotiation of meaning; b) imagination, which creates images of how people interpret the world through their own experiences; and c) alignment, which enables people to coordinate energy and activities to fit within broader social structures and to contribute to broader enterprises.

A final aspect of Wenger’s communities of practice is the idea of participation and non-participation. He points out that we not only produce our identities through the practices we engage in, but we also define ourselves through practices we do not engage in (Wenger, 1998, p. 164). Our identities are constituted not only by what we are but also by what we are not. What we are not can even become a large part of how we define ourselves. Participation and non-participation are both involved in how our identities are shaped in communities of practice.

Communities of practice is one theory important in analyzing the relationship between learner identity and second language acquisition. The notion of investment is also important in analyzing the relationship between learner identity and second language acquisition and is discussed in the following section.

1.4 Investment

The notion of investment can also be used in describing the relationship between learner identity and second language acquisition. Norton was researching language learners in Canada (Norton Peirce, 1995; Norton, 2000) when she observed that existing theories of motivation in the field of SLA were not consistent with the findings from her research. Many of the theories at the time assumed that motivation is a character trait and that if the learner failed to learn the target language than they were not committed enough to learning. This is why she introduced the concept of investment as a sociological construct.
Inspired by the work of Bourdieu (1977), Norton (1995) developed the construct of investment to complement constructs of motivation in the field of language learning and teaching. The construct of investment signals the socially and historically constructed relationship of learners to the target language and their sometimes ambivalent desire to learn and practice it. She has argued that if learners “invest” in the target language, they do so with the understanding that they will acquire a wider range of symbolic resources (language, education, friendship) and material resources (capital goods, real estate, money), which will in turn increase the value of their cultural capital and social power. As the value of language learners’ cultural capital increases, so does learners’ sense of themselves, their hopes for the future and their imagined identities are reassessed. An investment in the target language is an investment in the learner’s own identity.

When language learners speak, they are not only exchanging information with target language speakers but they are constantly organizing and reorganizing a sense of who they are and how they relate to the social world. Thus an investment in the target language is also an investment in a learner’s own social identity, an identity which is constantly changing across time and space. This investment, in turn, must be understood in relation to the multiple, changing and contradictory identities of language learners (Norton Peirce, 1995).

The theory of communities of practice and the construct of investment will be used to explore the relationship between identity and second language acquisition. The qualitative research methodology of narrative inquiry will be used in this study and is explained in the following section.
1.5 Narrative inquiry

The term “narrative” is most often associated with the word “story”. Narrative inquiry is stories lived and told (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Narrative inquiry involves the reconstruction of a person’s experience in relationship both to the other and to a social milieu (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Narrative inquiry “inquires” into or asks questions about and looks for deeper understanding of particular aspects of life experience.

In the human sciences field, narrative inquiry is considered with different viewpoints such as the ‘realist’ ‘postmodern’ and constructionist. Although there is much disagreement, they do agree on the following definition:

People shape their daily lives by stories of who they and others are and as they interpret their past in terms of these stories. Story, in the current idiom, is a portal through which a person enters the world and by which their experience of the world is interpreted and made personally meaningful. Narrative inquiry, the study of experience as story, then, is first and foremost a way of thinking about experience. Narrative inquiry as a methodology entails a view of the phenomenon. To use narrative inquiry methodology is to adopt a particular view of experience as phenomenon under study (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 375)

In addition, Clandinin and Connelly (2006) articulate that people are not only concerned with how life is experienced in the moment, but also how it is experienced in continuance. They also point out that in narrative inquiry ‘researchers’ personal, private and professional lives flow across the boundaries into the research site; likewise, though
often not with the same intensity, participants' lives flow the other way (p. 115).

Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004) affirm that in terms of one's own version of the negotiation of identities, narratives play an important role. Furthermore, Barkhuizen (2014) professes that narrative inquiry is able to assist us in understanding how language teachers and learners organize their experiences and identities and represent them to themselves and to others.

Studies of identity and agency in SLA have very clear relevance for both language learners and educators. It is important for teachers and learners to understand their own stances and positionings and how these affect their engagement with (or participation in) language education (Duff, 2012, p. 12).

1.5.1 Position of my Research

Most of the research available on narrative inquiry states the importance of the relationship of the researcher with the researched. Researcher-participant relationships are a key focus of the narrative inquiry process (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Narrative inquirers recognize that the researcher and the researched in a particular study are in relationship with each other and that both parties will learn and change in the encounter (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2006). Narrative researchers may tell participants of their own personal experiences with the research topic in order to build rapport and open communication and come to a mutual, deeper understanding of the issues or events in question (Ellis, 2004, p. 65). Narrative researchers may interweave their own personal experiences along with the stories that they tell of their participant's experiences (Creswell, 2007, p. 57). The researcher's personal background and world view affects their "relationship, identifications, and exchanges" (Luttrell, 2000, p. 500) with their
participants. In light of this research it is important to include the position of my research.

Because I am a foreign woman married to a Japanese native and learning the Japanese language just like my participants, I am an "insider" in my position as researcher. In insider research the researchers themselves collect and analyze the data. All of those involved in the research (participants and researcher) are supposed to benefit by participating in it directly or indirectly (Nakata, 2014). The results of the research would most likely change if the position of the researcher was different. For example, if the gender or nationality of the researcher was instead male and Japanese, the participants might not feel at ease and hesitate in disclosing certain information.
Chapter 2 Research

2.1 Theoretical Framework

Narrative inquiry is a way of understanding experience. It is collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series of places, and in social interaction with milieu. An inquirer enters this matrix in the midst and progresses in the same spirit, concluding the inquiry still in the midst of living and telling, reliving and retelling, the stories of the experiences that made up people’s lives, both individual and social (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 20).

Derived from the educational theorist Dewey’s (1938) view of experience, specifically of his notions of situation, continuity and interaction, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) invented a research framework called the *three-dimensional narrative inquiry space*. This framework allows inquiries to travel into different directions – inward, outward, backward, forward and situated within place. When referring to inward, these two researchers are talking about the internal conditions, such as feelings, hopes, aesthetic reactions and moral dispositions. By outward, they are referring to the existential conditions or the environment. When they mention backward and forward, they indicate temporality or the past, present and future. With the use of place, they attribute to the specific concrete physical and topological boundaries of inquiry landscapes (p. 51).

Dewey (1938) believed sound educational experience involves both continuity and interaction between the learner and what is learned (p. 10). Dewey’s (1938) concepts were called situation, continuity and interaction. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) change the terms situation to *notion of place*, continuity to *past, present and future* and interaction to *personal and social*. These three terms create a metaphorical
three dimensional narrative inquiry space, with temporality along one dimension, the personal and social along a second dimension, and place along a third (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000 p. 50).

2.2 Research Questions

In this qualitative study, the following two research questions are addressed:

(1) How does the experience of marriage to a native Japanese man affect identity in the native English speaking woman?
(2) How do identity changes in the native English speaking woman influence learning the Japanese language?

2.3 Participants

In this section, the reason for choosing participants for this study is discussed. A major reason for choosing these particular participants is because of the author's personal involvement with this group. The author belongs to an internet chatting group called CHAT (pseudonym). This is a group of English speaking immigrant mothers who are mostly married to Japanese men raising families and living in Japan. The group exchanges information about education, Japanese language, homecare, cultural differences and many other topics. This group was chosen because like the author, the participants were married to Japanese men and were learning the Japanese language.

A message explaining about the study and asking for volunteers was sent out. Responses from about ten people were received. Five participants, based on availability and enthusiasm for participation in the study, were selected. Four participants were interviewed, however, for one interview the voice recorder ran out of batteries so the
interview was lost. Another participant was eager to volunteer but unfortunately did not have any time for an interview. This led to the inclusion of only three participants in the final study. The three participants were all English speakers, two were from the United States of America and one was from the United Kingdom. In order to ensure privacy for the participants, pseudonyms were used for those who requested not to use their real name.

After the participants were decided, semi-structured interviews were set up with each participant. Due to the distance the author would be traveling and other constraints, one of the participants suggested that we have a double interview. The author agreed to this suggestion and so as a result Melanie and Charlotte were interviewed at the same time. Originally the plan was to interview one after the other, but because they each had a young child with them during the time of the interview, the author interviewed them simultaneously. Because the author did not know the area well, all participants recommended places they thought would be conducive to an interview. The interview with Erinn was originally supposed to be held at a different Starbucks which ended up to be closed so was changed to another location close by.

Table 1

Participants Background Information of the Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Country of Origin</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Age at Entering Japan</th>
<th># of Years of Academic Japanese Study</th>
<th>Nationality of Husband</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Melanie</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>Japanese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erinn</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0 years</td>
<td>Japanese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlotte</td>
<td>UK</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>0 years</td>
<td>Japanese</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A semi-structured interview format was used with the participants. The author created questions (see appendix E) to ask the participants. A practice interview was held with another student who is also a foreigner married to a Japanese native. Based on feedback from this participant, the interview questions were revised. During the interviews, the questions were only used as a guide through the interview process. The researcher did not always use all the questions and sometimes asked other questions as they came up in the process.

2.4 Research Design

In narrative inquiry there are generally agreed upon considerations in designing a narrative. One consideration is the use of justification. There are three different ways that should be used to justify the research in narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Huber, 2010). The first is personal justification in which the researcher justifies the inquiry in the context of their own life experiences, tensions and personal inquiry puzzles. The second is practical justification in which researchers attend to the importance of considering the possibility of shifting or changing practice. The third is social justification in which researchers address the so what and who cares questions important in research.

