Identity Negotiation of Japanese Women in International Marriages:
Impact of Foreign Language Learning Experiences and Cross-Cultural Encounters

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As part of a broader study of Japanese women in international marriages with native speakers of English, this paper focuses on three women who were particularly keen learners of English when they were students, examining how they became attracted to the English language and culture and how the experience of learning a foreign language and coming into contact with its culture affected their identity development and negotiation. Observation, life-story interviews and questionnaires were used to triangulate the data for the case studies in the more extensive project, but this paper mainly analyzes data from the life story interviews. The interview extracts reveal the significant role that "*relatedness*" and "*akogare*" [yearning] played in the participants' language learning experiences as well as the formation and negotiation of the participants' identities.

国際結婚における日本人女性のアイデンティティ形成
一　英語学習、異文化接触の観点から
アスコー朋子、淑徳大学、国際コミュニケーション学部

本研究は、英語圏の男性と国際結婚をした日本人女性の、より広範囲な研究の一部で、学生時代に特に英語学習に強い興味を抱いていた３人の日本人女性に焦点をあてた。この３人の参加者がどのように英語、英語圏文化に興味を持つようになったのか、またその興味を持った英語学習、異文化接触が彼女達のアイデンティティ形成・再構築にどのような影響を与えたのかを考察したものである。本研究の基になる広範囲な研究では、観察法、ライフ・ストーリー・インタビュー、アンケートと３種の研究手法を用い、データの正確性を期するためトライアンギュレーションを行ったが、本論文においては、主にライフ・ストーリー・インタビューのデータを用いた。データの分析により、３人の研究参加者の英語習得経験とアイデンティティ形成には、「関係性」また英語、英語圏文化等への「憧れ」が大きく関与していることが明らかになった。

INTRODUCTION

Speaking fluent English is still a dream for many Japanese people. A large number of Japanese spend enormous amounts of time and money to make this dream come true. One reason for this drive was suggested by a survey of Japanese university students about English education in Japan conducted by Sugino (reviewed in Sekigawa, Sugino, Okayama & Ascough, 2003). In response to the question "Do you feel proud when you speak English with native speakers of English?", 52% of the participants answered "Yes". This suggests that language use and identity—in particular, how individuals look at themselves subjectively and objectively—are closely related.

However, despite the long history of emphasis on English education in Japan and the above-mentioned pride many Japanese take in their ability to communicate with native speakers of English, the Japanese attitude toward international marriage[1], even to English-speaking people, has not always been positive. Due in part to the many sad cases of war brides and other ill-fated marriages of Japanese women with foreign men in Japanese history, the Japanese have historically embraced a variety of pessimistic impressions of marriage with non-Japanese people.

Recently, however, this negative view of international marriage has changed to a more positive image due to the growing number of everyday encounters with non-Japanese people, both in and outside of Japan. According to statistics compiled by the Ministry of Justice in 2004, the number of Japanese going abroad for business, sightseeing and study exceeds 1.6 million a year. At the same time, the number of people of other nationalities coming to Japan annually for sightseeing, to seek work opportunities or to study Japanese has been more than 5 million in recent years. As these numbers

increase, opportunities for Japanese people to meet non-Japanese partners naturally increase as well.

Consequently, the number of Japanese people marrying non-Japanese has been rising, as can be seen in Figure 1. According to the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare, out of a total of 740,191 marriages in Japan in 2003, the number of Japanese who married non-Japanese was 36,039. Of these "international marriages", 8,158 were between Japanese women and non-Japanese men, while 27,881 were between Japanese men and foreign women.

FIGURE 1: International Marriages in Japan, Classified According to Nationality of Spouse

Wives' Nationalities	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Korean	4,521	4,461	4,504	5,143	5,798	6,214	6,188	5,353	5,318
Chinese	5,174	6,264	6,630	7,036	7,810	9,884	13,936	10,750	10,242
Filipina	7,188	6,645	6,035	6,111	6,414	7,519	7,160	7,630	7,794
Thai	1,915	1,760	1,688	1,699	2,024	2,137	1,840	1,536	1,445
American	198	241	184	215	198	202	175	163	156
British	82	88	90	65	81	76	93	85	65
Brazilian	579	551	488	417	333	357	347	284	295
Peruvian	140	130	156	138	128	145	142	126	139
Others	990	1,022	1,127	1,335	1,486	1,792	2,091	2,030	2,427
Husbands' Nationalities	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Korean	2,842	2,800	2,674	2,635	2,499	2,509	2,477	2,379	2,235
Chinese	769	773	834	787	836	878	793	814	890
Filipino	52	56	61	81	101	109	83	104	117
Thai	19	25	31	38	64	67	55	45	62
American	1,303	1,357	1,374	1,299	1,318	1,483	1,416	1,488	1,529
British	213	234	225	240	228	249	267	317	334
Brazilian	162	199	233	204	222	279	243	231	265
Peruvian	66	58	99	122	123	124	135	137	125
Others	1,514	1,708	1,818	2,071	2,237	2,239	2,286	2,407	2,601

