

**A MULTIGENERATION STUDY OF JAPANESE AMERICAN  
HERITAGE LANGUAGE LEARNERS OF JAPANESE**

by

**Kenneth Tanemura**

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**THE PURDUE UNIVERSITY GRADUATE SCHOOL  
STATEMENT OF COMMITTEE APPROVAL**

**Dr. Tony Silva, Chair**

Department of English

**Dr. Margie Berns**

Department of English

**Dr. April Ginther**

Department of English

**Dr. Irwin Weiser**

English Department

**Approved by:**

Dr. S. Dorsey Armstrong

*Dedicated to your custom dedication*

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## **ABSTRACT**

This dissertation explores motivation in Japanese American learners of their heritage language. This area of study is significant because existing research primarily looks at heritage language learners as “balanced bilinguals” and limits their learning purpose to professional motivations. Also, research on “passive” or “receptive” bilinguals and the impact of history and ethnicity on motivation builds new knowledge in the field from which other scholars can construct their own studies. Through my interview-based case studies and autoethnography, I found that historical, social, and ethnic identity factors contribute considerably to the motivation to maintain or reject the heritage language. My findings reveal that the traumatic events of WWII such as the forced incarceration of over 110,000 people of Japanese descent led to the loss of the heritage language and a denial of the heritage culture. I also discovered that third generation Japanese Americans are motivated to learn Japanese for professional reasons whereas fourth generation Japanese Americans study Japanese to gain a stronger sense of ethnic identity.

# CHAPTER ONE

## Preface

### *Japanese as a Heritage Language in the Time of War (1939 – 1945)*

Tom Brokaw (1998) famously called Americans who lived through World War II “The Greatest Generation,” for their valor in military campaigns abroad and their tenacious work at home that contributed to the war effort. Brokaw said this group of Americans was the greatest generation that ever lived. However, as this great generation was having their sugar rationed, saving up their hard-earned dollars and relishing their patriotism, generations of Japanese Americans lost not only their businesses, but also—to some extent—their language and culture. Nurseries, clothing stores and farms—the conduits that would have allowed Japanese Americans to save and benefit from the economic expansion of the 1950s, were irretrievably lost. In San Francisco, posters that instructed people of Japanese ancestry to prepare to be evacuated to “assembly centers” were ubiquitous, so that a single person walking along Front Street would not misunderstand the orders to leave all property and possessions behind and bring with them only what “can be carried by the individual or family group.” The Japanese owners of a clothing store in San Francisco immediately sold off all of their merchandise at half-price upon hearing of the evacuation orders.

Rather than growing their business through the war years and benefitting from the postwar economic boom, JAs (Japanese Americans) were forced to leave all assets and prospects behind. Some sold their businesses to white entrepreneurs for half the value. When evacuation day came, the Japanese American businesses were ransacked and everything from furniture to restaurant equipment to food and clothing was stolen. My grandfather sold his lettuce farming business, equipment, car and other possessions for a fraction of what he paid. Looters were so ruthless that even plumbing and appliances were stripped from houses left vacant by Japanese American evacuees. Soon, 120,000 people of Japanese descent would be detained behind barbed wire in internment camps located in remote areas of the country. They would be supervised 24/7 by military guards perched in watchtowers equipped with machine guns. Cooper (2000) reminds us that almost two-thirds of those evacuated were American citizens.

This was the price to pay for being of Japanese descent, for speaking the Japanese language or for being the children of those who did, for practicing Japanese culture or being a part of a family that maintained Japanese cultural values. The day after the attack on Pearl Harbor, a Japanese American grocer in Oakland, California put up a sign that read, “I Am An American.” The sign was so large it could be read from a block away. Meanwhile, Japanese American children, before being evacuated, were still in classrooms sincerely reciting the pledge of allegiance with their hands across their hearts. Dorothea Lange photographed a Japanese American child who wore a cap with the words, “Remember Pearl Harbor” embroidered on it; his father, like any American of the day, wears a fedora hat and wool overcoat, while trying to foresee what would happen to his family as they waited in a detention center. After the attack on Pearl Harbor, Davis (1982) notes that some first-generation Japanese Americans “felt that clinging to their Japanese-language books and magazines and their family photos would be misunderstood by the American government” (p.8). Many families buried Japanese-related objects—traditional clothes, dolls, etc.—in their yards (p.8). Japanese language and culture were literally and figuratively concealed and abandoned for the sake of self-preservation. Fellow Americans conflated the shared language and racial features of first-generation Japanese immigrants, as well as their US-born children, with the enemy who was responsible for Pearl Harbor. Even as Japanese Americans “were burning their ties with their ancestral homeland” (Davis, 1982, p.10), no amount of English-language fluency or patriotism could prevent the internment of 120,000 people of Japanese descent.

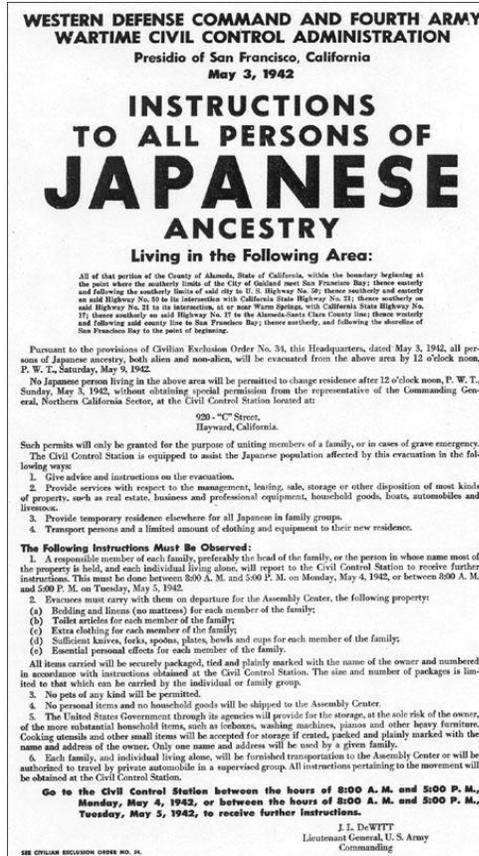


Figure 1. <https://www.ncpedia.org/media/poster-announcing-military>

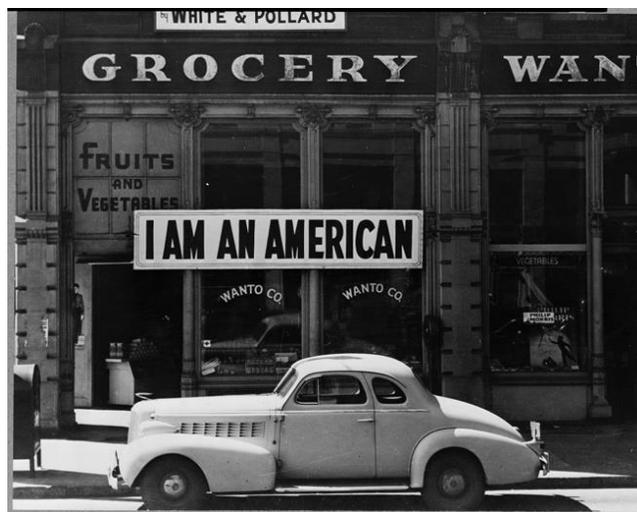


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While some first-generation Japanese Americans were busy cutting ties with their linguistic and cultural backgrounds, their children were even more adamantly American; they saw their parents as too “Japanesey” (Davis, 1982, p. 22) and experienced their heritage language as shameful and un-American. Smith (1995) quotes a second generation Japanese American: “I think the Japs are coming to bomb us, but I will go and fight even if I think I am a coward and I don’t believe in wars but this time it has to be” (p.91). It is telling for a Japanese American to use the racial slur “Japs” to refer to a group of people who share his ethnicity, but not his nationality. In this particular case, the Nisei (second generation Japanese American) instinctively chose his American identity over his Japanese ethnicity. As Davis (1982) explains, the second generation felt “a need to exhibit their Americanism at a time of anti-Japanese feeling” (p.23). Another factor is that many Nisei did not feel Japanese or speak the language anyway. Cooper (2000) cites a Nisei who explains that “I didn’t know how to speak Japanese except to my parents in broken Japanese. We were going to Japanese school after our regular classes, but that was more because we had to, and I didn’t personally feel I was part of Japan” (p.25). The gradual loss of their heritage language had as much to do with the natural processes of assimilation as it did with the pressure of discrimination. These Japanese and Japanese Americans might have been part of the greatest generation except that their US citizenship was revoked, and they would for years have no papers that identified citizenship to any country.

If Nisei identified more as American, Japanese as a heritage language was yet another marker of the buried ethnicity that should be forgotten. Smith (1995) recounts that “Unsure of what the FBI would consider incriminating evidence, the Satow family buried Japanese artifacts, from books in Japanese to inherited Samurai swords” (p.92). Japanese as a heritage language was concealed and excised for the sake of personal safety. Asahina (2006), in his study of Nisei, claims that “all the veterans I interviewed regarded their schooling in Japanese language, religion, and culture as a burden they endured for their parents’ sake” (p.65). These Nisei were not interested in the heritage language because of the natural sway of assimilation which was further reinforced by the discrimination they faced as “aliens.” Asahina found in his study that “To a [Nisei] man, they said they would rather have been playing baseball or doing anything else besides studying what they saw as their parents’ culture” (p.65). This is exactly what Nisei did even within the confines of internment camps where they formed baseball teams, danced to the big band sounds of Glenn Miller and Benny Goodman at formal functions, and created makeshift basketball courts

from whatever materials they could gather. It was precisely the constant accusation that Japanese Americans were unassimilable and loyal to their parents' language, culture and home country that made them strive to be all-American. Being all-American meant being a monolingual native speaker of English who does not speak Japanese or relate to Japanese culture or religion; the Nisei were forced into a position of choosing one language and culture over another, rather than given the luxury of a multi-cultural, bi-lingual identity. In other words, Japanese Americans benefitted socially for not pursuing proficiency in their heritage language, and for neglecting their heritage language altogether. Japanese Americans were trapped in the grip of forces that even their oppressors did not fully understand. Milton Eisenhower, director of the War Relocation Authority in charge of evacuating Japanese Americans, is quoted by Smith (1995): "when this war is over and we consider calmly this unprecedented migration of 120,000 people, we are as Americans going to regret the unavoidable injustices that may have occurred" (p.165). The forfeiture of Japanese as a heritage language, the language that attends to culture like the weather to climate, though perceived as a marginal injury, is one loss incurred from these injustices.

Rather than revolt against government orders, the Japanese American community, under the leadership of Mike Masaoka—the president of the Japanese American Citizens League—complied with all orders to evacuate. The goal was not to achieve freedom through protest, but rather to gain acceptance through assimilation. Murray (2008) states that Masaoka was opposed to Japanese language schools and recommended that emphasis "should be laid on the enunciation and pronunciation of words so that awkward and 'Oriental' sounds will be eliminated" (p.111).

Not only did Masaoka argue for the elimination of the heritage language, but he advocated the erasure of even a sign of the heritage language in the way Japanese Americans spoke; in other words, nothing short of perfect English (with no accent or code-mixing) was good enough to prove one's Americanness. While Masaoka went too far in calling for the elimination of the heritage language, he was operating in a context where lack of assimilation—at least in the eyes of some Japanese Americans—was the cause of their own internment. By this logic, forgetting the heritage language and embracing English as a native language was a way to prevent such traumatic events as the internment from occurring again. Paul Shinoda, a Nisei internee who participated in Tateishi and Daniels' (1999) oral history project, recalls his father advising, even before the attack on Pearl Harbor: "Don't speak *Nihongo* ('Japanese')" (p.52). Shinoda explains that "He was against Japanese schools. He says you go to the school your neighbor does, and what they play, you play.

So he said, if you want to learn Japanese and you think you need it, when you get out of college, you go spend a year there” (p.52). In other words, Shinoda’s father considered the heritage language a liability for his son, while not completely dismissing the possibility of future heritage language study.

Miyo Senzaki, in the same oral history project, describes her father’s reaction the day after Pearl Harbor was bombed: “Dad got scared and started to burn all the books, Japanese books. He was panicking; he said to get everything out—all the records—and we just built a bonfire, busted everything, you know” (p. 101). To prove that Japanese Americans were 100%-US-born-native-English-speaker-American, draft age Nisei volunteered to join battalions in Europe, even as their citizenship was still revoked—one could see this as a military effort to win back a birthright citizenship. Asahina (2006) suggests that Nisei joined the army because “It declared not what made them different from other Americans but what they had in common with them” (p.66). There was a general belief in the community that Japanese Americans were allowed to resume their lives in relative peace after the war only because the exclusively Japanese American 442<sup>nd</sup> Regimental Combat

Team became the most highly decorated battalion in American history. Duus (1987) notes that “They were fighting not simply to defend their country but to prove to their fellow countrymen that they too were loyal and patriotic Americans” (p. 127). Over 22,500 Japanese Americans served in the US Army and 18,000 of those were in segregated units (Asahina, 2006, p.6). The courage with which Japanese Americans fought in Germany, Italy and elsewhere speaks to the will to prove to others that they were not only Americans, but patriots who were willing to die for their country. Still, some Japanese American veterans of the war were confronted and harassed by their fellow white American veterans, even as they wore the same exact uniform in public. For Japanese Americans during World War II and after, no amount of Americanness—monolingual native speaker of English, veteran, patriot—was enough to gain true acceptance. Murray (2008) suggests that “The history of Nisei soldiers’ bravery helped Japanese Americans and the JACL win wide-ranging public support” (p.124). At the same time, some Nisei resented being called upon to prove their loyalty through military service. Jack Tono, in Tateishi and Daniels’ (1999) collection of oral histories recalled: “But then in the camp the JACL [Japanese American Citizens League] was going around telling the people that we have to go prove our loyalty. And then I said to myself, for Christ sake, what the hell do we have to prove it for? We haven’t done nothing” (p.173). There

was bitter disagreement between the JACL and some Nisei who insisted on their freedom first; the irony of being asked to serve while imprisoned in an internment camp was a bitter pill to swallow. When the war ended, Japanese Americans who were perceived to be the most loyal to the United States were released from internment camps and dispersed throughout the country. Hirabayashi (2009) remembers that “Japanese Americans who were released from the WRA camps between 1943 and the war’s end in 1945 were those who were most open, psychologically and emotionally, to reducing—if not cutting—their ties to the ethnic community” (p.20).

Hirabayashi notes that “Franklin Roosevelt and WRA director Dillon S. Meyer, are on the record in saying that it was in everyone’s best interests for Japanese American re-settlers to disperse themselves around the country and blend into the mainstream” (p.25). Pictures of Japanese American women with rolled, backcombed hair and A-line skirts abound, as well as Japanese American men sporting pompadours and double-breasted suits, resembling their Caucasian counterparts in Royal Crown Cola billboards. In the postwar years, Ichioka (2006) suggests that Nisei distanced themselves from “anything related to Japan” (p.148), including the heritage language. The WRA attempted to assimilate Japanese Americans into the mainstream culture.

The WRA created a film called “Wrong Ancestors,” which argued that Japanese Americans should not be blamed for accidents of ancestry (Murray, 2008, p.87). According to O’Brien and Sugita (1991), the WRA “even discouraged Japanese from being seen together in groups” (p. 91). Soon, Japanese Americans would adapt to being the only family of Japanese descent in the neighborhood, and their children often attended schools where they were the only Japanese Americans enrolled; English became the common language and in the WRA-inspired fantasy of dispersal and assimilation, very little, including language, distinguished these families from any other in suburban postwar America.

However, the path to assimilation was rough going, at best. If the pressure to assimilate was not enough to push a Japanese American further from his ethnic identity, “White mobs beat and fired bullets into the houses of Japanese Americans, and arsonists destroyed their property” (Robinson, 2001, p. 231). Granted, the postwar years were marked by racial unrest that involved Mexican Americans and African Americans as well, and Japanese Americans were a part of that mix. It did not help that then President Franklin D. Roosevelt failed to perceive Japanese Americans as true Americans (p. 243). Newspaper headlines of the time, like “Poll Indicates

Californians Seek To Eject All Japs” (Conrat, 1992, p.90) hardly inspired ethnic pride and heritage language study.

At the same time, the linguistic impoverishment that resulted from lack of heritage language study puzzled some people. Okimoto (1971) notes that “postwar Nisei generally have a harder time with the language [Japanese] than Caucasians. Because others expect us to speak Japanese fluently, we feel retarded when we cannot measure up to their expectations” (p.74). Speaking of the postwar years, Takezawa claims that “Japanese Americans were upwardly mobile and assimilated into the mainstream but did so at the cost of deemphasizing their cultural heritage” (p.116). Takezawa quotes Walter’s experience of Japanese as a heritage language: “I spoke perfectly good Japanese until I was about twenty. I had to because my mother didn’t speak English. But I deliberately forgot it all and repressed it all. Now I’m really sorry. I wish I could speak Japanese again” (p.118). Another Nisei in Takezawa’s study, Akimoto, confides: “In our family, we have no Japanese relatives, so we don’t want to talk about Japanese too much. In fact, to use the Japanese language in our family—we not only discourage it, but we just don’t” (p.119). The ideal is to melt into mainstream society without a trace of ethnic heritage or the heritage language, to facilitate socioeconomic success and the rebuilding of capital. It is estimated that the Japanese American community lost \$400 million during WWII (Weglyn, 1976, p.276). A fraction of that amount would be paid back by the US government thanks to the Redress movement.

Later, in the Redress movement of the 1960s and 1970s, Japanese Americans strove to reconnect with their heritage, but not their heritage language. This reconnection occurred in the form of the fight for Redress; in other words, they sought justice through the legal system for what they understood to be the illegal internment of their parents and grandparents’ generations. Ichioka (2006) claims that the Civil Rights movement inspired Japanese Americans to “assess their own ethnicity without being defensive or apologetic and to affirm what they considered to be valuable in their own cultural heritage” (p.148). Nonetheless, Japanese Americans reassessed their heritage by visiting the former sites of internment camps, or through studying Japanese American history, rather than by studying their heritage language. After all, it is from the perspective of a US-born highly assimilated native speaker of English that these Japanese Americans began to examine history and the legal system, activism, and social justice especially as it pertained to their community. The project was not to vacate their English-only, American identity in search of some

mythical heritage identity or heritage language, but rather to enrich their awareness of their families' struggles in the WWII era.

### **Overview of This Project**

This dissertation seeks to explore the phenomena of heritage language loss and maintenance in the context of social and ethnic factors as well as Japanese American (JA) history across two generations of JAs. This research employed case studies and an autoethnography to illustrate the phenomena under examination. Participants in this study included my father, a third generation JA; my sister, a fourth generation JA; and myself, a fourth generation JA. The two fourth generation participants in this study are fourth generation “receptive” learners of Japanese.

While many studies focus on “balanced bilingual” heritage language learners, research on “passive” or “receptive” learners has been limited. This limitation has led to a lack of research on fourth generation Japanese Americans who tend to have, if at all, only a receptive knowledge of Japanese. Because assimilated fourth generation JAs are often interested in learning to *speak* Japanese, there is a possibility that they would become discouraged by the complicated Japanese and Chinese characters even beginning level students of Japanese are expected to learn. Besides the neglect of receptive learners in the literature, scholars and teachers have not understood the import of instructing receptive heritage learners properly because most studies are decontextualized from history and the complex psychology attendant upon ethnic identity issues.

The impact of history and ethnic identity is difficult to illustrate in a quantitative study because 1) the community of learners is dispersed and not situated in particular contexts and 2) traumatic historical events and personal encounters with racism and experience of ethnic identity is exactly that, *personal*; such encounters are most productively examined through a detailed study of a small group of people. Therefore, the purpose of this dissertation was to explore the impact of JA history on three participants, as well as the social and ethnic factors that may have led them to reject or learn/maintain their heritage language. Case study and autoethnography are used as methods of investigation.

For the two case studies, I employed multiple in-depth interviews and history texts to build thorough learner profiles. For the autoethnography, I culled from notes, quizzes, and tests, emails from the Japanese language instructor, study guides and workbooks, journals, and instructor feedback to put together a learner profile of myself that is complete enough to indicate what

inspired or de-motivated me from learning my heritage language. The study did not begin without preconceived notions and assumptions.

The assumptions I brought to this study include: 1) the belief that the participants' experience of racism, both in the WWII-era and into the 1980s and 90s, affected their perception of themselves, their culture and language 2) the idea that the internment during WWII both directly and indirectly impacted the survival of Japanese as a heritage language in the JA community, at least for those who originate from the first wave of immigration from Japan (1868-1924) and 3) the opinion that a desire for integration in ethnic identity, healing from racism and connection to ethnic roots spurred fourth generation Japanese Americans to study Japanese.

At the time of conducting this study, the researcher was a PhD student in Second Language Studies/ESL at Purdue University. He undertook two semesters of Japanese language study at Purdue and subsequently conducted multiple interviews with participants. Because there are similarities between the researcher's own experiences and that of his participants, he waited until he completed his Japanese coursework and a first draft of his autoethnography before conducting multiple interviews with his participants over a period of months. This was a strategy intended to achieve greater researcher objectivity and preserve the integrity of the independence of the three participants' experiences.

The rationale for this study was to 1) build knowledge in heritage language research by directly connecting historical events to the lives of learners 2) forthrightly investigate the impact of racism and ethnic identity on language learning and 3) propose best practices for the instruction of Japanese to receptive learners.

The chapter outline is as follows: Chapter Two presents a literature review in which heritage language research, particularly as it relates to Japanese Americans and ethnic identity is discussed. Chapter Three explains the choice of case study and autoethnography as research methods for this dissertation and explicates participant recruitment and the way I collected and analyzed data. In Chapter Four, my case study of Tom, a third generation JA and former internee, illustrates the impact WWII had on JAs and their connection to language and culture. The stages of ethnic identity I introduce in this chapter is also further explored in my case study of Julia, a fourth generation JA who struggled to learn her heritage language as both an undergraduate and graduate student at UC Berkeley in the 1990s. The thread about identity and its connection to heritage language study introduced in this chapter is further explored in Chapter Five, the

autoethnographic chapter, in which I relate my own story of learning Japanese as a heritage language. Chapter Six is the discussion section that analyzes the findings and Chapter Seven is the Implications and Conclusion.

### **Definition of Key Terminology Used in This Study:**

*Balanced bilingual*- a person who has equal fluency or proficiency in two languages

*Ethnic identity*- a person's social identity in a larger context based on belonging to a particular cultural or social group

*Heritage language*- a minority or immigrant language learned at home from members who belong to the ethnic group that has historically spoken the language.

*Internment*- Specifically as it relates to Japanese Americans, internment is the forced incarceration of over 110,000 people of Japanese descent during WWII.

*Receptive bilingual*- A person who is fluent in one language but only has basic ability in another language, e.g., unable to carry on a conversation in another language.

### **Japanese Heritage Language Motivation: An Internee's Son's Story**

My father was interned at the age of four and released at the end of WWII when he was eight years old. Like many of the subjects in the studies cited above, my father had an ambivalent experience of the Japanese language. Before the outbreak of WWII, my father took Japanese as a heritage language lessons at a Buddhist institution near Los Angeles. He spoke Japanese with his father, who immigrated to California before WWII, but he communicated in English with his bilingual, US-born mother. Japanese American children in the internment camps primarily communicated in English. My father saw himself as an American and even joined the US Army a decade after being released from an internment camp; ten years after the end of WWII. Ironically, my father took English as a heritage language lessons while in the US Army, along with men in the service who were born in Europe, because his English language skills had waned somewhat during his years in Japan. After WWII, my father's father repatriated the family to Japan, a country my father had never visited; my grandfather, after all, had been born in Japan, and he was aware of the anti-Japanese hysteria that had swept his adopted country, the United States. My father spent ten years in Japan before joining the army at the age of 18; he joined, not as an act of

patriotism, but as a ticket back to California. In other words, my father was both a heritage language speaker of Japanese, and a heritage language speaker of English, even as he was culturally more American than Japanese. Once, when my father saw one of my basketball teammates in high-school back in Palo Alto, California sporting a headband with an image of the rising sun imprinted on it—the same image emblazoned on Japan’s “war flag”—my father shot the boy an alarming look and exclaimed, “You could get killed for wearing that.” Clearly, an American of Japanese descent could have been attacked for wearing such a headband in 1942, and my father was not aware of how the rising sun image had been post-modernized and used by American rock bands, movies and video games; he was not aware of how previous meanings attached to the image had been wrung from it, rendering the image sported with a kind of shallow irony by my Japanese American teammate in 1987, meaningless nearly a half-century after the war had ended.

My father, like most Japanese Americans of his generation, was so silent about the trauma of war and internment, that I had no sense of why he forced me to stop speaking Japanese at the age of seven, except for guesses and assumptions; he was, perhaps, uneducated and did not know any better, or he was angry about his over-bearing mother, or post-traumatic stress compelled him to snuff out the heritage language in me and my sister. He never explained that many Japanese Americans of his generation, and the previous generation before his, attempted to rid the family of the heritage language to evade suspicion from the FBI, neighbors and the police, or that once he and thousands of other Japanese Americans did everything they could—including ditching their heritage language—to be accepted as Americans and to be treated fairly. In fact, he might have explained that his decision to remove the heritage language from my education was not an instinctive act of spite and ignorance, of malice and misguided rage; his decision contained within it a rationale that could be explained in the context of numerous studies, interviews, dissertations, and oral histories. In other words, my father’s story turned out to be generalizable, at least as his generation of Japanese Americans was documented by activists and scholars in the post-war years. Even his silence around this matter has been well-documented, as most Japanese American families did not pass down stories about internment and the war; they chose to manage their experiences by suppressing them and allowing their children to live their lives as if the oppression and trauma of the past had never happened. This is precisely how I grew up.

As far as I understood, the past never occurred. The interment was not taught in elementary school and middle school textbooks in the 1970s and 80s; even high-school textbooks of that time did not consider internment to be a necessary or essential component of American 20<sup>th</sup> century history. We learned about the Nazis and the Holocaust, about Normandy and Victory Day; we learned about Pearl Harbor and Kamikaze pilots, about Mussolini and Roosevelt; but we did not learn about Roosevelt's Executive Order 9066 that led to the forced evacuation of 120,000 Japanese on the West Coast. What we did not learn in school, my parents and grandparents did not bother to fill in. My ignorance about my family's Japanese American history estranged me from the history, just as my father's dismissal of the heritage language estranged me from the heritage language. I only had a sense, then, that I was different from others primarily in terms of appearance and ethnicity, and that the loss of Japanese as a heritage language led to an ambivalent relationship to English, my native language I loved and hated, the language I wanted to master just as much as I disowned it as my natural language. Though I am a native speaker of English, I never had the sense of speaking it as naturally as I felt I could have; at the same time, I devoted myself to studying literature in English and aspiring to compose literary works of art. One of the reasons I began heritage language study was to find a language I could speak with the natural ease of a native language of which I would be a privileged speaker, a speaker without an ambivalent family history with the language. I believed that I could find a stronger connection to the heritage language if I lived and worked in Japan.

The last time I visited Japan, in 2012, one of my relatives addressed me very sternly: "The next time I see you, we will speak in Japanese." She, my mother's cousin who spent all her life in Tokyo, thought it was preposterous that I could not speak Japanese. I had neither the time nor inclination to explain that the loss of the heritage language was not an individual case attached to my life; that thousands of Japanese Americans struggled to bury the heritage language to survive the aggressively anti-Japanese sentiment of the WWII years. Japanese often forget that Japan and the US were once bitterly at war with each other, and even those who do remember do not understand that Japanese Americans fought in battlefields against Japan's allies, and worked with US military intelligence to undermine Japanese military plans and strategies. If I had not gone through the experience of ethnic identity emergence, I would never have come to understand why the heritage language was lost in my family.

According to Tse (1999), there are four main stages in ethnic minority identity development. The first stage occurs early in an ethnic life, before s/he encounters other minorities and becomes aware of social hierarchy (p. 122). The second stage “occurs in childhood and adolescence and is characterized by feelings of ambivalence toward the ethnic group” (p.122). In stage two, EMs (ethnic minorities) try to distance themselves from their ethnic group and assimilate into the mainstream. In stage three, EMs realize that they cannot truly become a part of the dominant culture; consequently, “they experiment with alternate group associations, and many look to the ethnic homeland group for acceptance” (p.122). Finally, a resolution occurs in the fourth and final stage, in which EMs “join the ethnic minority group (e.g., Asian Americans, Chicanos) and resolve many of their ethnic identity conflicts” (p.122). In stage three, or the “ethnic emergence” stage, many Japanese Americans, including myself, became heritage language learners. Kim (1981) suggests that the aim of this stage for Asian Americans is to “figure out what parts of themselves are Asian and what parts are American” (p.147). While some may explore this process through joining Asian American organizations or fraternizing more frequently with other Asian Americans, I had come to the understanding—however erroneous it may have been—that I was somewhat more Asian than American and should thus learn the heritage language in order to discover my real self and identity. This discovery, however, came years after I thoroughly pursued the American side of my Asian American identity. I researched the Japanese American experience, particularly internment and Redress, and sought to gain a greater grasp of how the anti-Japanese climate of WWII affected family members and, indirectly, my own identity development. However, since very few historians investigated the role of the heritage language in the Japanese American experience, I was merely interested in visiting the former sites of internment camps and interviewing survivors of these camps, as well as attending Day of Remembrance ceremonies where, annually, the experience of internment is “commemorated” with political speeches and candlelight vigils. I lost sight of the linguistic experience, as if loss of language was a marginal concern in ethnic minority development.

It was not until I began doing research in Second Language Studies as a PhD student that I considered the role of the heritage language in the Japanese American experience. Simultaneously, I began taking beginning-level Japanese language courses to fulfill my language requirement and resolved to write an autoethnography about learning Japanese as a heritage language. However, unlike my previous motive to learn about Japanese American history and

culture to reconnect with my Japanese American background, I began to perceive myself as more Japanese than American. I did not buy into the “homeland” myth; rather I saw myself as an American of Japanese descent who wished to go to Japan, not quite like, but not entirely unlike, some white Americans who go abroad to teach. In other words, my love of Japan—not merely as an ancestral site, but as a unique and interesting country that fascinated me on other levels—inspired me to study the heritage language and seek job opportunities in Japan. At the same time, the experience of both fitting in and not fitting in captivated me; in Japan, I shared physical features with most of the people around me, which gave me a sense of comfort I had never experienced back in the States. While I did not understand most of what was being said around me, the sound of the language—being one of the first languages I heard at home as well as my mother’s language—felt familiar to me, even as the meaning of the words evaded my understanding. I wanted to facilitate what I perceived to be a greater sense of security and a more comfortable lifestyle by learning Japanese and moving to Japan.