Another consideration is naming the phenomenon. One should think narratively about the phenomenon throughout the inquiry. When doing this one should keep the three commonplaces of narrative inquiry—temporality, sociality and place in mind. This should be considered from framing the research puzzle, to being in the field, to composing field texts and finally in composing research texts. Also framing a research puzzle is a part of the process of thinking narratively.

An additional consideration is living the narrative inquiry. With this one must
acknowledge the ongoing temporality of experience when it is understood narratively. One starts out in the field with creating field texts of studying the experiences of participants with transcripts of conversations, field notes, family stories and other texts. Then from field texts the inquirer moves to interim research texts created by analyzing and interpreting the data. Research texts that represent the complexity of people's lives and experiences are then created.

Continuing with research design considerations, one must also consider positioning. Because narrative inquirers attend to individual's lives as they are composed over time in relation with people and situations in a particular place or places, the focus remains on lives as lived and told throughout the inquiry (Clandinin & Huber, 2010).

Narrative inquirers must also consider ethical matters and comply with the legal and procedural aspects of ethics held by institutional research boards. They also must consider issues of representation. It is important to attend to the narrative forms that fit the lives of the participants and narrative inquirers being represented.

2.5 Analysis of Data

Narrative inquiry is a form of qualitative research and thus narrative studies often utilize the same data analysis approaches that are used in other types of qualitative research. When explaining about data analysis in narrative inquiry Barkhuizen, Benson and Chik (2014) refer to Dörnyei’s (2007) chapter on qualitative research. Dörnyei emphasizes three key terms when referring to data analysis. The three terms are: “iterative”, “emergent”, and “interpretive”. He explains that with iterative or “zigzag,” patterns of qualitative research, the researcher moves back and forth between data collection, data analysis and data interpretation. He implies that iterative data analysis
stops at the point of “saturation” when further data collection, analysis, or interpretation is unlikely to yield additional insight or, more practically, when a piece of work needs to be completed and written up.

Iteration implies an emergent research design, in which “a study is kept open and fluid so that it can respond in a flexible way to new details or openings” (Dörnyei, 2007 p. 37) The research findings are brought out during repeated rounds of data analysis. In order that research questions, as well as their answers, may emerge during data analysis, open-ended aims and objectives often begin qualitative research.

Qualitative research is “fundamentally interpretive,” in the sense that the research outcome is ultimately the product of the researcher’s subjective interpretation of the data” (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 37).

In terms of analysis, Reissman (2008) proposes that there are four main categories of analysis including:

1) **Thematic Analysis** – Focus is on what was “spoken” in the narrative
2) **Structural Analysis** – Focuses on how the story was told
3) **Dialogic/Performance Analysis** – Examines the interaction of dialogue as narrative
4) **Visual Analysis** – Interpreting the images of the storyteller as well as the words

For the purpose of my research, I chose to use thematic analysis. Thematic analysis encompasses repeated reading of the data, coding and categorization of data extracts and their reorganization under thematic headings. In analyzing the data and creating thematic headings I realized that the theory of communities of practice and the construct of investment could be used in interpreting the data. In writing the narratives of the participants I interweave both communities of practice and investment.
There are 6 phases in thematic analysis according to Reisman. The six phases are listed below:

Phase 1: familiarize yourself with your data, (make a transcription of verbal data)

Phase 2: generate initial codes

Phase 3: search for themes

Phase 4: review themes

Phase 5: define and name themes

Phase 6: produce the report

This is the process that I followed as I analyzed the data. In the following chapter the results of the analysis will be reported.
Chapter 3 Results

In this section, the stories of the participants will be presented and analyzed based on the communities of practice theory and the construct of investment. The stories were constructed by utilizing the data transcribed in the interviews with the participants. After the narrative was completed it was sent to the participant for review and proper representation. After the participants’ scrutiny, the author of this thesis edited the narrative based on their feedback.

The following table includes the themes which were extracted from the transcripts of the interviews. After careful consideration of these themes the decision to use the theory of communities of practice and the construct of investment in order to explain the data and co-construct the participant’s narratives was made.

Table 2

*Themes in the Participants’ Interviews*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Erinn</th>
<th>Charlotte</th>
<th>Melanie</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>raising children</td>
<td>survival Japanese</td>
<td></td>
<td>raising children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy</td>
<td>teaching English</td>
<td></td>
<td>Shy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>community study</td>
<td>raising children</td>
<td></td>
<td>holding in opinions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>depression</td>
<td>token foreigner</td>
<td></td>
<td>learned Japanese for husband</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>high expectations</td>
<td>community study</td>
<td></td>
<td>teaches English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bilingual children</td>
<td>teaches English</td>
<td></td>
<td>came to Japan after university</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>came to Japan at the age of sixteen</td>
<td>came to Japan on a working holiday (after university)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Before the narratives of the participants are portrayed, a reminder to the reader of the research questions is presented. The two questions that are explored are:

(1) How does the experience of marriage to a native Japanese man affect identity in the native English speaking woman?
(2) How do identity changes in the native English speaking woman influence learning the Japanese language?

### 3.1 Melanie’s story

#### 3.1.1 Brief History of Melanie

Melanie is a 33-year old American who is living in Japan with her Japanese husband and their two children. She met her husband during her university days while he attended her university in the USA. She started studying Japanese in university after she met her husband. He came back to Japan before her as she stayed in the USA to finish her degree. She studied Japanese for three semesters at university. She came to Japan for a year before they got married. She feels that her Japanese has improved a lot since she has moved to Japan. Most of the Japanese that she has learned while living in Japan has come from practice with her mother-in-law.

Now that I have included a brief history of Melanie, I will explore her identity through her struggles, communities of practice and her investment in learning Japanese.

#### 3.1.2 Melanie’s Struggles

A site of struggle is evident when Melanie says: “You are kind of restricted in what you can and can’t say, a lot of people probably hold in their opinion and don’t say them” (Melanie 60).
She is struggling with what she should say in the Japanese cultural context because there are hidden rules of what is appropriate to talk about in different cultures (“Beg to Disagree”, 2014). She knows that in the Japanese culture people tend to hold in their contrasting opinions and not say them. She struggles with this because in general in her culture it is the opposite. In the American culture it is more common to voice your opinions on almost any matter but in Japanese culture there are different ways of communicating your opinions if they are communicated at all. Many foreigners are inclined to stop and ask those around us for their opinions on a matter. In Japan political and ethical issues are not easily discussed. The methods of discussion or debate tend to have different objectives in each culture. The art of opinion giving is a site of struggle for Melanie.

Another site of struggle can be seen in this comment: “I think I am a lot more quiet because I either I don’t have the vocabulary for what I want to say or I think of how to say it too late” (Melanie 32). At some point, Melanie realized that as she speaks Japanese her identity in this context is changing. She thinks she is a lot quieter because she lacks vocabulary in the target language or because by the time she thinks of how to say something it is too late to interject it into the conversation. This is a struggle she faces in her identity negotiations.

Sites of struggle are included in the definition of identity. The ideas of community of practice and investment are used in this thesis in order to come to an understanding of the relationship between identity and second language learning. In the following section, I will narrate the story of how the theory of community of practice is related to Melanie’s identity negotiations while she learns Japanese.
3.1.3 Melanie’s Community of Practice

As stated in the literature review, communities of practice is a social learning theory that starts with the assumption that engagement in social practice is the fundamental process by which we learn and so become who we are (Wenger, 1998). People belong to multiple communities of practice. When migrants are learning a new language in their adopted country they have various opportunities to be participants or non-participants in communities of practice. When one works, their place of employment is a community of practice with participant or non-participant status. When one has children, the schools, play centers, parks, raising children groups and other places where parents gather are all communities of practice. If one is studying the language by taking a structured class, this is a community of practice. If one belongs to a sport club or another kind of club, this also forms a community of practice.

It seems Melanie’s most important and valuable community of practice is with her mother-in-law or grandmother-in-law. This is apparent by the following statement made by Melanie: “I learned from my mother-in-law. I didn’t learn from my husband because we always speak English to each other so all my initial Japanese, once I got here is from my mother-in-law or grandmother-in-law” (Melanie 81). By interacting and speaking with her mother and grandmother-in-laws Melanie is engaging in social practice and becoming who she is (how she sees herself) in Japan. The four components of a social learning theory (community, identity, practice, and meaning) are all attained in this community of practice. As part of the community she is learning through belonging, as part of identity she is learning through becoming as part of meaning she is learning through experience and as part of practice she is learning through doing. She is re-negotiating her identity in this context. This is not the only place that she re-negotiates her identity as she is a participant and non-participant in other
communities of practice which will be mentioned later.

In the community of practice shared with her extended family members, the domain of shared interest is the success of Melanie in her husband's home country. This success includes language learning as well as customs, traditions and day to day living in Japan. In pursuing their interest in this domain, the members (Melanie, mother-in-law and grandmother-in-law) engage in joint activities and discussions, help each other and share information. The language they use to communicate is Japanese. Meeting with regularity, through every day and special events they practice Japanese together.

In building her identity Melanie is negotiating the meaning of her membership experience in this community of practice with family members. Through her understanding of her participation in this community, she is creating her individual identity. Every interaction that she has with members of this community plays a role in her identity re-negotiation.

A mention of the concept of modes of belonging is necessary when addressing the issue of identity in communities of practice. The three modes of engagement, imagination and alignment are used to make sense of the processes of identity formation and learning in this community of practice. In this community of practice with her family members, Melanie is actively involved (with her mother and grandmother-in-law) in negotiating meaning through their experiences. She is creating images of the world and seeing connections through time and space by deducing from her own experience. She is coordinating her energy and activities in order to fit within broader structures and to contribute to broader enterprises. She feels that she belongs as a member of this group and through her Japanese practice with this group she is growing as a person.