  * Statistics and Information Department of the Japanese Ministry of Health and Welfare: "*Heisei 15 nen jinko doutai toukei nenho*" [Annual Report of Population Trends for 2003]

Although Koreans may appear to account for the greatest number of international marriages between Japanese women and foreign men in Figure 1, this figure includes *Zainichi* Koreans—people born and raised in Japan but not having been naturalized. If only truly "international marriages" (those between Japanese and people raised in other countries) are considered, Americans account for the greatest number of non-Japanese men marrying Japanese women.

Takeshita (2000) suggests four possible explanations for the shift from essentially negative historical views of international marriage toward the more positive and glamorous images of recent

times. First, Japan's increased economic power contributed to the change, since power relations influence international marriages. Secondly, owing to the Tokyo Olympics and the liberalization of regulations governing overseas travel for private individuals, as well as increased access to world news, the tendency to view international marriage as a special type of marriage has declined. Thirdly, the marriages of internationally acknowledged Japanese women to non-Japanese men, such as Yoko Ono's marriage to John Lennon in 1963, improved the image. Lastly, since the nationality law was revised in 1950, marriage to non-Japanese no longer means the loss of Japanese citizenship for Japanese women.

Issues related to intermarriage, including the racial, cultural, and religious patterns of intermarriage (Endo & Hirokawa, 1982; Kalmijs, 1993), the difficulties of intermarriage (Gleckman & Streicher, 1990), the effects of bicultural socialization on personality, identity adjustment and inter-group relations (Stephan & Stephan, 1989,1991), and motives for intermarriage (Aldridge, 1989; Buttny, 1987; Cretser & Leon, 1982; Johnson, 1980; Porterfield, 1978; Warren, 1966) have been widely studied. Among the motives found in the last group of studies, Takeshita (2000) highlighted four that appeared to be particularly applicable to international marriages in Japan: 1) weakened foundation/standardization of marriages among Japanese people, 2) unbalanced ratio of women to men in the nation's population, 3) attraction to a different race and/or ethnic group, and 4) extensive social contact between Japanese and non-Japanese people.

The current study focuses on the development and negotiation of identity of three Japanese women who were particularly keen English language learners in their student days and who, after acquiring high levels of English language proficiency, married native speakers of English. In these case studies, I first investigated what made the three participants become interested in studying English in the first place by analyzing their life history from the perspective of relatedness. Secondly, I tried to determine if their foreign language learning and encounters with foreign culture(s) affected their identity formation and negotiation, and if it did, in what ways they negotiated their identities during their foreign language learning. Finally, I examined how the identities they negotiated in their contact with a foreign language and culture affected their lives, including their choice of a husband and their style of discourse.

PREVIOUS RESEARCH AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The notion of identity has been applied in many different ways in a variety of social research. The work of Erikson (1968), Heller (1987), Norton-Pierce, (1995), Norton (2000), Sugimura (2000) and Tajfel (1978, 1981) provided this study with important insights upon which to build a better understanding of the formation and negotiation of Japanese women's identities.

Erikson (1968), who established *identity* as an academic term, defines it as a conviction that one is an individual who has internal identification/oneness, as well as continuity, which has a social dimension; that is, identity must be recognized by other people. Erikson also stressed the notion of *relatedness* in examining the development of identity. He states that identity develops through reciprocal relationships with other individuals. The mutuality of self and others is maintained throughout one's lifetime within the context of parent-child relationships, friendships, wife-husband relationships, and so

on. Through the experiences of reciprocal action, identity develops over one's lifetime (Erickson, 1968).

This important notion was applied by Sugimura (2000) to gain an understanding of the development of women's identities. She states that Japanese women's identity may be characterized by relatedness in a way that stresses the "roles" which Japanese society expects women to play, such as obedient, amicable and harmonious family members, employees, group members and so on.

The most well-known model of social identity was developed by Taijfel (1978,1981), who elucidated social identity in terms of inter-group behavior employing four related concepts: social categorization, awareness of social identity, social comparison and psychological distinctiveness. Taijfel's social identity model is based on the presupposition that human beings seek positive social identity; he claims that individuals become aware of their social identity by being a member of a group, and when the status of the group to which one belongs is evaluated higher than other groups, the self-esteem of the members is raised as well. This notion of seeking positive social identity seems to be essential in interpreting an individual's choice of discourse style.