Most Japanese Americans of my generation do not mourn the loss of the heritage language, for good reason; they assimilated into mainstream American culture and are no more inclined to learn Japanese or live in Japan than the average American is inclined to do. However, most Japanese Americans my age don’t have a parent who was born and raised in Japan. My mother immigrated from Tokyo to the San Francisco Bay Area in 1969. She did not understand any better than I did, at the age of seven, why my father was so intent on making me forget the heritage language; after all, it was the only means of communication I had with my mother. In the latter half of my seventh year, the amount of time I spent talking with my mother dramatically decreased, as I was not allowed to speak her language, my heritage language, and her proficiency in English was rudimentary at best. The loss of this medium of communication with my mother was traumatic; but there are other less significant losses that are nonetheless distressing for other reasons. For example, Japanese was a language I loved as a child, and it suited my temperament; I associated English with racially offensive invective or trite expressions I heard on TV shows I watched daily, since that was what suburban American children did. I imagined Japanese was meant to be spoken softly, with a sense of deference behind it. I thought the mild, inquisitive tone of Japanese accompanied customary physical gestures like the act of bowing or handing an object to another person with both hands as a show of respect. I assumed, correctly or not, that speaking in Japanese was less performative, in contrast to the loud, up-down-up swing and bluster American English

speech can become. It was a pleasure to speak in Japanese, but the kind of aesthetic pleasure that transcends grammar and vocabulary.

While the ethnic minorities in Tse's (1999) study resolve their conflicts in the final and fourth stage by joining others who share their ethnic identity, through participation in organizations and friendship with others with a shared ethnic identity, I sought to join others who share my ethnic identity but not my nationality; who share my mother's nationality and native language, and this was the motivating factor behind my return to the heritage language. In other words, I sought the kind of resolution ethnic minorities usually find (according to Tse and the studies she cites) by seeking membership in their ethnic community, by seeking membership in the Japanese language and, by implication, in Japan itself. While other Japanese Americans found resolution by joining the Japanese American Citizens League or the Buddhist Churches of America, I decided that becoming a citizen of Tokyo, teaching, and living in Japan, learning Japanese as a heritage language—rather than becoming involved in Japanese American social organizations—would result in a kind of productive exegesis of my situation. However, after completing only two introductory, undergraduate courses in Japanese, emphasis on the Japanese part of my identity shifted back to the American side, for reasons unrelated to the culture and language/s I had been negotiating for most of my life. I met a Vietnamese woman, Duyen, and began collaborating with her on projects unrelated to Japanese as a heritage language, such as a profile on English in Vietnam, and an article about translingual writing. Duyen often pointed out how different her Asian collectivist values were compared to my American individualist values, and through much communication about cultural differences, and through many cultural misunderstandings and conflicts, I came to understand that Asian culture in general was foreign to me. Just as Japanese Americans have often noted that they did not realize how American they were until they took a vacation in Japan, I came to realize that I was far more American than I had acknowledged. I was the American immersed in heritage language study and dreaming of living in a foreign country. Quite suddenly, or so it seemed, I lost interest in heritage language study, stopped perceiving myself as more Japanese than American, and became the perfect expositor of American values. The dream of living and working in Japan was placed, rather abruptly, on the back burner. I did not see myself as a Japanese American, but just as an “American,” much like my grandfather's generation, the generation of Japanese Americans who fought the Axis powers during WWII to show their patriotism. These Japanese Americans of two generations ago had no

desire to visit their parents' homeland or to become fluent in their heritage language; they primarily wanted to fulfill their identities as Americans.

Despite this diversion into the Americanness of my ethnic identity, I still clung to the hope of living and working in Japan, and one day, picking up the thread of heritage language study, if only at a beginner's level. Just as I spent hours sharing my thoughts with Duyen about American perceptions and values, I still hoped to live a life of Japanese values in Japan. Perhaps I was able to envision my American identity in *harmony* with my Japanese identity in Japan precisely because Japan and the US share similar human rights values and ideals. In other words, I saw a connection between Japan and the US: both Japan and the US are economically stable, industrialized, capitalist, medically sophisticated, technologically innovative, have high standards of living, are relatively prosperous, and espouse freedom of speech and democracy. I came to the conclusion that ethnic identity research has a too-narrow focus. Countries like Japan, then, could have more in common with Belgium, Spain, Canada and Iceland than it does with some of its own geographical neighbors, such as North Korea, the Philippines, Laos and Myanmar, for example. As a Japanese American, it would be easier to adjust to life in Iceland than it would be to adjust to life in Myanmar, though Myanmar shares an Asian heritage with Japan, the country of my ancestry. After all, Iceland holds elections, has strict laws against domestic violence, prides itself on government transparency (rather than authoritarian control), and generally has a good human rights record. I began to see myself as someone who happened to be a native speaker of English (or a heritage speaker of Japanese). And yet, Japanese as a heritage language remained my mother's language, the language I heard at home alongside and mixed with English like birds of a feather, so to speak. In other words, my relationship to the heritage language was always in flux, and I could not predict or fathom how this relationship would manifest even in the near future.

Norton and Toohey (2011) could have been specifically addressing HLLs (heritage language learners) when they explained that "the target language community is not only a reconstruction of past communities and historically constituted relationships, but also a community of the imagination, a desired community that offers possibilities for an enhanced range of identity options in the future" (415). These past communities could be the family as it existed in the learner's childhood, and the imagined community could be the quasi-native culture/community in which the learner belongs or could have or might yet belong insofar as the target language is learned and assimilated. Norton and Toohey (2011) suggest that "subjectivity and language are

seen as mutually constitutive and are thus centrally important in how a language learner negotiates a sense of self within and across a range of sites at different points in time” (417). That is, how the learner symbolizes and imagines a target language and its culture and community changes over the course of learning the language. The learner’s understanding of what the speech community of the target language is can change from interaction to interaction. Factors influencing investment and motivation change as well, depending on context. Norton and Toohey’s (2011) understanding of identity are significant to research on HLLs. They explain that “in imagining ourselves allied with others across time and space, we can feel a sense of community with people we have not yet met and with whom we may never have any direct dealings” (422). For example, an HLL might imagine himself communicating with people in a different country in the future; perhaps a locale where the speech community he perceives himself to belong to is situated. On a pedagogical level, Norton and Toohey (2011) maintain that “a lack of awareness of learners’ imagined communities and imagined identities could hinder a teacher’s ability to construct learning activities in which learners can invest” (422). Theoretically, HLLs could struggle to learn if their objectives are not understood in a broader context, just as HLLs who teach EFL (English as a foreign language) may struggle in their capacity as teachers if they do not understand how learners in a particular context—a college classroom in Japan, for example—symbolize and envision EFL.

While such theories about subjectivity and identity may seem to obfuscate the path of heritage language learning, we may use them as a framework to explain the HLL’s shift in perceptions of identity from Japanese to American, to an integration of both, for example. Alterations in the way a heritage learner of Japanese identifies himself along national lines are expected, and these various adaptations are not necessarily a sign of identity conflict, but rather evidence that learners pull from a vast array of “identity options.” Rather than dismissing the particular for the general, I suggest that one of the crucial “identity options” for Japanese American heritage learners of Japanese generally, and for me specifically, is that of “an internee’s son” or daughter, both literally and/or figuratively. The internment and the WWII experience in Japanese American history is simply too salient to ignore as a key factor in shaping heritage language study in the Japanese American community, past and present. The sociocultural tendency, fueled by the internment and anti-Japanese sentiment during WWII, to suppress the heritage language for the sake of safety, survival and assimilation left a stark legacy of ambivalence and neglect of the heritage language. However, as my own case corroborates, the experience of being an American

“internee’s son” can lead to a desire for a transnational encounter that includes, and goes across and beyond, the traditional set of motivating factors ascribed to heritage language learners. In other words, while heritage language study may comprise an important role in ethnic identity formation, as HLL’s frequently strive to learn the language of home and family for personal and cultural reasons, unforeseen factors can arise and exert a powerful influence on motivation. The dynamic relation between the facts of ethnic minority history and culture, and the suppositions and inventions that contribute to the construction of identity, makes research on heritage language study thought-provoking and serves as the modus operandi of this line of inquiry.

**Chapter Summary** This chapter proposes that events in Japanese American history, such as WWII and the internment, has caused the loss of Japanese as a heritage language in the Japanese American community. In chapter four, my case study of Tom, a former internee, illustrates the impact WWII had on Japanese Americans and their connection to language and culture. The stages of ethnic identity I introduce in this chapter is also further explored in my case study of Julia, a 4<sup>th</sup> generation Japanese American who went through the various stages and struggled to learn her heritage language as both an undergraduate and graduate student at UC Berkeley. The thread about identity and its connection to heritage language study introduced in this chapter is examined in chapter 5, the autoethnographic chapter, in which I relate my own story of learning Japanese as a heritage language.

The literature review in the next chapter explains that little research has been done around Japanese as a heritage language and its relation to Japanese American former internees, the ethnic development of 4<sup>th</sup> generations Americans, and identity research by 4<sup>th</sup> generation Japanese Americans that explores how their identities intersect with the heritage language.

## CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### Introduction

This literature review is organized into three sections: 1) Definition of heritage language and receptive bilinguals 2) Studies of Japanese heritage language learners and 3) The connection between ethnic identity and the heritage language. The review begins with a definition to clarify for the reader what a heritage language is in context to bilingualism. A section on Receptive bilingualism is included because two of the three subjects of this study are receptive bilinguals, and a sizeable number of Japanese American “bilinguals” are more receptive than expressive. Since this dissertation argues for the importance of considering the social and historical context of Japanese Americans, a section on “Studies of Japanese heritage language learners” is the most imperative part of the review. Because the literature on heritage language learning indicates that there are connections between heritage language learning and ethnic identity, I reviewed the literature on how ethnic identity affects the motivation to learn and maintain a heritage language in the Japanese American community.

### Definition of heritage language and receptive bilinguals

*Heritage language* students are generally defined and discussed in terms of bilingualism. If a learner grew up in a home where a language other than English was spoken and has some degree of proficiency in both their heritage language and in English, he or she is bilingual (Valdes, 2001). Traditionally, bilingualism has been thought of as the phenomenon of equal fluency in two languages. Valdes (2001) and other scholars have reconceived bilingualism as occurring along a continuum of competence. Bilingualism is seen not in terms of equal, but rather varying degrees of, proficiency in either language (Valdes). In other words, a bilingual heritage speaker can be fluent in one language (e.g., English) and have only a small degree of competence in the heritage language. This imbalance in skill levels in two languages has led some scholars to use terms such as *receptive bilingual* and *passive bilingual* to refer to speakers of heritage languages whose ability in the heritage language is limited to some degree of listening comprehension and slight oral communication proficiency.

Many receptive or passive bilinguals have no, or very limited, oral proficiency in the heritage language, and a high level of proficiency in their first or main language (Baetens, 1986). Simply put, a receptive learner of a heritage language, when interacting with a native speaker of that language, may not have the linguistic resources to maintain, or even to begin, a conversation. Often, receptive bilinguals report that they are hesitant or shy about using their heritage language out of fear of judgement or embarrassment; it may be that they are expected to speak the heritage language fluently because of their ethnic identity (Baetens, 1986). Personal reasons related to identity and family background, culture, and cultural ambivalence, can impact the level of a heritage speaker's receptivity.

### **Studies of Japanese heritage language learners**

#### **Japanese American immigrants versus late-generation Japanese Americans**

The current research on late generation Japanese Americans and heritage language learning is very limited. The body of research on Japanese as a heritage language overall is small. Studies of Japanese heritage language learners almost exclusively focus on recent immigrants, while excluding late generation Japanese Americans whose families were part of the first wave of immigration from Japan in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Kondo-Brown is one of the most influential scholars in Japanese as a Heritage language research. Her focus is primarily on recent Japanese arrivals to the US and their challenges with maintaining their heritage language. The number of Japanese students who live abroad has increased. In 2004, 54,000 Japanese children were living abroad, mostly in North America (Kondo-Brown, 2006). Even though Japanese immigrants are far outnumbered by immigrants from Korea and China, Kondo-Brown makes the case that there are *enough* students in the new Japanese American community to warrant research and pedagogical study. Kondo-Brown is primarily interested in recent first and second-generation Japanese Americans in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, with little comment on the fact that most of her subjects are the same age as many 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> generation Japanese Americans who come from a different context with vastly different educational and linguistic needs. This is significant because Kondo-Brown's research, like most scholars in the field, is focused on migrant or immigrant learners, to the exclusion of late-generation Japanese American learners.

Japanese migrants and recent immigrants cannot represent late-generation Japanese Americans because these constitute two very different groups. Kondo (1999) conducted a study of Shin Nisei, or “new second generation Japanese” college students. The study showed that Shin Nisei use Japanese outside the classroom more than other bilinguals (Kondo, 1999). This is in stark contrast to the receptive and passive bilingual proficiency levels of most late generation (3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>) Japanese Americans. Most Shin Nisei reported that they studied Japanese mainly to fulfil a language requirement (Kondo, 1999).

In other words, since Shin Nisei students have not lost their language and culture through processes of racism or assimilation, they do not have an emotional attachment to the language of their grandparents, but rather view Japanese as a practical tool. Shin Nisei are interested in improving their Japanese for professional purposes (Kondo, 1999). Japanese is, if not a first language, then a very close second for most Shin Nisei; their parents, native speakers of Japanese, immigrated to the US with relatively little cultural or social obstruction. Compared to the experiences of Nisei who lost their citizenship and their homes during WWII because of their race, culture and language, and who proceeded, in response, to deliberately lose Japanese as a heritage language for the benefits (and perils) of assimilation, Shin Nisei had a clear path to learning Japanese—with no discouragement from their parents or the US government—for professional purposes. One of Kondo’s interview subjects, Lori, reported: “I really enjoy everything I do with Japanese language—speaking Japanese to my friends, watching Japanese TV, reading Japanese magazines, singing a Japanese song in a karaoke booth, visiting Japan and meeting people there—everything” (p.80). While the historical movement from shame to pride in Japanese America is surely progress, the focus on high proficiency bilinguals among Japanese heritage language learners has eclipsed a community of learners who are more assimilated linguistically and culturally, and who experience a greater sense of loss and ambivalence towards their heritage language.

The focus on recent Japanese migrants and immigrants seem to describe Japanese as a migrant or immigrant language rather than a *heritage language*, which is generally studied by individuals who have a more permanent status in the US. Other studies are concerned with learners who spend most of the day communicating in a language other than English during their childhoods, who by the time they reach college, have shifted towards predominantly using English in most aspects of their lives. These studies also highlight the immigrant experience, while *barely*

*touching on the experiences of later generation Japanese Americans.* In this case, the native language and the heritage language are the same. Hinton (1999) notes that “Many children, for example, have only a passive knowledge of their heritage language. They may reach a point where they understand the home language in a basic way but cannot speak as well as they understand” (p. 3). However, rather than follow the thread stated here—the experiences of passive or receptive learners—Hinton sticks to his theme of heritage language *as immigrant language*. Loss of the heritage language can lead to less communication with relatives, distance from peers from the home country, and embarrassment before family friends who speak the heritage language (Hinton, 1999). In other words, the home countries of these heritage speakers are not the United States, and the learners seem to come from families that exist between two countries and cultures.

Most studies of Japanese American heritage language learners focus almost exclusively on this community. Few, if any, studies concentrate on the Japanese American community that is already established in the US, the community that can be traced back to the first wave of immigration from Japan which occurred from 1895-1908 (Densho Encyclopedia). Hinton quotes a heritage language learner: ““Between my parents and siblings and myself, there has been constant tension...for my younger sister, younger brother, and me to use Korean among ourselves and with our parents at least when we are in the house. Yet, we neglect it and use the more comfortable English—until we hear another lecture” (p. 4.) In contrast, many second and third generation Japanese Americans from the first-wave of immigration (1886-1911) were encouraged to stop speaking their heritage language, which was not their native language anyway, but rather their second language, or the language of their parents or grandparents, for the purpose of safety and assimilation. However, Hinton’s participants have one thing in common with late generation Japanese Americans: both, finally, chose to neglect their heritage language in favor of English; both were under the sway of assimilative and additive processes. The problem, as with most studies of heritage languages, becomes the issue of language maintenance, a common dilemma of immigrant families, and the less common conundrum of assimilated families and heritage language learners who are a generation removed from their heritage language.

There are 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> generation Japanese Americans who only have Japanese speaking grandparents (Kondo, 2015). But Kondo mentions these facts mainly to make the point that these students have less proficiency than students from families who immigrated to the US more recently. Kondo (2015) prefers the term “additive” to “assimilative” when additive suggests that the

mainstream culture is *added* to the home culture, whereas assimilation implies a *loss* of the home culture. However, the term “additive,” meaning the state of balancing the first and second languages and cultures, while it does apply to the first-and-second generation subjects Kondo is primarily concerned with, does not apply as much to previous generations of Japanese Americans who were not allowed to both maintain their culture and language while “adapting” to mainstream society.

Many studies of Japanese as a heritage language do not focus on immigrant communities; rather they focus on “*kaigaishijo* (overseas Japanese children who plan to return to Japan)” or “*kikokushijo* (Japanese returnees)” (Kondo, p.59, 1998). The participants in Kondo’s studies generally come from immigrant families who have established a foundation in the US, through permanent residency, for example—in contrast to *kaigaishijo* who are here on a very temporary basis, depending on their parents’ employment contracts. Kondo’s work has a more vital connection to assimilative and additive processes. For example, *kaigaishijo* are not in the US long enough to lose their native language, and they are not established enough in the US to be concerned with creating a balance between their first and second languages, or between their home and mainstream cultures.

### **Studies of late-generation Japanese American heritage language learners**

As mentioned in the introductory chapter, history matters, but research on late-generation Japanese American heritage language learners is incomprehensive and makes almost no connection with the historical context of WWII. Kondo mentions a list of books on Japanese Americans who were part of the first wave of immigration, but these books deal mostly with immigration laws and politics, and do not associate the historical context with heritage language learning. The few studies that have been done about Japanese Americans in the WWII era are broad historical overviews with little or no mention of heritage language learning. Some studies do not offer detailed information about Nisei Japanese heritage language learners, but rather provide a broad overview of the English-only movement in Hawaii and California, or a historical summary of immigration policies in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries (Tamura, 1993; Asato, 2006). Other studies focus on how Japanese American children assimilate American moral values and negotiate their parents’ Japanese cultural values (Lebra, 1972). These few works were published in the 1970s and 1980s, and the research did not lead to further, more focused studies

on Nisei and their heritage language, or Sansei (third generation Japanese American and Yonsei (fourth generation Japanese American) and their experiences with their heritage language.

Although the facts of history and the sway of large-scale events like WWII and the internment might indeed prove to be trivial in the study of Japanese Americans and their relationship to their heritage language, considering that progress—and laws that are far more amiable to Japanese Americans and Asian Americans in general have been implemented—perhaps some mention of Japanese American history could be enlightening especially when discussing Japanese Americans’ cultural and linguistic traits and tendencies.

Some scholars study the impact of the internment camps but have not explored the connections with heritage language learning. Lack of empirical research on these generations of Japanese Americans have created such a gap in Japanese as a heritage language that Japanese American history tends to be *removed* from the equation even as studies purport to engage with Japanese Americans and their heritage language. While there may have been a lack of research on new Japanese immigrants in the 1990s, this gap has been subsequently filled. Since there is so little research done on 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> generation Japanese Americans, it is noteworthy that Kondo (1998) argued that recent generation Japanese Americans were eclipsed by late generation Japanese Americans in the sense that more books about the first wave of Japanese immigration to the US have been published.

Still other scholars recognize the consequences of the internment on the Japanese American community, but they fail to explore how or why this could have happened. For example, Hashimoto & Lee (2011) seem to have noticed that there is something unique about Japanese American heritage language learners, compared to other learners, but they seem unable—despite ample historical documentation and evidence—to realize how Japanese American history may have impacted the role of the heritage language. These scholars believe that Japanese American children, compared to children of other ethnicities, tend to struggle the most with maintaining their heritage language (Hashimoto & Lee, p.163, 2007). While historians (Ashina, 2006; Davis, 1982; Duus, 1987; Ichioka & Azuma, 2006; Murray, 2008; O’Brien & Fujita, 1991; Okimoto, 1971; Robinson, 2001; Smith, 1995; Takezawa, 1995; Tateishi & Daniels, 1999 and Wegelyn, 1976), among others, have clarified that the WWII and internment experience had a devastating impact on the cultural and linguistic processes of Japanese Americans, *heritage language scholars have not yet made the connection*. Hashimoto & Lee (2011) suggest that “The reason for this pattern is

unclear, but it may be deeply rooted in the historical and social context of the Japanese people and language in the United States during and post-World War II, when there was heightened animosity toward the Japanese” (p.163). Rather than explore this pertinent thread, a thread that suggests the direction already explored by the above-mentioned historians, they conclude the paragraph by stating that there are relatively few Japanese Americans. But this conclusion leads the authors away from the original insight, toward a more dubious direction. Because the Japanese immigrant population is small compared to other Asian groups, there are fewer Japanese heritage language speakers and less need for HL programs to meet their needs (Hashimoto & Lee, 2011). The idea that fewer heritage language programs are needed for Japanese Americans because their community is relatively small, and that this lack of opportunity to study the heritage language may lead to lower rates of HL maintenance among Japanese Americans, while accurate, is *unrelated* to the over-arching problem of the “historical and social context of the Japanese people and language in the United States” that the authors mentioned. Meanwhile, none of the Japanese American “informants” of their study have a grandparent, or relatives, who were interned during WWII; they are the children of first-generation immigrants.

Some studies pay attention to the impact of the Japanese American historical context but do not associate the historical context with late-generation Japanese American HL learners. These studies recognize the significance of understanding the context of Japanese American history for gaining insights about heritage language learning, even as they fail to investigate the implications. Triest (2018) acknowledges the importance of contextualizing Japanese American heritage language learning within the larger scope of Japanese American history. The social context of Japanese heritage learners cannot be understood without some knowledge of the history of Japanese immigration to the US (Triest, 2018). But it is not clear how this historical and legal background connects to her qualitative study of heritage language learners. Japanese heritage language schools in the US closed when WWII began (Triest, 2018). Yet the question of how this dramatic silencing of Japanese as a heritage language affected the development of heritage language study is left unexplored. It is important to keep Japanese American history in mind when considering Japanese American identity and engagement with the heritage language (Triest, 2018). The history and trauma of internment and the closing down of heritage language schools does impact how Japanese American heritage language learners experience their heritage language. Yet Triest claims that there are only two types of heritage language programs and neither of these types

caters to late generation Japanese Americans whose families have been in the US long enough to experience the impact of the community's history. One type of program is the *ESL program* that encourages children to focus less on their heritage language and more on English; the second type are *immersion programs* that aim to maintain the heritage language through intensive study (Triest, 2018). Although Triest establishes the importance of understanding Japanese American history as a key to understanding how Japanese Americans experience their heritage language, she still excludes late-generation learners. Therefore, her work fails to answer significant questions such as: How does this historical knowledge connect with the 1.5 generation Japanese heritage language learners Triest studies? There is no mention of the irony of 5<sup>th</sup> generation Japanese Americans who are the same age as the 1.5 generation Japanese Americans presented in Triest's dissertation. Triest seems torn between the reality of Japanese American history and the existence of 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> generation Japanese Americans, versus the trend in Japanese heritage language studies to focus on generation 1.5 Japanese Americans almost exclusively. It is as if Japanese Americans become irrelevant, in terms of heritage language study, the moment they hit the 3<sup>rd</sup> generation and become assimilated into mainstream society. At the same time, it seems clear that 3<sup>rd</sup> generation is not so far removed from the heritage language as to dismiss the significance of language and culture in the home environment (immigrant grandparents, bilingual/bicultural second-generation parents). Does the stereotype of Japanese Americans and Asian Americans as "perpetual foreigners" and "sojourners" in their own country, the United States, play any role in the choice of focus among scholars of Japanese as a heritage language? Or are these choices based on the convenience of studying a linguistic group that most closely resembles that easily-categorizable figure, the balanced bilingual?

### **Japanese proficiency of Japanese American heritage learners**

Researchers too often generalize from observing highly assimilated, non-bilingual 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> generation Japanese Americans (Kondo, 1998). It is understandable that scholars would be concerned about an over-focus on 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> generation Japanese Americans, since their merely receptive (or lower) proficiency in Japanese as a heritage language might appear not compelling enough for those who are looking for obvious—or expressive—examples of heritage language development. However, the area of Japanese as a heritage language studies if not established, has at least some secure footing specifically as it concerns recent Japanese immigrants.

Some scholars have incorporated the reality of the Japanese American WWII experience into their research, but even these scholars provide only a cursory glance at significant events, and do not engage with the existence of late-generation Japanese American heritage language learners. Chinen, Douglas & Kataoka (2013) acknowledge that the internment of Japanese Americans during WWII did lead to the loss of Japanese as a heritage language among 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> generation Japanese Americans. However, a single paragraph is dedicated to this community, and this information is primarily presented to suggest that late generation Japanese Americans are *no longer heritage language learners*. Japanese became a foreign language, rather than a heritage language, for most Japanese Americans; for this reason, the WWII era heritage language schools became foreign language schools (Chinen, Douglas & Kataoka, 2013). Receptive or passive heritage language learners are in fact foreign language learners (Chinen, Douglas & Kataoka, 2013). The implication is that receptive proficiency in the language of one's parents and grandparents is *not enough* to qualify as a heritage language learner, which requires something closer to balanced bilingualism (equal proficiency in two languages). True heritage language speakers, then, study in *Hoshhuukoo* (supplementary Japanese language schools) that were created for families whose companies sent them overseas for work; the goal of the Japanese school is to help Japanese students keep up with the Japanese school curriculum (Chinen, Douglas & Kataoka, 2013). According to this view, a heritage language learner of Japanese should be unassimilated, in the US temporarily, and have no lineage or connection to Japanese American history and community as it has been established over the past century.

While there is a lack of research on late generation Japanese American heritage language learners, I found one study that includes a 4<sup>th</sup> generation Japanese American participant. Metoki's (2012) study includes a late generation Japanese American low-proficiency heritage language learner. One of the participants in the study, Linda, identifies herself as a "Yonsei" (4<sup>th</sup> generation Japanese American) and attributes her lack of proficiency in Japanese to the fact that she is a few generations removed from her immigrant great grandparents; she believes that the general perception about Yonsei being removed from their cultural and linguistic roots is accurate. This participant agrees with the research that being a few generations removed from her heritage language has led to only a beginner's level competence in Japanese. However, even though Linda is a 4<sup>th</sup> generation Japanese American, she still has cultural reasons for studying Japanese as a heritage language. Linda reports that she studies Japanese because her "roots" are part of her

identity, and that she would feel “alienated” from the community if she did not know the language, because “some phrases” in Japanese were used in her family when she was growing up (Metoki, 2012). Linda is not studying Japanese as a heritage language to increase her job opportunities—her proficiency is not high enough for Japanese to be a marketable skill for her—but she is attempting to stave off alienation, to achieve a stronger sense of identity. Like many learners of heritage languages with a low proficiency level, Linda struggles with gaining enough confidence to practice her Japanese around Japanese speakers, and this hesitance seems to be a distinguishing factor among late generation Japanese American heritage language learners in general. Linda expresses regret that she is unable to join in Japanese conversations, and she is embarrassed about her bad grammar, which prevents her from even trying to speak Japanese (Metoki, 2012). Like many receptive and low-proficiency heritage language learners, the desire to connect with one’s family culture motivates heritage language study. In another interview from Metoki’s study, Linda regrets that she has limited contact with the Japanese American community because of the language barrier, and she feels the loss of her “historical roots” (p. 54). It is interesting to note that Linda, even as a 4<sup>th</sup> generation Japanese American, wants to establish a deeper connection with newer immigrants from Japan to the US, so that her project of learning Japanese is not only based on a desire to reconnect with what she calls her “historical roots.” Linda is by far the most assimilated participant in Metoki’s study (2012), but even as a 4<sup>th</sup> generation Japanese American, Linda finally arrives at a longing to find a place, not just in mainstream society, but also in the smaller niche of the Japanese American community which, in her view, includes relatively new immigrants as well as her own grandparents’ generation who were interned during WWII. In contrast to scholars who may doubt the significance of heritage language learning for late generation low-proficiency learners, Metoki (2012) explains that Linda’s heritage language study “strengthens her identity as a Japanese-American who will continue to search for her place within the greater American society” (p.71). Heritage language learning, for this group of late generation low-proficiency students, is about searching for a place to belong, and this overarching search might not facilitate effective language learning or lead to high linguistic proficiency; but the search plays an important role in research about the function of heritage languages in the United States.

However, research about this quintessentially American search for a linguistic and cultural space of belonging is overshadowed by a focus on new Japanese migrants and immigrants. Japanese heritage language scholars are often instructors of Japanese and are first generation

Japanese Americans. This fact has shaped the area of Japanese as a heritage language studies. If there is a distinction made among scholars of Japanese as a heritage language, it is between the choice of researching language maintenance for second generation Japanese Americans who have close ties to their parents' language and culture, or doing research on young first-generation Japanese Americans who struggle to maintain native-like proficiency in their first language (Japanese) as they negotiate with English in the United States (Allred, 2016; Hashimoto, Lee & Sook, 2011; Hayashi, 2006; Kondo, 1998; Kondo, 1999; Kondo-Brown, 2008; Kondo-Brown, 2015; and Metoki, 2012).

### **Ethnic identity and the heritage language**

In this section, I would like to highlight the need to investigate the relation between ethnic identity and heritage language learners. I will begin with a definition of “ethnic identity ambivalence” because this is one of the main factors that demotivates learners from pursuing their heritage language. It is important to investigate ethnic identity to distinguish heritage language learners from other learners. Racial stereotypes about Asian Americans as “perpetual foreigners” prevents heritage language scholarship about this community. I conclude this section by emphasizing the role of ethnic identity in studying Japanese heritage language learners.

It has been established that there is a strong correlation between ethnic identity and heritage language loss or maintenance. Tse (1999) suggests that ethnic identity development can play a significant role in an individual's relation to his or her culture, and by close connection, to his or her heritage language. Tse identifies a stage called “*ethnic identity ambivalence/evasion*” which often occurs during adolescence and is characterized by “feelings of ambivalence toward the ethnic group” (p.122). Because the heritage language is so much a part of ethnic identity, feelings of misgiving and uneasiness towards the heritage language would naturally result. The “strategies” ethnic minorities use to negotiate their minority status has “important implications” for how minority groups approach their heritage language (Tse, 1999). The “vast majority” of heritage language learners claim that “cultural/social identity” is the most motivational factor behind heritage language study (He, 2006). The search for proficiency in a heritage language signifies a search for a greater understanding of identity and how the learner identifies himself on more than a linguistic level.