Wenger (1998) emphasized that we not only produce our identities through the
practices we are involved in, but we also define ourselves through practices we are not involved in. Our identities are sculpted by the combination of our participation and non-participation in communities of practice. This is reinforced by Melanie’s experience. Melanie’s most important community of practice when she first arrived in Japan was the one with her mother-in-law and grandmother-in-law. When she worked, because she worked teaching English, she was not supposed to speak Japanese in the workplace. This workplace (a community of practice) can be seen as one that Melanie has non-participation in. I refer to the following comments: “I am not supposed to (speak Japanese), but at the office I work in most people speak just Japanese. My students who speak English, they are the only ones who come and talk to me” (Melanie 51). “I mean I speak sometimes I speak with the ones who speak Japanese as well, if I have a question. Well, because I work in the English department, nobody in the other departments have any reason to ask me anything” (Melanie 53).

In this context, because Melanie as a native English speaker (and teacher) cannot participate in the Japanese speaking work environment, perhaps she defines herself differently because of this non-participation.

When Wenger (1998) explains about participation and non-participation he asserts that “we not only produce our identities through the practices we engage in, but we also define ourselves through practices we do not engage in.” (p. 164). Melanie incorporates her situation of non-participation with co-workers at work when she is constructing her identity. She is not supposed to speak Japanese with her co-workers. People in other departments besides the English department have no reason to talk to her. Although she does not participate with them, their presence is acknowledged. Our identities are shaped by a combination of participation and non-participation in communities of practice.
Non-participation can be observed in her remark: "I didn't learn from my husband because we always speak English to each other" (Melanie 81). Does her non-participation relationship in a community of practice with her husband have an effect on shaping her identity? Does she view herself differently because she does not participate in a community of practice with her husband? She is with her husband every day, living in his home country, speaking his native language in the society and for social situations, but yet she speaks to him in English. Does she identity herself to be more educated and valued because she can speak English (a desirable language to be able to speak in Japan) with her husband? On the other hand, does she identify herself to be less capable in the Japanese language because she speaks to her husband in English?

So far the struggles and communities of practice have been discussed the next section includes evidence of Melanie's investment in learning the Japanese language.

3.1.4 Melanie's Investment

I use the notion of Investment in order to describe the relationship between learner identity and second language acquisition. Signaling the socially and historically constructed relationship of the learner to the target language and their sometimes contradictory desire to learn and practice it is the concept of Investment.

Melanie proves her Investment in Japanese language learning when she makes the following statement:

After meeting my husband in the US, I then transferred schools so I could take some Japanese courses that is why I just had three semesters because I was finished with school after two semesters. I lived in Wakayama for a year and that is when I started to learn more Japanese through community and what not. I worked for an eikaiwa there. (Melanie 90)
Melanie, with the understanding that she would be able to acquire a wider range of symbolic resources (language, education, friendship) and material resources (capital goods, real estate, money) when she moved to Japan to be with her husband she took Japanese classes. She understood that she could increase the value of her cultural capital and social power when she moved to Japan. As the value of her cultural capital increased, so did her sense of herself, her hope for the future and her imagined identity. As she invested in her Japanese language abilities, she invested in her own identity.

As she learned to speak at first through structured language courses and later through community, she exchanged information with other Japanese speakers and constantly organized and reorganized a sense of who she was and how she related to the social world. Through this investment over time and space her identity was constantly changing. From the time Melanie started to learn the Japanese language in the United States, to when she first arrived in Japan to the present her identity has been changing.

3.2 Charlotte’s story

3.2.1 Brief History of Charlotte

Charlotte is a 28 year old UK native who is living in Japan with her Japanese husband and their two children. Charlotte originally came to Japan on a working holiday and worked with the company Nova teaching English. As the company went bankrupt, she stayed with them until the very end and finally had to look for other work. She is currently employed with a social welfare company doing all sorts of things mostly to do with English such as working with the daycare center and preparing people who will study abroad. She feels the Japanese that she uses with her husband is “bad” Japanese and not always appropriate to be used in the community. She also feels if she studied the Japanese language at a school she could become quite good at the language.
Next, I will include Charlotte’s “sites of struggle”, communities of practice and her investment in learning the Japanese language.

3.2.2 Charlotte’s Struggles

When I look at the possible “sites of struggle” for Charlotte when she is learning Japanese and negotiating her identity, I cannot completely conclude that these are actually a struggle for her, but they could be sites of struggle in forming her identity while learning the Japanese language. This representation is that of the author of this thesis and not actually the verified representation of the participant.

Charlotte sees herself as an informal and casual person. She says she gets mixed up between when to usual informal Japanese and when to use formal Japanese. She realizes that this gets her into trouble based on her following comment: “because they are all polite and formal and I am informal and casual and I am always getting mixed up and sometimes I get in trouble for saying the wrong thing.”

In English, there is not really a standard way to talk to people that you “should” be polite with. We do tend to speak to children differently than to adults, but between adults there is not a separate vocabulary for being polite. When we speak to bosses or in business to customers or partners or to high level people like the president we try to be polite. We tend to use the words could or would for can or want. But in general there is not a whole new level of formality to borrow from.

Japanese, in contrast, has more pervasive levels of formality (“Japanese Honorifics”, 2014). Introductions alone can stump a new comer because of all the honorific suffixes attached to names. Even the Japanese people are confused in how to address a foreigner because they have heard that foreigners address each other with their given name. In the field of education, one will hear “Yoshida sensei”, “Uehara sensei”
for the native Japanese and “Wendy sensei” for the foreigner even though that foreigner is married to a Japanese native and has a Japanese surname. To show respect, most Americans would call their teacher by saying Professor and their last name, not be their first name.

The Japanese language also has separate conjugations for verbs. There are polite forms and plain forms which the speaker uses depending on their position to the listener. This is often very confusing for English speakers or speakers of other languages that do not have this level of formality. The use of honorifics during phone calls by companies or businesses often frustrates native English speakers. I often hear of native English speakers asking people to not use “keigo” or honorifics but instead “normal” Japanese so that they can understand.

Due to the honorific system in the Japanese language and the absence of it in the English language it is understandable that Charlotte would struggle with this aspect of the language and culture.

Another “site of struggle” for Charlotte is not being able to say what ones true feelings because of the culture of the Japanese. This is exhibited by the following comment: “I feel I am constrained by you know, you can’t say what you feel, because nobody else is doing it.” I do not know if this is an actual struggle for Charlotte or not, as she was saying it in response to another comment about giving opinions. This could be a site of struggle for her. Charlotte seems to be a very outgoing person who is direct and to the point. In following Japanese practices of not saying what you feel, she feels constrained. She has to adjust her personality when she speaks Japanese. This could be affecting her identity and how she sees herself when she speaks Japanese.
3.2.3 Charlotte's Community of Practice

Community of practice is used to discuss the relationship between identity and second language acquisition in the case of Charlotte. Charlotte is most likely involved in more communities of practice than were brought out by the interview, but with the acquired data, four of her communities of practice will be interpreted. Her main communities of practice are: her husband and home, her friends who are also mothers (mama tomo), her daughter's daycare, and her place of employment.

Not all foreigners married to Japanese natives use Japanese to communicate at home. Some foreigners met their husbands in their own countries, some in countries foreign to the both of them and some met in Japan. Each couple will choose what language or languages they communicate in based on their individual situations. Charlotte met her non-English speaking husband in Japan and they use the Japanese language in the home to communicate with each other.

We only speak Japanese at home because he doesn’t speak English but my Japanese is maybe very bad, his Japanese is bad, his Japanese isn’t the politest, how do I say that in a nice way? He is a bad boy, so I know lots of bad Japanese, I shouldn’t use it. (Charlotte 78)

Charlotte is engaged in a community of practice with her husband. How she sees herself can be influenced with her interactions/practice with him. Charlotte sees her husband's Japanese as bad or impolite, hence she understands her Japanese to be bad or impolite. This is a negative point that she keeps in mind when she struggles in the work environment not to get in trouble for making mistakes in the use of honorifics.

Another of her communities of practice is with her “mama tomo” or friends she
made through her children. “I’ve got mama friends, mama tomo friends” (Charlotte 16). The term “mama tomo” comes from the combination of the word mother (mama) and tomodachi or friend (tomo). Although most countries in the world have this sort of concept, it seems to be a vital concept of survival in motherhood in Japan. “Mama tomo” are groups of mothers who meet at the playground or schools who get together for talk and mutual support. These are people “in the same boat” and are supposed to understand what each other are going through. In my experience, these friends are integral for the success of the immigrant mother at the children’s preschool or elementary school. The Japanese school systems are different than school systems of foreigners. What is common sense for the Japanese is not common sense for the immigrant. In addition to the school customs being different, often the communication notes home are in Kanji and not understood fully by the foreign mother. Sometimes the father will read the notes and explain, but this is not always the case so the foreign mother needs to access the information. The best way to do this is to ask your “mama tomo” friends.

Charlotte communicates in Japanese with her “mama tomo” friends. How she interacts and is understood by her peers in this community of practice helps shape her identity.

An additional community of practice for Charlotte is her daughters’ preschool which was clarified by the comment: “My daughter's houikuen (preschool) is very parental involved, they make you come and help. And I find no problems with that, no issues” (Charlotte 16). Charlotte is expected to get involved at her daughter’s preschool. She even writes notes in Japanese to the teachers in the daily communication notebook. In the preschool setting Charlotte feels she belongs. She is actively involved in the mutual process of raising a child and negotiates meaning from this process. By
reflecting on her experience with the school, she has images of the school environment and sees connections through time and space. She is aligned as she coordinates her energy towards activities (such as the communication notebook) and the broader enterprise of education.