In the area of language and identity, some of the most important studies are Heller's (1987) study examining the relationship between the role of language and that of ethnic identity formation, Gumperz' (1982) study of social identity and communicative phenomena in face-to-face interaction, Ochs' (1993) investigation of language socialization and social identity, and Norton's (Norton-Pierce, 1995; Norton, 2000) constructs of investment and situated identity, which have helped frame a large number of studies on these issues.

Heller (1987) investigated bilingual children's ethnic identity formation based on the belief that participation in ethnic social networks is the principal factor in ethnic identity formation. She claims that, in addition to being a means of communication, language is a symbol of ethnic identity and ethnic relations. She argues that language use plays an important role in ethnic identity formation, since participation in activities and formation of social relationships in ethnic groups is achieved through language, and language is a tool to make sense out of shared experience, without which it would be almost impossible to become an ethnic group member.

Norton (Norton-Pierce, 1995; Norton, 2000) puts emphasis on the role of social identity in language learning. She claims that Second Language Acquisition theories fail to take into account the relationship between social identity and power in language learning. She defines identity as "how people understand their relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how people understand their possibilities for the future" (2000, p. 5). Norton constructs this notion of the relationship between social identity and power based on Bourdieu's (1977) notion of symbolic and cultural capital and identity, Weedon's (1987) concept of subjectivity, and Cummins' theories about coercive and collaborative power (2000).

The current study is framed mainly by Norton's theory of identity. Drawing chiefly on Weedon, a feminist poststructuralist who attempts to integrate language, individual experience, and social power into the notion of subjectivity, Norton introduces a postmodern concept of social identity, viewing it as multiple, a site of struggle, and changing over time according to the individual's relation to symbolic power and material power in second language learning. She also develops the notion of investment in

language learning, adapting Bourdieu's (1977) concept of cultural capital to the relationship between identity and power. Norton claims that the notion of motivation utilized by many theorists does not take into account the relationship between power, identity and the learners' commitment to learning the target language.

METHODOLOGY

Relationship to Larger Study

As part of a broader study of Japanese women in international marriages with native speakers of English, this paper focuses on the development and negotiation of identity in three women who were particularly keen learners of English when they were students and later happened to marry native English-speaking men.

The larger research project employs a case study approach to investigate the development and negotiation of the participants' identities analytically, holistically, organically, culturally, and by a mixture of these methods. Stake (2000) states that in order to investigate both the commonality and particularity of a case, a case study needs to seek six things: 1) the nature of the case, 2) the historical background, 3) the physical setting, 4) other relevant contexts (e.g., economic, political, legal, and aesthetic), and 5) other cases that show the same thing.

The project began with general observation of fifteen Japanese women who are married to native speakers of English and are members of the Association of Intercultural Families (*Kokusai kekkon wo kangaeru kai*), through which I originally contacted them. In an attempt to obtain a better understanding of the participants, the larger study follows Davis' (1995) suggestion to triangulate data. After five years of general observation, a series of informal interviews with the participants was conducted once a week for a period of one year to obtain the women's life stories. In order to make the most efficient use of the time allotted for the life story interviews, a questionnaire was sent to the participants to obtain background information before the interviews began. The current paper mainly analyzes data from the life story interviews of three of the fifteen Japanese women in the larger study.

Participants

The three participants in the current study—Natsuko, Mamiko, and Yumiko[2]—were selected from the fifteen families participating in the larger project because they represented one type of Japanese women involved in international marriages: those who were enthusiastic learners of English and had reached a high level of English proficiency before they married their husbands. The purpose of the current study was to investigate how these women became attracted to the English language and culture in the first place, as well as how the experience of learning a foreign language and coming into contact with a foreign culture affected their identity development and negotiation.

The three participants were chosen because their responses on their questionnaires suggested that they had been especially enthusiastic about learning English as students, and also because the TOEFL or TOEIC score they provided indicated that they had reached a high level of competence in English.

Data Collection: Life History Interviews

Telling stories is a basic form of communication which plays a very important role in our lives (Atkinson, 1998). The study of life stories attempts to understand how people mentally process their experiences; it focuses on both the act of telling lived experiences and on the stories themselves (Yamada, 2000).