The fact that ethnic identity can impact heritage language study so dramatically suggests that a heritage language is different from a second or foreign language. The heritage language is the vehicle in which “cultural memory” is transferred geographically, between communities, and across generations (Trifonas and Aravossitas, 2014). For example, a Chinese international student who enrolls in a composition course for second language writing students at an American university relates to English in a way that does not involve cultural memory or generational lineage, unless he has relatives from his parents’ or grandparents’ generations for whom English was a native language. An American student whose great grandparents immigrated from Germany, who takes Japanese as a foreign language in the US to fulfill an academic requirement, does not view Japanese as a storehouse of cultural memory; he does not recall his grandparents’ speaking in Japanese as a native language. Ironically, a passive, low-proficiency learner of a heritage language can yet carry the burden of “cultural memory.”

Many studies show that the kind of receptive language skills late-generation Japanese Americans tend to possess are indicative of heritage language learners in general. Wiley (2014) suggests that receptive heritage language learners might not be as paradoxical or unusual as they may appear. Wiley claims, in the *Handbook of Heritage, Community, and Native American Languages in the United States*, that the “typical example” of a heritage language learner is “someone whose family immigrated to the United States in the 19<sup>th</sup> or early 20<sup>th</sup> century. As a third or fourth generation born in this country, the person may have an ‘ethnic’ or cultural interest in the language but no ability to speak or comprehend it” (p. 21). Wiley’s profile of the “typical” heritage language learner is at odds with the stereotype of Asian Americans as perpetual foreigners, perceived to always be in a first or, at most, second generation status.

Because Asian Americans are often seen as foreigners, even highly qualified Asian Americans are often perceived as outsiders and therefore unfit for “positions of authority or leadership” (Kim, 1999). In other words, Asian Americans may struggle to be acknowledged as heritage learners, because they are seen to be native speakers of their “home” language, and second language speakers of English. Asian Americans may be seen to be not sufficiently removed from their heritage to be a *heritage* learner, which often requires distance and authentic belonging to a country their ancestors immigrated to “in the 19<sup>th</sup> or early 20<sup>th</sup> century.” At the same time, since many heritage language studies focus on immigrants and their children, recent Asian immigrants and their families fit the profile of the heritage language learner as constructed in much of the

literature. That is, there is a gap in the literature regarding late generation Asian Americans who were born and raised in the United States, and whose native language is English.

The stereotype of the *perpetual foreigner* marks Asian Americans as foreign, even if they were born and raised in the US (Chang, 2015). When Asian Americans are acknowledged for being US citizens, other minorities tend to judge them, nonetheless, for being foreigners, because Americanness is equated with whiteness (Huynh, Devos & Smalarz, 2011). In other words, having Asian features or being of Asian descent can itself signify foreignness to others, regardless of factors like citizenship and native language speaker status. Research has shown that many educators still see their Asian American students as foreigners (Ng, Lee & Pak, 2007). In the context of heritage language learning, late generation Japanese Americans with a low proficiency in Japanese might be rendered invisible since first or second generation Japanese American identities more closely conform to the stereotype of the perpetual foreigner, and therefore are most visible to researchers and educators. The stereotype of Asian Americans as foreigners emerged during WWII when Japanese Americans were perceived to be purely Japanese, and not American, and consequently placed in internment camps (Murjani, 2014). However, the relative peace of the post-WWII years did not eradicate the stereotype. The perpetual foreigner stereotype did not subside after WWII; the stereotype was bolstered in the 1980s when Asian countries became economically powerful and were perceived as a threat to the US (Murjani, 2014).

Omi (2008) observed that “Our nation has not been able to purge itself of a repertoire of cultural and racial representations that are evoked or emphasized in particular historical moments that render Asian-Americans foreign, subversive, and suspect.” Late generation Japanese Americans, because they do not fit the conventional “cultural and racial representations,” may be under-researched simply because Japanese Americans as US-born native speakers of English who struggle with their heritage language do not belong to a recognizable identity that others comprehend. This could help explain the focus in the literature of Japanese Americans and their heritage language on first, and second generation, Japanese Americans. It is imperative to examine ethnic identity issues if one wants to study heritage language learners, and ethnic identity research is missing in the scholarship about Japanese heritage language learners. Without deeper investigation into ethnic identity and the reasons why Japanese as a heritage language has diminished so much in the Japanese American community, the heritage language will be completely lost, and its attendant culture will also suffer attrition and potentially disappear.

Fishman (1996) believes that loss of language is neither trivial nor incidental. He asks the question: “What does the country lose when it loses individuals who are comfortable with themselves, cultures that are authentic to themselves, the capacity to pursue sensitivity, wisdom, and some kind of recognition that one has a purpose in life?” (p.71). In other words, loss of language is not only loss on a linguistic level, but rather on a spiritual, existential level as well. For Fishman, language is never purely linguistic, but covers a vast range from customs and arts to society and civilization: “When you are talking about the language, most of what you are talking about is the culture. That is, you are losing all those things that essentially are the way of life, the way of thought, the way of valuing, and the human reality that you are talking about” (p.72). Fishman takes this a step further and says, “the whole economy, religion, health care system, philosophy, all of that together is represented by the language” (p.72). This dissertation argues that the grasping attempts to learn so characteristic of the late generation low-proficiency heritage learner of Japanese is motivated, as Fishman suggests, by no less than a moral imperative.

Particular research methods can assist in the exploration of the pursuit of a heritage language as a moral imperative, because this pursuit is a part of the learner’s identity. Autoethnography is a useful method to explore identity because it can offer an emic, “insider’s” perspective of the subject. Autoethnography has been frequently used by minorities to add an extra layer to academic research by recording “subjective experience” about cultural issues (Allred, 2016). Autoethnography has also been described as a useful method for the researcher to explore his or her own participation in a cultural community (Hughes & Pennington, 2017). However, the only autoethnography I have seen by a Japanese American heritage language learner is written from the perspective of a mixed-race, second generation Japanese American on his mother’s side; that is, his autoethnography does not address issues related to Japanese American history, or to late-generation receptive learners. Allred (2016), a highly proficient speaker of Japanese, explains, “I am a biracial Japanese American; my father is Caucasian of largely English extraction and my mother is Japanese. I grew up in a bilingual household, but even now as I am writing, there is a lot about Japanese that I still have to learn in the way of more academic language and literacy” (p.201). In other words, Allred is a highly proficient speaker of Japanese, but he was schooled in the United States, which means that he did not learn academic writing conventions in Japanese. Allred’s mother immigrated to the US after the Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965; that is, she was part of the second wave of Japanese immigration, and therefore did not have family members

who were interned during WWII. Allred's lineage differs from Japanese Americans whose grandparents and great-grandparents immigrated in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. For this reason, Allred, like most Japanese heritage language learners who are studied by applied linguists today, was not pressured to forget his heritage language. Allred's linguistic choices were purely a matter of personal decision. Allred (2017) was embarrassed about being a Japanese American who had quit Japanese school; in hindsight, he felt that he should have been more diligent in his study of Japanese.

However, unlike 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> generation Japanese Americans, or even 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Japanese Americans who came of age during WWII, Allred (2017) was not embarrassed about *being* Japanese American; to the contrary, he was embarrassed about not being Japanese American *enough*; that is, he did not take his heritage study as seriously as he, in his own estimation, should have. It is interesting to note that Allred does not, anywhere in his autoethnography, contextualize his own experience with the Japanese American experience, or with Japanese American history, as if Japanese Americanness began after the Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965, when the second wave of Japanese immigration began. However, Allred does not even contextualize his experience as part of this second wave of immigration, or with the greater flows of immigration from countries around the globe facilitated by the Immigration and Naturalization Act. Rather, Allred, in his autoethnography, appears as a solitary individual whose struggles and conflicts are almost entirely linguistic. Allred (2017) was not pressured by his parents to maintain his proficiency in Japanese; in fact, he was encouraged to pursue any language he was interested in. Yet Allred perceived Japanese to be a part of his identity, and a part of his family, if not a part of the larger Japanese American community. Still, what Allred shares with 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> generation Japanese Americans is the sense of the heritage language as a connection with their parents or grandparents. Japanese was, for Allred, the "mother tongue," the language of the family, not of a larger community. Allred has more distance with Japanese as a heritage language than most Japanese heritage language learners who are the subject of studies conducted by applied linguists, because Allred's sense of identity never extends beyond himself and his family, to the larger Japanese American community. Even if Allred's autoethnography bears no trace of Japanese American history, other studies involve subjects who arrived in the US more recently, for the purpose of career advancement. In other words, the literature on Japanese heritage language learners is mostly associated with children who are in the US temporarily because one or both of

their parents came to the US for work. These studies are even more decontextualized from Japanese American history than Allred's autoethnography.

### **Chapter Summary**

This dissertation concerns itself with communities who are excluded from the discourse on Japanese as a heritage language, specifically late generation Japanese Americans who may be two or three generations removed from their heritage language. The gap in the literature is the absence of research on late generation Japanese Americans and their heritage language study. Wiley's (2014) profile of the "typical" heritage language learner is at odds with the stereotype of Asian Americans as perpetual foreigners. Since many heritage language studies focus on immigrants and their children, recent Asian immigrants and their families fit the profile of the heritage language learner as constructed in much of the literature. That is, the literature does not include Japanese American heritage language learners who were born and raised in the United States, and whose native language is English. In the context of heritage language learning, late generation Japanese Americans with a low proficiency in Japanese are rendered invisible since first or second generation Japanese American identities more closely conform to the stereotype of the perpetual foreigner, and therefore are most visible to researchers and educators. The existing studies are decontextualized from Japanese American history. Though historians have clarified that the WWII and internment experience had a devastating impact on the cultural and linguistic processes of Japanese Americans, heritage language scholars have not yet made the connection. Most studies of Japanese American heritage language learners focus almost exclusively on recent Japanese immigrants. Few, if any, studies concentrate on the Japanese American community that is already established in the US, the community that can be traced back to the first wave of immigration from Japan which occurred from 1895-1908 (Densho Encyclopedia). This dissertation builds on Metoki's (2012) dissertation research: In contrast to scholars who may doubt the significance of heritage language learning for late generation low-proficiency learners, Metoki states, regarding one of her participants, that heritage language study "strengthens her identity as a Japanese-American who will continue to search for her place within the greater American society." The relation of Japanese as a heritage language and the search for a sense of belonging in American society is a primary thematic concern of this dissertation. Finally, there is a gap in the literature in that there has been little or no use of autoethnography or case study as methods to study late-

generation Japanese American heritage language learners. This dissertation will address the gaps; particularly it will focus on historical and cultural themes as suggested by the following research questions:

1. What role does Japanese American history play in the loss—or maintenance—of the heritage language in the JA community?
2. What kinds of external (societal) or internal (ethnic identity) factors influence loss or maintenance of the heritage language?
3. What motivates 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> generation Japanese Americans to maintain their heritage language?
4. What are the differences in motivational factors behind 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> generation Japanese Americans who learn or maintain their heritage language?

## CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I will discuss my research methods, participant recruitment, and data collection and analysis. I will start by justifying why case studies and autoethnographies prove to be sound research methods for my dissertation. The second part focuses on participant recruitment, which explains why my family members and myself can be considered appropriate, suitable for my research. The third part is dedicated to my process of collecting data which includes interviews with family members, my self-reflections on learning Japanese as a heritage language, and my Japanese learning artifacts. The chapter will conclude with data analysis, which explains my coding schemes and data interpretation.

### Case Studies

This dissertation is modelled on situated qualitative case studies such as Bazerman and Russell (2003), Prior (1998), and Tardy (2004). I chose to use case studies as a research method because they can give an in-depth portrait of the process of learning a heritage language. While there are few clear-cut definitions of what a case study is, many scholars have attempted to describe case study research. Hancock & Algozzine (2006) suggest that case study research “employs quotes of key participants, anecdotes, prose composed from interviews, and other literary techniques to create mental images...” (p.15). Interviews are often situated in prose accounts that contextualize the data gained from the interview. This kind of “thick description” can shed light on what motivates a heritage language learner, as well as his or her struggles in learning the heritage language. The case study researcher is more concerned with labelling themes and classifying types of behavior rather than testing a supposition or proving connections (Hancock & Algozzine, p.15, 2017). An interview with an individual in a case study, and a description of the context, is not simply documented without interpretation, but rather compared, in terms of similarities and differences, with data collected from other interviewees and their respective contexts. Because the case study is amenable to classification of themes and behavior, it is appropriate for investigating the theme of ethnicity/identity and heritage language learning, and categorizing various types of behavior, such as attempts to learn or relearn the heritage language,

as well as attempts to ignore and forget the HLL. For this reason, I chose the case study to explore the intersection of ethnicity and heritage language learning for both of my participants.

The loss of Japanese as a heritage language is related to historical factors; therefore, it is important to examine key aspects of Japanese American history, such as the internment. Since it is impossible to return to WWII to observe and study Japanese heritage language communities, it is essential to select a case that may be representative. Therefore, I selected a participant who grew up during WWII, attended heritage language schools both outside and within internment camps, and has the unique experience of being detained in two separate internment camps over a period of four years. Most case studies operate with the assumption that the case can be viewed as representative of a larger community (Borg, p.402, 1989). The researcher also selects participants to some degree based on how representative they may be. Multiple case studies should be done since it is difficult to take a single case study and draw general conclusions, and simply interviewing and observing a subject can yield only shallow results (Borg, 1989). This dissertation combines two case studies and an autoethnographic study so that more conclusions can be drawn about what motivates 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> generation Japanese Americans to learn or relearn their heritage language; about what kinds of external (societal) or internal (ethnic identity) factors influence loss or maintenance of the heritage language; and about the role Japanese American history plays in the loss—or maintenance—of the heritage language in the JA community. One way to answer these questions is through accessing multiple information sources “for an intensive case study includes *public archival records* such as actuarial records, political and judicial reports, government documents, and media accounts; *private archival records* such as autobiographies, diaries, and letters.” (Borg, p.403, 1989). Historical records should be used as supporting evidence when doing a case study about a single individual’s experiences during WWII, for example. Political and government documents, even journalistic pieces that are relevant to the context in which the participants operate are also useful in providing a more layered description.

Because heritage language use is not merely a historical event to be studied, I intend to do ethnographic observation to supplement my interviews; during these observations, I can get a more tangible sense of the participant’s proficiency in their heritage language. I will be observing their use of the heritage language in actual social contexts. Creswell (2007) who promotes “thick description” explores a case “through detailed, in-depth data collection involving *multiple sources of information* (e.g., observations, interviews, audiovisual material, and documents and reports)”

(p.73). In other words, it is not enough to weave parts of an interview into sections of narrative observation; a case study should incorporate information from various genres and even be multi-modal to some degree. The case studies in this dissertation will include photographic images, parts of an interview transcript, ethnographic description, and other data. Yin (2003) indicates that researchers need “six types of information to collect: documents, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant-observations, and physical artifacts” (p.75). In accordance with the principles of “thick description,” the case studies in this dissertation will include historical information, archival records, photographs, interviews, and other documents to create a comprehensive portrait of the participants.

The case study is an ideal method to study what Merriam (1998) calls a “a single entity, a unit around which there are boundaries” (p. 27). The case study focuses on a single unit—one family, for example—from which to cull and categorize themes and patterns of behavior. I chose to use the case study as a research method because I will be studying two individuals with a specific focus on learning Japanese as a heritage language. The very specific nature of my investigation makes the case study an ideal research method for this dissertation. Similarly, Nunan (2010) claims that “case study research typically observes the characteristics of an individual unit—a child, a clique, a class, a school, or a community” (p.77). The goal is to find data from in-depth study of an individual or small group of individuals that can be representative of the larger community “to which the unit belongs” (p.77). In my dissertation, the two heritage language learners I study belong to the same unit (Japanese heritage language learner), so it is reasonable to assume that some of the data accumulated may be representative of other heritage language learners. The two case studies are not meant to be compared in terms of similar experiences but are rather juxtaposed to highlight generational differences. The internalized racism and oppression of older Japanese Americans was passed down to their children, who inherited the consequences of the kind of subjugation forced upon the Japanese American community during WWII. Some of these consequences are heritage language loss and ethnic shame, which can lead to a deeper alienation from Japanese language and culture.

The case study is useful for particular types of studies. Yin (2003) explains that “case studies are the preferred strategy when ‘how’ or ‘why’ questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context” (p.1). My research questions are how/why questions: How are 3<sup>rd</sup>

and 4<sup>th</sup> generation Japanese Americans motivated to learn or relearn their heritage language? Why do external factors (societal) or internal (ethnic identity) factors influence loss or maintenance of the heritage language?

How does Japanese American history impact the loss—or maintenance—of the heritage language in the JA community? Case studies are also effective when they concern current issues, like heritage language learning, or study individuals, like heritage language learners in real-life contexts—as college professors or retirees, as is the case in my dissertation. In this sense, the case study emphasizes the individual’s experience, rather than glossing an individual experience for the sake of a larger, more etic (general, objective), quantitative approach.

Since 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> generation Japanese Americans have seldom been interviewed by researchers, an “emic” approach would shed new light on this community of learners. Hamel (1993) suggests that the case study takes an emic approach, meaning that it should consider the perspectives of the participants, rather than just the outside perspective of the researcher. Hamel notes that “The actor’s point of view should be given due weight, because the latter is directly present among the field materials, be they collections of remarks in context, or documents, such as letters” (p.17). The interview is one way to incorporate the participant’s viewpoint into the study.

The case study allows the researcher to explore a single case with greater depth and detail. Through detailed data collection, this dissertation builds case studies that explore learning strategies and communicative procedures. It is important to explore strategies and procedures because heritage language learners have different learning needs than foreign language students (Kimi-Kondo Brown, 2005). About the possibilities of the case study, Johnson (1992) reports that case studies “can inform us about the processes and strategies that individual L2 learners use to communicate and learn, how their own personalities, attitudes, and goals interact with the learning environment, and about the precise nature of their linguistic growth” (p.76). The case study offers a glimpse into the participant’s personality and opinions about language and language learning, as well as their personal reasons for pursuing language study. A participant in a case study can also be contextualized historically and considered in terms of how policies and societal attitudes of a given era might have impacted the learner’s process. Because one of my participants has experienced major events in US history, it is important to use a research method that allows for historical contextualization. Because my Japanese American participant was influenced so strongly by policies and societal attitudes, a quantitative method would not do justice to the

nuances of how public policies and attitudes affected their learning; only a case study provides enough space to incorporate the historical and the social as well as the personal and the cultural.

Another advantage of case study research is that it provides a large and diverse context. The case study is ideal when the participant cannot be easily distinguished from his or her context (Yin, p.3, 1993). The participants in this dissertation operate in very specific ethnic, social, familial, and institutional contexts that need to be understood in order to gain a more accurate understanding of their motivation, struggles and needs, as well as cultural and linguistic goals.

Similarly, major themes in this dissertation, such as culture and racism, cannot be quantified; whereas a qualitative method, such as the case study, allows “a researcher to achieve high levels of conceptual validity, or to identify and measure the indicators that best represent the theoretical concepts the researcher intends to measure” (George & Bennett, 2004, p.19). That is, case studies can be more effective in measuring variables that cannot be measured quantitatively. As George & Bennett (2004) explain, “Many of the variables that interest social scientists, such as democracy, power, political culture, state strength, and so on are notoriously difficult to measure” (p.19). An attempt to quantitatively measure these variables can be problematic because numbers in themselves do not speak to the complex social and historical nuances implicit in politics or culture, for example, that is these concepts are encoded with meaning in such a complicated variety of ways that it is difficult to reduce them to numerical measurement. Explaining the connection between Japanese American history and culture, and heritage language loss and maintenance, requires a nuanced, qualitative investigation. However, an emic approach that involves expertise in the networks of knowledge around a specific culture or cultures requires just as rigorous a method of data collection and analysis. George & Bennett (2004) also identify some pitfalls of case study research, such as “case study bias,” “lack of representativeness,” and “lack of independence of cases.” A common pitfall is the temptation to select participants whose experiences happen to meet the researcher’s hypothesis or expectations (George & Bennet, 2004). In this dissertation, participants with diverse experiences were selected so that a predetermined shared outcome would not occur.

The sheer concentration on an individual or small group of individuals is likely to lead to a comprehensive study (Duff, 2008, p.43). In this dissertation, more thorough analysis is necessary because my participants’ experiences are embedded in complicated social and historical contexts. The case study research process may also lead to unexpected insights and information from the

participants (Duff, p.44, 2008). This is particularly salient to my dissertation considering the remarkable lack of knowledge about 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> generation Japanese American heritage language learners currently available. Yielding or creating new knowledge is one of the goals of this dissertation. Also, case studies, because they generate new information, are often used to conduct further studies using other methods, both qualitative and quantitative. In other words, my case studies will, hopefully, create opportunities for future researchers to do more work, both qualitative and quantitative, around 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> generation Japanese American heritage language learners. Finally, even if an individual is atypical and therefore not representative of the larger unit to which he or she belongs, he or she may yet provide new knowledge that can be theoretically compelling (Duff, p.45, 2008). This applies to one of my participants, who makes the atypical claim of having two heritage languages, Japanese and English; few studies have been done on heritage language learners who claim two languages as their heritage language/s.

### **Autoethnography**

There are various reasons why I chose autoethnography as a method: 1) the population of late generation Japanese American heritage language learners is small, and the task of locating and recruiting participants from this population is beyond the scope of a dissertation 2) My own experience of struggling to maintain Japanese as a heritage language seems to align with the few accounts in the literature about 4<sup>th</sup> generation Japanese Americans and their attempts to learn their heritage language 3) I have been academically trained in an MFA in Creative Writing program to write “evocatively” (Bochner & Ellis, 2016), so autoethnography is an opportunity to apply my skills to my research and 4) Autoethnography demands “thick description,” a full account that can result in a more comprehensive portrait of a heritage language learner than other research methods would yield. Also, autoethnography, when paired with or set alongside case studies, can provide more in-depth analysis considering that different participants are being studied using different research methods. Autoethnography is an ideal method for the researcher to include himself in a study of his family, where case studies are used to investigate the heritage learning experiences of other family members. One way to describe autoethnography, after all, is a case study of the self; when combined with case studies of others, autoethnography can become less autonomous, less navel-gazing, more integrated with the experiences of others. In other words, autoethnography, when synthesized with case studies (in the context of a dissertation) can become a stronger method

in that it relies less wholly on the self to achieve its ends; that is autoethnography is best when it is part of the equation, but not the entire statement. Autoethnography as *method*, consequently, bears less burden to convey all that the data imparts.

Autoethnography is still new to Second Language Studies (e.g., Canagarajah, 2012), while diary, oral histories and related genres have been used extensively (e.g. Belcher & Connor, 2001; Flowerdew & Miller, 2008; Pavlenko, 2007). These studies gather their data from subjective positions. Autoethnography is “new” in the sense that it blends autobiography with ethnography (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011). There have been autobiographical accounts in the field—e.g., Casanave and Vandrick (2003), and Silva et. al. (2003)—as well as ethnographic studies—e.g., Burgess & Ivanic, 2010; Prior, 1998; Swales, 1998. Still, autoethnographic studies in the field are rare, except for Simon-Maeda (2011) and Watson-Gego and Gegeo (2011). One of the reasons that autoethnography is rare in the field is that it is so different from traditional applied linguistics research methods, such as surveys and questionnaires.

As mentioned earlier, and as noted extensively by Bochner & Ellis (2016), autoethnography is literally a literary form that uses plot, action, conflict, and resolution—traditional creative writing concepts—to tell a story. Having taken graduate level workshops in fiction and creative nonfiction writing in my MFA and having taught two sections of Introduction to Creative Writing at Purdue University I am uniquely prepared to maximize the advantages of autoethnography as a method. Beside the use of literary techniques, autoethnographers, like creative writers, allow for far more emotional expression and political commentary than traditional academic writing permits. Because my own linguistic background is informed by educational policies and societal attitudes, as well as a complicated history of racism and oppression inherited from my father and his generation of Japanese Americans, I need a method that is large and liberal enough to contain various kinds of information and experiences. Two leading exponents of autoethnography, Ellis and Bochner (1996) instruct autoethnographers: “Don’t be afraid to make ethnography dangerous, political, and personal. Take risks. Write from the heart as well as the head” (42). Traditional ethnography, and some elements of more traditional social science based autoethnography, champions objective observation and warns against personal narrative and political commentary. Since the political history in which this dissertation is situated goes back to WWII, and involves immediate family members, Ellis and Bochner (1996) gave me the academic “green light” to explore the intersection of politics and family history.

While there is more freedom in autoethnography to connect the personal to the political, autoethnography is not a loose genre like the memoir that defies academic rigor. Memenley and Young (2013) clarify that autoethnography is not a memoir without rigorous rules: “Autoethnography is challenging because it requires those who are already embedded in particular cultural and social processes to subject themselves and their most intimate surroundings to the same forms of critical analysis as they would any other” (p. 3). Unlike a memoir, my autoethnography incorporates analysis of data, including actual quizzes and assignments, journal entries and presentation slides. This recalls the Bakhtinian idea of the dialogic. Dialogism is Bakhtin’s idea that texts, authors, and characters are always in dialogue with each other; that is, they do not exist in isolation as homogenous units. For example, Bakhtin believed that Dostoevsky was the first novelist who created characters that were so fully fleshed out that they had the apparatus to argue back plausibly and credibly to and against the author. Granted, the autoethnographer’s narrative self is not a fictional character; at the same time, a critical distance should be maintained between the autoethnographer and the self that he or she projects into the narrative and embodies with language. While creating a character of the narrative self in autoethnography may seem like an experimental gesture compared to traditional questionnaires, the autoethnography has the same aims as other qualitative research methods.

As a heritage language learner whose father was interned during WWII, there are many seeming idiosyncrasies to my linguistic and cultural experiences that cannot be adequately represented in a quantitative study. Autoethnography is in part a reaction against quantitative research methods. What features of people and their lives are omitted from quantitative studies? Autoethnography seems to redress this omission. As Muncey states, “It is the complexity of individuals that autoethnography seeks to address; the muddled, idiosyncratic, florid eccentricities that make us unique as opposed to part of a population” (p. xi). As an autoethnographer with an uncommon background—2<sup>nd</sup> generation Japanese American on my mother’s side, 4th generation on my father’s side, for starters—the space an autoethnography allows to explore unique characteristics of identity and social contexts proved to be useful for my research.

While one of the critiques of autoethnography is that it is too personal, and therefore not credible in an academic context, I consider the “personal is political” perspective valid and persuasive. Even as autoethnography charts the intersection of the personal and the political, autoethnography always *begins* with the personal, individual narrative. The “personal is political”

motto was part of the second wave of feminism in the 1960s and 70s; just as feminists used the motto to empower themselves and validate their own identities, I use it to inscribe meaning and value to my own experiences as a Japanese American whose heritage language was, at least at one point in US history, quite controversial. As Denzin (2014) notes, “I want to turn the traditional life story, biographical project into an interpretive autoethnographic project, into a critical, performative practice, a practice that begins with the biography of the writer and moves outward to culture, discourse, history, and ideology” (x). Since my own experiences are so embedded in specific, under-represented social and cultural contexts, I perceived the autoethnography genre as an opportunity to explore the complicated nuances of Japanese American history. As mentioned earlier, there are roughly two strands of autoethnography: a traditional social science-based approach that maintains that personal data can and should be generalized and presented as objectively as possible, and “evocative ethnography” which accepts the personal *as personal* and ungeneralizable but still academically credible and important. This dissertation follows a heuristic process and lies somewhere between the lines that have been drawn. However, I accept the critique that analytic autoethnography’s pretense of generalizability is suspect since the genre is by definition personal and individual. Consequently, the autoethnography presented in this dissertation follows the more realistic propositions of evocative autoethnography.

I chose autoethnography as a method because it can be used to effectively study the phenomena of heritage language learning. The aim of the autoethnography is essentially the same as the aim of quantitative research; the design may be different, but the desired outcome in the bigger picture is the same, which is understanding social phenomena. As Hughes and Pennington point out, “engaging in autoethnography means welcoming the opportunity to learn more about your participation in one or more cultural groups, communities, and contexts while contributing to critical social research” (p.1). Even if I make no claim to generalizability, I still do autoethnographic research with the hope that social phenomena—in this case, the mysteries of heritage language learning—can be illuminated in some way.

Even though autoethnography can only study a single case, the researcher’s own experiences, the tendency for autoethnography as a genre to explore identity is useful for my dissertation. In my case, identity—4<sup>th</sup> generation Japanese American—cannot be separated from heritage language study. One of autoethnography’s limitations is that it, as a genre, can only grapple with so much social phenomena, precisely because it begins with the narrative self. Choi

(2017), in her book *Creating a multivocal self: Autoethnography as method*, explains that “I explore the deep effects of how certain understandings of language shape possibilities and impossibilities of language usage, identity performances and the potential for new identity formations” (p. xxi). There is a reason why autoethnography is steeped in identity; autoethnography is particularly equipped to grapple with issues of identity, just as it is not equipped to provide evidence or analysis of many cases from which information can be generalized. Autoethnography then is a limited tool, and one of many imperfect methods in the qualitative-quantitative spectrum with which to examine social phenomena. Still, considering the proliferation of identity studies in Second Language Studies research (Ivanic, 2006; Lantolf & Genung, 2002; Pavlenko & Lantolf (2000); Kanno & Norton, 2003; McKinney & Norton, 2008), autoethnography can be a useful method for the field especially regarding studies that relate to identity, such as this dissertation.

The literary quality of autoethnography serves a positive function in my dissertation. Organizing my experience into a narrative arc helps give meaning to my experience as a heritage language learner, and a well-written narrative with plot and conflict, for example, makes it more accessible to the reader and other researchers who may want to build on this study. That is, using literary techniques, the reader may be compelled into a new understanding of the Japanese American heritage language learning experience; similarly, other researchers are more likely to gain interest in a topic if it speaks to them on an essential level as the best literary writing is intended to do. Still, “literariness” is anathema to traditional social science research and seems to contradict the academic ethos of “information.” But the autoethnographer must confront the reality of the literariness of autoethnography, with all its negative connotations in social science research, because literariness is precisely what gives autoethnography power as a research method. As Kim (2016) admits, “It seemed to me that narrative inquiry was a perfect hybrid of research and art (literary art in particular) that could satisfy my inclination for literature” (p.1). I suggest that an autoethnography must have literary qualities to be evocative and convincing through vivid details and rich layers of thick description. Bochner & Ellis (2016) are the most vocal supporters of the literariness of autoethnography; they advocate the use of character, setting, plot, conflict, and action, which are traditional components of fiction (p. 37). Autoethnographies are, finally, stories, and stories must be well-told to successfully convey and analyze social phenomena; they must also be well-written to convince the reader, and other researchers, that the topic of inquiry is significant.