The last community of practice that I include for Charlotte is her work environment. She started out as a non-participant in her first work environment as an English language teacher. She was not allowed to use the Japanese language when she was at work after a couple of years when the company closed she started working for a new company. She stresses this by saying “Now I work for a Japanese welfare company” (Charlotte 6). It’s interesting how she sees herself in this new company where she uses Japanese as the language of communication.

I don’t know (when asked what she does for the company), I am like their token foreigner basically. They have old people’s homes and they have a houikuen. And I help a lot with the houikuen. They have some foreign exchange programs so I help to facilitate it. If staff is going abroad I help with some English. Bits and bits, various things (Charlotte 8).

She sees herself as a “token foreigner”. In this community of practice she thinks the only reason she was hired was because the fact that she is a foreigner. This might be the case, but because the language of communication is Japanese she must have had to demonstrate her Japanese ability before being hired. Even before applying, she had to see herself as capable in the Japanese language. When she first came to Japan she was not able to speak any Japanese, but now a few years later she had enough confidence in her Japanese ability to apply for a position in a Japanese company. Her acceptance in
this community of practice plays a part in her identity negotiations.

Four communities of practice that Charlotte participated were included above, but now one community of non-practice will be explained.

I find it easy (speaking Japanese), I didn’t think about it. It just came naturally. At the same time, now I would really love to go to Japanese school and learn. I think if I went to school properly, in about a year it would be very, very good. I don’t speak, I speak Japanese, but I don’t speak it as a native speaker. I have never done like a Japanese test, so I do not know about all that but I know all that but I know I can communicate (Charlotte 14).

Charlotte is not a member of a structured Japanese language school. She does not see herself as professionally educated in the Japanese language. She has learned the language in the natural environment. She knows that she can communicate in Japanese because of her own efforts and natural abilities.

Next, Charlotte’s Investment in the Japanese language will be examined.

3.2.4 Charlotte’s Investment

Charlotte has never studied the Japanese language formally in a classroom setting. She arrived in Japan with a vocabulary of one word, “konichiwa”. She has learned the Japanese language through community and now even has a job in which she communicates in Japanese. When she first arrived because she worked at an English conversation school with a strict “no Japanese” policy she had no chances to speak in Japanese at work. She spent about two and a half years just listening to the Japanese language. After that period, she picked up speaking Japanese quickly. She found it easy
and natural. Now, she is married to a Japanese man and because he does not speak English they speak Japanese together.

From the very beginning Charlotte has been invested in learning the Japanese language, although at first she was not allowed to speak in the work environment, she knew it was important to learn the language so she just listened. She quickly became to understand the Japanese language. When she started to speak in Japanese, she became quite skilled. In the back of her mind she understood the value of “cultural capital” and learning the target language well.

By learning the language, she was able to gain employment in a Japanese company where she was required to communicate in Japanese. She also makes an effort to write in Japanese when she communicates in the daily communication notebook for her daughter. She only uses Japanese with her husband. She speaks Japanese with her “mama tomo” friends and at her daughter’s school.

She has accomplished a lot in her years in Japan and through the process her sense of self has increased. She has also reassessed her hopes of the future and her imagined identity, by saying: “Now I would really love to go to Japanese school and learn, I think if I went to school properly, in about a year it (her Japanese) would be very, very good” (Charlotte 14). She knows that an investment in the language will increase her “cultural capital”.

Through the relationship with her husband she has exchanged information with a target language speaker and has constantly organized and reorganized a sense of who she is and how she relates to the social world. This is evident in the following statement:

We only speak Japanese at home because he doesn’t speak English but my Japanese is maybe very bad, his Japanese is bad, his Japanese isn’t the politest,
how do I say that in a nice way? He is a bad boy, so I know lots of bad Japanese, I shouldn’t use it (Charlotte 78).

Charlotte has learned about the value of politeness in the Japanese language and how she evaluates her own language ability is based on an important model in her life: her husband. Through her investment in the Japanese language, she has also invested in her own social identity. This identity will steadily change across time and space. By virtue of identity being multiple, changing and contradictory, as she invests in the Japanese language she will inevitably faces struggles.

3.3 Erinn’s story

3.3.1 Brief History of Erinn

Erinn is a 45 year old American who came to Japan with her father when she was 16 years old. She did not attend Japanese school, but instead worked independently on her high school degree. She never left Japan after high school. She started employment with different teaching jobs for friends.

She has four children who are bilingual in English and Japanese. She has a conversational level of Japanese. She feels that ultimately she will never completely, fully belong in Japanese society. She never formally studied Japanese and most of what she learns has come through friends or from the community.

3.3.2 Erinn’s Struggles

There are several struggles that Erinn goes through while learning Japanese and constructing her identity. Before these struggles are specified, it is important to include a question that came up while analyzing a comment made by Erinn:
When asked “Do you feel any changes in yourself when you speak Japanese?” She replies: I don’t think so, although my Japanese isn’t fluent, I have a long way to go it is a natural part of me, being here so long and hearing it, seeing it and speak it that it’s easy for me to go between each one, it’s not like a big change (Erinn 164).

Erinn came to Japan at the age of sixteen before she was an adult. She was still developing her adolescent identity at that time. Does this fact play any role in her identity construction or the struggles she goes through as an adult immigrant married to a Japanese native?

The following comment refers to an incident when her child applied for a Japanese high school, was accepted but turned it down to attend a high school in the United States. “But ultimately I don’t fit in. I never completely fully fit in” (Erinn 71). The Japanese school and school board were shocked by this action as it had never been done before. Erinn, as a foreigner to the Japanese school system did not know that it would be such a dilemma to turn down the high school position. She feels that no matter how she tries, she does not completely fit in. This is a struggle she faces as she constructs her identity.

Another issue that she struggles with is depression that she faces in certain situations related knowing the Japanese language and understanding cultural attitudes towards education. This becomes noticeable in this comment, “Things like that get me down (the situation with her daughters application to high school), you do not know unless you are here” (Erinn 75). Another comment also illustrates this struggle:
One of the things I struggle with is not being able to speak as fully in depth as I can in the States. I can’t help my kids with their homework, I can’t read books with them at the library, just all these little things that build up and get me down, and I think ‘If I were in the States, I would be so fully involved with my children’s academic life, but here I’m really at the mercy of my husband or the kids themselves.’ Last week I faced a bout of depression about not being as involved as I dreamed I would be when I first became a mother. I had visions of what it would be like but the reality is hard because of the language (Erinn 119).

3.3.2 Erinn’s Community of Practice

Erinn is a social-being. Most of the Japanese that she has learned has been through the community and friends. She illustrates her learning with friends through the following comment:

When asked “Did you learn just on your own?” She answered: Yeah with friends, making horrible mistakes and everyone looking at me like what did you just say you’re picking your nose in the garden. (laugh) you’re picking your nose in the garden, I think there is something wrong there. I was trying to say weeding (Erinn 95-97).

She participated in a community of practice while she attended a community class for foreigners. She expresses this with the following comment: “My city, they have a free Japanese class for foreigners, so I was going there regularly for almost 2
years. But that would probably be the most focused studying that I ever did" (Erinn 85). For two years she participated in the common goal of improving their language ability. Together they (the foreigners in the class) sought meaning in this task and as a community they practiced the Japanese language. Through this process they developed their identity.

Although she does not need the Japanese language to perform her employment responsibilities, in order to relate/socialize with her co-workers she speaks Japanese. This is unmistakable in the following comment “um it’s not like I need to use it for work, I only speak it if the kids look at me like okay and after the class I will converse with people in Japanese” (Erinn 79). The goal of this community of practice was not specifically the Japanese language, the members got together after work was finished with the purpose of socialization.

One of Erinn’s sources of pride is a community of practice that she herself created.

(laugh) it’s been fun, it’s a good release, I really needed that. It’s interesting that the CHAT group and my jewelry business and kind of the garage sale groups a little later, but they all kind of started around the same time I think at that time I needed to meet people I needed to have something to call my own (Erinn 178).

This community of practice is an online chatting group for international mothers living in Japan with the purpose of supporting each other. Various issues are discussed from daily living issues, cultural differences, educational differences, and language issues. Erinn is the founder and an active member in this group. Through the online interactions
with this group Erinn negotiates her identity.

Erinn is also a non-participant in a part time job in Japan. This is visible by the comment: “I was thinking I need to study Japanese so I considered getting like a part time job at Mcdonalds or something” (Erinn 87). Although she does not engage in the practice of a part time job, she has considered the possibility. She sees herself as being competent enough in the Japanese language to be able to work in a job which requires Japanese language skills.

3.3.4 Erinn’s Investment

The learners’ investment in the target language characterizes their commitment towards their second language learning process and the social identities constructed in interactions with the target language group (Norton Peirce 1995; Norton 2000). Erinn has a desire to learn and is committed to learning the Japanese language via the community. Erinn has four children. She did not explicitly say that she learns the Japanese language in order to simplify/improve living conditions for herself, her children and her family however deriving from evidence in her comments, the author makes this assumption. Many of her comments include situations with her children as demonstrated by the following:

we had planned to go back (to the US) when the kids finished elementary, around that time right after that so the kids could finish their education in the states I figured that they would get their Japanese down, then they would get their education in English that did not quite work out but they do for the most part know English, you know they are bilingual. One of them is in the states now, one of them went, and one is planning to go to college (Erinn 6). [Update:
two are in the States now, one in HS, one in college (edited by the participant)]

She also reveals the following: "It's one of the things that I struggle with is not being able to speak when I could in the states. I can't help my kids with their homework" (Erinn 119). Erinn strives to improve her Japanese language ability for the benefit of her children.