Drawing on this, the aim of the life history interviews in this study was to ask the participants to verbalize their own experiences as lived and told stories (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). As we can speculate, living experiences in our own lives and telling past experiences in a story cannot possibly be one and the same. We make our stories by making meaning of one experience as it relates to other experiences. Considering this, the goal of the interviews was not to obtain the true history of the participants' lives, but to better understand how the experiences or events recounted by the participants had contributed to their identity formation.

During the first period of data collection, unstructured interviews were conducted, with minimum control exerted over the participants' responses, as suggested in Bernard (1994). The interviews were intentionally not recorded in order to allow the participants to feel comfortable in revealing personal or important issues. Since the participants and I are all native speakers of Japanese, the interviews were conducted in Japanese.

During the second period of data collection (from the second year onward), creative interviewing techniques (suggested in Holstein & Gubrium, 1995) were employed. According to Holstein and Gubrium, who drew on Douglas (1985), the interview needs to create an *atmosphere of mutual disclosure* by showing the researcher's willingness to share his or her feelings and ideas in order to gain access to the participants' deepest thoughts. During this second period, the interviews were recorded and transcribed for later analysis.

Analysis

According to Bogdarn & Biklen (1998), data analysis should be done in two stages: firstly, in the field, making analysis an ongoing part of data collection; and secondly, after data collection, by developing, categorizing and analyzing the data. These analytical procedures were employed, enabling the focus of the larger study to be narrowed during the first period of data collection, which involved observation and unstructured interviews. Decisions were made concerning the types of techniques to be used in gathering data, and analytic questions were developed both for further observation and for the in-depth interviews.

After completion of the data collection, the descriptive data needed to be catalogued. Based on Bogdarn & Bilken (1998), the first procedure in developing classification categories is to identify regularities and patterns in the data. I did this while I was transcribing information gained in interviews. The next step was to determine major categories (themes and chapters) and sub-categories (smaller categories within major ones). The classifications were then checked with my research peers. Subsequently, the data was reviewed again and classified according to the categories which had been developed and checked.

RESULTS: IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT/NEGOTIATION VIEWED THROUGH LANGUAGE LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND CROSS-CULTURAL ENCOUNTERS

Natsuko's Story

Natsuko was born into a family with an academic atmosphere; her father was a professor of English literature, and her mother was a high school English teacher in a residential suburb of Tokyo. When Natsuko was growing up, she lived with her parents, grandparents, and her younger brother in a big house owned by her grandparents.

When Natsuko was small, her mother used some simple English expressions in the home with the expectation that Natsuko and her brother would become interested in English later in their lives. For example, when Natsuko came home from school each day, her mother would say "Wash your hands" in English rather than in Japanese. In addition, there were many English materials available to the children in the home, including tapes, records, and books. Natsuko's aunt, who lived nearby, also brought lots of English materials to add to the collection. Thus, Natsuko remembers that even though she was brought up in an ordinary Japanese family, she was exposed to English input every day at home.

Natsuko's mother was a so-called *"kyoiku mama"*[3] and was very strict about her children's education. From the end of fourth grade in elementary school, Natsuko started to go to one of the most difficult *jukus*[4] in the Kanto area to prepare for junior high school entrance examinations. She commuted to the juku three times a week, taking the train for an hour or so each way. On days when she did not go to the juku, she had to study for several hours at home to prepare for the entrance examinations. Her mother also hired a tutor to come to their house to help Natsuko with her homework. Moreover, when the tutor was not teaching Natsuko, her mother was sitting right next to her to answer the questions she had. Studying even intruded on Sundays, when, following the regulations of the juku, Natsuko had to take achievement tests so that her mastery of the skills and knowledge to be tested on the entrance exams could be compared to the national average in terms of her T-scores (*hensachi*). At the end of the 6th grade, Natsuko took the entrance examination of a very competitive women's junior high school located in Tokyo and passed it.

Natsuko remembers that her mother was a perfectionist: She would not be happy if her daughter got a score of "just" 95 (out of 100) on English tests. Moreover, since her mother expected the perfect scores to continue even after Natsuko entered the junior high school, the professional tutoring was maintained, while Natsuko's mother kept on helping Natsuko with English and her father helped her with math until Natsuko finished high school. This meant that one of the three adults was sitting next to Natsuko whenever she was studying. She never had to worry about not understanding her school work, since there was always somebody to answer questions when she needed help. Natsuko's mother also kept track of what she was studying at school and when the tests were. Thus, Natsuko completely relied on her parents academically.