## **Motivation**

In this dissertation, I operationalize motivation as defined by Dörnyei's 'L2 Motivational Self-System' that consists of 3 components: 1) the Ideal L2 Self, 2) the Ought-to L2 Self, and 3) the L2 Learning Experience. The Ideal L2 Self is the person the learner wants to become at the end of a course of language study. Without formally using this framework, I adapt some of Dörnyei's ideas insofar as I believe heritage learners visualize an idealized L2 Self (in my case, a balanced bilingual who teaches English in Japan). The Ought-to L2 Self is the self that is concerned with meeting external expectations and avoiding negative perceptions. In the case of one of the participants of this study, Tom, his Ought-to L2 Self was a learner who didn't make Japanese language mistakes at school and work. The L2 Learning Experience has to do with immediate factors in the present that might impinge upon the learner (in my case again, the curriculum that included memorization of hundreds of Chinese characters) was part of the L2 Learning Experience that demotivated me to continue heritage language study

## **Participant Recruitment**

I recruited three participants for my research: my father, my sister and myself. My father is an eligible participant for my study because he "represents" the older 3<sup>rd</sup> generation of Japanese Americans who studied Japanese as a heritage language before and during WWII. He is also an example of an older Japanese American who learned, through the experience of internment and oppression of Japanese Americans during WWII, to dismiss the Japanese language and heritage language study. Since his experiences and attitudes aligns with much of the literature on Japanese Americans of his generation, I considered him to be a credible participant.

My sister who is a 4<sup>th</sup> generation Japanese American is also qualified to participate in this study. She has taken Japanese as a heritage language courses at both the undergraduate and graduate level. Since her linguistic experience and identity conflicts parallel previous research on 4th generation Japanese Americans, I considered her to be, if not representative, then a viable choice for my study.

I will include my own experiences in the form of an autoethnography, because I am a 4th generation Japanese American who has taken Japanese as a heritage language courses at both the

undergraduate and graduate level. My linguistic experience and identity conflicts correspond with the literature on 4<sup>th</sup> generation Japanese Americans, so I consider my own experience to be useful.

### **Data Collection**

Interviews and ethnographic observations will be the sources of data for my case studies. The interviews in this dissertation follow the non-linear interview process described by Casanave (2002). Attentive listening leads to better follow-up questions that can establish a creative dialogue; that is, new issues that arise inform the themes of subsequent interviews (p.32). Casanave (2002) did not adhere to a strict set of questions and pre-determined themes, though she did begin with clear research questions. Rather, she treated her interview data not as fixed but developing and revealing new information as her subjects spoke and reflected on their own answers and ruminations. Casanave aims to watch participants “discover things about themselves, about themselves as writers along the way” (p.33). Interviews, then, are not just means to gather data; interviews can create meaning and knowledge (data) as they are conducted. The interviews in my case studies allow interviewees to explore new discoveries that subsequently inform my knowledge and perspective of the participants. The case study researcher overhears the interviewees as they engage in the hermeneutic process of interpreting their own experiences. Casanave’s hermeneutic process was influenced and partly shaped by her interviewees’ stories: “I began to perceive issues that people talked to me about as clustering in certain ways and not in others, and that my discussions, no matter how I try to adhere to the stories themselves, will reflect these clusterings” (p.33) In other words, new themes emerged during the interviews, which helped shape and reshape Casanave’s case study. Similarly, I allowed new themes to emerge in the interview process, across multiple interviews that were conducted over the span of several months. I view this not as a digression from my initial research questions, but rather as a necessary expansion of the questions required to develop a comprehensive, multi-faceted study.

I conducted and coded multiple interviews of both of my participants. Since I have not previously discussed heritage language learning with my participants, I did not know what to expect or what kind of data would emerge from the interviews. Because I was unsure of the exact nature of the data that would be collected, I needed to use the interview method to help me discover and interpret data in a meaningful and efficient way. The improvisational nature of the interview, partly scripted and partly informed by spontaneous follow-up questions, was effective in collecting

relevant information. The interview process is dynamic, and the researcher should not limit himself to a predetermined set of questions (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). Some questions depend on the answers given and are generated within the context of the interview. At the same time, “several main questions” (p.146) should be prepared in advance to guide the interview. Multiple interviews with the same interviewee are another way to add depth. Rubin & Rubin (1995) recommend that the researcher “ask people how they [the interviewees] carry out specific tasks for which they are responsible” (p.146). The researcher’s focus should be on nuance, rather than facts alone; this requires the researcher to ask for more and more precise descriptions from his or her interviewees” (p.81). It is the interviewer’s task to elicit complex answers. The interview provides a kind of “thick description” within the larger “thick description” of the case study itself. The interview is not simply placed into a case study but is situated in the researcher’s positionality. For the sake of “transparency,” interviewers should keep detailed records of how they prepared for the interview, what they noticed, how they felt about particular clusters of meaning and emergence of themes” (Rubin & Rubin, p. 86, 1995). The researcher relates what happens “behind the scenes,” so that readers have more information to assess the validity of the study. Even transcripts should be coded and annotated so the researcher and the reader can keep track of how categories were labelled, interpreted, and organized (p. 86). Much like the way a vivid historical account convinces the reader through its rich details, “The richness of detail, abundance of evidence, and vividness of the text help convince those who have never been in the field that this material is real” (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p.91). Therefore, I concentrated on providing vivid descriptions of my participants and their learning contexts.

My interview questions are based on my research questions. I split each research question into sub-questions and included follow-up questions. For example, here are two of my research questions: What motivates a 4<sup>th</sup> generation Japanese American, versus a 3<sup>rd</sup> generation Japanese American, to learn or relearn their heritage language? From this question, I derived a series of sub-questions to ask the 4<sup>th</sup> generation Japanese American, such as 1) Why did you wait until college to study Japanese as a heritage language? 2) Why did you see your heritage language class as a haven on campus? 3) What were you trying to achieve in class—linguistic proficiency, cultural connection, or both? I also composed several sub-questions to ask the 3<sup>rd</sup> generation Japanese American participant: 1) Were you motivated to learn Japanese as a heritage language before WWII? 2) When you were repatriated to Japan after WWII, what was your attitude towards

improving your Japanese proficiency? Were you interested in keeping up at school, or were there deeper cultural or personal factors that motivated you to learn?

I have focused my interview questions on my research questions to prevent an excess of information. One pitfall of interview-based research is that the researcher might include too much material, too many bulky transcripts with no thematic center, no unifying central ideas (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). “Without knowing the ‘what’ and the ‘why’ of the story, the ‘how’—the form of the story—becomes problematic” (Kvale & Brinkmann, p.270, 2009). An interview story is a *story* with a definite narrative structure. Therefore, I began each interview with a set of focused, informed questions and made sure that the inquiry progressed to a deeper investigation, rather than losing focus.

Lack of transparency is another potential pitfall of writing the interview story. Researchers should reveal to the reader what his own activities and processes were; a record of these processes should be included in the case study (Kvale & Brinkmann, p. 271, 2009). Therefore, I kept detailed notes about my research process from initial interviews and coding to follow-up interviews and the evolution of simple labels to thematic categories. This is not to say that room should be made to include *everything*, but efforts should be made to *correlate* the details of knowledge production to the study itself. Since case studies generally do not include whole transcripts, but rather select quotes, each quote should be contextualized and interpreted. The quotes should be short, and “not make up more than half of the text in a chapter” (Kvale & Brickmann, p.280, 2009). While the first draft of my case study was a bit overwhelmed with material from transcripts, I edited out inessential quotes and balanced the quotes I used with observations and other information.

The interviews I conducted with family members took place between November 2018 – February 2019. The ethnographic observations of family members occurred in February 2019. The data for my autoethnographic study was collected over an extended period of time between Fall 2017 and Spring 2019. The data primarily covered my 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> year as a graduate student in the Second Language Studies program. I drew on multiple data sources for this dissertation to maintain the ethos of triangulation in ethnographic research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The longitudinal data presented in this dissertation allowed me to answer my research questions over an extended period with access to multiple data sources, including interview transcripts, autoethnographic observations, photographs, texts and emails for the case study chapters, and a history/literacy

narrative, journal, writing samples, and reading samples for the autoethnographic chapter of this dissertation.

### **Data Analysis**

The initial stage of coding interview data begins with generating codes. According to Kvale & Brinkmann (2009), “codes are immediate, are short, and define the action or experience described by the interviewee” (p.202). In my open-coding, I made handmade comments on the right margin of my interview transcripts, as a first step towards creating labels and codes.

This open-coding stage involves labelling ideas and concepts that appeared in the transcript, as well as labelling the subjects of each paragraph” (Rubin & Rubin, p. 227, 1995). For example, I used the code “motivation” to mark parts of the transcripts that addressed the issue of motivation. Similarly, I used the code “ethnic identity” when issues related to ethnic identity arose in the interview.

In a later, “more focused” stage of coding, the researcher should group the initial labels and codes to develop categories, and this process should repeat until no new categories seem to emerge (Kvale & Brinkmann, p. 202, 2009.)

The purpose of coding is to determine, label and analyze themes. When I completed the categorizing stage, I moved on to themes. I began to develop themes from the categories. Transcripts of several interviews with a single interviewee were compared and analyzed according to themes. These themes help the researcher understand the participants behavior. Examples of themes are, “‘Everyone is out for themselves’ or ‘Good people care for their parents and help those in need.’ Themes may tell people how not to behave— ‘Planning ahead is foolish as it is all fate anyway’” (Rubin & Rubin, p.234, 1995). Themes manifest as general remarks that can describe a variety of phenomena. The interviewer begins by summarizing units of the interview, before assigning thematic meaning. The researcher should listen for “Iconic statements, pithy summaries of how the interviewees interpret their world” (p. 236), because these suggest themes. My own coding process followed the suggestions listed above.

Analyzing interview data is both an intuitive and analytical process; researchers read their transcripts to get a general impression first, then situate parts of the transcript in a narrative, interpret metaphors, use charts to visually map out the data (Kvale & Brinkmann, p. 234, 2009). Comparing one event or theme to another is an important way of integrating and categorizing the

data. The data gleaned from my interviews underwent the various processes described by Kvale & Brinkmann (2009). For example, I did an initial close reading of the transcripts, before attempting to place sections of the transcript in paragraphs.

I used simple coding (codes, categories, and themes) as a method of analyzing and understanding the interview data. Saldana (2009) suggests using “a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data” (p. 3). However, even as coding assigns labels and meaning, it is only the initial act of interpreting the interview data. Coding can go through three or four cycles before larger themes emerge. Also, coding should not be confused for themes. Saldana (2009) explains that “A theme is an *outcome* of coding, categorization, and analytic reflection, not something that is, in itself, coded” (p. 13). Coding then is a tool to discover themes and can help the researcher notice the patterns, trends, and concepts in his or her interview data. While some scholars espouse a more intuitive approach to coding, Saldana (2009) recommends that the researcher “keep a copy of your research concern, theoretical framework, central research question, goals of the study, and other major issues on the page in front of you to keep you focused and allay your anxieties because the page focuses your coding decisions” (p.18). I followed Saldana’s advice, by printing out my research questions and referring to them as I coded the transcripts. Coding is some combination of intuitive process and checking against the research questions, and it is the researcher’s essential, first engagement with the interview data. While the data seemed too ambiguous and overwhelming to approach at first, once I started coding the interviews, the case study began to take shape.

## **Chapter Conclusion**

In this chapter I justified the use of case studies and autoethnography for my study. I also justified my participant recruitment by explaining why family members, specifically my father and sister, are ideal candidates for research on Japanese as a heritage language. I argue that, because Japanese as a heritage language is connected to Japanese American history, doing a case study of a Japanese American, my father, who attended a heritage language school before WWII, and was interned along with 110,000 other Japanese Americans during WWII, would yield productive results. The next chapter introduces an actual case study which chronicles my father’s experiences as a heritage language learner before, during and after WWII. Because 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> generation

Japanese Americans have rarely been interviewed or studied in the context of learning Japanese as a heritage language, I suggest that case study, because it is comprehensive, is a suitable method with which to explore the experiences of 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> generation Japanese Americans who were born and raised in the US. The next chapter includes a case study of a 4<sup>th</sup> generation Japanese American, my sister, and the story of her motivation, rooted in a search for ethnic roots, to learn Japanese as a heritage language. Finally, I propose that qualitative forms such as case study and autoethnography are appropriate for study of major themes such as culture and racism, which are not quantifiable, and which cannot be explored by a mere examination of the literature. For one thing, the literature does not comment on the experiences of Sansei and Yonsei (3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> generation Japanese Americans).

## **CHAPTER FOUR: AN INTERGENERATIONAL STUDY OF JHL**

### **Introduction**

The first case study presented in this chapter explores the life and language learning experiences of Tom, a third generation Japanese American who came of age during WWII. The second case study examines the very different kind of engagement with language and culture of Julia, a fourth generation Japanese American who went to college in the 1990s. These case studies are presented side by side to shed light on different aspects of my research questions. For example, Japanese American history has a direct role in Tom's relationship to his heritage language because he was interned during WWII along with over 110,000 other people of Japanese descent. However, Japanese American history exercises only an indirect influence in Julia's learning experiences since she was born 3 decades after the end of WWII yet was influenced by her father's attitudes that were partly shaped by his suffering racism and discrimination in the 1940s. Consequently, a different set of societal and ethnic factors motivated both Tom and Julia to learn their heritage languages, and disparate motivating factors compelled Tom and Julia to maintain (or lose) their heritage language. The deeper implications of these differences and what they mean to the state of Japanese as a heritage language today will be explored in Chapter 6.

### **Case Study #1: The Life and Language Experiences of a Sansei**

My father, Tom, was born in 1934 in Santa Maria, California. At the time of the interview, Tom was 84 years old. Although Tom did not attend preschool, he did enrol in a Japanese language school at the Buddhist Temple in Lompoc, California in 1940. Tom went to Maple Street School in Lompoc for kindergarten, which consisted of a single classroom with less than 40 students. Maple Street School was one of several elementary schools in Lompoc. While Maple Street School doesn't exist anymore, Maple High School in Lompoc currently operates as a high school for special education students. Tom went to kindergarten at this school from Fall 1941 to the beginning of World War II, when his family was relocated and then interned at the Gila River internment camp. "There were signs in the town that said, 'we don't want Japs' around the time before and during WWII," Tom said, though he claims to have paid little attention to these signs. "There was no open hostility towards me at that time," he said. Tom knows that the family moved from

farmhouse to farmhouse after they received death threats, but he concedes that he was “too small to understand.” Tom does remember a sheriff arriving at the house with the suspicion that the family might have been spying for Japan, but Tom has little recollection of what happened.

Concurrent with kindergarten, Tom’s father enrolled him in a Japanese heritage language class at the Buddhist Temple in Lompoc after school. As Ichioka (2006) claims, “*Issei* leaders and educators engaged in a renewed, spirited debate over the future of Japanese-language schools and the need to instil Japanese moral values in the Nisei generation” (p. 75). The Buddhist Temple was a branch of The Buddhist Churches of America, which was founded by Japanese immigrants in 1899 to connect the Japanese American community to Buddhist traditions. Maple Street School had a diverse study body, mostly Japanese, Latino and Caucasian, and by Tom’s account, the children got along well, without acts of racial discrimination or bullying. The Buddhist Temple organized the language school for the purpose of maintaining Japanese among the US-born Japanese American children. According to Tom, all the children enrolled in the Japanese language school were born in the US. However, he does not remember what he learned from the heritage language school, though Tom knew almost no Japanese even at the age of 6. When I asked Tom why he knew no Japanese when his father was a native speaker of Japanese, and a Japanese citizen, Tom explained, “Because my mother spoke English.” Tom’s mother, who I will refer to as Grace, though born in Winters California, spent part of her childhood in Japan, from the age of 1 – 6, because her father, Minosuke Tsuchida, sent his wife Tome and their children (including Tom’s mother) to Shiga, Japan, to look after his father who was no longer able to care for himself. After Minosuke’s father passed away, Tom’s mother was able to return to California to begin first grade in Los Angeles. In other words, although Tom’s mother was bilingual in Japanese and English, Tom did not learn enough Japanese to carry on a conversation. Tom attributes this to the fact that he had assimilated into mainstream schools and neighbourhoods where English was the primary language. It was Tom’s father’s (real name: Ichiro) idea to send his son to a heritage language school. Still, some *Issei* were against the creation of Japanese-language schools, believing that “Japanese language schools would be the cause of future anti-Japanese sentiments” (Ichioka, 2006). Most *Issei*, however, agreed with Tom’s father that Japanese language schools would help the Nisei retain their language and culture.

According to Tom, many Japanese American children in Lompoc attended the heritage language school, under social pressure from their Japanese born parents. Tom has no recollection of how he felt about attending this heritage language school. Tom has more memories of Maple Street School where English and math were taught to children. Tom said, “it was nice to see other kids because on the farm, the closest neighbour is 5 miles away.” After finishing Japanese school, Tom was unable to learn enough Japanese to hold a conversation because he did not use the language outside of the school. In fact, Tom did not start learning Japanese enough to communicate in the language fluently until his father repatriated the family to Japan after WWII when Tom was 12 years old.

While it may seem that Japanese Americans in Lompoc were struggling economically before WWII, if only because people of Japanese descent were not allowed to purchase or own property or land, the Japanese American community was thriving. A group of Japanese Americans had started the Lompoc Vegetable Union, a shipping cooperative, in 1941 (McReynolds, 2010). More vegetable packing sheds were opening in the community. Business was growing rapidly. With the growth of community, a branch of the Japanese American Citizen’s League opened in town. Japanese Americans were building ties with the larger community, with the mayor of Lompoc, the Postmaster, and leaders of the Chamber of Commerce attending community events. An entrepreneurial spirit persisted despite laws that restricted Japanese Americans from flourishing. On December 7, 1941, when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, Japanese American community leaders were arrested and detained for no other reason except their ancestry. December 7 marked the end of the promising business community in Lompoc, cantered around a growing number of industrious and smart Japanese American families. Every single member of the Japanese American community in Lompoc would be stripped of their birth right citizenship, forced to sell, or relinquish all belongings, and imprisoned for the duration of WWII. California Attorney General Earl Warren recommended that Japanese farmers on the West Coast be “promptly eliminated” (McReynolds, 2010). Warren and others failed to distinguish between the Japanese who attacked Pearl Harbor and the Japanese Americans who were living American lives—many of them *as* Americans, and even *patriotic* Americans—in the farmlands of California.

At the outbreak of WWII, Tom’s family was relocated to Tulare detention center in Southern California, where they were detained for two months. Tom was one of 4,800 Japanese detainees. Since Tulare was the site of a fairgrounds, detainees slept in stalls and sheds formerly

used to keep livestock. Extra barracks were constructed to accommodate the large number of detainees. Most of the detainees spoke English, except for the Issei (first generation immigrants). “My biggest impression was, we never saw so many people that looked like me. So many Japanese gathered in one place. I thought it was unusual.” Tom was happy about suddenly being surrounded by other Japanese American children. “For the kids, we never had so much fun.” Tom seems to have little recollection of the barbed wire fence that surrounded the facility, or the armed military guards who manned the watchtowers to make sure no one escaped.

Tom’s family, along with all of the other detainees, were then transferred to the Gila River internment camp in Southern Arizona. Tom was interned at the Gila River internment camp from the age of 7 to 9. Tom began second grade at a school in the internment camp that was operated by the War Relocation Authority (WRA), which created its own curriculum that was designed to reflect the normal curriculum of schools outside the internment camp. James (1987) notes that “As far as education was concerned, they [the WRA] hoped enlightened planning could make the classroom experiences of the children substantially equivalent to those in public schools on the outside” (p.30). The WRA-run school taught reading, math, social studies, English, and other topics that were taught at any school in the US, and these subjects were instructed in English by Caucasian teachers who worked for the WRA. During his stay at the Gila River internment camp, Tom only spoke Japanese occasionally at home with his father. “I had no like or dislike for the Japanese language, I just considered English to be natural. I felt more natural speaking in English.” Tom did not understand Japanese well enough to have conflicting feelings about the language or to relate it to negative cultural stereotypes. “All of the neighbour kids I played with were English-speaking Japanese Americans, so English just felt more natural.” Tom’s generation of kids—mostly Sansei (third generation Japanese Americans)—were native speakers of English.

In 1943, Tom’s family was relocated to Tule Lake because his father answered “no” to two questions on a loyalty questionnaire. The War Relocation Authority issued a mandatory questionnaire that included two controversial questions. Question #27 asked: "Are you willing to serve in the armed forces of the United States on combat duty wherever ordered?" Question #28 asked: "Will you swear unqualified allegiance to the United States of America and faithfully defend the United States from any or all attack by foreign or domestic forces, and forswear any form of allegiance or obedience to the Japanese emperor, or any other foreign government, power, or organization?" Tom’s father answered No to both questions. That is, Tom’s father stated that

he was not willing to serve in the US armed forces, and that he would not swear allegiance to the US. These questions did not make sense to Tom's father because he was too old to serve in the armed forces, and he could not swear allegiance to the US because he was not a US citizen to begin with. While Tom's father was not a Japanese loyalist, he wanted to leave open the possibility of returning to Japan. Tom's father was born and educated in Japan. I was somewhat surprised by Tom's apathy surrounding the questionnaire because I had heard accounts of Japanese Americans who were angry for being asked these questions. After all, German and Italian Americans were not asked to prove their loyalty to the US, even as the US was at war with both Germany and Italy. Tashiro (2005) notes that "Many Issei and Nisei argued that since the US government chose to take away our property, our rights and put us into camps, it didn't deserve our service in the armed forces" (p.77). Tom seemed to have little opinion about the conflict, perhaps because he was still in the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade and did not understand the implications. I had heard from Japanese Americans who were a generation older than Tom that many young adults were afraid that their allegiance to the US and willingness to serve in the US armed forces put them at odds with their parents, who were Japanese citizens and had other allegiances and beliefs.

Nonetheless, the family was sent to a special segregation center at Tule Lake, where Tom would begin 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. According to Tom, the classes were taught in Japanese, though not all schools at Tule Lake used Japanese as the language of instruction. Tom's father decided to put him in a Japanese school. I asked Tom what his mom, a US born native speaker of English, thought about him going to a Japanese school. "I don't think my mom had any say in it," Tom said. His father is an Issei, or first generation Japanese American, so the family might have been placed on Block 49 (a predominantly Issei area of the internment camp), and Tom remembers that most of the children who lived on Block 49 went to Japanese schools. "I'm pretty sure there were conflicts between the US born and pro-Japanese internees, but I was too young to understand the arguments," Tom said. Tom identified himself as an American of Japanese descent and a native speaker of English whose heritage language was Japanese. At Tule Lake, there was a cultural and generational difference, with Americanized, English speaking children of Tom's age, and older Japanese-speaking Japanese citizens. Tom was a dual citizen, born in the US, and registered—by his Japan-born father—as a citizen of Japan. Later, when Tom joined the US Army in 1956, he relinquished his Japanese citizenship, to meet the requirements of joining the army.

At first, Tom did not understand everything the teacher said, but he improved his Japanese enough to keep up with the language level of the classroom. “We just accepted that the classes were suddenly in Japanese. I wasn’t against it or for it, that’s the way it was,” Tom says. Finishing 4<sup>th</sup> grade at Tule Lake helped Tom improve his reading, writing and speaking skills in Japanese; for example, he was able to talk to his teacher in Japanese. Although the literature indicates that the WRA operated the schools in the Tule Lake internment camp, and not Japanese loyalists, Tom seems to recall classes at Tule Lake being organized and taught by first generation Japanese internees. According to Jacoby (1996), “teachers of Caucasian ancestry had to be recruited to enable the schools to open” (p. 44). Japanese Americans with college degrees or teacher certifications worked as assistants. Jacoby notes that the WRA “had announced an educational policy that called for the establishment of school programs that would operate eleven months of the year, and that in each center the program would meet at least the minimum standards of the state in which a center was located” (p.44). It seems implausible that the WRA would allow all subjects to be taught in Japanese, by Japanese teachers, particularly in a segregation center that was very much a concern for the US government; Tule Lake was seen as a locus of Japanese loyalists, patriots and immigrants with anti-American sentiments. Perhaps the larger, more intense factions of pro-Japanese groups and the larger numbers of Japanese speaking people at Tule Lake left a deep impression on Tom’s psyche. However, upon further investigation, I learned that some Japanese internees, in protest against the WRA-curriculum and poor classroom conditions, and partly in reaction to what they perceived to be a discriminatory loyalty oath, started their own Japanese language schools (James, 1987).

After WWII, Tom’s family was released from the Tule Lake internment camp and his father repatriated the family to Japan. Tom was 12 years old. “My mom was probably against going to Japan because she was born in America and went to high school here. I didn’t know any better. We went to Japan, that’s the way it was.” Once Tom got to Japan, he realized that moving to another country was more difficult than it seemed. “Japan was almost feudalistic, family life, school. In post-war Japan, I didn’t fit in. I had a hard time understanding Japanese. I didn’t know the dialect of the nonstandard Japanese of Shiga. They speak a dialect called Kansai. I was taught standard Japanese.” The interview data shows that Tom quietly went along and accepted the circumstances of his life. One area that did seem to bother Tom was what he called the “feudalistic” nature of Japanese culture. “Feudalism is a male chauvinistic, top-down, rigid society,” he said.

Tom had trouble with older kids in school because they liked to pick on the younger kids to show their superior position in the hierarchy. Soon after starting school in Japan, Tom began to see himself as a Japanese citizen and not a Japanese American. After a few months, Tom perceived himself as a speaker of Japanese, not a native speaker of English. “Within a 2-3-month period, I had to assimilate and become like the other students,” Tom said.

When Tom first learned that he would have to move to Japan, he felt like he was going to “my father’s country.” The only motivation Tom had to improve his Japanese was to fit into the new culture and survive at school. Tom was placed in the third grade, though he was 12 years old, because he struggled with reading Japanese. The diagnostic tool his school used to assess Tom’s level was a simple reading proficiency test. Tom finished grades 3-6, then transitioned to 3 years of middle school and 3 years of high school. Tom finished high school when he was 20, two years later than his peers, because he had difficulty in his Japanese reading and writing proficiency. While it may appear as though it would have taken Tom a long time to adjust to the new language and culture, Tom claims that he was comfortable with the language and culture after less than a year. “Kids are flexible, you learn fast. Japanese almost replaced English as my primary language,” he said. Even though Tom continued to use English on occasion with his mother and his US-born aunts in Japan, he considered Japanese to be his native language by the time he graduated from high school.

When Tom was 12, before moving to Japan, he experienced English as his native language and Japanese as his second language. “I had to become bilingual because my father took the family to Japan. My motivation to learn was to be able to get along in school,” Tom said. Taking two years of school in Japanese at Tule Lake helped Tom adjust to his new life in Japan after WWII ended, though he was placed 2 grades behind the other children his age because of his relatively low proficiency in reading.

After high school, by his mother’s suggestion, Tom enrolled in a typing and English class at the YMCA in Kyoto. His mother wanted him to brush up on his English in the event that he would return to the US. Tom was proficient enough in English but did not excel. “When we got to Japan, I started speaking Japanese with my mother, whereas before I always spoke English with her.” Tom finished the course at the YMCA in 6 months and then joined the US Army in 1956. “There wasn’t much of a life for me in Japan and I heard there were other Japanese Americans who were moving back to the US.”

In 1956, Tom's mother was determined to return to the US, against her husband's wishes. His mother also suggested that Tom join the US Army as a ticket back to California. Tom's mother had been working for the US Army as a cashier since 1950, when Tom was in middle school. His mother moved to a US Airforce base to work as a food service manager in Nagoya. Tom received his first 8-week boot camp in Fort Lewis, Washington State in 1956. Ironically, some Japanese Americans were detained at Fort Lewis during WWII as part of an "enemy alien" internment program. Later, battalions would be trained at Fort Lewis during the Vietnam War. Tom primarily engaged in a great deal of exercise and learned how to handle weapons.

Tom went to Camp Otsu to fill out an application to join the army. By going through the process of joining the US Army, Tom began to feel more American again. The army conducted a background check to make sure that Tom never voted in Japan or served in the Japanese military. The new environment of the army base made Tom feel like an American again, but it took him longer to regain the sense of being a native speaker of English. The years that Tom was in the army, Tom stopped speaking Japanese. "It took a while to get accustomed to speaking English all day again." For the first two weeks in the army, Tom felt like English did not quite register when he heard someone speaking to him. "There was a lag time before I was comfortable," he said. According to Tom, the army is a "different culture" where your identity becomes that of a "soldier," regardless of ethnic background. Tom overheard other soldiers making derogatory comments about Japanese Americans in the army, such as "The only good Jap is a dead Jap." Tom reports that "it didn't bother me one bit." Tom says that these soldiers were from rural areas, so he did not take their words seriously. "Some of these guys couldn't even sign their own name. Some of them never wore shoes until they got into the army," Tom said.

Tom did not fit into the culture of Japan, even though linguistically he was proficient enough to stay in Japan. He felt more American than Japanese because he was born in the US, even though he had become "rusty" in English. Wanting to establish his life in the US, he was highly motivated to relearn English. Tom studied English in the Army and attended English language classes in San Francisco after he finished his 3-year term in the army. He was in the US army from the age of 21-24.

Tom's mother would return to San Francisco to join her sister's family in 1958. However, she began working as a live-in housekeeper in Atherton, California. When Tom got out of the army in 1959, he also re-joined relatives in San Francisco and stayed with his aunt and uncle who had

also worked for the US Army in Japan and had recently returned to San Francisco. By the time Tom got out of the army in 1959 and moved to San Francisco, he considered himself a balanced bilingual in English and Japanese. The post-war years were still considered “an emergency time” so more people were drafted in that time, compared to today when the army relies more on volunteers. “I got in the army and became an American,” Tom said. “In my time, 90% of Americans were veterans because they got drafted.” When Tom started living in the US again, he began to see himself as a native speaker of English just as he did when he was 12 years old, and Japanese became a second language. However, Tom was hired as a bilingual in the sales department of Japan Airlines in San Francisco, which helped him maintain his balanced bilingual proficiency. For his new job at Japan Airlines, Tom had to brush up on his Japanese language skills, even though he graduated from high school in Japan, primarily because of the terminology related to his new job such as business and travel terms. However, the only thing that motivated Tom to further develop his Japanese as a heritage language proficiency level was his job and his professional aspirations.