With the exception of a free community Japanese class, Erinn has never formally studied the Japanese language. Despite this she feels her Japanese is at a conversational level enough to be able to "tell someone off". Confident enough in her ability to speak Japanese, she feels she would be successful in working a part time job like at Mcdonalds in Japan: "I wanted to improve my Japanese. I think that (getting a part-time job) would be one of the best just to encourage myself into the situation to use it" (Erinn 93). Due to the low pay that a part-time job would offer, Erinn has never applied for a job at Mcdonald's, but she understands the value of gaining Japanese language skills.

She also invested in learning the Japanese language by joining a class for foreigners. "My city, they have a free Japanese class for foreigners, so I was going there regularly for almost 2 years" (Erinn 85).

3.5 Summary of their Narratives

After careful construction of their narratives a few commonalities among the participants have been recorded. The first commonality is based on an impression made by the participants during their interviews. It seems, although not said in specific words, that all of the participants are invested in learning the Japanese language (and culture) for the sake of their husband and children. Also, when they chose to marry a man who happened to be a Japanese native, and live in his home country, they
unconsciously invested in all things that come with that commitment such as language and cultural development in the target language.

The participants themselves do not believe that their Japanese husbands have helped improve their Japanese language ability, on the other hand has their marriage affected their identity? Charlotte is the only participant who is actually participating in a community of practice with her husband. The other two participants do not actively participate in a community of practice with their husbands but as they do live with them they could be considered as non-participants. As a combination of participation and non-participation in communities of practice shape identity, it is inevitable that the participants’ husbands play a role in their understanding of their relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space and how they understand their possibilities for the future.

Across time as the participants grow in their relationship with their husbands they are negotiating their identities. Erinn and her husband had originally planned to return to the United States after the children finished elementary school. They figured that after this amount of time living in Japan, the children would have mastered their Japanese and could continue their education in the US in order to master their English. This plan never happened. How Erinn understood a possibility for the future was shaped and affected by her marriage to a Japanese man. Although their plans for the children’s education changed, the goal of raising bilingual children did not. One of Erinn’s struggles was with not being able to speak Japanese fluently enough to be able to help her children with their homework. Before she became a mom she dreamed of being very involved with her children’s education, but with the reality of the language barrier she had to adjust those expectations and how she saw herself.

As each participant’s identity changes the way they view themselves as a
“wife”, “parent”, “worker”, “foreigner” and other multiple identities affects the process of learning a second language and how they see themselves. Every new experience the participant has with the language and culture contributes to the way they see themselves. Based on the way they see themselves they will make decisions on how much they invest in learning the Japanese language and culture. They will also move through different levels of participation and non-participation in multiple communities of practice. The where, how and with whom they learn the Japanese language will change with time and space. How they see themselves will affect the decisions they make in terms of what aspect of the language/culture to study. For example, if Erinn sees herself as unable to help the children with their homework perhaps she will decide to study specific academic vocabulary that will allow her to assist her children. Perhaps she will decide to join a community of practice with other moms in order to join them and learn from their educational concerns.

Each participant has a story to tell. The narratives told above are told with the intention of allowing the readers to gain knowledge of inside reports of experience with identity construction while learning the target language in natural contexts.
Conclusion

This thesis began by demonstrating the importance of identity construction with the acquisition of a new language. Two research questions were addressed:

(1) How does the experience of marriage to a native Japanese man affect identity in the native English speaking woman?
(2) How do identity changes in the native English speaking woman influence learning the Japanese language?

While keeping these research questions in mind the author aspired to tell the lived experiences of the three participants who are married immigrants living in Japan and learning the Japanese language in the natural context. Themes in the data obtained through semi-structured interviews were analyzed through the theory of communities of practice and the construct of investment.

The study found that the participants were constructing their identity as they moved through multiple communities of practice. While the participants formed communities of practice of participation and non-participation with their spouses they negotiated their own identities. The experience of marriage affects their identity by influencing the communities of practice in which they engage. If the participants were not married to Japanese natives they most likely would not be involved in communities of practice with their spouses, their in-laws, or their mama-tomo friends.

In addition, the study also found that the participants’ investment in learning the Japanese language for the sake of their families increased their cultural capital. All of the participants were primarily invested in learning the Japanese for the sake of their husbands and families. Essentially, the investment of the participants was affected by
their marriage to a Japanese native. The identity changes they went through affected where, when and to what degree they learned the Japanese language or how much they invested in language learning. As they went through changes in their identity they envisioned different jobs, changed their plans of where they would raise their families, participated in multiple and various communities of practice and dreamed of becoming skilled in the Japanese language.

The foremost limitation in this study is an ethical issue. According to Bell (2002) when researchers take people’s stories and place them into a larger narrative, they are imposing meaning on participants’ lived experience. Because of this interpretation by the researcher, the participant can never be quite free. The data analysis and interpretation may not exactly reflect what the participants really intended to say. How the researcher sees the participant is most likely different than the participants see themselves. However, by interpreting the stories of the participants, they themselves start to think about how, where and with whom they learn the language of their husband and children. They start to think about their identities as second language learners and possibly can find various ways to invest in improving their Japanese.

Although this limitation is present, the author made sure to work in cooperation with the participants in the production of the narratives. All of the participants read their own narrative and clarified what they meant if the author’s interpretation was not quite what they wanted to say.

Future studies could perhaps represent immigrants from countries with a native language other than English. Also, the participants of this study were all female, future studies could investigate the identity construction of male participants. Another trajectory could be telling the stories of the Japanese husbands of the immigrants in the
study.

Charlemagne said long ago, “to have another language is to possess a second soul.” By sharing the experiences of second language learners both students and teachers are able to learn from each other and grow from the experience.
References


Duff_identity_agency_SLA.pdf


Japan Intercultural Consulting: Japanese Business Etiquette Guide - Beg to Disagree


Appendix A

Ethics Protocol Form

Ethics Protocol

The data will preserve confidentiality. The reason why I ask about your learning is simply to improve teaching methodology in Japan. I would like to make my teaching better. There is no right answer. I would like to see how you think about your learning Japanese. Before the interview I would like to ensure the following points:

1. This interview is done with your cooperation as a volunteer.
2. You have the right not to answer any questions you do not want to answer.
3. You have the right to stop the interview if you think the question is inappropriate.
4. This study preserves your confidentiality.
5. The data will be used for research purposes only.

In order to ensure that you participate in the interview on the basis of your understanding of those points, please sign your name and date.

Name: ____________________________

Date: ____________________________
Appendix B

Letter to Invite Participants

Dear Mothers,

I am getting my Master degree in education. I am doing a thesis project concerning identity in second language learning. I am wondering if those of you in Kansai would be willing to participate in some interviews. I need to have about 5 volunteers to be interviewed. Your rights will be protected and all of the data (the interview tape) will be returned to you after analysis is complete. I will also give you a copy of my finished thesis so you can see where your data ended up. If you are interested please PM me and I will give you more information.

Vicki Versland
Appendix C
Narrative Data
Erinn’s Transcript

1. Vicki: yeah, its literacy here is I took five years but

2. Erin: you kind of, you basically have to be born here to be capable of writing and reading the language.

3. Vicki: yeah

4. Erin: yeah, I don’t think I ever, I never learned the language so, If I can, I am sure I would be better at it then now. But I didn’t, I wasn’t planning to stay here for long term. so

5. Vicki: What brought you to Japan?

6. Erin: My dad’s work, so I turned 18, and just he got married right (so) right after that so I never had (inaudible) (laugh) and um he got married we had planned to go back when the kids finished elementary, around that time right after that so the kids could finish their education in the states I figured that they would get their Japanese down, then they would get their education in English that did not quite work out but They do for the most part know English, you know they are bilingual. One of them is in the states now, one of them went, and one is planning to go to college. So
7. Vicki: So do you still have family connections in the states where the children can stay with them?

8. Erin: yeah, my family is quite large, my daughter is staying at my sister's place right now and yeah

9. Vicki: that's nice

10. Erin: yeah (laugh) it is nice that is always the difficulty with family locations it pushed so I could send the kids

11. Vicki: hmm How many children do you have?

12. Erin: I have 4 children.

13. Vicki: My sister has 6

14. Erin: (laugh) in, not in Japan, right. In the states? Okay. Where in the states?

15. Vicki: um Wisconsin.


17. Vicki: Where are you from?
18. Erin: California.

19. Vicki: Wisconsin is over by the great lakes Its below Canada, in the north

20. Erin: kind of northern, and over on the coast

21. Vicki: It is called the Midwest

22. Erin: I should look it up

23. Vicki: but it is not really west and it is not really mid, but I do not know why it is called Midwest, so 4 children, the oldest is college age

24. Erin: (laugh) she’s 20

25. Vicki: Ah, she’s 20

26. Erin: She’s 20 and my next is 18 he graduates basically the youngest daughter is in the states and she plans to finish high school and then the youngest is 7

27. Vicki: your little man

28. Erin: my little man, the little guy, the little ball of noise and energy and dirt, (laugh)

29. Vicki: (laugh) do you feel he is louder than other Japanese?
30. Erin: no, he is calmer.

31. Vicki: Oh, he is calmer.

32. Erin: but he is more energetic than the older boy, he is full of a lot more energy.

33. Vicki: Because I feel my sons are more louder than the Japanese and that is because they have double blood in them other kids who have 2 nationalities as parents they are louder to.