In addition, Natsuko's mother controlled what TV programs she and her brother could watch and allowed them to see only educational programs. She also refused to let them read comic books in front of her. However, since she was teaching English privately to people in the area near her house at night as well as teaching at a high school during the day, Natsuko's mother asked the grandparents to look after Natsuko and her brother while she was teaching at night. That was the only time the two children

could read comics and watch the kind of TV programs they liked.

Later in Natsuko's life, her mother told Natsuko that she regretted leaving her children with their grandparents while she was teaching English for one or two hours in the evening, because that meant she did not have supper with them. She also said that good mothers should stay with their children all the time and have dinner with them. She regretted that her children did not grow up as she expected because she did not do what "good mothers" should.

However, from Natsuko's point of view, the evenings were the only time when she could relax. It was a very precious period in the day when she could do what she wanted to do without her mother's control. She thinks that she could not have survived without this free time.

Today, Natsuko portrays herself as a complete failure, saying, "I failed to satisfied my mother. She thinks I'm stupid, and I think I am, too."[5] She does not have any confidence in herself. However, people around her look at her as a very bright and attractive person.

When Natsuko was 16 years old, she spent a summer in the United States with her father, who was there for a year while on sabbatical. She described her impressions of her first trip outside of Japan in Interview Excerpt 1 below.

Interview Excerpt 1:
When I was 16 years old, my father went to do research at a university in the United States for a year while he was on sabbatical. I thought it would be a good opportunity for me, so I went to visit him during my summer vacation. American food was really delicious, and the buildings were tall and not at all like those in Japan, so it all made a big impression on me. Another thing I realized then was that when I was little, I had completely believed the oatmeal my mother made for breakfast every day was a typical Japanese breakfast. In America, I realized that it wasn't.

１６歳の時に、父がサバティカルでアメリカの大学に研究に行っていたんです。丁度良い機会だと思い、夏休みに父の所へ遊びに行ったんです。アメリカの食べ物もとっても美味しくて、建物も日本に無いような大きなビルでとっても印象的でした。アメリカってすごい国だなーと思ったんです。その時初めて分かったんですが、小さいとき、毎朝母が朝食に出していたオートミールはてっきり日本の物だと思っていたんですが、そうじゃなかったんですね。

As can be seen in the above interview excerpt, the first foreign country Natsuko went to impressed her a great deal.

She had begun studying English as a school subject in her first year of junior high school (seventh grade). She did not dislike studying English, and she had already acquired some basic skills from her mother when she was small. However, she initially rejected the idea of going on to study English in college, since she associated it with the memory of her mother imposing English listening tasks on her when she was a little girl. After she came back from the States, however, she became fond of English as a means of expressing herself. Interview Excerpt 2 shows why, as Natsuko answers the question, "Why do you like to use English?"

Interview Excerpt 2:
Japanese women, probably particularly middle-aged women, are expected not to express our feelings. So when I was studying English, I was told to say "Yes or no" clearly. Once I got used to saying "No", it became a kind of really nice feeling for me. Now, it's easier for me to say "no" in English.

日本人の女性は、特に中高年の女性は、自分の感情を表さないように言われているんです。英語を習っているとき、イエス、ノーをはっきり言うように先生に言われていましたが、それが慣れてしまうと、これが良いんですね。今では、ノーが英語の方が言いやすいです。

In the above excerpt, we can see how Natsuko thought that Japanese women are restricted in expressing their feelings and opinions straightforwardly, which she feels deprives her of the freedom to express herself. On the other hand, she got the impression that women's discourse in English could give her the freedom to express herself more accurately.

Mamiko's Story

Mamiko's grandparents emigrated to the Philippines in the early twentieth century, and they ran a restaurant there. Her grandmother spoke Tagalog very well. Although her mother and her aunt were born in the Philippines, they came back to Japan when Mamiko's mother was three years old because of World War II.

Mamiko's aunt was older than her mother and learned English and Tagalog before they left the Philippines. She is fluent in English and worked as an interpreter at an American army base near Tokyo in the 1960's. She served as a role model for Mamiko, as seen in Interview Excerpt 3.

Interview Excerpt 3:
I looked up to my aunt; she was fluent in English—on top of that, she had the atmosphere of an American woman…. She often brought me presents of things like American chocolates and nice-smelling soap from the American base.

英語が流暢で、容姿もアメリカ人のような伯母に憧れていました。伯母はよく、米軍基地からアメリカのチョコレートや良いにおいの石けんを私に持ってきてくれたんです。

Mamiko's family used some English and Tagalog words at home, and this was the first contact with a foreign culture that she remembers. It was the influence of her aunt, however, that led to her becoming fond of English after she started studying the language in junior high school. Mamiko explained, "The things such as chocolate that my aunt gave me were fantastic. I thought that America was a great country. On top of that, I longed for her American-like atmosphere."