Tom lived in San Francisco’s Japantown from 1959-1967. While Japantown today is mostly a quiet, California Historical Landmark, back in the 1950s, the district bustled with people and activity, and there were regular dances held at the YWCA. The 1950s was a time of relative stability since the Walter-MCarran Immigration and Nationality Act passed in 1952 (The Japantown Task Force, Inc., 2005) allowed first generation Japanese immigrants to become naturalized citizens of the United States; crowds of Issei (first generation Japanese Americans) packed San Francisco City Hall to participate in naturalization ceremonies. Art stores, tofu shops and fish markets thrived in the small district of Japantown. A Japantown newspaper, the *Hokubei Mainichi*, published stories about community and neighbourhood events. However, by the time Tom moved out of Japantown in 1967, the city of San Francisco had ordered forced evictions and quick sale of businesses in Japantown for the purpose of building an expressway through the heart of the district. It was the end of the heyday of the city’s Japanese American district, and over the coming years, Japanese Americans would become more and more dispersed throughout the suburbs. Tom followed this trend of dispersal; he bought a house in a suburb, Redwood City, which was a 40-minute drive south of San Francisco. Tom began commuting by train to Union Square, San Francisco, where the Japan Airlines office was located at the time. While Tom spent half of

his workday speaking Japanese, he continued to speak mostly English outside of work. Tom spent much more time speaking English than Japanese.

In the late 1960s, after Tom had moved to Redwood City, researchers at UC Berkeley contacted Tom because they were doing a survey about different generations of Japanese Americans. Since Tom's mother is second generation, he was categorized by the researchers as Sansei (third generation Japanese American.) "But I feel like a Nisei (second generation Japanese American) because my father was born in Japan, and in the Japanese system, they go by your father's lineage." Because Tom grew up in "feudalistic" Japan, he has the "mentality that everyone goes up by the father's side." Culturally Tom feels more like a Nisei because he had all his schooling in Japan.

Over the next several years, Tom continued to improve his idiomatic language in English and his English development overshadowed his Japanese development because he was living in the US. The only Japanese language study Tom engaged in was related to customer service and etiquette in communicating with clients. Tom was trained by Japan-born supervisors on how to use Japanese for business. The only motivation Tom had for learning these nuances of Japanese was the demands of his job. As for English, Tom read manuals in English to learn aviation law and other features of the airline business. Tom's primary motivating factor for expanding his English vocabulary was also professional. "It was just survival," Tom said.

When I asked Tom about accounts I heard from his wife and daughter about racial discrimination they experienced in Redwood City, Tom said, "I never noticed because I was working in San Francisco all day and I was only home in the evening. I didn't see much. There were some rowdy kids in the neighbourhood." However, the discrimination that stayed in his wife's and daughter's memory didn't bother Tom much. "You're never immune to it but it doesn't bother me that much."

Tom has been living in the US now for 63 years. He was never interested in reading and writing in Japanese on a higher level, because it was not professionally required of him. If Tom studied or tried to improve his Japanese, it was purely for practical reasons. He feels equally comfortable in both Japanese and English, but more comfortable in the US than in Japan. However, Tom spends "60%" of his time speaking in Japanese, because his wife is a native speaker of Japanese. Over the past 50 years, Tom never spent more than 50% of his day speaking in English. According to Tom, English is easier to learn because Japanese requires more specialised

vocabulary and kanji (Chinese characters) for reading and writing. “I have no problem with living in Japan. But I prefer to live in the US, because I’m more comfortable with the culture. Japanese culture is too structured and formal. In the US, people can do their own thing. In Japan, you have to worry about what everyone else thinks. Here in the US, people don’t care.” When I asked Tom if he feels more American or Japanese, he seemed perplexed. “You can’t compare me to other Japanese Americans who were interned because I worked as a bilingual in a diverse environment at the airline, so I don’t fit the stereotype of the typical Sansei,” he said. Tom recognizes that he is more in between languages, cultures and generations than other Japanese Americans of his generation.

One thing that does make Tom a typical Sansei is his aversion to discussing the troubling events of WWII, the internment, and the Redress movement of the 1960s and 70s. When asked about the Redress movement, Tom explained that he did not follow politics very closely. I mentioned the Civil Liberties Act of 1988, which led to an apology from then President Ronald Reagan for the internment of Japanese Americans during WWII. “I think the apology from Ronald Reagan was due,” Tom said, though he did not expect an apology. In the 1980s, according to him, “People were not very friendly towards Asian Americans, especially Japanese Americans because of WWII.” Tom felt that people discriminated against him for being Japanese in the 1960s. “There were new anti-discrimination laws in the 1980s,” he said. The gesture for the US government to offer amends to Asian American communities was “unusual” at that time. Tom’s lukewarm feelings about the Redress and the apology from former president Ronald Reagan is noteworthy, since the apology is commonly perceived by Japanese Americans as the landmark moment that allowed the Japanese American community to heal from the wounds of internment and WWII. Hatamiya (1993) reports that, in response to the passing of the Civil Liberties Act, “Japanese Americans erupted in celebration, marking the end to a long, difficult, and often frustrating trek through the legislative process” (p.186). However, Tom’s stoic stance also aligns with the way that Japanese Americans obediently abandoned their property and belongings and agreed to their own internment without protest during WWII.

A report published by the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians suggested that “Recalling the events of exclusion and detention, ensuring that later generations of Americans know this history, is critical immunization against infection by the virus of prejudice and the emotion of wartime struggle” (p. 7). The report claims that awareness of these events is

crucial to preventing the exclusion and detention of minorities in the future. As it pertains to Redress, the report recommends that Congress “recognize the nation’s need to make redress for these events, by appropriating monies to establish a special foundation” (p.9) Tom’s disinterest in the long legal and activist struggle that led to the apology he received from the US government may be indicative of a coping strategy. After all, his experience of wartime events is personal, not academic, or even political. Still, Tom seems to have been able to deal with events of the past on his own terms.

Last summer, when Tom’s daughter invited Tom to join her on a large-group pilgrimage to Tule Lake, Tom declined. However, Tom and his wife took a trip to the former internment camp site on their own; he found that, with the barracks and the barbed wire taken down, there was barely any trace that this was the former site of an internment camp. It wasn’t until he saw Abalone Mountain, the nearly flat top jutting up into a cluster of clouds, he said, that it “all came back” to him.

### **Case Study #2: Lost Roots and the Motivation to Learn JHL**

Julia is my younger sister by 3 years. She and I grew up with a similar linguistic and cultural background as 4<sup>th</sup> generation Japanese Americans who were fluent in Japanese until a certain point. Julia spoke Japanese fluently at the age of 4 but was forced to stop speaking Japanese by our father. Julia has no memory of speaking Japanese, though she knows that she once spoke it fluently, based on tape recordings and reports from family members. She was surprised to hear that there was a tape recording of her speaking Japanese. “I imagine it must have been difficult communicating with mom when she didn’t speak English well, but I have no memory of communicating with mom in Japanese.” Julia’s first memory of communicating with her mother was in English when she was around 5 years old, in 1978. “I remember it was easy to talk to mom, because I understood Japanese and I responded in English,” she said. “But mom didn’t really talk a lot, so it’s more about her being emotionally unavailable, reserved and quiet. And *angry*.” When I asked Julia what her mom must have been angry about, Julia said that her mom was angry “about the racism she experienced in California, social isolation and being abandoned by dad.” According to Julia, her mother “emotionally divorced” her father out of disappointment in the marriage. For Julia, loss of Japanese as a heritage language has less to do with her mother, and more to do with a sense of cultural loss and not being able to communicate with relatives in Japan. “That made me sad,” she

said. Julia went to Japan every summer in her childhood but felt separate from “my culture, ancestors and my identity, and from who I am.” However, Julia’s lack of communication with her mother goes beyond the language barrier. “If I spoke Japanese, I don’t know if I’d be able to communicate with mom any different, because she was not emotionally available. She would still have been an angry person.” Julia has no memory of her father telling her not to speak Japanese, but she remembers him having a lot of shame and anger. “Every time we went out, dad would say ‘there’s no room for us here,’ meaning Japanese people, and ‘*they* don’t really want us here.’” In her view, her father was traumatized by the internment and experiences with racism and discrimination during and after WWII.

Julia always felt the loss of Japanese throughout her childhood and was not interested in regaining it in high school. Even though Julia felt the loss of Japanese, she was not interested in the Japanese heritage language school her cousins attended because she was “trying to assimilate.” She didn’t want to go to Japanese school in her elementary and middle school years, but her sense of losing Japanese as a heritage language became more acute in college. Consequently, she took an Introduction to Asian American Studies class as a freshman at UC Berkeley in 1992, and a Japanese language class in her sophomore or junior year. She took five semesters of Japanese as an undergraduate. “I was trying to explore my identity through heritage language study,” she said. Julia also took two classes in Japanese literature and wrote a paper comparing Marcel Proust to Murasaki Shikibu. “I was starting to appreciate Japanese culture. There was a lot of shame in being Japanese growing up, and the classes helped me become proud of my culture. It also made me realize how difficult Japanese is.”

According to Julia, racism, negative portrayals of Asians in the media, the hostile environment of her neighbourhood and her father’s shame made her ashamed of her ethnicity and of Japanese culture. She said she learned the shame from her father. Moreover, Julia said her mother did not treat her like she was Japanese, and this cultural gap motivated her to study Japanese. “When we went to Japan, I felt like we were treated as Americans by mom’s family.” For Julia, Asian American Studies motivated her to learn Japanese, because it gave her a sense of pride in being Japanese American. “Mom and the relatives felt like I wasn’t Japanese, but I was able to find a new ethnic identity in being Japanese American. Studying Japanese was a way of becoming Japanese American, embracing my identity as a Japanese American,” she said. Julia applied to the JET program (Japan Exchange and Teaching Program) in her senior year, but she missed the

deadline. She wanted to live and teach English in Japan because she wanted to learn more about Japan and become more proficient in learning Japanese. Two years after graduating with a degree in English, Julia began her PhD in English at UC Berkeley in 1997. However, she was too overwhelmed with coursework to take more Japanese classes.

In 2000, Julia went on the Tule Lake Pilgrimage to visit the former site of the internment camp where her father and grandmother had been interned during WWII. The Tule Lake Pilgrimage is a three-day gathering held every other year at the former site of the Tule Lake internment camp. The program is packed with various events from testimonials by former internees and spoken word poetry performances by young 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> generation Japanese Americans to small group discussions and candlelight vigils. The Pilgrimage was a life-changing experience for Julia. “That’s when I decided to change my focus to Japanese American literature,” she said. “I never heard so many people talking about the interment; it was a very powerful experience for me. They were clearly upset about it. I was like, ‘Oh, that’s what my family went through.’ I feel like I recognized my family in that. The former internees validated the family experience.”

In the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of her PhD, Julia was working in the East Asian Studies department, filing, and doing paperwork for faculty. While working at this office, she learned about a Japanese language summer immersion program. She visited the Japanese American early immigrant writing archives at UCLA and found that many of the documents were in Japanese. She wanted to be able to read the documents to further her research on Japanese Americans. Julia’s motivation to learn Japanese switched to academic research and focused less on identity. However, the summer 8-week immersion program she began in 2000 in Tokyo was “too hard,” even though she learned enough conversational Japanese to “get around.” But she did not learn enough to read archives in Japanese. Still, she maintained the hope of connecting with her identity through studying Japanese as a heritage language.

At the end of the immersion program, Julia decided to stick to English-language archives because it was too difficult to read Japanese. “There was a brief period where I knew enough Japanese to get around, but I forgot it all by now.” For the first time, Julia felt a sense of belonging in Japan, because she became more proficient in Japanese and culturally, people in Japan recognized the Japanese traits in her, such as “being humble” or “just the way you’re supposed to behave.”

When Julia returned to the US, she began the 4<sup>th</sup> year of her PhD program. She lost her motivation to continue heritage language study because she felt like she would never become fluent in Japanese. “There were other ways I wanted to connect with my ethnicity which is not through language but by doing research on the immigrant experience and connecting it to Japan somehow.” Julia believes that there’s a sadness in the Japanese American community over loss of community. “We don’t live in any specific location, and we don’t have a big community anymore, so it’s like trying to figure out how to deal with that.” For Julia, the Japanese language has little to do with her research even though she wants to continue to learn more about Japanese culture. “I’m not interested in learning the language anymore, I’m more interested in the food culture and Buddhism and feminism and the anti-nuclear movement in Japan, Japanese imperialism and the US occupation.” Julia feels like she can learn more about these issues because “I can barely speak like a 5-year-old after studying Japanese for 5 years.” She entertains the idea of going back to Japanese heritage language study after she retires. She is the mother of two sons, age 3 and 7, and it “doesn’t leave a lot of time for reading or study.”

In Julia’s 5<sup>th</sup> year of graduate school, her primary concern was to find a job and “support myself.” She explained, “After I went to Japan, I figured I was never really going to do so I let it go.” In graduate school, Julia felt like there was a major emphasis on the corporatization of the university. “I even worked at Mondo Media as an undergraduate; it’s an animation company in San Francisco. I worked at Stanford University’s Business dormitory, the Schwab Center. I felt the pressure to fit into this corporate culture as a humanities person.” Julia wanted to professionalize, and she remembers the prevalence of the term “professionalization” in her field. She knew that it wasn’t going to be possible to incorporate Japanese as part of her professional career because Japanese was too difficult. “I was just trying to find a job at that point,” she said. Julia believes there’s a correlation to be made between Asian Americans, the model minority myth and corporatization. “Japanese American literature was minoritized in the English department at UC Berkeley; the Department Chair didn’t see it as a legitimate field. He said, ‘this is not an adequate field for your exam.’ The implicit message is that studying Japanese American literature isn’t legitimate because it wasn’t seen as a growing or emerging field. Like, there’s no point of studying this because I can’t get a job.” Julia believes that at the time, people were looking for scholars to work on Korean American issues, because the Korean American population was

growing rapidly in the 1990s; today, she claims that Filipino American issues are coming to the forefront.

Julia's perceptions of the corporatization of the university align with the literature. Slaughter & Rhoades (2008) claim that "the trend line in emphasis and investment is in academic capitalism in the new economy" (p.19). Knowledge, power, and economy are intertwined in a neoliberal economy (Pitman, Pereyra & Shultz, p.9, 2013). Roggero & Brophy (2011) suggest that "even as students are encouraged to be entrepreneurial subjects and shrewd investors of their human capital, the cynical and disenchanted relationship with both the academy and the world of work that is produced by the generalization of precarious employment carries with it some serious risks for the governance of the rapidly changing academic sphere" (p. x). Julia's words, "I was just trying to survive," come to mind, when she describes leaving heritage language behind as too difficult, and without connection to professional development. In the corporatized university, more emphasis is placed on training over learning (Noble, 2001). Education leads to knowledge and self-knowledge; training disassociates the individual from the self by the acquisition skills designed for use by others.

Martin reported in 1998 that less than half of the new PhDs who were seeking employment found jobs (p.15). Also, in the 1990s, when Julia was in graduate school, there was a 20% decline in humanities majors compared to the 1960s, and English declined as an area of study (Schrecker, 2010, p.115). Fewer undergraduates majored in "modern languages" in the 1990s partially because of the stark job market. Besides the growing shift towards professionalization, from education to "training," there was a shift away from the study of language and literature.

Considering that many heritage language learners, especially 4<sup>th</sup> generation Japanese Americans, are motivated to learn to support their sense of ethnic identity, and other personal rather than professional reasons, it makes sense that "fulfilment" would be replaced by "economic advantage" in terms of what kinds of subjects are pursued. The change in the content of higher education "follows from the institution's increasing subservience to business interests following from its dependence on private partnerships and its devotion to only the economic function of higher education" (Lustig, p. xxx, 2010). Japanese as a heritage language ultimately proved too difficult a subject for Julia, and finally such study had no economic function, as she struggled to find a job teaching literature. This is in stark contrast to Tom, who was motivated to become more proficient in Japanese as his job in the aviation industry required.

Today, Julia teaches Asian American Studies at Cal State East Bay, a diverse university in the San Francisco Bay Area. “Demographically at our school, we don’t have hardly any Japanese American students. The desire to accommodate multicultural students is a good thing, but it’s not good for Japanese, and the school won’t want to offer Japanese as a heritage language courses because there’s not enough students to make it profitable.” According to this line of reasoning, Mandarin could be a profitable heritage language to teach and learn. “The university is probably going to develop programs that accommodate those students, like Chinese heritage language learners; at this point you have a lot of second generation Chinese American students. The Japanese population in the US is not very big, even though the Japanese language is still somewhat popular; but it’s not because of the heritage learners.” However, since Julia is no longer a graduate student, and does not perceive herself as a heritage learner anymore—she has given up study for the foreseeable future—her primary concern is her own research interests, including Asian American feminism.

## CHAPTER 5. A YONSEI'S<sup>1</sup> HERITAGE LANGUAGE LEARNING JOURNEY: AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHY

### Introduction

The case of heritage language study is interesting because it is both essential and unnecessary; after all, the life-enrichment that learning a heritage language can bring is not crucial to one's survival, either physically or spiritually, and if I were elderly, the pursuit of recapturing the language of my childhood may seem, at best, redundant and, at worst, a pointless excursion into the past or the future which would be too narrow in scope to justify the rigor of study and the enjoyment of its benefits. For it is a *pleasure*, not a necessity, to speak one's heritage language, to relearn the lost language and employ it in a manner that had previously seemed possible only in fantasy. The artificiality of locating a starting point in a narrative about language loss and learning serves as an impediment to the narrative itself, since the reader, and the writer, naturally over-emphasize the beginning of any story. The start of a story is exaggerated as if the root meaning or theme of the entire piece could be found there. To begin an autoethnography is to begin with misdirection, like pointing a tourist in the wrong direction, towards the sea and not the crowded plaza he seeks.

To begin *this* autoethnography with no reference to the fact that it does not stand alone, but rather is part of a triad alongside two case studies of family members, my sister and father specifically, would be to ignore how implicated my story is, literally (in this dissertation) and figuratively in the context of family. The drive to distinguish oneself as an independent individual through narrative, and the inescapability of the most basic form of dependence—reliance on family—are brought together, so that the will to strengthen one's self-reliance underlies a kind of vulnerability that an inevitable level of subordination to the family exposes. Just as family members may be the most likely to agree to participate in a study, they may also be the most hesitant, because no one knows them as well as the researcher, *and* their willingness, or unwillingness, to participate—that is, their attitude of approval or disapproval—carries a degree of power that would be meaningless to a study conducted by an objective third party. While the exercise of power, and fear of the power the other holds in an interdependent family unit may be

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<sup>1</sup> Yonsei: fourth generation Japanese American.

a natural dynamic, the researcher / autoethnographer must remain loyal to the research questions themselves which guide the study from beginning to end.

As an autoethnographer, I chose to begin my narrative in 1977, and entrust the personal events of the story with only myself, and the reader. Because the autoethnographer has complete control over his narrative and how it is presented, there are no ethical concerns that would prompt me to be concerned for my own safety and confidentiality. The lack of official channels to navigate is both a freedom and a limitation, since standard research protocol, which can serve as guideposts on the research path, disappear, making the autoethnographer's task seem to resemble fiction and memoir more than empirical research. However, when the desired results are closer to that of empirical research than they are to fiction or memoir, it is perhaps only the research questions that are left as shadowy reminders of the realm of qualitative research. Since I believe this to be the case, it makes the most sense to me to begin my story with an attempt to answer my second research question: "What kinds of external (societal) or internal (ethnic identity) factors influence loss or maintenance of the heritage language?" Since external (societal) factors influenced me far before internal (ethnic identity) factors did, I begin my autoethnography with the first part of this question, regarding external or social factors.

I hesitate to begin at the beginning, because the act of isolating an event from the past memorializes it, and the danger of this kind of over-emphasis is a misunderstanding of the proper place of the event in relation to other events. For this reason, I relate, with some reluctance, the story of my 2nd grade teacher, Mrs. Swift's, confusion about the way I mixed Japanese and English words; this may explain why to this day I am a bit skeptical of the idea of speech therapists working with the oral proficiency issues of second language speakers of English, though I understand that many with speech therapy backgrounds are excellent language teachers. I do not remember the conversation I must have had with Mrs. Swift, in which I must have uttered, in response to her questions and directions—perhaps about a particular homework assignment—with an "un," "hai" or "sou" to indicate that I understood what she was saying, or agreed with her. I do recall my father being informed that I was given an amateur diagnosis—speech impediment—by Mrs. Swift. The data she collected—my series of incomprehensible "grunts," surely indicated a communication disorder. Perhaps Mrs. Swift believed I had a speech sound disorder, in which the speaker has difficulty translating words into their appropriate sounds, so that in her imagination I might have been trying to say "hello," whereas I could only, due to my disorder, manage a "hai" (yes, in

Japanese). Whatever the case may be, my father's pride was shattered—that his son was perceived as grunting rather than speaking at school must have recalled the greater shame of being interned during World War II. He was singled out for being an American of Japanese descent. As a way to remedy the problem, he enforced an English-only zone at home. It took great effort and time to stop speaking Japanese, as children speak through habit without thinking. I felt like there was a rift between my life in the classroom and my life at home. Auerbach (1993) points out that monolingual instruction can affect students' self-esteem because "their sense of powerlessness is reinforced either because they are de facto excluded from the classroom or because their life experiences and language resources are excluded" (p. 18). I felt that I was both excluded from my second-grade classroom and that my life experiences and fluency in Japanese was dismissed by my teacher. This experience led to a decrease in self-assurance and self-regard that I never overcame in my primary school years. Unfortunately, professionals in education had not yet concluded, as Auerbach (1993) did, that the allowance of the L1 in the classroom can "reduce affective barriers to English acquisition" rather than obstruct English language learning (p. 19). To be clear, my L1 is English, but I would have felt more confident and more comfortable in both English and Japanese if I was permitted to remain bilingual. In a utopia, my teacher would have understood that allowing the L1 would have alleviated my anxiety by incorporating my true bilingual, bicultural self into the classroom, not to mention that I would have been able to maintain communication with my mother in Japanese.

Japanese was the only language my mother knew, so it was the only language through which I could communicate with her. My father's shame must have overpowered his sense of responsibility to protect that bond, since he demanded that I stop speaking Japanese each time a word or two escaped my mouth by pure habit rather than protest his English-only decree. Often, my mother, a then monolingual Japanese speaker, was the intended recipient of my Japanese words, and I do not know why she did not respond or react with words or actions when my half-formed messages to her were clipped by the decree of a shamed father. I only know that, just as languages are spoken habitually by children, they are just as habitually lost. I do not know how or if I communicated with my mother for the rest of second grade, or third grade, or if she remembers whether we communicated at all in those years, or if my father noticed the new silence in the family, or what that silence meant to him, if anything.

That Mrs. Swift did not recognize my Japanese words as *words*, but registered them only as peculiar sounds is, of course, appalling; at the same time, someone like Mrs. Swift is too easy a foil to contrast with the presumed, educated reader. The autoethnographer must look beyond such facile targets if he is to arrive at an understanding of social behavior. I can only imagine how my father received Mrs. Swift's complaint about my speech, the proposition that I may have a speech impediment, the comparison of disorder with Japaneseness; how this must have recalled in my father the accusations levelled against Japanese Americans during WWII: spy, disloyal, perpetual foreigner, racially odd, linguistically strange. To label my father a victim of post traumatic disorder, a category he too conveniently fits, would be to pathologize him in the same way that Mrs. Swift pathologized my code-mixing, the same way that the United States government pathologized Japanese Americans as unassimilable (Densho Encyclopedia).

Perhaps the simplest statement, that my father was *shamed* into making sure that my sister and I no longer spoke a word of Japanese, and spoke only English, or that he did not have the courage to protect and preserve the linguistic and cultural family setting that had already been established naturally, should suffice. However, this information may only suffice insofar as minorities in general have been shamed into behaving in less-than-ideal ways; that to protect and preserve one's culture is easier said than done.

Interestingly, my sister, who was 4 years old at the time, does not remember speaking Japanese, or being told not to speak Japanese anymore, though tape recordings show that she spoke Japanese as fluently as a 4-year-old can. Nonetheless, my sister does remember the language barrier between herself and our mother, as well as with our relatives in Japan. Like me, she would be inspired, years later in college, to pursue Japanese language to recapture a lost part of herself, and to gain the capacity to have more meaningful communication with our relatives. Because of a lack of Japanese language proficiency, she felt like she was not part of the family, or part of the community, and this was unsettling for her. She felt like she possessed some Japanese characteristics in terms of behavior, but that her identity as a Japanese person was incomplete without the ability to speak Japanese. Unlike me, my sister gave up Japanese language study as "too difficult," and refocused her energy on studying Japanese American history and culture. While my sister also explains my father's English-only language policy as stemming from racial shame, neither of us have looked very closely at the dynamic of family pride.

In other words, we were a proud family, of a proud community, but our pride was tested by events outside our control. In the 1970s, it was commonly believed that children might be hindered by a heritage language, that it might negatively impact fluency in English and even decrease capacity for assimilation. My father, born in the U.S., subscribed to the belief that Japanese would hinder my ability to learn English. It is possible that my father was trying to protect me from being vilified at school, from facing the kind of persecution he had to endure during WWII. At the age of 4, my father was interned at the Gila River internment camp. He was released when he was 8 years old and had never been to Japan. Still, his father repatriated the family to Japan because he feared for his safety in the postwar years in the United States. A decade later, in 1954, my father joined the US Army from Japan as a ticket back to the US, where he has remained until now. Because my father grew up with two languages and maintained both languages throughout his life, he never experienced nostalgia for Japanese in the way I would years later. However, the fact that communication with my mother ended overshadowed the ethnic pride that may have been a part of the family character.

When an immigrant mother who does not speak English is introduced into any story, a new set of perils emerge; the trope of the immigrant mother almost demands sympathy from the reader, which is not to say that such a figure is *undeserving* of sympathy. I allude to the danger previously mentioned: that characters in an autoethnography, including the self, are always vulnerable to exaggeration, to stealing the focus, not from any more justified center of attention, but from the various parts that comprise a story and, as a unit, form the whole. The immigrant mother in question is, in fact, *my* mother, and I feel the obligation to resist presenting an over-simplified picture. Suffice it to say that, over time my mother would pick up English through my, and my sister's, attempts to communicate in English with her. She learned English through us, though as children we did not know the most efficient methods to teach English, and very probably never attempted to instruct her in any methodical kind of way. I assume that we must have used simple words, and defined them, and she must have—since my father did not forbid her from speaking her only language—responded to us in the Japanese words we had already learned to hear, and which therefore could not be lost.

My father grew up in a feudalistic culture where women were seen as less important than men, and he did not primarily consider how his Japanese monolingual wife would continue to communicate with her children. My father's *feelings* preceded those of the mother's or the

children's experiences or opinions. The collusion of racism and patriarchy, in this case, can be explained as primary reasons why I lost my heritage language. On the one hand, an ignorant schoolteacher; on the other hand, a man who believed that he had the right to impose linguistic restrictions on the rest of the family and did so with no obstruction or protest from any of the family members.

I remember speaking fluently in Japanese with my mother, and I recall this communication as natural, happy; while listening to a tape recording of myself speaking Japanese at the age of 7, I am struck by how comfortable I sound in the language, as if it was an organic part of me, an instinctive expression. Nonetheless, there is no way I can gauge the impact that losing my heritage language, and losing communication with my mother, had on me as a child. My father's insistence that I not utter a single word of Japanese probably harmed me more than the actual loss of Japanese as a heritage language, for he revealed himself as unreliable and out-of-control at an early age, filled with rage, and therefore absent: this lack in a parent, the strange omission of calm and openness, signaled to me that there was no one I could depend on as a role model, as a beacon of maturity, wisdom, patience or sharing. I am less certain about why my mother withdrew: culture shock, unhappy marriage, anger towards the racism she experienced in the US, disappointment with her own life. Not the loss of my heritage language, but my father's shame, palpable, was what influenced me the most throughout elementary school, and into middle school and high school. However, there may have been cultural implications that I was not aware of at the time. For example, Wong and Tsai (2007) suggest that shame has a positive role in East Asian cultures because shame could inspire people to improve and self-correct (p. 214). Wong and Tsai (2007) also note that shame in East Asian cultures does not necessarily derive from negative self-evaluation but could also stem from the actions of others (p. 216). Seen from this perspective, it is possible that my father was acting more out of an intention to help me adapt to the English-only school environment rather than acting out some trauma of his own. It is also possible that he was not ashamed of himself for being Japanese, but rather ashamed of me, or ashamed on my behalf, for drawing negative attention from my teacher. At the same time, since my father was born in the US and has spent most of his life here, 76 years to be exact, he may have been ashamed of being Japanese; perhaps he had internalized the anti-Japanese hysteria of the WWII years, adopted the hateful gaze of the oppressors and turned it against himself. Maybe he did not possess the mental

strength that he valued so much as an ethos, some masculine ideal. It is possible that he wanted to protect himself and his family from anti-American hostility.

It was not until I reached college, when I became interested in Japanese literature, that I considered relearning Japanese. I had a vague sense of reconnecting with the ancestral language and fantasized about living and working in Japan one day. I took a beginning level course in Japanese at the Japan Society in San Francisco before enrolling in an introductory level Japanese course at San Francisco State University. I wanted to reconnect with Japanese language and culture; throughout my life, I had always possessed at least a receptive proficiency in Japanese. One way that I reestablished communication with my mother after being forced to stop speaking Japanese was to listen to her speak to me in Japanese, and then respond in English, which she learned by trying to understand me, and through my explanations of English vocabulary words and grammar rules. I believe this is the way my mother learned English. I was taking an introductory course in Japanese while volunteering as an ESL conversation partner at the American Language Institute on campus. Both learning Japanese and “teaching” ESL felt familiar to me, because my role as a conversation partner, often with Japanese international students, reminded me of my conversations with my mother, and learning Japanese gave me hope that I might one day be able to communicate in a natural, *organic* way—at least this is how I imagined and idealized my childhood years of speaking Japanese. After years of being the only Japanese, or even the only Asian person, in my middle school or high school class, I was anxious to connect with my ethnicity, to address it somehow. Years later, after moving from the San Francisco Bay Area to Queens, New York, and spending most of my time in Manhattan, having gone weeks without hearing a single word of Japanese spoken by anyone, I was relieved to discover a tiny Japanese market in Astoria, where I wandered the aisles just to hear people speaking Japanese, finally, the language of home in some sense; I left the shop without having purchased a thing, not even a box of mochi ice cream, a tasty confection invented by a Japanese American from Los Angeles.

I did not go beyond a single introductory course in Japanese when I was in college. I was sidetracked by the rigor of learning critical theory, and difficult courses on Milton, Joyce and Conrad. After graduating from college, I devoted my time and energy to creative writing, and was determined to get into an MFA program; the desire to relearn Japanese was always in the back of my mind, on my bucket list, but kept being deferred until I began my PhD in Second Language Studies/ESL at Purdue and was required to study a “foreign language.”