34. Erin: to be them.

35. Vicki:

36. Erin: I thought Japanese kids in general settle down in junior high school. The parents don’t impose a lot of rules to be quiet they are kind of allowed to do their own things a lot and then they tend to fall in in junior high and high school you have 2?

37. Vicki: I have 2, a five year old and a 1 year old.

38. Erin: oh, those are rough.

39. Vicki: yeah the.
40. Erin: every age has its challenges, wait till they hit 13 (laugh), no but up until about 2 is the hardest for me when they were born was okay, but from about 4 months to 2 I really struggled with it with this one, because the other 3 had each other

41. Vicki:

42. Erin: right, so they would play physically I had to do the laundry as far as the part that was too

43. Vicki: What about their Japanese? How was their Japanese?

44. Erin: well now they. Each of them spoke English only until kindergarten I decided to just say, that is it. So with me they only speak English I do not answer them, I do not listen to them if they speak Japanese.

45. Vicki: oh that is smart

46. Erin: I don’t, I just refuse to listen. I guess they know if they have a question, use English and their dad is he is

47. Vicki: that is nice

48. Erin: that helped. I don’t use Japanese at all
49. Vicki: but your Japanese level is

50. Erin: it's conversational, but it's not more than that I can argue and tell someone off

51. Vicki: (laugh) that is a good skill

52. Erin: (laugh) it's harder to discuss business details

53. Vicki: You said you came when you were 16, did you go to an international school?

54. Erin: basically, I finished then I started out with different teaching jobs for friends or with in until I got into when I got a bit older and then I met my husband I was in Tokyo until we got married. And we moved into the area.

55. Vicki: Is your husband from the area?

56. Erin: No, he is from Tokyo. But he wanted to get out of Tokyo and I didn't care

57. Vicki: Ahh

58. Erin: I was like whatever, so we moved down here

59. Vicki: Do you like it?

60. Erin: I prefer the city I am in now than to Tokyo maybe because it is where we set
up our lives so it was more my choice than Tokyo was

61. Vicki: yeah, that is important

62. Erin: it is

63. Vicki: So when you speak Japanese, how do you feel? Do you feel

64. Erin: um no, I'm confident in my pronunciation. I feel like I don't really butcher the language

65. Vicki: I do (laugh)

66. Erin: (laugh) it takes but I know I screw up the grammar when I make a mistake I kind of get flustered and I cannot get myself out of it. So what I usually do is just talk to people in English and if they look at me like what the heck are you saying then I will switch over to Japanese I figure, this is my philosophy they study English in Junior high school, probably 6 years of English, so this is their chance to use it.

67. Vicki: (laugh) that is a good philosophy.

68. Erin: it's my contribution to society, free English (laugh)

69. Vicki: (laugh) I find when I come to the bigger city, the people use their English
more they just speak to me like I am one of them, like a normal person

70. Vicki: Because I lived in Kobe for a short time and I didn’t feel that I needed Japanese. I do not know if it’s like that where you live

71. Erin: not quite like that but umm I use Japanese, but when I am in a rush I do not want to take the time to visit questions, but ultimately I don’t fit in I never completely fully fit it. Even things that you do not know. And you do not realize it until you come across the problem. Like my third daughter, they have the whole test thing here for high school and you only have one chance at that test, so you chose the school and if you don’t get into that high school you are stuck with a private high school so she could get into a top high school in that area but at the same time we were trying to decide about the states. So we said take the test so that you can secure your place but if moving to the states is preferred which you are going to go to the states instead then they can just give your spot to some other kid. We did, it turns out that you just do not do that in Japan.

72. Vicki: ohh

73. Erin: this test, you never cancel it. it is just unheard of. they freak out, people in the high school freak out the board of education freaked out, we had to meet people and explain over and over. I was like laughing like I cannot believe I caused this

74. Vicki: yeah
75. Erin: things like that get me down you do not know unless you are here

76. Vicki: I learned so much from the other parents I have no idea, I went to the meeting for first grade the other day there are so many things that you need for first grade, they are going over the size of the bags.

77. Erin: they give you the pamphlet . I have so much to do.

78. Vicki: You said that you work, do you use Japanese at work at all?

79. Erin: um its not like I need to use it for work, I only speak it if the kids look at me like okay and after the class I will converse with people in Japanese

80. Vicki: Do you feel you are competent. How do you feel when you speak at work?

81. Erin: um

82. Vicki: Is it different than just regular conversation.

83. Erin: it is not conversational because I am trying to get a point across, a grammar point or a situational point. It’s not like a conversation, if I have any conversations but the only time I really use it when they do not understand what is in their workbook I will give them the Japanese for it.

84. Vicki: I think you said that you do not apply yourself in Japanese did you study at
85. Erin: not formally I studied on my own. My city, they have a free English uh Japanese class for foreigners so I was going there regularly for almost 2 years. But that would probably be the most focused studying that I ever did.

86. Vicki: Was this class different, how did you find the Japanese?

87. Erin: um, some of the other foreigners in the city were it's a volunteer class I have not been for a while cause I was thinking I need to study Japanese so I considered getting like a part time job at Mcdonalds or something so I can see and at the same time my friends I would just go to the free lessons every week.

88. Vicki: Do you feel that you could successfully get a job at Mcdonald's.

89. Erin: yeah, yeah I think my Japanese is enough to get me a job

90. Vicki: like at a café

91. Erin: but the pay is so minimal that I really wouldn't consider it, I mean I have some teaching. I want something that requires no thinking and no children talking back to you. But the pay is bad for what

92. Vicki: I have thought about it too, but I do not know if my Japanese is good enough to get a job it would be a good way to practice Japanese.
93. Erin: Yes, I wanted to improve my Japanese I think that would be one of the best just to encourage myself into the situation to use it. I have never been in that situation here. I have always been able to get something convenient.

94. Vicki: Did you learn just on your own

95. Erin: Yeah with friends, making horrible mistakes and everyone looking at me like what did you just say your picking your nose in the garden.

96. Vicki: (laugh)

97. Erin: (laugh) your picking your nose in the garden, I think I there is something wrong there. I was trying to say weeding

98. Vicki: ahh

99. Erin: (laugh) I used the wrong vocabulary

100. Vicki: I think mistakes are fun

101. Erin: yeah

102. Vicki: but they can be

103. Erin: I know that I made a mistake but I laugh its pretty funny, that's pretty funny

104. Vicki: but they do not laugh
105. Erin: they don’t, it is not until later I am like what did I say? I told my students to kill the ball, oh my God so

106. Vicki: so your married to a Japanese?

107. Erin: yeah

108. Vicki: Do you feel being married helps your Japanese at all?

109. Erin: No, I normally don’t talk to the schools, or read the notes that come back from the schools

110. Vicki: he does that all?

111. Erin: yeah or the kids figured out that they better do it because mom even when I tried to read it they figured it was easier for them to take care of it themselves then have me do it.

112. Vicki: So what about your first grader, the kanji, the dad

113. Erin: daddy does, or one of his older brothers or sisters

114. Vicki: my husband does most of it but he’s so busy he doesn’t look, then at the last minute I’m like what do we need.
115. Erin: It's happened there is something we need to go to, I need to go, an hour before (laugh)

116. Vicki: How do you feel when you have to rely on your husband or the children?

117. Erin: How do you feel?

118. Vicki: I feel powerless.

119. Erin: yeah, its one of the things that I struggle with is not being able to speak when I could in the states I can't help my kids with their homework which is my ability is not there anymore and I can't um take them to the library I can take them to the library but I can not choose books with them and sit down and read with them everything is not in English, all these little things all these things that I think, when I was in the states you know I was really full on involved, but here it gets me depressed, last week I really had a bad bout of that depression about not being as involved as I dreamed as I would be when I became a mom, you know I had visions but the reality is it is hard because of the language

120. Vicki: Yeah, I think that is why CHAT is a valuable resource because I think it gives us power in a sense

121. Erin: we can ask somebody else somebody else can help us out and tell us that it is okay I know the feeling
122. Vicki: and like you told the story earlier, I can picture myself in that situation in the schools

123. Erin: yeah

124. Vicki: that comes through I didn’t know about that

125. Erin: yeah, all these things you just, if you are not careful it can be really depressing

126. Vicki: I think everyone goes through the depression and I think the chatting group has helped me a lot, not to be so depressed because others are going through the same thing

127. Erin: yeah and you know if you need a pick me up, someone out there is going to say I am there, it will get better

128. Vicki: like the other day, the case of the newspaper person came into the house

129. Erin: (D), freaky but she handled it so well (laugh)

130. Vicki: I do not know what I would do, the people that come to the house are pretty calm, I have never had someone shove in

131. Erin: that was unusually rude its not, it was really rude
132. Vicki: I was shocked because Japanese do not seem so forward

133. Erin: yeah

134. Vicki: pushy

135. Erin: It could have been a generation thing, because when I first came to Japan if you went to somebody’s house, you just opened the door and walked in and said hello, all over Tokyo the certain that is what it is like. And even still recently some of the older delivery people would still just open my door and say Hello I’m here I have a package for you

136. Vicki: yeah, I have one delivery man He said I came earlier and your door was open I’m like well how do you know, why are you coming into my house

137. Erin: right its an older generation that are very open and trusting. Odd because its such a they would just walk into the house, they would not go further than the genkan area they never went into the house, the genkan is still considered outdoors

138. Vicki: it is interesting that the genkan is considered outdoors

139. Erin: I do not know now, things are changing I know you live in the inaka and people will still go to the store and leave their car running does that still happen

140. Vicki: Um, I do not think it happens much. I used to leave the kid in the car, I would run into the store, I do not know if I am the only one who does that
141. Erin: no I have done that leaving kids in the car more than once

142. Vicki:

143. Erin: I know the Japanese do that all the time. I didn’t even realize that in the states it was a crime until I went there and did it.