When Mamiko was a junior high school student, she listened to an English language radio program called "*Hyakumannin no eigo",* [English for a million people], where she could hear English as used by native speakers. She particularly liked one of the teachers for the program called Yoko Nomura, a bilingual English teacher, who made a very big impression on her. She mentions this influence in the following interview excerpt.

Interview Excerpt 4:

I was studying English along with *"Hyakumannin no eigo",* and I particularly admired one of the program's teachers—I believe she was called Yoko Nomura—and I wanted to be like her. That was one of the motivations to study English for me at that time.

「百万人の英語」という番組で英語を勉強していたんですが、その中の一人の先生で、たしか野村陽子という人がいて、その先生に憧れていましたね。その先生のようになるのが、英語を勉強すういい励みになりました。

However, after Mamiko entered high school, she lost interest in English. She explained,

Interview Excerpt 5:
It seemed to me that the teachers were making English grammar difficult on purpose, as if the teachers were saying that English was not interesting. Until then I liked English, but I started to think that English was difficult and bothersome.

英語の先生って、まるで「英語って面白くない」とでも言うように、無理矢理英語の文法を難しくしているように思うんです。前までは英語が好きだったんですけど、英語って難しくて、つまらないな〜て思うようになったんです。

Mamiko was fond of studying Japanese language and literature, and as she lost her interest in English, her interest in the Japanese language increased again.

When it came time to go to college, Mamiko's father selected a university for her and gave her advice about choosing a major. He felt that majoring in English would probably give her more opportunities to obtain a better job than the study of Japanese literature. However, Mamiko found it very difficult to learn English vocabulary and grammar when she was preparing for the university entrance examination. She thought that it might be more enjoyable and easier to study Japanese literature than English, which was not her strongest subject at that time. Therefore, she decided to major in Japanese literature at the university.

Mamiko was aware of the fact that at the time (the 1970s), majoring in Japanese literature at four-year colleges did not lead to very many job opportunities for Japanese female university students. While female graduates of junior colleges obtained prestigious jobs like those in top *shosha* (trading companies), the best job she could think of with her qualifications was to work for a publishing company, where your first job was serving tea—a Japanese convention for newcomers. As female employees at publishing companies pursued their career, they might be allowed to write articles if they were lucky.

As this was not what Mamiko hoped to do as a university graduate, she spent a lot of time thinking about her future. While she was wondering what she could do, one of her friends from high school started to think about going to study in the United States. Her friend's idea stuck in Mamiko's mind. She related her train of thought in the following interview excerpt.

Interview Excerpt 6:
If I could speak English, I could become a flight attendant after graduation. I thought that would be better than becoming an *ochakumi* [a person who serves tea in an office]. I thought if I could speak English, I might have better and more varied job opportunities.

英語とかしゃべれたら、大学の卒業後にスチュワーデスか何かに成れれば、会社でお茶く

みに成るよりずっと良いと思いましね。ですから、英語ができれば、もっと仕事の選択し
の幅も広がるし、もっと良い仕事があるかもしれないな〜と思っていました。

Mamiko explained her plans to study in the States and her objectives to her parents. She wanted to enroll in an ESL course at a university for one year to improve her English during her third year at the university in preparation for the JAL (Japan Airlines) flight attendant test. However, she realized that if she stayed in the States for a whole year, she would be 22 by the time she returned to Japan and would not be able to apply for a job with JAL, since the age limit for taking the exam for flight attendants was 21 at that time. Then while Mamiko was still considering studying in the States, she met some former Japanese flight attendants who told her that being a stewardess was not as attractive a job as she thought. It was not rewarding and was very hard work. This was enough to change Mamiko's mind about her future profession.

Even though she had given up the idea of trying to become a flight attendant, Mamiko still wanted to study English in the United States. She asked her parents for their permission to study at a university in the U.S., fully expecting to be rejected. Much to her surprise, her mother granted her request, saying that she was ready to hear that. Mamiko therefore left for the United States, taking a leave of absence from her university, when she was in her third year.

After spending a year in the States, where she met her future husband, Mamiko came back to Japan and started working. In the next interview excerpt she explains the identity crisis that she experienced at that time.

Interview Excerpt 7:
After I came back from the States, I was working for a company in Tokyo. There was a returnee who was behaving like an American woman even when she was speaking Japanese. I mean she was too straightforward and direct. The way she was speaking and her mannerisms made people around her feel uncomfortable. This caused me to think that I might be doing the same thing. I therefore looked at my attitudes and the way I used Japanese and tried hard to correct and readjust my behavior to fit into Japanese society.