After graduating from college, I went through an “Asian American” phase where I tried to explore my Asian American identity by going to performance poetry events, pilgrimages to former sites of internment camps, attending Japanese American Citizens’ League events in the San Francisco Bay Area, and reading books on Asian American literature and history. Nothing in my Asian American phase pointed towards heritage language study since the Americanness of the Asian American experience was emphasized in the literature and in the events.

By the time I began my PhD in Second Language Studies (SLS) at Purdue in 2014, I had graduated from my Asian American ethnic identity phase and became interested again in relearning Japanese and moving to Japan to live and work. The primary reason I began a PhD in Second Language Studies was to be qualified to teach English at a university in Japan; my friend Ryan Godfrey\*, a fellow Japanese American from the West Coast, albeit *Southern* California, had gone through the SLS program and was teaching and living in Tokyo at that time. The PhD program had a language requirement, but I saw this requirement as an impediment to my academic success, since I would have to take four semesters of Japanese and learn complicated kanji (Chinese characters) to succeed. Because I was afraid of the time and focus language study would take away from my coursework in SLS, I chose to take a single-semester, Spanish for Reading Purposes course that would magically fulfill my language requirement. After completing the course successfully, I decided to take a Japanese course, which I passed with a B; this encouraged me to continue on to second-semester study, which is the furthest I had ever gone towards Japanese language study in my life. However, a combination of personal struggles and kanji (Chinese characters) led to a low grade in Japanese 102, which discouraged me from retaking the course or trying to move on to level 3. The next section of my autoethnography focuses on the processes of attempting to gain greater proficiency in my heritage language as a graduate student at Purdue University.

### **Japanese 101**

Ogawa Sensei struck me as the ideal teacher. We had been classmates in Dr. Miller’s\* Curriculum Design course, where we had several conversations on teaching and Japanese and Japan, but I never imagined that she was such a gifted instructor. In my notebook from that semester, Fall 2017, I wrote: “Ogawa Sensei is so completely present, so invested in every moment of the class hour; if any aspect of teaching is a chore for her, as it is for most people I know, no

trace of it comes through—not even in the slightest telling gesture. How does she do it?” There were 15 students in the course: 11 Chinese international undergraduates and 3 Caucasian Americans. Though I was the only Japanese American, the only grad student, and significantly older than the other students, there was a sense that we were in the same boat, giddily struggling with new words and learning how to pronounce them. My philosophy as a student could be summed up in one word: superabundance. That is, that quantity of workbooks I ordered was more than what was appropriate for the class. I ordered several hiragana workbooks that were not required for the course, because I knew how much I struggled with Japanese characters, and I was determined to do well. I had finished all coursework of my PhD study, so I could devote myself completely to Japanese. I even cut back on lesson planning for ENGL 106i, the section of freshman composition designated for international students I was teaching. My goal was to make more time to focus on Japanese.

### **The challenge of hiragana**

Knowing that I have always struggled to learn Japanese characters, hiragana, and katakana, I ordered additional workbooks for the course, to practice through repetition. The first workbook I ordered was “Kodansha’s Hiragana Workbook: A Step-by-Step Approach to Basic Japanese Writing.” According to the workbook, hiragana is “a syllabary, or a set of symbols for writing syllables—the basic building blocks of the Japanese language.” Since hiragana is the basic building block, the course began with an introduction to hiragana. Our first homework assignment, and our first in-class quiz, was about hiragana. From the beginning, then, I was disappointed that the initial focus of the class was on reading and writing, and not on interactive communication. I understood the approach, since most of the students did not know enough Japanese words to communicate successfully, and studying hiragana was a way to practice Japanese sounds. For example, た has a specific sound, “ta,” which can be combined with other sounds to form words. The first two syllables of my last name are たね, and the second figure represents the sound “ne.” Also, たね(ta ne) means “seed.” I tried to create a mnemonic device to remember hiragana characters, to varying degrees of success. The character た looks like a “t,” and the “equal sign” image of the character looks like someone saying “ah,” which is one way to remember that this character is the “ta” sound. I believe that an ability to draw well can help the student of Japanese,

since more precision is required to write Japanese characters than English letters. On my first hiragana assignment, Ogawa Sensei noted that I left too much space between the two parts of the character, た. With ね(ne), I made an association with the Japanese word ねね, which means sleep; a word I was taught as a child. For me, the character for ね looks like a sleeping cat with its tail curled.

The first image in Figure 1. shows a successfully completed, early semester katakana homework assignment. The corrections on the second, third and fourth images are from 1) an in-class dictation quiz on katakana which shows plentiful corrections and not-quite-correctly written characters and 2) further corrections on conjugated hiragana characters. The last image is of an in-class hiragana quiz that involves dictation and fill-in-the-blanks.

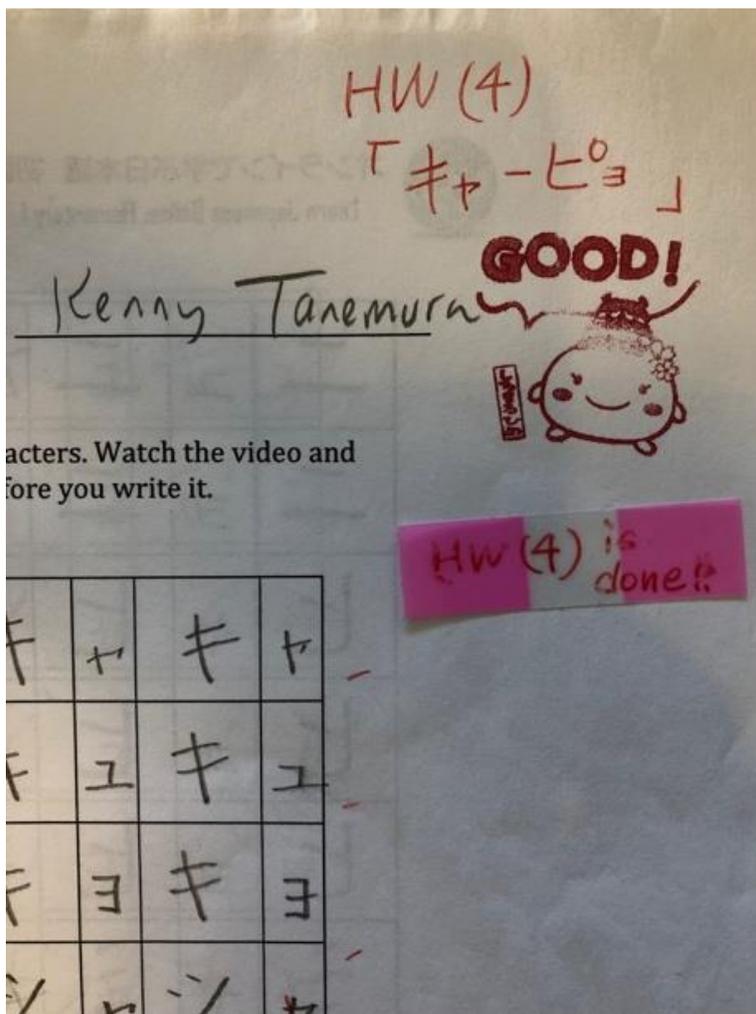


Figure 5. Hiragana homework sheets and quizzes, with no dearth of corrections in red ink.



I spent most of my time practicing Japanese characters. I would sit for hours at a time, filling out the blank spaces in notebooks. Years ago, when I made an amateurish attempt to study Japanese calligraphy, I read, in my self-study sessions, that calligraphers practiced a single character thousands of times to learn how to write the character properly. This struck me as a particularly Japanese approach, since my Japanese mother frequently suggested that I practice repeatedly, as if this was the secret to learning anything. However, after writing thousands of characters and seeing little improvement in my penmanship, I began to doubt the Japanese approach to learning. Repetition is perhaps over-stated as a learning technique. I have shot thousands of jump shots to become a better basketball player, but I am still a terrible jump shooter. I practiced basic chords on a guitar hundreds of times if not more, yet I never learned to strum even a handful of chords well. Perhaps talent and instinct bear more on learning than repetition.

I traced the Japanese character あ(a) 8 times, then wrote it out myself 16 times in the workbook. I traced the character い(i) 8 times, then wrote it out myself 16 times, and so on for 90 pages in one marathon sitting. I would then order another hiragana workbook to fight against what I perceived to be my lack of innate ability for language learning. After spending most of my time practicing, I was able to successfully complete the dictation exercises at the beginning of the semester, because the characters were relatively simple, and not yet complicated by katakana (another set of Japanese symbols) and kanji (more complex Chinese characters). I did take no small degree of satisfaction in being able to get the dictation correct. When Ogawa Sensei crisply uttered the sound, “ho,” I was able to correctly write, ほ, and when she said “to,” I correctly wrote と, except that the curve of the character was not rounded enough. While these were encouraging signs, there were discouraging signs as well. For example, after the many hours and the hard work I put in to learning basic hiragana, I still failed to “draw” ね correctly; I drew a small circle in the bottom left part of the character, rather than a sharp v-line shape. Perhaps these were the natural mistakes of a novice; perhaps they were indicators of struggles to come later in the semester.

I already began to struggle when we were required to put hiragana characters together to form words, and when we were asked to write the words correctly and understand their definitions. For example, in dictation, when we were asked to write “okashi,” which means “candy,” I forgot to add the apostrophe-like mark in お, and added a sideways dash instead of the more vertical dash in か, for which points were detracted. This was the first few weeks of the semester, and Ogawa

Sensei had written in the margins: “Kenny—Are you too busy or is this too intensive? (Both were yes if I were you...)” Ogawa Sensei knew that I was teaching .75 time and working on my dissertation, but she did not know that I was paying more attention to Japanese, or at least trying to, than I would have been given the workload from my dissertation or teaching duties. However, I was doing well enough on the other assignments to keep up a good grade, somewhere between an A and a B.

As a heritage language learner of Japanese, I hoped that the course would begin with vocabulary about family. As it turned out, we would not begin to learn how to talk about family until semester two or Japanese 102. I was disappointed to discover that we would start with greetings and introductions, since I already knew these words and had learned them in other courses. Nonetheless, I found the very first set of vocabulary words difficult because we were supposed to learn how to write the words not only in hiragana, but katakana (Japanese syllabary that is used to write foreign and borrowed words). For example, “America” in katakana is アメリカ. The “ah” sound in katana is ア, and in hiragana it is あ. The “meh” sound in katakana is メ, and in hiragana it is め. The “ri” sound is リ and り, only a slight difference between katakana and hiragana. カ and か represents the “ka” sounds in katakana and hiragana. While the “ri” and “ka” sounds are similarly written in both hiragana and katakana, there are enough differences to confuse students who are attempting to assimilate the 46 hiragana and katakana characters we are expected to learn in the first month of the class. Putting in so much work to memorize these 46 characters—which is the bulk of the time and effort I put into the first half of the semester—I was painfully aware of how little I had learned to communicate in Japanese. Also, the practice dialogues in the textbook, from the very first chapter, are written in Japanese. When I revisited the textbook, I realized that I had forgotten most of the characters and was unable to read the dialogues.

I accidentally switched the language of my MacBook Pro to Japanese, which rendered me helpless to perform the simplest tasks. I could no longer read the toolbar. Instead of saving my document, as I had intended, I unintentionally restarted my computer. Rather than opening a new document as I planned, I accidentally hit the print button. A series of mishaps occurred before I was able to restore the primary language on my laptop, which reminded me of my experience of Japanese 101. The purpose of taking Japanese 101, for me, was to learn to speak in Japanese with my mother and other Japanese speakers, such as my relatives in Japan, and not to anguish over memorizing complicated characters. Well into Chapter 3 of the textbook, we were expected to mix

and match hiragana with katakana and use their various conjugations correctly, yet on a communicative level, all we were able to say was: “I have a class,” “Which day of the week is it?” “It is noon,” “I will eat lunch,” “Are you going to school?” “No, I’m not.” I wished there was a Japanese course that was designed for receptive heritage learners, focusing exclusively on oral communication; the vast amount of time required to learn Japanese and Chinese characters would take years and a steady, high level of commitment to learn successfully. I kept waiting for the moment I would be able to call my mother and begin a conversation in Japanese, but even at the end of the semester, most of what I had to show for the class was hundreds, if not thousands, of practice marks in workbooks.

I remember how frustrating it was to take one of the first vocabulary quizzes in Japanese 101. I knew every single word, pronounced each word perfectly, and knew their definitions, but I failed the quiz because there were too many errors in hiragana. Item #6 on the quiz was “famous,” which can be translated into romaji (Romanized Japanese words) as “yume.” The hiragana character for “yu” is ゆ, and the hiragana character for “me” is め, so I wrote ゆ め as my response. However, in this word, “yu” is a long vowel, so you must add an extra character to signify the long vowel. The hiragana character for “u” is う. One notices a vague similarity in shape. The correct way to write the word in hiragana is ゆ う め い. The very last character, い, which I missed on the quiz, represents the “i” sound. In the word “yume,” there is an extra sound that occurs at the end. This extra sound must be accounted for; each subtle sound, however quiet, must be written out.

I felt that this unnecessary complicated writing requirement was limiting what I could learn about oral Japanese, which is what I was primarily interested in. The class, I imagine, must have been fine for the Chinese international undergraduate students who were familiar with Chinese characters and were primarily attempting to fulfill an academic requirement by taking the course, but for a beginning level heritage language student like me, the course method—not the teacher or the teaching style—was disappointing.

### **Kanji and its discontents**

I was mortified to learn that we would have to start learning Kanji (more complicated Chinese characters) by midterm of the first semester of Japanese. My score for the first Kanji quiz was 0/10. Ogawa Sensei had kindly written on the margins of the quiz: “Would you like to talk

about Kanji with me?” These words were written underneath a frowning face drawn in red ink. The quiz asked us to translate hiragana words into kanji, and kanji words into hiragana. The textbook explained that “Kanji originated as pictographs and some of the characters still retain their pictorial qualities.” This is the moment when a separation seemed to occur between the Chinese international students in the class and everyone else, since Kanji are “characters borrowed from the Chinese.” One of my classmates, a sophomore undergraduate student from Shanghai, told me before class, “The kanji are easy for me because they’re really close to the Chinese characters.” However, *I* found that even the beginning level Kanji characters were profoundly complex. Meanwhile, on the communication front, we were still learning very basic utterances, such as: “Welcome! Come in,” “Excuse me, anyone home?” “Is the room dark?” “Is that person Mr. Tanaka?” “Is she Japanese?” “Where did you eat lunch?” “Yes, it is under the desk.” “Whose is this nice bag?” “I saw it on TV,” “I write with a pencil,” “I am a student,” “Where is the gym?” “What time is it now?” The problem is that we were stunted in terms of what we could learn to say because we could not move on to more complex phrases until we learned how to write them in hiragana, katakana, and kanji. There are around 200 kanji characters, and I tried to take the same approach to learning them as I applied to learning hiragana. That is, I ordered several kanji workbooks, with the hope that rote practice and laborious, perhaps endless repetition could yield productive results. This was a significant mistake.

Kanji is interesting insofar as you do not have to write kanji. Sato (2015) explained that “The earliest preserved characters were written on tortoise shells and animal bones, and about 3,000 characters have been discovered in this early period” (p.4). Kanji characters were borrowed from China in the 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> century A.D. and were used hundreds of years before hiragana and katakana were developed (Sato, 2015). According to Sato, there are 3 stroke types, which are stop, jump, and sweep. A stop indicates a stroke that ends with a slight impress of the pen. An example of a stop stroke is: とめ. A sweep concludes with a quick lift of the pen: はらい. The jump is a stroke that ends with a hook or curve at the end: はらい. Moreover, horizontal lines are always written from left to right, whereas vertical lines start at the top and go down (except for diagonal lines, which can go either way). This may seem reasonable except that one of the first kanji characters we learned involved 18 strokes. Here is the way “Monday” is written: 月曜日. The complicated middle character indicates “days of the week,” and begins with a simple stroke down, followed by a short horizontal stroke beginning at the top of the first stroke, moving right, then, in

the same fluid movement, concluding with a stroke down to create a rectangular shape. Next, a horizontal line is drawn in the middle of the rectangle, and another horizontal line closes the bottom of the rectangle; the result is a lantern like figure. The fifth step is a half square that hovers just above the figure to the right, which is followed by two horizontal lines that result in a reverse E shape; then the character is 1/3 complete. In my workbook, I see that I practiced this character 34 times, though my characters do not bear a strict resemblance to the model, and carry, at best, only a noticeable likeness. While I struggled to practice and learn kanji, I was reminded of my experience in high school art class, when I experienced drawer's block at the prospect of having to draw a flower, as required. I remember asking my younger sister to draw a somewhat realistic flower on my behalf to submit to my teacher as homework. Perhaps this was a mental block and not an example of my lack of talent or ability. Once, when I was doing an MFA in Creative Writing at UC Riverside, I accidentally drew an accurate portrait of my sister using a twig and a lighter. I burned the end of the twig with a lighter and used the ashy tip to draw. I think it was the artificiality of the medium, the half-burnt twig, that helped me distance myself from the act of drawing itself, the pressure to create an accurate representation, which liberated me to instinctively draw well. I was astonished at how I seemed to unconsciously draw the portrait with some skill, without planning or thinking about how to create the portrait. However, Japanese 101 was not the time to experiment with lighters and twigs; I felt the pressure to create accurate representations of Chinese characters, and I struggled to “draw” these characters accurately and to remember in what contexts they were used.

Late in the first semester, I received a 1/20 on an in-class quiz. On the very next quiz, I scored 10/20. Ogawa Sensei had written in the margin: “Nice progress!” However, two quizzes later, I regressed to 3/20. The only reason I was passing the class was because I had done somewhat well on the early hiragana tests and had done very well on the communication and pronunciation parts of the larger tests. The amount of writing homework, two handouts a week, only some of which I kept up with and completed, was overwhelming. Before the first semester was even over, I began to feel like Japanese—primarily because of kanji—was too difficult. I could not maintain my teaching and tutoring duties—one section of composition for international students, and a quarter time appointment as a tutor at the Oral English Proficiency Program on campus—as well as write my dissertation while learning and memorizing and using complicated Kanji that required several strokes, with various curves and angles. I would have to save learning Japanese for some

later, less time-constrained period of my life, or simply move to Japan to live and teach so that I would be immersed in the language and culture. I dismissed the first option of saving Japanese for later, perhaps retirement, to properly learn, because my motivation and desire to learn it was too strong to evade. I identified myself as half Japanese, unlike my sister who seemed to view herself as an *American* of Japanese descent, and consequently I had a stronger motivation to learn. My sister, on the other hand, never entertained the idea of living and working in Japan, as her life and identity were firmly situated in Berkeley, California. While my sister was married with two kids, I was single, drifting through graduate school, tied to no specific country or locale, so I may have had more options to explore.

Fortunately, the final presentation in Japanese 101 counted for a quarter of the final grade. While I was required to write a script in hiragana and katakana, I kept the narrative simple and introduced my home region, the San Francisco Bay Area. My slides were accompanied by minimalist text in hiragana and katakana (Figure 2). I did not have to worry about being surprised by in-class quizzes. I spent hours practicing at home, to an imagined audience; I paced about the room, exaggerating my hand and arm gestures as if I could correlate physical movements with Japanese words, a kind of mnemonic device. Although I was required to submit my draft script in hiragana and katakana (I avoided kanji and accepted the loss of points), I translated the text into romaji (Romanized Japanese letters) for the purpose of practice and memorization. This is the opening of my script, in romaji. I also translated the romaji into English to help me memorize the lines:

Konichiwa. Watashi wa Tanemura desu.

*Hello. I am Tanemura.*

American-jin desu. Nikkei-jin desu.

*I am American. I am Japanese American.*

Daigaku insei desu.

*I am a graduate student.*

Senko wa Second Language Studies desu.

*My major is Second Language Studies.*

Pahdue daigauku no gakusei desu.

*I am a student at Purdue University.*

San Francisco kara kimashita.

*I came from San Francisco.*

Kyo wa watashi no machi o shokai shimasu.

*Today, I will introduce you to my hometown.*

San Francisco ni wa rippana no honya ga arimasu.

*In San Francisco, there is a fantastic bookstore.*

Koen mo rippana desu. Kono Koen de yoku sampo shimashita.

*The park is also wonderful. I used to walk a lot in this park.*

Toshokan kara apato made jidensha ni gofun kakarimasu.

*By bicycle, it takes 5 minutes to get to the library from my apartment.*

San Francisco ni yoku subarashi no kohii o nomimasu.

*Often in San Francisco, I drank amazing coffee.*

Soshite, baru ni totemo oishi no biru o nomimasu.

*Also, I drink very delicious beer in the bars.*

San Francisco ni supa to restoran to eki to kisaten wa kirei desu.

*The supermarkets and restaurants, the train stations and the coffee shops are all pretty in San Francisco.*

Eki wa yume no tatemono desu.

*The train station is a very famous structure.*

Sore wa watashi no machi desu.

*That is my hometown.*



Figure 6. My final presentation slides in Japanese 101

I could describe the “method” of writing my script as a gradual translation of hiragana and katakana to romaji to English, that is an assimilation of Japanese towards English until, finally, I am setting the English translation against romaji (a system we never learned in Japanese 101, because romanization is not an aspect of the Japanese language). I am reminded of a famous Japanese modernist poet, Ishikawa Takuboku, who wrote the classic “Romaji Diary,” a canonical diary in modern Japanese literature. Takuboku wrote his diary in romaji so that his wife would not be able to read it; the average Japanese would not be able to make sense of romaji or be able to translate romaji back into hiragana or katakana. In hindsight, I was proud enough of my basic,

almost austere straightforward script to record myself practicing it and to send the video to my mother and sister. I was proud, mostly, of my pronunciation, which, when it comes to simple words and sentences, can sound “native like,” even as I read and write like a beginning-level language learner. However, Ogawa Sensei never praised my pronunciation; perhaps she thought it was something I naturally acquired from my mother, or that pronunciation did not matter much at the beginning levels, or that we shared the same ancestry, so I had an advantage. I remember a Japanese graduate student in the School of Language and Culture telling me, “You must be the best student in the class!” I was stunned, had no response for her, and wondered why she would assume that I would be the best student when my generation of Japanese Americans are well known for not knowing any Japanese, and for being monolingual speakers of English.

I was tired of being around people who were too ignorant or were not informed enough to understand me. I missed being around people of all races and ethnicities back in California; those who are used to seeing people of Asian ancestry speak like native speakers of English, because they *are* native speakers of English. From Prague and Vienna to West Lafayette and Lafayette Indiana, I had grown accustomed to the flabbergasted look on the faces of people who hear me speak English without a Chinese accent. California was the one place where I could avoid these disturbing encounters for the most part. Ironically, in Asia, I “pass” as a native speaker of English, largely because people do not know what to make of me. In Japan, I am treated like a foreigner who is a native speaker of English; the fact that I am not “one of them,” because I am not a Japanese citizen, puts me in the “foreigner” category, and it is no surprise in Japan to hear a “foreigner” speak any non-Japanese language fluently. In other words, because of Japan’s sense of nationalism and pride in their language, my English fluency is accepted, as I am not Japanese in their perception. Nonetheless, I wanted to learn Japanese partly to be able to function in Japanese society as an “insider,” if not in terms of citizenship, then at least socially. I had never had the sense of being an “insider,” because I have spent my life as a minority. Japan was perhaps the only place on the planet where I had a chance to potentially be an insider, given the cultural background I inherited from my mother, being similar in appearance to people in Japan, and sharing—I hoped, one day—a common language.

For example, even though no one in Paris or London looked at me askew when I spoke, because they were surrounded by people of various ancestries who are native speakers of French and British English, I never felt like I could fit in as an insider in Paris or London, because I do

not speak French or British English, and because ethnically I am a minority in those cities. There is a similar situation in smaller cities like Prague, Vienna, and Lucerne. I recall ordering a cappuccino and croissant in Lucerne, Switzerland in “perfect English,” and the waitress stood and stared at me, amused—the vast majority of Asians in town were travelling via large Chinese tour buses and the Chinese tourist was beginning to replace the “ugly American” in terms of bad reputation abroad. In Vienna, on an escalator ride down to the train station, a group of middle school girls standing behind me on the escalator shouted “China!” then scrambled past me as they sprinted towards the terminal. They said this word in jest, but I know that they genuinely believed I was from China, because most of the Asians in town, once again, seemed to belong to the large Chinese tour buses. I must admit that I took advantage of this racist attitude once or twice by joining Chinese museum tours for free. I did not try to gain free admittance; I was rather persuasively *convinced* into returning to the tour group by security personnel. Honestly, I was too tired to exert the effort required to explain, in “good” English—whatever the response to *that* may have been—that I am in fact not a member of this Chinese tour group. At any rate, these events reminded me of my status back home in the United States. I am frequently mistaken for a Chinese international here in the US, and many are not able to recognize my English as “native.” I believed that I could improve my status, so to speak, if I could learn Japanese and move to Japan, where my last name and appearance, as well as some cultural knowledge I gained from my mother, leads to a level of acceptance or, even respect, that I often go without in Middle America.

Once, in Vienna, I ordered a cappuccino and croissant in a sidewalk café from a waiter of African descent who *accepted* my native proficiency in English but rejected my poor French; he corrected my pronunciation of “croissant” in perfect, even elegant, French, but perhaps too obviously, as if to assert his own credibility as a European. Of course, it’s possible that a waiter in Tokyo could very well correct my pronunciation of some Japanese food or drink, but in many years of visiting restaurants throughout Japan, I have never had this experience, perhaps because of my minimal level of linguistic and cultural proficiency.

Vietnam is like Japan in that there seems to be a division between Vietnamese people who are native speakers of Vietnamese, and everyone else; I fall into the “everyone else” category. The only difference between my experience in Vietnam and Europe is that it might take a minute for people in Vietnam to process that I am 1) not Vietnamese and therefore must be 2) a “foreigner” and consequently fluent in a non-Vietnamese language, such as English. The fact that it takes a

minute longer for a Vietnamese to recognize my identity, compared to Caucasian Americans in Vietnam whose identities are comprehended instantly, for example, makes a difference because their acceptance of my identity as a native speaker of English comes with an asterisk. This asterisk is there primarily because some Vietnamese believe that I look Vietnamese, which can be supported by the fact that I have often been approached by Vietnamese people speaking Vietnamese with the full expectation that I would be able to respond in Vietnamese. Because I don't share a language or culture with Vietnamese people, I don't feel at home there as I do in Japan. However, similar facial features put me in the majority in one category. But I strove to learn Japanese because I wanted to be in the majority in more than one category. Perhaps the fact that Ogawa Sensei did not give me any points for good pronunciation made me feel like Japanese was too hard, because once pronunciation was removed from the equation, I was left with reading and writing complicated characters.

If I had been accorded points for pronunciation in Japanese 101, I might have received an "A" for the course. I believe I may not have been accorded points because I am a student of Japanese descent, and the stereotype of Japanese Americans is that we all speak perfect Japanese and may, if we struggle in language at all, speak accented English. One of my cohorts in the MFA program at Purdue University, who remains a friend almost a decade after I graduated from the program, is convinced that I have been speaking some mysterious form of accented English that he cannot quite put his finger on. It never occurred to him that perhaps growing up in the rural outskirts of Valparaiso, Indiana, has influenced him into *hearing* an accent when in fact, no accent is present; or that people from California, a state my friend has never visited, might speak slightly differently than "hoosiers." I felt that racial stereotypes in the US could impact even a Japanese language class where a Japanese American may not be understood as being an *American* of Japanese descent. Nonetheless, pronunciation was my strongest point in Japanese 101.

It is, of course, possible that pronunciation simply is not accounted for in grading oral tests in Japanese 101. I was a bit resentful of the fact that the Chinese students, who had bad pronunciation but easily learned Chinese characters, benefitted from their background on their path to excelling in the course. Perhaps kanji should have counted for less points, and pronunciation for more points; I can see no rationale for prioritizing one over the other, especially since pronunciation is more important in being able to communicate effectively in everyday life. Still, I

was content at the end of the semester and looking forward to starting second semester Japanese, Japanese 102, in the Spring 2018 semester.

## Japanese 102

The first thing we studied in Japanese 102, in January 2018, was food and beverages. The most difficult part for me was to learn how to write words in both hiragana and kanji. For example, the word “shrimp” is simple enough in hiragana: えび. ”Shrimp” in kanji, however, looks like this: 海老. The truth is, at this point in my life, I began losing interest in Japanese. I did not bring the same dedicated fervor to learning kanji through rote memorization, through hours of extra study using workbooks. I had no immediate professional motivation to learn Japanese, and for various reasons, my sense of identity shifted so that I became less interested in my ethnic identity. If I associated my future, happiness, and success in the past with learning Japanese and teaching in Japan, perhaps a country more suited to who I am, I no longer held the same view. Still, I had not completely given up hope on my dream of learning Japanese and moving to Japan. Also, I had become involved with a Vietnamese woman and, as our commitment to each other deepened, our professional plans coalesced around working in either the US or Vietnam. Given this new perspective, I saw that my identification was more general than specific; that is, I perceived myself as more Asian American than Japanese American and, in that sense, my desire was to live and work in Asia generally. Since Vietnam is in Asia, and not far from Japan, I saw the new plan of working and living in Vietnam as a mild compromise.

On one of the first quizzes of the semester, I scored a 3/20. I received a low score because I simply did not know, or memorize well enough, how to write certain words, and because I started to have some issues with grammar. While I spoke Japanese fluently until the age of 7, I was never taught grammar rules and never attended a heritage language course for Japanese American children. I struggled with inserting the correct prepositions. In the first question, where I was supposed to write “lettuce” in katakana, I simply wrote “lettuce” in English instead of レタス. This word does not exist in Japanese, so Japanese people write it as re – ta – su. Because Japanese have difficulty pronouncing the “l” sound, “re” substitutes for “le”. “レ” represents the “re” sound. Japanese also have trouble pronouncing the “tuh” sound, so they say and write “ta.” “タ” represents the “ta” sound. Also, Japanese words do not end with an “s” sound. Katakana can be seen as a way

to use characters that accurately represent the way Japanese people say English words with an “accent.” “ス” represents the “su” sound. Katakana is only used for words borrowed from English, like basketball, aerobics, hiking, cola, etc.