144. Vicki: oh, it’s a crime.

145. Erin: yeah, I don’t know about in Wisconsin, but in California your children can be taken away from you for leaving them unattended in a vehicle. I didn’t know. I was like I’m just dashing in.

146. Vicki: yeah but they can be kidnapped in the meantime.

147. Erin: in some cases

148. Vicki: yeah

149. Erin: it wasn’t hot

150. Vicki: yeah, it’s like I said, I only did it in the winter, the summer

151. Erin: it’s too hot the winter is too cold

152. Vicki: oh you’re from California, okay I am from Wisconsin which has 4 distinct
seasons

153. I lived in Houston for 3 years, its warm most of the time but I grew up with seasons so I can tolerate the weather here.

154. Erin: umm

155. Vicki: But I am glad I don’t live in Hokkaido

156. Erin: I don’t know about heating, but double doors, heated floors and all that stuff that keeps a house warm.

157. Vicki: they are prepared.

158. Erin: outside it’s cold, but inside you don’t feel it another mom Amelia, and she lived up in Hokkaido and she moved to Kyoto

159. Vicki: yeah, I hate having to sit underneath the kotatsu because the house is so cold and the computer my fingers are freezing

160. Erin: (laugh)

161. Vicki: umm, since you are not in a regular class, you just took speak Japanese in Japan, do you feel any changes in yourself when you speak Japanese?

162. Erin: like in what way
163. Vicki: kind of like your personality

164. Erin: I don't think so, although my Japanese isn't fluent, I have a long way to go it is a natural part of me, being here so long and hearing it, seeing it and speak it that it's easy for me to go between each one, it's not like a big change

165. Vicki: So do you think you would react the same way like when someone calls your child cute. I know that's a big thing

166. Erin: on the group

167. Vicki: would you react the same way as if someone called them cute in the states?

168. Erin: I think I would react the same way, you know it doesn't really phase me. I prefer not but it happens you just have to live with it.

169. Vicki: there is a lot of here

170. Erin: really good at it

171. Vicki: when did you start your business?

172. Erin: This will be my third year in September so 2011.

173. Vicki: did you ever register?
174. Erin: no

175. Vicki: the internet

176. Erin: the internet or people I meet on facebook

177. Vicki: (laugh)

178. Erin: (laugh) it's been fun, it's a good release, I really needed that. Its interesting that the CHAT group and my jewelry business and kind of the garage sale groups a little later, but they all kind of started around the same time I think that time I needed to meet people I needed to have something to call my own.

179. Vicki: yeah

180. Erin: they just kind of happened

181. Vicki: you started the garage sale groups too?

182. Erin: that came from the CHAT group because people wanted to get rid of stuff, right so I'm like I don't want to have sales so maybe we should start a group for selling, but nobody did, so I was like I will do it

183. Vicki: I think you need a goal, before I came to Japan somebody told me that you need a goal when you go to Japan. If you don't have a goal, you get lost. I had a
goal when I first came, but then when I got married my goal got lost.

184. Erin:

185. Vicki: When I joined the CHAT group I got back a bit of my goal

186. Erin: a bit of

187. Vicki: not a goal, but some focus and interacting with people

188. Erin: that are in the same situation, yeah

189. Vicki: so it’s not really a goal, but it’s a support group I think that is helping a lot

190. Erin: good I am glad to hear that. That was the point of it, right was just to bring unique little group in Japan I had the idea and said you guys you want to do this.

191. Vicki: I think the group has 350 members

192. Erin: 380, I mean not all of them are active I’m in a lot of groups that one is the most active beside the garage sale one but that is a little different

193. Vicki: that’s nice

194. Erin: knock on wood they are relatively no conflicts some people clash, it happens,
but overall its been smooth I was really worried about in the beginning

195. Vicki: I find, what is it called, the foreign wives club

196. Erin: the foreign wives in Japan?

197. Vicki: yeah, I have found I felt alienated that is what I felt. But with the KA group
   I do not feel alienated at all I don’t feel like my opinion is

198. Erin: yeah, yeah I had worried about that a lot in the beginning I have been in
   groups not mother groups, but other groups that was just like a free-for-all. So at the
   very beginning I kept repeating some of the main points, over and over I would
   remind, just to try and set the tone of the groups but now it barely ever needs it like
   I said knock on wood you don’t know what’s going to happen tomorrow. (laugh)

199. Vicki: but I have not felt negative activity in a while

200. Erin: that is good to know My I mean that know that forceful personalities need
   that kind of outlet, but I am not that type of person. So I just wanted a group where
   you could say what was happening without fear of criticism about it or judgement

201. Vicki: yeah because I do not know how you feel, but I am constantly making
   mistakes here

202. Erin: (laugh)
203. Vicki: and its like language and culture I would say most of the mistakes are cultural wise

204. Erin: on top of just the normal mistakes that you make as a person, right

205. Vicki: and as a parent you make more mistakes. So everyday I feel what can I do, I have to find something I can do but I wallow on the stuff I can’t do because we all make mistakes and I am not working, in your work you can say oh I taught someone English when you do not have an outlet like that you just make mistakes you think uh, where is my value? So um I think it is a feeling of powerlessness. I think the KA group helps us feel power but I wonder if that could have people who want to feel powerful kind of criticize other.

206. Erin: It could be and that happens a lot of the people who are like that leave because they realize that the group does not work that way there are other groups for that they can be like that. I have never actually kicked anyone out, there have been rumors going around that I have kicked people out, but I haven’t anyone is allowed to take a safe out, it wasn’t for them

207. Vicki: Yeah, well I think you did a good job starting the group.

208. Erin: I’m just glad to have met so many people.

209. Vicki: Have you met a lot of people from the group
210. Erin: Actually yeah, I have met a lot of them I went to Tokyo met a few people there and kansai of course we tend to get together a lot I don’t know if you’re free on the 30th

211. Vicki: for the Hanami picnic

212. Erin: yeah

213. Vicki: I’m coming

214. Erin: great

215. Vicki: yeah, it’s my first event I’m excited

216. Erin: you really

217. Vicki: I’m bringing the boys. It is the farthest I have gone. Right now my youngest is escaping his car seat so I don’t want to drive I do not want to drive, plus I have not really driven in Osaka

218. Erin: parking is severe

219. Vicki: I think it’s just easier to take the train

220. Erin: oh fun, I hope they enjoy it the train is fun and not fun with kids
221. Vicki: my oldest son doesn't sit

222. Erin: runs up and down

223. Vicki: he runs up and down and I know its rude, but he just doesn't sit

224. Erin: but the nice thing in Japan is that people tend to let kids to be kids, not look down on them for being kids

225. Vicki: yeah

226. Erin: I don't really feel criticized when my kid or are noisy or just a little out of control it people just ignore it for the most part

227. Vicki: I had one man grab my son by the neck

228. Erin: no

229. Vicki:

230. Erin: he was being a little crazy

231. Vicki: I think he was trying to take a toy from a kid, the man did not like it, it wasn't even the man's kid it was just some stranger

232. Erin:
233. Vicki: I wasn't watching my son I was walking around I wasn't watching him.

234. Erin: right

235. Vicki: some parents play with their kids, I usually play with him but I was just walking around because I needed a break and

236. Erin: you can either review it as a mistake on your part or view it as a community being your eyes

237. Erin: somebody stepped in to help

238. Vicki: he didn't do it the right way, you don't pick up a child by the neck but in a way it was kind of nice that someone did get involved I felt a part of the society because sometimes I feel that the parents ignore their children and they do dangerous things and no one says anything I would rather have them say something if my child is doing something wrong then just ignore it. Every side has its positives and negatives

239. Erin: How did you meet your husband?

240. Vicki: I met him, he's a volunteer at a Japanese volunteer class, and he runs the class and he, the class was a distance away from my dorm when I first came to Japan and he picked us up and um I first met him through the rides but through the class he invited us to his house for BBQ’s and I met him that way, and he was also a
teacher at a special education school and I was researching about special education so that is how we started a relationship.

241. Erin: So did you come to Japan for research, or study or work?

242. Vicki: so it’s a teacher training scholarship and I came to Kobe for about 6 months and then Hyogo Kyoiku Dai gakku is a teachers university I went there for research and then I met my husband

243. Erin: nice

244. Vicki: I never expected to stay in Japan. Kind of like you.

245. Erin: how many of us out there (laugh)

246. Vicki: that’s an interesting question

247. Erin: how many of you planned it, Japan that is

248. Vicki: So, how did you meet your husband?

249. Erin: I actually met his children and his first wife cause he was married and he was not living with them and a friend asked if I could help the mom take care of the kids when the youngest was a baby and she had to do some business so they were like, would you mind to watch the kids for the day. So I did not actually meet him
until a year after so there was some meeting cleaning, maid so that is where we actually first said hello. Over the years we interacted, our paths crossed. He left his wife. We started dating, I got pregnant, got pregnant again and then I had number three and then we decided

250. Vicki: I do not know how it is to be divorced but I wonder

251. Erin: divorcing, or no it was me I wasn’t sure I wanted to be married and his wife wasn’t giving him the divorce for a while

252. Erin: (laugh)

253. Vicki: Do you feel any different in your 40’s compared to the 30’s?

254. Erin: no, not physically I have calmed down a lot I think. I kind of found a place where I belong, starting the group my business the older kids are kind of going on their own, there is still the little kid he is kind of like a grandkid as who I am as a person than I did previously

255. Vicki: because I am 38 I will be in my 40’s soon

256. Erin: You will do great, you will do great

257. Vicki: I think basically my questions are answered so I can turn off the recorder
Appendix D

Narrative Data

Charlotte/ Melanie Transcript

1. Vicki: You already mentioned, but what brought you to Japan?

2. Charlotte: I finished university. I was having a gap year and then it just kind of well actually when I first came I worked for Nova.