アメリカから帰って来て、東京の会社に就職したんです。同じ職場に、帰国（子女）がい
て、彼女の態度とか言葉使いが日本語を話しているときも、なんだかアメリカ人のよう
で、あの、なんていうでしょうか、歯に衣着せぬですか。その彼女の態度が回りの人達を
不愉快にしていましたね。でも思ったんですが、もしかしたら私も同じ事をしているかも
しれないって。それで、自分の態度、言葉使いをもっと日本の社会に合ったものにしよう
と努力しましたね。

Thus, Mamiko found that she had to rethink her language use and identity after her return to Japan.

Yumiko's Story

Yumiko's father was interested in languages, particularly French, since he needed French for his business. Yumiko remembers that her father struggled to learn French words by sticking vocabulary cards all over their house. He also tried to create a good language-learning environment for his children, hoping that they would become fluent in foreign languages, as he himself had a hard time learning French. Thus, Yumiko's language learning was shaped by her father's struggle, and she ended up

achieving her father's dream, which was to become fluent in English.

Her father also wanted Yumiko to become a flight attendant, which was a symbol of English fluency for Japanese people of her father's age. He tried to give positive images of flight attendants directly and indirectly by doing things like talking about the job and taking her to the airport. As she explains in the following interview excerpt, Yumiko believes that she decided to grow up to be a flight attendant when she was very little because of her father's influence.

> **Interview Excerpt 8:**
> My father was very much interested in languages, but he had to learn French by himself for his work after he was already grown, and it was quite a struggle for him. That's why he wanted to create a good environment for me to study English. He would take me along whenever international events were held. Maybe that's why I naturally came to like English and wanted to become fluent in it and become a stewardess or something.
>
> 父は外国語にとっても興味があったんです。仕事の為に、年取ってからフランス語を始めたので、やはり大変だったんですね。そんな父が私の為に英語ができるようにって、最適な環境を作ろうってやってました。国際イベントがあると連れてってくれたりしていました。そのせいか、自然と英語が好きになり、英語が流暢に話せるように成りたいと思っていましたし、スチュワーデスか何かに成りたいとも思っていました。

Yumiko's father had struggled to study French himself, so he wanted his daughter to learn English without the same difficulty. He therefore took her to all sorts of international exhibitions. He provided her with English tapes when she was an elementary school student. Her first summer in junior high school, he took Yumiko and her brother to an English camp in Guam. She really liked it and started thinking of going to an international high school.

Yumiko's father even considered sending his children to an international school from their elementary school years, but his dream did not turn into reality. Yumiko entered a local elementary school and junior high school. When the time came for her to decide which high school to apply for, she believed that her father would permit her to go to an international high school or go abroad. However, her parents opposed the idea of an international school. When Yumiko asked her father to explain why, he said that going to a Japanese high school was crucial to prepare for university entrance examinations. In the end, Yumiko agreed to go to a Japanese high school on the condition that she could go to an American university.

The high school Yumiko entered had a music course, and she became interested in music, particularly singing. While there, Yumiko gave up the idea of becoming a flight attendant and decided to go to a university in the U.S. to study music.

Before going to college in the U.S., Yumiko attended a junior college, and during that time, she went to the States on a home stay program. One of the things that impressed her deeply was the way the father in her host family behaved. He seemed more helpful and gentler than Japanese men.

When Yumiko finally entered college in the U.S., she still had not managed to get a TOEFL score over 550—a prerequisite for taking regular classes—so she had to take an intensive English course for three months before she started undergraduate coursework. After she was accepted into the undergraduate music course, she realized that there was a huge gap between the performance

standards for music in Japan and those in America. She lost her confidence in singing and dancing, and decided to return to Japan without completing the course.

After Yumiko came back from the U.S., she got a job working as a tour guide, which involved taking Japanese tourists to foreign countries. One summer when she took some Japanese students to America on a summer home stay program, she had the opportunity to visit her host family again. She explains what she did then in the following excerpt from one of the life story interviews.

Interview Excerpt 9:
I liked my host father a lot; he helped his wife do housework and opened the door for me. He was very gentle—not like Japanese men, I thought. I wanted to marry an American man like him. I was half joking and half serious, but I asked my host parents to find me a man like the host father.