On the next quiz, I scored 10/20 and Ogawa Sensei wrote “Nice progress!” in the margin. However, I hit a wall when I was required to translate hiragana words into kanji and kanji words into hiragana. In the first place, I could not memorize kanji; no matter how many times I wrote the characters in my notebook, I could not memorize them. While I was struggling to learn kanji through repetition, I began to forget some of the hiragana I learned in the first semester. For example, I was supposed to translate じかん、which is “time” in hiragana, into 時間、which is “time” in kanji. Then I was asked to translate こうこう which is “here” in hiragana into 高校 which is “here” in kanji. As I was struggling to figure out how to juggle hiragana and kanji, I was also struggling to change my dissertation topic from comparative rhetoric to an autoethnographic study of heritage language learning. Because I changed my topic, I defended my prospectus for the second time in January 2018. Back then, I wanted to do an autoethnographic study of learning Japanese because I was still determined at that time to learn Japanese and to live and work in Japan.

I had never heard of autoethnography until I attended an ESL Go! happy hour after a Speaker Series—a professional development event sponsored by an organization of the Second Language Studies/ESL program at Purdue. A cohort in the program explained the genre to me. Later that week, I was vigorously studying autoethnography as a research tool, since I was not happy with the way my prospectus defense went. I had an unproductive semester in both Japanese and dissertation writing, which led to an unproductive summer. It wasn’t until the Fall of 2018 that I began to get a stronger grasp of my dissertation, and in Spring 2019 I wrote drafts of my introduction, literature review and methods section. I had a viable set of research questions, but it took me until Spring 2019 to discover them. This was a full year or more after I had defended my second prospectus. I wanted to find some way to connect my dissertation to my Japanese studies and my aspiration to live and work in Japan. If it was not for my discovery of autoethnography, I do not think it would have been possible to make such a direct link between my research and my Japanese language study.

However, in the Spring 2018 semester, my Japanese studies took a nosedive. I lost interest in both Japanese studies and in my dissertation. I did not experience this loss of interest as significant because I had little sense of direction in my dissertation, and I could sense that it would

take a herculean effort to pass Japanese 102 and move on to Japanese 103, as I had planned. I began to spend less and less time studying. Well into February 2018, we were still translating hiragana into kanji, and kanji into hiragana (Figure 3), an exercise I had very little interest in. On a dictation test, I scored 96/174 (55.2%) and Ogawa Sensei wrote in the margin: “Big progress!” I was still passing the course because I did much better on the larger online tests that require oral responses. On another dictation test, I scored 67.5/216 (Figure 4) and Ogawa Sensei, always the optimist, commented: “I appreciate you directly wrote what you hear in Japanese, not Roma-ji to Japanese!! It’s a really big step-up!!” In other words, I may have been writing the wrong hiragana, katakana, and kanji words, but at least I wasn’t writing Roman letters! I didn’t do well on dictation tests, but I did better on fill-in-the-blank homework assignments. However, I often submitted the homework assignments late, and didn’t receive credit for them.

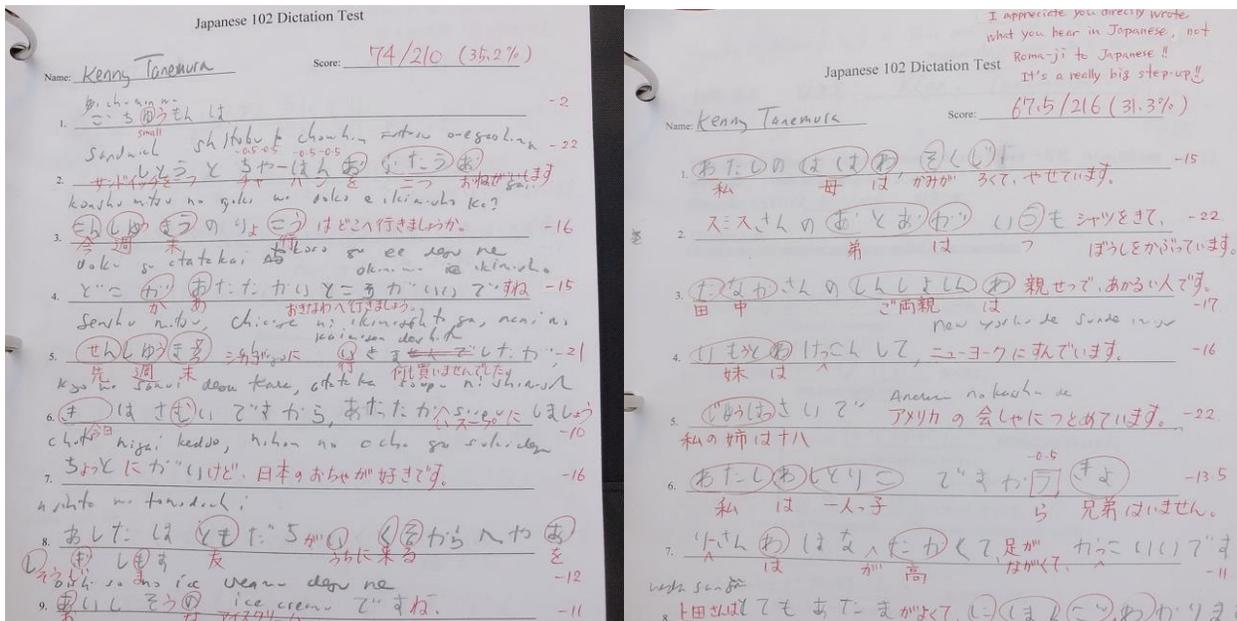


Figure 7. Dictation tests in hiragana, katakana, and kanji.

クイズ8-6 なまえ: Kenny Tanemura 1/20

Write Kanji for hiragana and hiragana for kanji.

1. 九時 (9 o'clock) → 九時
2. 六つ (むく) → 六つ
3. 一本 (いっぽん) → 一本
4. 一つ (ひとつ) → 一つ
5. 七本 (ななぽん) → 七本
6. さんびやく (さんびやく) → 三百 +1
7. 五万九千 (ごまんきゅうせん) → 五万九千
8. きゆうせんにひやくえん (kyū sen ni hyaku en) → 九千二百円
9. 店 (みせ) → 店

JPN102 Ch. 7 Quiz 1 なまえ: Kenny Tanemura 1/20

Write the appropriate particle or word in each of the following blanks, using the information in the chart. A smiling face indicates something that a person likes. A neutral face indicates the person's indifference. A frowning face indicates the person's dislike.

なまえ	😊	😐	😞
田中	Tennis	Football	Golf
スミス	Beer & Wine	Orange Juice	Black Tea Sake etc.
山田	Pops	Jazz	Classical

1. スミスさんは、a ビール ( ) b ワイン (か) 好きです。 - 3  
Smith likes beer & wine (but nothing else).
2. スミスさんは、c オレンジ ( ) d さけ (か) きらいです。 - 4  
Smith dislikes black tea & sake (and other things).
3. 田中さんは、e フットボール は、好きでも 嫌いでも ありません。 - 3  
Tanaka neither likes nor dislikes football.
4. A: 田中さんは、どんな スポーツ が好きですか。  
B: テニス が 好きです。  
A: じゃあ、h ゴルフ は、どうですか か。 - 5  
How about ---?  
B: <h>は、ちょっと。  
Golf is a bit---. Use the polite expression. Do not say, "I dislike golf."
5. 山田さん (の/が) 好きなおんがく (Music) は、i ポップス です。

Figure 8. Quiz on kanji, hiragana, katakana on left. Grammar quiz on right.

Fortunately, just because kanji was introduced didn't mean that all assignments and tests required knowledge of kanji. In one homework assignment that was given close to midterm, I scored 25/30 because I was required to memorize the words for "eyes," "hair," "nose" and other anatomical features, and to translate hiragana into English, which I found easy. I was allowed to use hiragana to write the words for these anatomical parts. I don't know if Japanese use kanji for these words.

I believe I was the only student in the class who relied so heavily on romaji to make sense of new grammar rules and short phrases. When a grammar rule was introduced, sample sentences were always given, but the sentences were in hiragana, katakana, and kanji. Connecting the Japanese characters to English letters was such a leap that I used romaji to build a connection between the two. For example, above the words, しごとが, I wrote the romaji translation, "Shi go to ga," which means, "My job will..." Above the phrase, もうすぐ, I wrote "mo u su gu" which means "soon." On top of あわるので, I wrote "a war u no de," which means "finish soon." Finally, above ここでまて下さい I wrote "ko ko de ma te kuda sa ii," which means "please wait here." The English translation is: "My job will be finished soon, so please wait here."

I preferred learning adjectival forms to rote memorization of hiragana, katakana, and kanji. For example, when I learned that *kirei na mono* (きれいなもの) is the prenominal form of “pretty thing,” versus the plain negative form, *kirei ja nai* (きれいじゃない) or “not pretty”, I felt like I was learning something that could be useful in actual oral communication. Also I enjoyed learning the difference between *kirei na no de* (きれいなので) or “because it is pretty” and *kirei ja nai no de* (きれいじゃないので) or “because it is not pretty”, because these are the building blocks to describe what someone is or is not, the negative and affirmative forms of adjectives, as well as to describe negative and affirmative actions. However, I found it too difficult to memorize 15 new kanji characters towards the beginning of the semester while learning how to write adjectival forms in hiragana and katakana at the same time.

One of my favorite activities in class involved interaction with classmates in Japanese, since I saw this as the entire point of learning a language: social interaction, not reading and writing. I remember one of the prompts, “You are at a party. Introduce yourself to someone and start a conversation.” The class generally approached these interactive exercises with a mixture of excitement and nervousness since role-playing in a foreign language can be both enjoyable and full of mistakes. I was also fortunate to sit next to a Chinese student who was so invested in Japanese language and culture that her speaking ability sounded like 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> semester Japanese to me, and I wondered why she was placed in Japanese 102. This student often answered Ogawa Sensei’s questions with answers that were too sophisticated for our class level. She also spoke English with great fluency and helped me by explaining grammar rules and new vocabulary words.

One area that I always struggled with in Japanese were numbers above 100, because I was never taught to count higher than 10. However, I always found it a waste of time considering how much time can go into explaining how to write the numbers in hiragana. I wished a little less time was spent learning numbers, and more time was spent in discussing shops, department stores and customer service in Japan; information that could be useful for an actual visit to Japan. However, my mind was somewhere else. Before I knew it, I was required to learn 12 more new kanji characters, when I hadn’t yet learned the first 15 characters we were introduced to at the very beginning of the semester. I found the actual content almost useless, because I already knew the different types of Japanese foods and how to pronounce the words correctly. I knew the words for “warm, hot, cold” and by the midterm of 2<sup>nd</sup> semester Japanese, was not able to write a simple text or email to my mother, unless my purpose was to ask her for a cold glass of orange juice, or to ask

her if she would like a cola. Soon enough, we were introduced to another set of 17 new kanji characters that would take up most of my time. Meanwhile, for homework assignments, I was writing phrases like “This soup looks salty” and “This is sour-looking sushi.”

At times, my childhood learning of Japanese served as an impediment. On one quiz, I was supposed to write the word for “wear,” and I wrote はく, which means to put on; however this term was not taught in the textbook, so the correct answer was きてます. I was so discouraged that I didn’t even bother to ask family members if both forms or words can be used correctly. Ogawa Sensei offered no support on these matters, though I imagine she may have guessed that I learned synonymous words (correctly? incorrectly?) from my parents. That this was not acknowledged made me feel like I was studying something that was unrelated to me and my background and relationship to the Japanese language.

I didn’t care anymore. The final project was a chore. I was required to give a presentation in which I incorporated specific nouns, verbs, particles, counters, contrasts, question words, plain past forms, noun-modifying clauses, adverbial forms, and characteristics of time, objects and places, among other things. We were required to describe a city we would like to visit, and I chose Hanoi, Vietnam. We were graded on “originality and creativity” among other features such as grammar and “enthusiasm.” Due to personal problems, I was not able to attend my own final presentation, but Ogawa Sensei gave me a chance to do the presentation late, with points taken off. Nonetheless, I was not very well prepared, and had written tiny notes on a scrap of paper to aid me in the presentation. My slides were basic and did not tell a coherent story (Figure 5). My presentation script was bare bones:

りそうのりょこう My ideal trip

わたしわりそうのりょこうでハノイにいきます

Watashi wa risoo no ryokoo de Hanoi ni ikimasu.

My ideal destination is Hanoi

ハノイ でどうぶつえやびじゅつかんにもいきます。

Hanoi de doubutsu (zoo) en ya bijutsukan (museum) ni ikimasu.

I will go to the zoo and the museum in Hanoi.

ハノイのデパ-とでかいものします。うでどけいおかいます。

Hanoi no depato de udodokei (wristwatch) o kaimasu.

I will buy a wristwatch from a department store in Hanoi.

ベルトもほしいです。

Beruto mo hoshi desu.

I also want a belt.

しょくぶつえん にもいきます。

shokubutsu en (botanical garden) ni mo ikimasu.

I will also go to the botanical garden.

ハノイのビールおのみたいです。

Hanoi no biru o nomitai desu.

I want to drink Hanoian beer.

ハノイでたのしそうなアルバイトおします。

Hanoi ni tanoshi souna arubaito o shimasu.

I would like to work part-time in Hanoi.

ハノイがすきです

Hanoi ga suki desu.

I like Hanoi.

せいけつじゃないけど、ハノイわきれいです。

Seike tsu ja nai kedo, Hanoi wa kirei desu.

Even though it's not important, Hanoi is pretty.

ハノイにいきましょう。

Hanoi ni ikimashou.

Let's go to Hanoi.

ベトナムにいきましょうか？

Betonamu ni ikimashou ka?

Should we go to Vietnam?

ハノイがいいとおもいます。

Hanoi ga eee to omoi masu.

I think Hanoi is a good place.

わたしわハノイに行きたいとおもいます。

Watashi wa Hanoi ni ikitai to omoimasu.

I think I want to go to Hanoi.

ハノイわあたたかいからあめがよくふります

Hanoi wa atatakai kara Ame ga yoku furi masu

Hanoi is hot so it often rains there.

つゆがながかつたので、ことしんのつなはむしあついとおもいます。

Tsu yu ga na ga ka tsu ta no de, ko to shinona a tsu ha mushi atsui to omoi masu.

Because the winter was long, I think it will be a hot summer.

さんねんまえにハノイに行きました。

San nen mai ni Hanoi ni ikimashita.

Three years ago, I went to Hanoi.

とてもたのしかつたですよ。お寺やじんじゃお見たり、かいものおしたりしました

。

To te mo tanoshi katta desu yo. Otera ya jinji otari, kaimono o shi ta ri shi mashita.

It was very enjoyable. I saw temples and shrines.

ハノイのみずうみわおもしろそうです

Hanoi no mizumi wa omoshiro sou desu.

The lake in Hanoi is interesting.

きれいですね

Kirei desu ne.

It is pretty.

ごせいちょうありかとうございました

go sei cho arigato gozaimashita

Thank you very much.



Figure 9. My final presentation slides in Japanese 102.

My final grade for the course was a D, which disqualified me from continuing to third semester Japanese. However, I'd lost any motivation or desire to continue into Japanese 103. Later, when my mother noted that I seemed less interested in Japanese than before—I'd stopped sending her videos of me practicing presentations—she said, “If you really want to learn, you will learn.” I think what she meant was that whether I learned through a class or self-study, practicing with friends or living and working in Japan, I could find some way to learn to speak Japanese if the

motivation was there. Though my mother would never express her own desire for me to relearn Japanese, I knew her well enough to read between the lines and understand that she would like me to invest greater effort and commitment, or more seriousness towards learning to communicate in Japanese. She seemed invested in the idea of me living and working in Japan, though she would never explicitly state this. Who knows if my being situated in Japan would give my parents an excuse to spend their elder years in Japan? They have expressed some discontentment about living with my sister and brother-in-law in Berkeley, California, mostly because they do not share the same attachment to the city of Berkeley that my sister and brother-in-law share.

Being in limbo about where to live and work made me feel like a bad first son, since first sons in Japanese culture are supposed to lead the way, rather than get bogged down in linguistic and cultural paralysis. First sons in Japanese culture should have leadership skills and be a beacon of reliability and hope for the future. An ideal Japanese first son would race through 5 semesters of Japanese, relearn how to speak fluently with family members after two years of hard study, and be living proof for the family that hard work and commitment pays off with skill, competence and success. I finished Japanese 102 completely deflated, but I did not share my failures with my family because I didn't want them to feel disappointed. I decided that my heritage language study plan would have to conclude here for the time being. I became less interested in my identity as a *Japanese American*, or an *American* of Japanese descent, and more as a person in the world, as a still-aspiring scholar, writer and poet, son, and teacher, struggling to find a place in the world on terms now larger, and more pragmatic, than the abstractions of ethnicity, culture, or language.

### **Hope for a better curriculum**

Research has indicated that Japanese and Chinese characters are particularly difficult to learn for students who come from English language backgrounds (Everson 2011; Mazzota and Chiesa 2019; Rose 2019) which is especially true for beginning level or receptive learners of Japanese. Seligman (1972) observed that repeated failure can lead to “learned helplessness” in which people are unable or unwilling to access their motivation and resources due to the impact of recurrent letdowns, in this case the failure of learning Chinese characters (p. 411). One remedy is to survey students to discover what their desires and needs are in relation to learning their heritage language. For example, Beaudrie & Ducar (2005) created a survey that was administered to Spanish heritage language learners (p.15). In the Spanish course which is the subject of Beaudrie

& Ducar's study, students are allowed to communicate orally without being corrected, since the instructor does not impose "prescriptively perfect" language performance. The focus is on oral communication since the students expressed a desire to communicate with family and friends. Unlike many language courses, Beaudrie & Ducar's course does not grade grammar or pronunciation but rather a willingness to participate in interactive communication; in fact, they state that "The goal of Spanish 103 is to get students into the habit of using Spanish to communicate with friends and family..." (p. 15).

The students in the class share their personal goals in becoming more fluent in their heritage language, and these goals are often aligned, from a desire to communicate more with a family member to being able to speak to in-laws. In this way, students can maintain a vital connection to their motivation and capacity for learning through a series of successful events. The model proposed by Beaudrie & Ducar for receptive heritage learners of Spanish could be transferred to receptive heritage learners of Japanese. One of the takeaways from my own learning experience is that we cannot overstate the importance of oral proficiency and interactive communication, whether the intent is personal (speaking with family members) or related to business or travel, especially for beginning level students. Considering that research on the difficulty of learning Japanese and Chinese characters for students from English-language backgrounds are well-documented, the interactive communication approach advanced by Beaudrie & Ducar makes even more sense.

### **Historical and social factors that led to the loss of the heritage language**

In the autoethnography there are several historical and social factors that led to the loss of the heritage language. "Shame" emerges as the main reason why the autoethnographer's father forced his children to stop speaking Japanese and to speak only English at home. Japanese American historical factors are mentioned briefly as a possible cause of shame, perhaps because the focus of this autoethnography is not about the internment. This suggests that Japanese American history, namely the internment during WWII, did lead to shame and ethnic ambivalence in the Japanese American community, which led to a turning away from Japanese as a heritage language, and a turning toward a more assimilative, English-only model. The theme of JA history and shame are explored only in the first few pages of the autoethnography since the rest of the autoethnography chronicles the process of relearning Japanese in a classroom context. Alongside

factors that led to the loss of the heritage language learning of the autoethnographer, there are also factors that motivated him to maintain Japanese as a heritage language. Two main themes emerged as motivating factors for the autoethnographer to learn Japanese as a heritage language: “reconnecting with the heritage culture” and “healing from the wound of racism.” The autoethnographer also cited comfort in the ancestral language, and reconnecting with the heritage culture to gain higher self-perception and a stronger sense of belonging to community as motivating forces. The theme of healing and reconnecting with culture is addressed in the first section of the autoethnography, which serves as an introduction to the account of language learning in a classroom context.

The major goal for the autoethnographer was to learn how to communicate orally with family members and in social contexts. Expressions of a desire to learn to communicate orally with family members first appear in the “*The challenge of hiragana*” subsection of the autoethnography. Also, in this part, the autoethnographer wishes for a Japanese class that focuses exclusively on oral communication. The autoethnographer notes, in the “*Japanese 102*” section, that he is more interested in practicing “social interaction” than reading and writing in Japanese.

Career appeared only briefly as a marginal motivating factor for learning Japanese, unlike previous research in Japanese heritage language learners (Kondo 1999; Metoki 2012; Triest 2018). According to this autoethnography, the motivating factors in learning Japanese are, in contrast to more recent Japanese migrants and immigrants, not career oriented. However, the path of heritage language learning did not go smoothly due to the foreign language pedagogy. The major obstacle to learning was the complicated and difficult process of reading and writing Japanese and Chinese characters, which was ubiquitous in JFL (Japanese as a Foreign Language) classrooms, the only Japanese language learning environment I had access to.

There was a mismatch between the learning purposes of the autoethnographer and the JFL learning outcomes. While the autoethnographer was motivated to communicate orally, most of the research focuses on reading and literacy skills (Hayashi 2006; Kondo-Brown 2008; Allred 2016). However, the effort to heal from the wound of racism by learning the ancestral language was thwarted by the curricular design of the Japanese as a Foreign Language courses, which focused, in the autoethnographer’s opinion, too much on reading and writing and not enough on oral communication. Rose (2013) notes, “The difficulties of learning Kanji have been well-documented, especially for learners from an alphabetic background” (p. 82). Everson (2011) suggests that it

takes four times as long to learn Japanese compared to Western European languages because the writing system is “non-alphabetic in nature” and uses “non-Roman alphabets that present special challenges from learners whose first language (L1) employs the Roman alphabet” (p. 251). In other words, the autoethnographer experiences kanji as an obstruction to oral communication, which was considered an invaluable means to connect with family members and others in his community, even as oral communication was not prioritized in the coursework.

### **Beyond the heritage language**

The longing for ethnic and cultural pride and identification and the desire to be able to communicate with family members were the strongest factors that motivated the autoethnographer to study Japanese as a heritage language. At the same time, the learner studied in this autoethnography discovered that larger factors, like family obligations and the importance of career, expanded his sense of identity towards a more cosmopolitan, less parochial definition traditionally associated with ethnic identity. When his Japanese learning fossilized, the autoethnographer felt that he did not live up to the expectations set for Japanese sons. He ended up not sharing his failures with his family members. This is mentioned in the concluding paragraph of the autoethnography under the section “*Japanese 102*.” Unlike previous generations of Japanese Americans who eschewed their heritage language to assimilate, this autoethnographer lost interest in studying his heritage language because he redefined his relationship to his heritage culture and family members on trans-linguistic terms, meaning beyond just learning the language for its own sake.

Finally, cultural and pragmatic factors—such as finding a job and being responsible to one’s family members—overrode the autoethnographer’s singular focus on the *linguistic* features of his heritage language. Both the autoethnographer’s experience of not sharing his failures in language learning with family members, and of losing interest in Japanese and redefining his relationship to the heritage culture, is explained in the final paragraph of the autoethnography under the “*Japanese 102*” section.

The experience of losing a heritage language can be traumatic but can also motivate people to relearn. This autoethnography is the only study that explores the impact of the internment of Japanese Americans during WWII on the loss of the heritage language in the JA community.

This is also the only autoethnographic account of a learner who inherited the legacy of internment and erasure of Japanese as a heritage language yet tried to relearn the heritage language. While other children from different cultures experience similar processes in terms of ethnic identity and ethnic affiliation, this autoethnography focuses on my own experience with Japanese American identity. For many 4<sup>th</sup> generation JA learners, oral communication is key because the autoethnographer, as a receptive learner, was motivated to learn how to communicate with his mother and other family members in Japanese. The JFL structure of focusing on reading and writing not only obstructed the autoethnographer's oral proficiency, but his connection to his culture since he was finally unable to communicate with family members after 2 semesters of coursework. This indicates the necessity of change in both assessment methods and curricular design for receptive learners of Japanese as a heritage language.

## CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION

In this section I will discuss and analyze the data in relation to my research questions. This dissertation shows that history does play a role in the loss or maintenance in heritage language learning but it affects different generations differently. For example, the internment made Japanese Americans not want to study Japanese as a heritage language anymore, and this attitude was passed on to younger generations. Specifically, Julia and myself, both 4<sup>th</sup> generation Japanese Americans and children of an internee, were raised with an ambivalent relationship to the Japanese language, stemming largely from our father's shame about historical factors (internment) and racism in the 1970s and 80s (societal factors). I argue that internal factors such as ethnic identity also influenced loss or maintenance of the heritage language, e.g., both Julia and I experienced ethnic shame when we were coming of age, and Tom experienced ethnic shame during and after WWII when Japan became the enemy of the United States. I concluded that many factors motivate a 4<sup>th</sup> generation Japanese American to maintain or learn their heritage language, from reconnecting to ethnic identity and roots to professional reasons. I close by suggesting that my own ethnic exploration of Japanese as a heritage language prompted me to do research in this area.

What follows are the research questions of my dissertation project which will be answered with reference to the findings.

### **Research question 1: What role does Japanese American history play in the loss—or maintenance—of the heritage language in the JA community?**

The internment affected the loss or maintenance in heritage language learning among the participants of this study because the anti-Japanese sentiment during WWII forced many Japanese Americans to disavow their heritage language and culture. For Tom, who was interned during WWII, Japanese became both a source of shame and a required language to study since he was interned in a segregated internment camp at Tule Lake with Japanese loyalists. He was also obliged to sharpen his Japanese skills after the war since he took a job as a travel agent at Japan Airlines in San Francisco. However, Julia and I experienced history via our father and were indirectly influenced by his experiences, as well as his ban on us speaking Japanese in the house. We were also influenced by societal racism in the 1970s and 1980s to forget our heritage language but Julia

and I were boosted by the multiculturalism and emergence of Asian American Studies in the 1990s and 2000s.

The data shows that Tom, the Sansei (third generation Japanese American), was directly impacted by events in Japanese American history. This experience manifested in several ways. First, since Tom's father was an Issei (first generation Japanese American), he was enrolled in a Japanese as a heritage language course at the age of 4. Tom's grandparents wanted to pass on Japanese cultural and linguistic traits, but his mother, a second generation Japanese American, encouraged assimilation in the United States. If it wasn't for the internment, Tom said that he probably would have lost his limited proficiency in Japanese, because Tom attended American schools and spoke mostly English before the start of WWII. However, because of WWII and the internment, Tom studied Japanese at the Tule Lake Segregation Center, which prepared him, linguistically at least, for his father's decision to repatriate the family to Japan. All signs indicate, including Tom's father's moderate success as a farmer in Central California, that the family would have stayed on the West Coast if it were not for the outbreak of WWII. The academic and financial consequences of the internment have been well-documented. The anti-Japanese hysteria following the end of WWII led many Japanese to abandon their business and academic aspirations and seek alternatives (Lee, 2018). For Tom's father, that alternative was returning to his home country, Japan. When Tom arrived in Japan at the age of 8, his Japanese proficiency kept him behind other children his age in terms of grade level. Tom was then motivated to gain greater proficiency in his heritage language to survive at his new school and in his new country. This motivation to assimilate and fit in was so strong that Tom soon gained equal proficiency in his heritage language as he did in his native language, English. In this case, the consequences of WWII led to a stronger motivation to maintain the heritage language. This is counter evidence to what the scholarship has advanced. For example, Triest (2018) suggests that career and academic reasons motivated several of her JA participants to study Japanese (p. 107).

One may argue that the linguistic requirements of a job are not a matter of history. However, the reason that Tom qualified for a position as a ticket agent at Japan Airlines was his bilingual proficiency, which he would not have had had it not been for the events of WWII, particularly as it affected the Japanese American community. Negative historical events eventually fostered his bilingualism and heritage language proficiency. No research has mentioned cases in which a

learner's heritage language capacity was blocked by a historical event but encouraged because of the consequences of that event.

On the other hand, Julia and I, as 4<sup>th</sup> generation Japanese Americans, were only *indirectly* impacted by the events of Japanese American history. Julia intuited her father's shame as a child and attributes his shame because he made her stop speaking Japanese and speak only English, but she was not aware of the internment until college. For example, she said in an interview, "Every time we went out, dad would say 'there's no room for us here,' meaning Japanese people, and 'they don't really want us here.'" Julia knew that her father was ashamed about his ethnicity, but she did not know why, beyond the pressure to assimilate and the discrimination against Japanese Americans which she also had faced at school. Even though Julia could not fathom the monumental event of internment, she sensed the psychological consequences that resulted from the trauma of internment and WWII. The English-only decree made her feel lost among her relatives in Japan, and she wanted to learn Japanese to gain a sense of belonging. This is related to historical events insofar as she may not have lost her heritage language were it not for the internment and its psychological impact on her father. In other words, Julia went from feeling shameful about the Japanese language with a vague sense of her father's experiences, to eagerness about relearning Japanese for the purpose of making a deeper connection to her ethnic identity.

I was also indirectly influenced by the events of Japanese American history. When my 2<sup>nd</sup> grade teacher, Mrs. Swift, complained to my father that I was mixing foreign sounds with my English, my father, as in a knee-jerk reaction, promptly forced me not to utter another word of Japanese in "my house." My experience resonates with what is documented in Cooper (2000). JA heritage language learners were discouraged from HL study due to the pressure of assimilation (Cooper, 2000, p.25). When the US entered World War II, many Japanese Americans destroyed or buried cultural artefacts and any possessions that would mark them as Japanese; the Japanese language, like a Samurai sword or a copy of a Japanese language newspaper, were among the casualties of what was lost due to anti-Japanese sentiment. At the age of 7, I had no idea why my father would react the way he did, though I had some sense of intuitively mixing in Japanese sounds and words in my conversations with Mrs. Swift. I had faced racial taunts at school, but I did not know enough yet to feel shamefully ambivalent about myself. I was introduced to this kind of intense ambivalence by my father, who I later perceived as a victim of post-traumatic stress because of internment and the anti-Japanese hysteria of WWII. I attribute my heritage language

loss to these events, and my effort to relearn Japanese as a heritage language can be explained as an attempt to recover from the weight of these events. This particular response to the historical event has not been documented in any source that I have read. There is a scarcity of scholarship on how older JAs discouraged younger JAs from speaking Japanese, but the scholarship is found in general scholarship on Japanese American community and history, rather than in scholarship about heritage language learners.

To summarize, Tom is a rare case in that the internment of Japanese Americans and the events of WWII both gave him an ambivalent feeling about the Japanese language, and ironically created circumstances in which he was able to increase his Japanese proficiency, this type of dual experience has not been documented or discussed in the literature. The case of Julia and myself has also been rarely documented and shows a progression from ambivalence about our heritage language due to historical factors and societal racism to an embrace of the heritage language inspired by a desire to reconnect with the heritage culture.

### **Research question 2: What kinds of external (societal) or internal (ethnic identity) factors influence loss or maintenance of the heritage language?**

In this section, I will discuss the roles that societal and internal factors played in Tom's, Julia's and my motivation to disavow, or relearn, our heritage language.