4. Charlotte: They went bankrupt though

5. Vicki: What did you do after they went bankrupt?

6. Charlotte: I was also one of the ones who stayed until it really died and then I had my first daughter and left. Now I work for a Japanese welfare company.

7. Vicki: What do you do at the company?

8. Charlotte: I don't know, I am like their token foreigner basically. They have old people's homes and they have a houikuen. And I help a lot with the houikuen. They have some foreign exchange programs so I help to facilitate it, If staff is going abroad I help with some English. Bits and bits, various things.


13. Vicki: Just through community. How do you find that?

14. Charlotte: I find it easy, I didn't think about it. It just came naturally. At the same time, now I would really love to go to Japanese school and learn. I think if I went to school properly, in about a year it would be very, very good. I don't speak, I speak Japanese, but I don't speak it as a native speaker. I have never done like a Japanese test, so I do not know about all that but I know all that but I know I can communicate.

15. Vicki: So how do you feel when you speak Japanese? Do you feel that you fit in, do you feel that, you say you speak Japanese not like a native speaker, but in the community do you feel that you can get by?

16. Charlotte: get by, definitely, I've got mama friends, mama tomo friends my daughter's houikuen is very parental involved, they make you come and help. And I find no problem with that no issues, and I have like only they don't think I am much but that is okay.
17. Vicki: Did you study a language in high school? Or are you just naturally good at languages?


19. Vicki: yeah, high school languages don’t stick.

20. Charlotte: I am Scottish. We kind of hear different language differences between Scottish English and British English

21. Vicki: May be that is why

22. Charlotte: I don’t know. To Melanie: have you ever studied Japanese?

23. Melanie: I studied Japanese in college for three semesters before I came. I studied German in high school.

24. Vicki: you studied German in high school

25. Melanie: but I didn’t learn much

26. Vicki: I studied Spanish and French in high school. So how do you feel at work when you use Japanese? Do you use Japanese at work?

27. Charlotte: only Japanese except when I am teaching English
28. Vicki: How do you feel at work?

29. Charlotte: difficult because they are all polite and formal and I am informal and casual and I am always getting mixed up and sometimes I get in trouble for saying the wrong thing

30. Vicki: oh really. So do you feel any changes in your personality when you speak Japanese?

31. Charlotte: Ah, maybe it depends on who to maybe, maybe

32. Melanie: I think I am a lot more quiet because I either I don’t have the vocabulary for what I want to say or I think of how to say it too late

33. Charlotte: like an argument

34. Melanie: or just like anything except for my mother-in-law, I can speak freely to her. If I make a mistake I don’t worry as much at work I wait until

35. Vicki: So what brought you to Japan?


37. Vicki: wow. How did you meet your husband?
38. Melanie: he was in the same college as I was, we had mutual friends

39. Vicki: you came with him

40. Melanie: yeah, in a way he came back before me. I finished college and then I came here.

41. Vicki: okay. This isn't one of the questions but, did you, was he worried about you being able to adjust to Japanese culture?

42. Melanie: a little yeah. Probably. He figured he would help.

43. Charlotte: men

44. Vicki: So you studied Japanese for three semesters in college, do you think it helped you when you came?

45. Melanie: a lot, but my Japanese now from when I came is a lot better

46. Vicki: like how, keigo level

47. Melanie: I've never taken any tests My speech has become more spoken. I have forgotten a lot of the formal things I think like kanji I've forgotten a lot of kanji that I studied
48. Vicki: Do you work?

49. Melanie: Yes, I work twice a week, I teach English.

50. Vicki: When you work, do you speak Japanese?

51. Melanie: I am not supposed to (speak Japanese), but the office I work in most people speak just Japanese. My students who speak English, they are the only ones who come and talk to me.

52. Vicki: The ones that speak English.

53. Melanie: I mean I speak sometimes I speak with the ones who speak Japanese as well, if I have a question. Well because I work in the English department, nobody in the other departments have any reason to ask me anything.

54. Vicki: Do you feel any changes in your personality when you speak Japanese?

55. Melanie: Umm, yeah I am more shy personality? I just don't say my opinions as much.

56. Vicki: I am the same way. I can't.

57. Melanie: Because I can't give my opinions as much.

58. Vicki: You are a maybe on that.
59. Charlotte: if it business, it is quite frustrating more than it does not change me, but I feel I am constrained by you know you can’t say what you feel, because nobody else is doing it and I think that is why

60. Melanie: You are kind of restricted in what you can and can't say a lot of people probably hold in their opinion or don’t say them.

61. Charlotte: Even if you have a totally different opinion I would say it's more culture than language.

62. Melanie: Right, so I wonder how many Japanese people would say that they are themselves at work.

63. Vicki: that is a good point Before I forget to ask, How old are you?

64. Charlotte: 28

65. Melanie: 32, no 33

66. Vicki: you had a birthday?

67. Melanie: like half a year ago

68. Charlotte: me too, In December I turned 28, but in my head I am still 27, every year I get closer and closer to 30 (laugh)
69. Vicki: I am getting closer to 40 so

70. Charlotte: really

71. Vicki: So you came after university, and you came after university and masters oh when you were 21

72. Charlotte: I kind of jumped a year in my university

73. Vicki: ah, I see

74. Charlotte: it feels like 20 years ago

75. Vicki: I think time goes, I lose track of time, I am tired all the time

76. Melanie: I have never been good with dates either

77. Vicki: Do you think being married to a Japanese has helped you with your Japanese?

78. Charlotte: we only speak Japanese at home because he doesn’t speak English but my Japanese is maybe very bad, his Japanese is bad, his Japanese isn’t the politest, how do I say that in a nice way? He is a bad boy, so I know lots of bad Japanese, I shouldn’t use it

79. Vicki: Its difficult to know My husband told me, you speak like an old man we have
to correct that

80. Charlotte: To Melanie: Do you speak only Osaka-ben, Melanie?

81. Melanie: pretty much yeah I learned from my mother-in-law I didn’t learn from my husband because we always speak English to each other so all my initial Japanese, once I got here from my mother-in-law and my grandmother-in-law so I would say that I sometimes talk like them from Kansai-ben

82. Charlotte: people tell me a lot you speak really strong Osaka-ben but I don’t know what the correct version of that would be its not like I choose to speak it its just what I have learned.

83. Vicki: my son speaks kansai-ben I don’t know what mine is, mine is Vicki-ben

84. Charlotte: my style

85. Vicki: do you study here in Japan formally?

86. Melanie: Now, no

87. Vicki: Have you?

88. Melanie: no
89. Vicki: just through the community, through living here?

90. Melanie: Yes. After meeting my husband in the US, I then transferred schools so I could take some Japanese courses that is why I just had three semesters because I was finished with school after 2 semesters. I lived in Wakayama for a year and that is when I started to learn more Japanese through community and what not. I worked for an eikaiwa there.

91. Vicki: Do you find that working helps with your Japanese?

92. Melanie: not so much now, I would go to a lot of seminars they were in Japanese were about English education but they were in Japanese so I learned a lot of things I wouldn’t of normally learned

93. Charlotte: technical terms

94. Melanie: yeah

95. Charlotte: When I first came to Japan I could speak like zero, I could say konichiwa and that was it so I was working for an eikaiwa which had a strict no Japanese policy and everyone around me is speaking English, and I am hearing Japanese, but I’m not getting the chance to speak it so for me it was like a good of 2 and half years of just listening and not getting a chance to reply then after that quickly. But in an eikaiwa I think its really hard, because most of them are really set that you cannot speak Japanese and sometimes you will get someone who is a lower level
student who will say a Japanese word to you and even if you know it, you’ve got to speak English. So I imagine it would be quite hard if you were only working in an eikaiwa. Maybe I don’t know.

96. Vicki: I think most of my questions are done. We can just talk.
Appendix E

Semi-structured Interview Questions

Original questions:

1. Tell me about your experience learning Japanese.
2. When did you first start to study Japanese? Where? Why?
3. What was it like emotionally?
4. What did you think about learning Japanese?
5. How did you happen to start learning Japanese?
6. What is your language history?
7. Who, if anyone influenced you to begin studying Japanese?
8. Tell me about how he/she influenced you?
9. What contributed to your motivation to learn Japanese?
10. What was going on in your life then?
11. How would you describe how you viewed your identity before learning Japanese?
12. How if at all, has your view of your identity towards Japanese learning changed after working? After marriage? After having children?
13. How would you describe the person you were then?
14. Tell me about your Japanese classes. Where? Who? What were they like?
15. How do you feel about studying Japanese in the classroom?

Revised questions

Interview Questions:

1. What brought you to Japan?
2. What did you do before you came to Japan?
3. Did you study Japanese in your home country?

4. When you speak Japanese now, how do you feel?

5. How did you feel before?

6. Did you study in a classroom when you came to Japan?

7. How did you learn Japanese in Japan?

8. Why do you learn Japanese now?

9. Can you read or write in Japanese? How do you feel about this?

10. Do you work? How do you feel when you speak Japanese at work?

11. How do you feel when you speak Japanese at home?

12. How do you feel about your Japanese when you interact with your children?

13. In general, how do you feel about your Japanese ability?

14. Since you have started to learn Japanese, do you feel any changes in yourself?