Tom's relationship to his heritage language was determined by historical, social and professional factors, such as war and internment, marriage, and starting a new job at a Japanese company. Julia and I can be seen as children of the Ethnic Studies movement which became a form of intellectual inquiry in the 1960s. We were both forced to stop speaking Japanese and shortly after found reasons in societal racism to feel ashamed of the language. Later, both of us sought to reconnect with our ethnic identity via heritage language study. While this period of heritage language study was a passing phase for Julia, it was a phase that I only partially evolved out of as I cling to hopes of relearning Japanese someday.

The primary social factors that influenced Tom's continued improvement in Japanese was work and marriage. Tom continued to learn new field-specific vocabulary in Japanese, his heritage language, for professional reasons. Tom also married a monolingual Japanese woman from Japan, and he had to sharpen his Japanese to communicate with his wife. However, unlike the case of younger Japanese Americans, ethnic factors did not seem to influence Tom's maintenance of his

heritage language and this, along with the relative distance of WWII and internment, seem to be the key differences between Sansei and Yonsei experiences with Japanese as a heritage language. This aligns with Triest's (2018) research, in that younger heritage learners were shown to feel a stronger need to strengthen their cultural ties. Triest (2018) claims that cultural heritage is important for Japanese heritage language learners (p. 99). But older Japanese Americans such as the Nisei did not see cultural heritage as a viable alternative to assimilation (Davis, 1982, p. 10). That is, Nisei saw assimilation (volunteering for the US Army, making claims to patriotism) as a path to survival and fitting in, whereas their children often felt the absence of the culture and language their parents worked so hard to eradicate.

Julia, on the other hand, primarily studied Japanese as a heritage language for both social and ethnic reasons. She grew up visiting her relatives in Japan every summer. Julia claims that she was too ashamed of her ethnicity to want to study her heritage language in high school (Tse, 1999). That is, internal factors, specifically ethnic identity and shame, pressured Julia to disavow her heritage language. It wasn't until Julia went through an Asian American phase in college, a phase that Tse (1999) refers to as the Ethnic Emergence Phase, that Julia took courses in Japanese. The Ethnic Emergence phase is where, according to Tse, ethnic minorities realize that they cannot be white and a part of the mainstream as they had fantasized, and so turn to an embrace of their own ethnicity as means to negotiate their identities. Tse (1999) suggests that this phase occurs in "adolescence and early adulthood - where Ems [ethnic minorities] no longer believe acceptance by the dominant group is possible or desirable. Left, in a sense, without a group, EMs look for a new ethnic identity and this search becomes a prominent part of their lives" (p. 1). Therefore, the search for a "new identity" often leads ethnic minorities to reconnect with their heritage culture and language, since the mainstream culture is perceived to be closed to them. Both Julia and I began studying our heritage language when we entered the Ethnic Emergence stage.

This phase is preceded by the Ethnic Ambivalence stage, which is characterized by ambivalent feelings about one's ethnicity and a desire to be like the mainstream. As Tse (1999) notes, this stage "occurs in childhood and adolescence and is characterized by feelings of ambivalence toward the ethnic group. EMs in this stage may distance themselves from their own group and adopt the norms and behaviors of the dominant group" (p. 2). Thus, ethnic minorities who feel ambivalent about their culture and heritage are more likely to disavow their heritage

language. Julia and I, for example, both disavowed our heritage language when we were going through the Ethnic Ambivalence stage.

Since Julia undertook heritage language learning in her Ethnic Emergence phase, it is reasonable to infer that her choice to learn Japanese as a heritage language was in part a reaction against her Ethnic Ambivalence stage, that is to resolve her ethnic ambivalence. Julia's final resignation to be a monolingual speaker of English can be seen as a manifestation of the Ethnic Identity Incorporation phase, which is characterized by self-acceptance and stability, rather than the intense and chaotic searching for ethnic roots that can occur in the Ethnic Emergence phase. In Ethnic Identity Incorporation, EMs "discover the ethnic minority American group and eventually seek membership. In the process, they come to terms, to a large extent, with their minority status" (Tse, 1999, p. 2). That is, Julia finally found the strong sense of herself in the world she had been seeking, and perhaps for this reason, no longer felt the need to learn her heritage language.

I also had both ethnic and social reasons for learning my heritage language. Ethnically, I felt more Japanese than American, so my loss of Japanese was a traumatic event I attempted to heal through language study. I had also gone through an Ethnic Ambivalence phase throughout my childhood and adolescence and turned to Japanese study to achieve the peace and balance I imagined I had when I was a child speaking Japanese fluently. While I did take Japanese language courses in my Ethnic Emergence phase, I do not believe that I ever reached the Ethnic Identity Incorporation phase. Even as a graduate student in my 40s, I continued to believe that learning Japanese would lead to a sense of ethnic identity incorporation, and perhaps social harmony in a new life in Japan. While I have given up the idea of continuing Japanese language studies in the US, I still keep the aspiration of continuing Japanese language study in Japan and achieving ethnic and social harmony while living and teaching in Japan. By this marker, I am still in the Ethnic Emergence phase characteristic of adolescence and young adulthood. However, like Julia, I have stopped my study of my heritage language for now, since I no longer feel a pressing need to reconnect with culture and heritage; that is, I recognize myself as an American native speaker of English. Perhaps the decrease in identity and cultural conflict led to decreased motivation to further my knowledge of Japanese. This would suggest that Julia and I are both in the Ethnic Identity Incorporation Phase. According to Tse (1999), in this phase ethnic minorities seek membership in their ethnic group and reconcile with their status as

minorities (p. 2). This is a phase of increased self-confidence and ethnic pride and can be seen as the resolution of the conflicts inherent in each stage of ethnic identity formation.

In conclusion, Tom was motivated to maintain his heritage language for professional reasons and to communicate with his Japan-born wife. On the other hand, both Julia and I navigated our way through the stages of ethnic identity as outlined by Tse (1999). One notable difference between Julia and me is that Julia seems to have reached the Ethnic Identity Incorporation stage, in which a stable balance between cultural heritage and assimilation is attained. At the time of this study, I found myself in the Ethnic Emergence state, still perceiving myself as a Japanese person who is an American, a Japanese American still seeking and yearning to relearn Japanese and to live in Japan perhaps as an avenue towards Ethnic Identity Incorporation.

### **Research question 3: What motivates a 3<sup>rd</sup> generation Japanese American, or a 4<sup>th</sup> generation Japanese American, to maintain or learn their heritage language?**

Different factors motivated the three participants of this study to maintain or learn their heritage language. Tom was initially motivated to learn Japanese by his family's insistence; later he was obliged to study the language as a child in a segregated internment camp. Finally, marriage and professional reasons compelled him to keep refining his Japanese proficiency. At the opposite end of the spectrum, Julia was deeply motivated on her own, even after being discouraged by her father at an early age to learn Japanese. She saw Japanese language proficiency to communicate better with her mother and her relatives in Japan. Julia gave up her heritage study when she passed through an influential Ethnic Emergence phase where she discovered her passion for Asian American studies. I also found motivation within myself despite my father's discouragement, but unlike Julia, I did not give up heritage language study because ultimately, I was less taken by my "Asian American" Ethnic Emergence phase and felt that nothing less than becoming proficient in Japanese would fulfill my journey.

Tom was primarily motivated to learn his heritage language by his immigrant father who enrolled him in a heritage language course before the outbreak of WWII. During WWII, Tom studied Japanese at the Tule Lake Segregation Center and he was primarily motivated by the Issei, pro-Japan faction in the internment camp, of which his father was a member, to learn Japanese. Extrinsic motivational factors compelled Tom to study Japanese. This practice has been documented in the scholarship as a common practice within ethnic groups when parents send

children to heritage language schools (Nakadate, 2013, p. 37). That is, first generation members of an ethnic community tend to want to maintain the heritage language in their children, since the first generation are native speakers of the heritage language and often only fluent in that language. However, Tom was not personally invested in learning Japanese because he saw himself as an American native speaker of English (Davis, 1982, p 23). When Tom's father, to Tom's chagrin, repatriated the family to Japan after the end of WWII, Tom was motivated to learn Japanese to fit into his new country and to keep up at school. Tom then joined the US Army and moved back to the US; he felt no special motivation to maintain his heritage language as there was no instrumental or pragmatic reason to do so. It wasn't until he found work, based primarily on his bilingual proficiency as he had no relevant work experience, as a ticket agent at Japan Airlines that Tom felt motivated to learn language related to his job. Tom believed that learning vocabulary related to aviation would help him gain more background about his job. Shortly after Tom began working at Japan Airlines, he married a monolingual Japanese woman from Japan, and this motivated Tom to sharpen his Japanese proficiency even further.

Julia, on the other hand, studied Japanese in college to heal ethnic ambivalence and connect with her mother and relatives in Japan. After several semesters of study, Julia lost her motivation to learn her heritage language. This loss occurred concurrently with her ambition to professionalize as a graduate student. Since learning Japanese would not help Julia in her professional goal of becoming a tenure-track professor in Asian American Studies, she stopped studying Japanese. Julia still has a small degree of motivation to one day learn Japanese, perhaps in retirement (20 or 30 years away), but she is content enough in her life and identity that learning her heritage language is no longer a pressing matter. Part of the reason that Julia lost interest in Japanese was that she found kanji too difficult and reading and writing in Japanese too complicated. Rose (2013) suggests that kanji is especially difficult to learn for learners from an "alphabetic language background" (p. 982). Rose (2013) also notes that there are over 10,000 kanji characters (p. 982). For these reasons, it is understandable why Julia had trouble memorizing the characters and learning how to read and write them.

When I first started studying Japanese in college, I was trying to address my ethnic ambivalence, though studying Japanese had very little healing influence. As far as I understand, ethnic ambivalence is not primarily linguistic ambivalence, but rather ambivalence about one's difference—in terms of appearance, name, background, etc.—from the mainstream. Tse (2000)

claims that ethnic ambivalence entails a lack of interest in cultural heritage and explicit rejection of ethnic heritage (p. 187). In other words, language is one part of the heritage that is rejected by ethnic minorities in this stage, but not necessarily the focal point. Learning Japanese was not going to change my appearance or background, for example, but I did intuit that I was Japanese, whatever that meant, and that I was disconnected from this essential part of me due to language loss. However, my interest changed to creative writing, and I did not address my ethnic ambivalence until I reached my 30s. I addressed my ethnic ambivalence by going to Japanese American community events and meetings, writing for Japanese American community newspapers, attending the Tule Lake Pilgrimage and other romantic, ethnic excursions into identity exploration. I conclude that attending cultural events is not enough to improve proficiency in the HL, e.g., the connection between activities and HL learning must be explicit for the activities to help the learner improve proficiency. However, none of these activities related to learning my heritage language. It wasn't until I passed my Ethnic Emergence phase in my 40s that I applied to the PhD in Second Language Studies/ESL program at Purdue as a ticket to living and teaching in Japan, and finally relearning Japanese. I was motivated to learn for professional reasons, but my case is different from the scholarship because I was demotivated by the pedagogy of Japanese as a foreign language teaching. My intrinsic motivation was in stark contrast to the class syllabus which focused heavily on writing Chinese characters. This contrast has not been discussed in the scholarship. While I was doing my PhD, I was motivated to learn Japanese to prepare myself for my social and professional life in Japan, and also to gain material for my autoethnography about learning Japanese as a heritage language. Finally, I found reading and writing in Japanese too difficult and only completed two semesters of Japanese language study at Purdue. A part of me still entertains the idea or possibility that I might reach the Ethnic Identity Incorporation phase after living and working in Japan and gaining at least passable proficiency in Japanese.

I believe that I was motivated and remain motivated to learn Japanese because I did not “find myself” in the Ethnic Emergence phase, as Julia did with her passionate engagement with Asian American studies. While Julia has settled into an “Asian American” identity, I have not discovered an identity to settle into and I still perceive Japanese as essential to understanding my “true identity.” In other words, learning Japanese is an ongoing process for me.

## **Concluding paragraph for the research questions**

In this section, I will summarize the analysis of each of the research questions previously discussed. Regarding my first research question, the question of the impact of history on heritage language learning is important given the direct and dramatic role the internment during World War II had not only on the Japanese language in the JA community, but on the community itself. Both the vibrancy of the heritage language and the vitality of the community itself were destroyed by the war. Given the significance of external factors like internment and societal racism, it is important to connect these external factors with internal factors like shame and ethnic identity to reach a more comprehensive understanding about motivation and heritage language learning. Both a consideration of internal and external factors should be examined in order to compose a complete picture of the participants in this study. Finally, it is important to compare differences in generational experiences because of the dramatic nature of second generation Japanese American patriotism and hyper-assimilation during WWII and after. Also, we should explore the impact of the attitudes of the older generation on the younger, some of whom struggled with a sense of ethnic identity.

In conclusion, this chapter explored the differences and similarities in relation to learning Japanese as a heritage language between the three participants especially as they relate to generational differences and similarities concerning dynamics in the larger Japanese American community. Tom was shamed into an ambivalent relationship to the Japanese language through WWII and the internment and he passed this shame on to his children, who were forced to stop speaking their heritage language in the house. Nonetheless, in accord with the stages of Ethnic Identity Formation (Tse, 1996), perhaps with the affordance of Asian American Studies as an established form of intellectual inquiry, Julia and I sought to reconnect with our ethnic identity via study of our heritage language. Julia found the answers she was looking for in the Ethnic Emergence phase and was discouraged by the difficult task of learning kanji; consequently, she was no longer motivated to maintain her heritage language. Like Julia, my struggles with the difficulty of learning kanji proved to be extremely discouraging. I also found only more confusion in Ethnic Emergence and equate the hope of relearning Japanese someday, despite the challenge of kanji, with the hope of achieving a fuller and healthier sense of identity. To reach this end, I presented my answers to the three research questions by exploring the differences and similarities between the three participants. To summarize, Tom is an unusual case because the internment of

Japanese Americans and the events of WWII made him ashamed of Japanese, but also led to events that increased his level of Japanese proficiency. The idiosyncratic duality of Tom's experience is absent from the literature. Julia's and my experience are also scarcely documented and reveals an arc from ethnic shame and lack of motivation to learn our heritage language because of historical factors and societal racism, to a desire to learn our heritage language for personal reasons, specifically to reconnect with our heritage culture. Both Julia and I have paused our study of our heritage language, partly because of the difficult challenge of learning kanji and do not feel an immediate need to reconnect with culture and heritage. We both recognize ourselves as American native speakers of English. The decrease in our identity and cultural conflicts, as well as being discouraged by kanji, may have led to reduced motivation to relearn our heritage language. Tom was initially motivated to learn his heritage language for personal reasons—his parents wanted him to maintain the language for the sake of maintaining cultural heritage and communication with family and community members, but later in life, he was motivated by instrumental reasons related to his job. Both Julia and I were affected by personal and linguistic reasons (the difficulty of kanji) to disavow our heritage language, and personal reasons compelled us to relearn our heritage language later, in college; that is, at no point in our lives did instrumental or pragmatic reasons motivate us to study Japanese.

This dissertation enriches understanding about motivation in heritage language learners because there is a scarcity of research about third and fourth generation Japanese American learners of Japanese as a heritage language. The professional and ethnic identity related reasons that motivate some heritage learners, that is the intersection of ethnic identity as a motivating factor and/or personal or instrumental reasons has not been previously explored.

## CHAPTER 7: IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

### Implications

As mentioned in the previous chapter, heritage language learners of Japanese struggle with reading and writing and tend to have receptive listening skills. Most Japanese heritage language learners learn their heritage language in foreign language classes which do not include cultural and historical perspectives. This is important because foreign language pedagogy does not meet the unique needs of heritage learners as heritage learners are motivated by connection with their ethnic identity (Beaudrie & Ducar, 2005).

In this chapter, I will provide implications to fill in the gaps of knowledge in approaches for heritage language courses. First, I will address the importance of culture and history in the learning of heritage languages by discussing Vygotsky's concept of the zone of proximal development (ZPD) as a good pedagogical approach to teaching heritage language learners because the ZPD is a good heuristic to teach students about culture. Second, I will talk about the difference in assessment and learner needs of heritage versus foreign language learners. I recommend that heritage language placement and proficiency assessment should be distinguished from foreign language assessment. Third, I recommend that a macro-based approach to teaching be implemented in heritage language courses for Japanese Americans. I will present a case study of a macro-based approach applied to a heritage language course.

Culture and history are essential to the learning of heritage languages. 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> generation Japanese Americans feel more connected to the heritage language learning process if they learned about Japanese American history and the personal histories of their family members, such as the internment camps during WWII. Although internment, racism, shame, and ethnic identity played a role in the loss of the heritage language, understanding the causes of this loss will not necessarily lead to better assessment and instructional methods for 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> generation Japanese Americans. Therefore, HL curricula may consider incorporating instructional materials that foster cultural understanding. For example, reading about these issues, e.g., Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston's *Farewell to Manzanar*, a memoir about life in an internment camp, can help heritage learners find a deeper connection to their heritage language. Similarly, the differences between 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup> generation Japanese Americans, while interesting in a sociolinguistic context, probably can only

benefit the heritage language learner today by giving her a cultural context and connection with the heritage language she is learning or re-learning. 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> generation Japanese Americans are likely to be so assimilated at this point that Lucy Tse's (2010) Ethnic Identity model may not apply to them. If it does apply to them, then it can be used as another tool, like Houston's memoir, to personalize the learning experience.

Since cultural knowledge is part of the heritage learner's current knowledge (versus the range of what they can learn), Vygotsky's concept of the ZPD is a good pedagogical approach to teaching heritage language learners. The Zone of Proximal Development describes the difference between the learner's current knowledge and the potential range of what they may learn (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). This applies to heritage learners because they often have current knowledge (receptive skills) that partly determines the range of what they can learn. For example, because receptive heritage language learners of Japanese have difficulty with kanji, instructors should be aware of the gap between the language the receptive heritage language learner can generate independently, and what she can do with the help of an instructor. Vygotsky's theory (1978, p. 84) of the zone of proximal development (ZPD) is useful here because it identifies what is outside the scope of what the learner can attain. If the bar is raised too high for a receptive learner, e.g., in the form of systematic learning of hundreds of complex Chinese characters, overall learning will be decreased. Therefore, I would recommend practices that take into account the heritage learner's cultural identity and background.

The second recommendation of my dissertation is that heritage language placement and proficiency assessment should be distinguished from foreign language assessment. Ilieva and Clark-Gareca (2016) note that there are "no current models currently created for HL learners that can adequately describe their abilities at a given level of proficiency" (p. 215). HL learners tend to excel at articulation and intonation and struggle with grammar (Ilieva and Clark-Gareca, 2016, p. 220-221). Exams like the ACTFL test HL learners based on what they might have learned in instructional settings, but most HL learners learned their language at home and not in a classroom. Therefore, a test that measures proficiency based on the kinds of language typically used at home would be more accurate and helpful for HL learners. There is a scarcity of empirical studies about how testing of HL learners should be different from testing of FL learners at different levels of proficiency, even as many scholars agree that HL learners have very different assessment and instructional needs than FL learners (Ilieva and Clark-Gareca, 2016, p. 214).

It is important to understand the key differences in assessment and learner needs of heritage versus foreign language learners. In other words, HL and FL learners should be differentiated because heritage and foreign language learners have different goals. For example, Fairclough (2012) notes that one of the four basic goals of heritage language instruction is “language maintenance” (p. 124). In the case of language maintenance, “the primary purpose of instruction is to connect students to family and local speech communities” (p. 124). Another key difference between HL and FL learners is that some HL learners have a receptive knowledge of the language. If some HL learners have a receptive knowledge, then it is important to test them to understand how much vocabulary they currently have. Conventional testing methods are most appropriate for foreign language learners with no receptive knowledge because their passive (receptive) and active skills are more balanced. This balance aligns foreign language learners more with advanced heritage learners with productive, active proficiency in the language. Assessment of 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> generation Japanese Americans should include a lexical recognition task to measure passive vocabulary knowledge (Fairclough, 2012, p. 127). A test that includes lexical recognition tasks could help differentiate between receptive and productive learners. It is important to find assessment means to differentiate between receptive and productive learners because these two types of learners would be placed in different levels. Specifically, Fairclough et. al. (2010) recommends that “Level 1”, a course designed for beginning level receptive heritage learners, would particularly aim to “develop communicative competence at the beginners’ level” (p. 276). In the model developed by Fairclough et. al (2010), HL learners would not even begin to study reading and writing until they reach Level 2 (p. 276). Fairclough recommended that beginning level Spanish heritage language learners not study reading and writing in Spanish. Fairclough’s recommendation would seem to be even more relevant to Japanese heritage learners since kanji is notoriously difficult to learn to read and write. One of the main differences between beginning level HL and FL learners is that there are receptive HL learners who have a passive knowledge of up to 3,500 words (Fairclough et. al., 2010, p. 287) even as they cannot produce more than a few words or a sentence of the language in speech. This difference needs to be identified through assessment, which means assessment tools that can detect and measure the difference should be designed. As noted earlier, scholars are not sure what type of test would be most suitable to assess HL learners. Fairclough et. al. (2010) suggests an electronic placement exam with a lexical recognition component. The various suggestions proposed by scholars over the years, though not

empirically studied enough, on what to include on an assessment test for HL learners is beyond the scope of this dissertation and therefore beyond the sphere of what I can recommend here. Therefore, I would recommend empirical studies about best practices in the assessment of heritage language learners, as well as in instructional methods for HL learners.

The third recommendation is that a macro-based approach to teaching be implemented in heritage language courses for Japanese Americans. A macro-based approach is one that takes into consideration the bigger picture of the learner's understanding of the language, such as cultural and familial contexts. A macro-based approach is best for heritage learners because it incorporates background experience and knowledge and prioritizes real-life communication, whereas the micro-based approach focuses on smaller linguistic units like the sentence (Carreira, 2016, p. 124). Macro-based teaching methods may be more effective because they are aligned with heritage language learner needs. Many heritage learners, for example, feel more motivated when their background knowledge is activated, and they are interested in learning the language for social communication purposes (Carreira, 2016, p. 125). Carreira (2016) suggests some macro-based activities that would be helpful to heritage learners, such as the following task-based activities: "Identify a picture from a description of it," and "Identify key ideas in a message." These activities draw on the heritage learner's receptive skills and the learner's big picture sense of the language gained from being exposed to it at an early age.

Carreira (2016) also claims that task-based teaching is a tenet of macro-based methods. An example of a task-based activity is: "Listen to conversations containing small talk and recognize when the speaker is preparing to introduce a real topic." (p. 127). A task-based activity is a "workplan" that "involves real-world processes of language use" (Ellis, 2003, p. 10). Task-based teaching can be useful to 4<sup>th</sup> generation Japanese American heritage learners because this community tends to be interested in learning how to communicate in Japanese in real world situations. Some studies have been done about implementing a macro-based approach in heritage language teaching.

A case study of a macro-based approach applied to a heritage language course would help illuminate how a macro-based approach is effective in teaching heritage learners. Wu and Chang (2010), in a study about implementing a macro-based approach in teaching heritage learners, described the process of teaching Mandarin as a heritage language with a macro-based approach. Their study found that students "took active ownership of their learning, dispelling the

image of adolescent heritage language learners as lacking motivation to learn about their cultural roots and heritage languages” (p. 23). If heritage students are given a chance to learn about their cultural roots, which they seldom are, they will be more motivated to learn their heritage language. While their study focuses on Chinese American heritage learners of Mandarin, their findings are relevant to my dissertation. By focusing on building up cultural knowledge, they connect the students’ prior knowledge and identity to their heritage language process. Unlike many second and foreign language classrooms, Wu and Chang’s Mandarin class is explicitly bilingual. Students do research in English on Chinese American history, the immigration stories of their own families, the origin of Chinatowns, and they read books by Chinese Americans in English (2010, p. 28). Group debates in Wu and Chang’s class focused on the need for Chinese American children to learn Mandarin, the pros, and cons of interracial marriage, what it means to be Chinese and Chinese American, and the role of Mandarin in their lives (2010, p. 29). Their students learned Mandarin through Chinese pop songs and lyric rewriting sessions, and the students code-switched between English and Mandarin as they rewrote lyrics. The study found that students were “not only actively engaged with each other in the HL class but also outside the class on the class blog or Facebook” (p. 31). That is, students who were initially resistant to learning their heritage language became motivated to both learn the language and use it in social spaces.

The ideas from Wu and Chang’s (2010) study can be applied to a heritage language course on Japanese for Japanese Americans because Japanese Americans also need to build up their cultural knowledge to motivate them to learn. For example, learners would study Japanese American history, including the different waves of immigration (pre-and-post WWII), the internment during WWII, and the origin of Japantowns. The learners can also read John Okada’s novel *No-No Boy* and Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston’s *Farewell to Manzanar* that chronicle Japanese American history. Japanese American heritage learners can do research about the immigration stories of their own families, and learn Japanese through J-pop, anime, and other genres. A bilingual engagement with these genres could be productive for Japanese heritage learners.

## **Conclusion**

In this study, I presented my findings regarding the heritage language learning experience of two 4<sup>th</sup> generation Japanese Americans and one 3<sup>rd</sup> generation Japanese Americans in various contexts. I examined Tom’s (a 3<sup>rd</sup> generation Japanese American) experience of learning Japanese

as a heritage language before WWII and at the segregated detention center, Tule Lake, during WWII. I also looked at Julia's (4<sup>th</sup> generation Japanese American) pursuit of relearning her heritage language via college level foreign language courses, as well as my own (4<sup>th</sup> generation Japanese American) struggles with learning Japanese in college level foreign language courses as a PhD student.

The study illustrates that culture, history and ethnicity play a role in the motivation to learn and maintain the heritage language. Overall, the findings reveal intergenerational differences in motivation to learn the heritage language. For example, Tom received encouragement from within the Japanese American community to maintain his competence in Japanese, whereas Julia and I were self-motivated and spurred by our personal experience of race, ethnicity and culture. The data from case studies of Tom and Julia and an autoethnographic study of my heritage language learning path show that Japanese American history played a direct role in Tom's heritage language learning journey, and an indirect role in Julia's and my encounters with learning our heritage language.

The social or external factors that guided Tom's heritage learning (community mentorship) differed from Julia's and my motivation to relearn the heritage language. That is, Julia and I were inspired by a desire to reconnect with family members and with our own ethnic heritage. Also, different motivational factors impacted Tom (community belonging, career advancement) and Julia and me (strengthening sense of ethnic identity, communication with relatives) in learning our heritage language.

The data also suggests that Tom was not discouraged in his heritage learning because he learned the foundation of reading, writing, and speaking in the 10 years that he attended school in Japan. Julia and I, on the other hand, were obstructed by the difficulty of learning complicated Chinese characters, since our first language is English. As a result, Tom remains a "balanced bilingual" speaker of English and Japanese, and Julia and I have put our heritage language study on hold indefinitely due to wavering motivation caused partly by the difficulty of studying Chinese characters, and partly by our healthier sense of ourselves as both ethnic minorities and as Americans.

This study contributes to the literature on Japanese heritage language learners in many aspects. In terms of sampling, few studies investigate receptive or passive beginning level heritage students of Japanese. In fact, past studies do not focus on 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> generation Japanese Americans,

particularly those who derive from the first wave of immigration from Japan to the United States which occurred from 1895-1908 (Densho Encyclopedia). Because past studies neglect these generations of Japanese Americans, the monumental event of internment during WWII is either not mentioned or not perceived as a major cause of the loss of the heritage language in the Japanese American community. Finally, previous studies do not highlight the need to look into the relation between ethnic identity and heritage language learners. I build on Tse's (1999) assertion that ethnic identity development plays a significant role in an individual's relation to his or her culture, and by close connection, to his or her heritage language. As a result, my study is unique in that subjects of different generations are analyzed and the case study and autoethnography genres convey thick description and a detailed account of the heritage language learning experiences of three participants. The autoethnographic account in particular presents data from teacher comments to quiz scores and homework assignments to provide a contextualized picture of my level of motivation and of what hindered my motivation in particular ways.

Despite the benefit of in-depth analysis, this study is not without its limitations. The small sample size is the most obvious deficit of this study, since it is impossible to generalize from such a small participant pool. Considering this, one promising area of research is a phenomenological study involving several participants, along with collaborative autoethnographies involving two or more participants. One study whose methodology can be replicated to generate more representative findings is Triest (2018); she conducts semi-structured interviews and follow-up interviews with 14 heritage language learners of Japanese ranging in age from 19 – 59. Triest (p.100) also found that there are major differences between the way heritage and foreign language learners learn Japanese. Triest also discovered that heritage learners who attended heritage classes K-12 or pursued heritage language study in college had a more significant understanding of their ethnicity. My study also found that there are important differences between heritage and foreign language learners and their assessment and curricular needs. In my dissertation, the two participants who studied their heritage language in college had a salient understanding of their ethnicity.

As this study partially illustrates, there is a gap in the literature regarding the Japanese heritage language learning experiences of 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> generation Japanese Americans. This can be partly explained by the limited language proficiency of these generations of Japanese Americans, and the fact that most heritage language classes for learners of Japanese cater to a more recent wave of immigration to the United States from Japan, which is constituted by native speakers of

Japanese who lose some level of Japanese proficiency upon studying or working in the US for a period of time. Therefore, my study fills a gap in the research by addressing the needs of receptive 4<sup>th</sup> generation Japanese American heritage language learners. I do this by highlighting the significance of culture and history in heritage language learning, specifically how they connect to Vygotsky's concept of the zone of proximal development (ZPD) as a good pedagogical approach to teaching heritage language learners. The ZPD is a good heuristic to teach receptive students about culture, because the ZPD begins with what the receptive heritage learner already knows (cultural background knowledge). I point out the difference in assessment and learner needs of heritage versus foreign language learners, since this distinction must be made before assessment tools and curriculum can be tailored for heritage learners. I suggest that a macro-based approach to teaching be implemented in heritage language courses for Japanese Americans because macro-based approaches focus on everyday situations and practical real-life language which help heritage learners gain competence in their primary goal, interactive communication.

In conclusion, while 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> generation Japanese American heritage language learners are not the obvious choice of study for researchers who study heritage language learning, this community of learners can help shed light on the interplay of motivation, race, history, and ethnicity. Furthermore, my findings resonate with the findings of scholars who have shown that the difficulty of learning complex Chinese characters serves as an obstruction for foreign language learners. My study suggests that this obstruction for foreign language learners is a double hindrance for heritage learners whose primary interest in learning the heritage language is interactive communication with family and community members. The future for assessment of receptive heritage language learners of Japanese depends on increased awareness among administrators that receptive learners strive to be active learners, that is they hope to gain competence in oral communication. If administrators and curriculum designers are more aware of the needs of receptive learners, these learners will be more motivated to gain active skills in their heritage language, and consequently, with their greater proficiency, will be able to communicate more with their family and with members of their community.

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