家事を手伝ったり、ドアを開けてくれたりしているホストファミリーのお父さんがとても素敵だな〜と思っていました。日本人の男性のようじゃなくて、とても優しかったですね。彼のような人と結婚してたいと思って、半分冗談、半分本気でホストファミリーに、お父さんみたいなひとを探してって頼んだんです。

Thus, even though Yumiko had lost hope in pursuing her chosen career in music and dance, while she was in the United States something very important happened to her. At her prompting, her host family introduced her to a man very much like the host father. She started going out with him, and they ended up getting married.

Upon her return from studying in the United States, Yumiko started working and experienced the need for renegotiation of her identity. She had difficulty using Japanese properly in her work as a tour guide. She explains the situation in the following interview excerpt.

Interview Excerpt 10:
When I returned from the States, I started working for a travel agency. My boss told me that my English was good, but that I should study *keigo* [honorifics] and Japanese history more because I am Japanese. Up until then, my interests had been in only American culture and English. I had completely ignored "Japan".

帰国後、旅行会社に勤めはじめたんです。そこのボスが私に「君の英語はいいけど、日本語がね〜。もう少し、日本人なんだから、敬語とか、日本史とか勉強したほうが良いよ」って言ったんです。それまでは、完全に日本を無視して、私の興味はたしかに、アメリカと英語にしか向いていなかってですからね。

As a student, Yumiko had disliked studying not only Japanese language, but also, anything Japanese. She had a good knowledge of world history, but she had little knowledge of Japanese history. She had ignored Japan. Her interests had always veered toward western countries. Her boss at the tour company therefore suggested that she practice polite Japanese and study Japanese history to become a better guide. Yumiko made a great effort to improve her Japanese language skills and to gain more knowledge of Japanese history and culture while she was working as a tour guide, renegotiating her identity to balance her knowledge of Japanese and Japan with her English skills.

DISCUSSION

Relatedness as an Important Element of Identity Development

Erikson (1968) and Sugimura (2000) mentioned that identity develops through *relatedness*—one's relationships with others in parent-child relationships, friendships, wife-husband relationships, and so on during the life cycle. The stories of Natsuko, Mamiko and Yumiko provide some good examples of *relatedness* in terms of the importance of family influence on these three women's identity development.

In Natsuko's case, her mother, who was an English teacher and a very keen language learner herself, expected that by creating a good English learning environment in the home, she could make her children become like her. She also used English at home to make herself a good role model as a Japanese speaker of English. However, contrary to her mother's expectations, Natsuko developed negative images of studying English. All the efforts made by her mother to help Natsuko become a Japanese-English bilingual seemed to have been in vain. On top of that, all of her mother's thoughtless comments on Natsuko's test scores helped her daughter develop an inferior self image, leading her to identify herself as a failure. Thus, Natsuko believed that her freedom to choose her behavior had been restricted by her mother.

Natsuko's mother's way of bringing her up also led Natsuko to think that women were restricted in expressing their feelings and opinions and should not say "yes or no" straightforwardly. However, at her junior high school, which was a Christian school, Natsuko learned that she could say "yes or no" to a question in English, which was a big surprise for her. When she later went to the States, she got the impression that women's discourse in English could give her the freedom to express herself more accurately. Thus, as Burr (1995) states, there is a close relationship between identity and discourse. In addition, Natsuko's story supports Heller's (1987) assertion that choosing a language means choosing an identity.

In Mamiko's case, on the other hand, the positive example presented by her aunt gave her a good role model for her future language learning. Mamiko was also convinced that the United States was a great country because of the American soap and chocolate that she received from her aunt, who obtained them at the American army base where she worked. Her aunt's sophisticated and exotic appearance also helped Mamiko construct an American-biased social identity. She tried to identify herself with her aunt and studied English hard later in her life to become a fluent English speaker like her aunt.

Nonetheless, Mamiko's parents were not successful in motivating her to study English and develop her identity through her choice of foreign language. Her father did suggest that Mamiko major in English, but this advice conflicted with Mamiko's thinking at the time. As Sugimura (2000) and Kroger (2000) state, however, facing disagreements when making important decisions can be a beginning in the process of developing one's identity.

In Yumiko's case, her father was struggling to learn French himself for business purposes, starting to study a new language at a rather advanced age. Her father's taking her to various international events helped Yumiko to become interested in foreign languages and cultures a great deal.

In addition to the great influence exerted by close family members on all three of the participants' language learning experiences, outside role models also played important parts in the identity

development of these three women. Mamiko mentioned that when she was studying English, she had tried to identify herself as an English speaker. She listened to an English radio program everyday and longed to be like the teachers of the program, Yoko Nomura and Kumiko Torigai (the latter went on to become one of the first conference interpreters in Japan). The other participants also mentioned identifying with particular role models.

As can be seen by these examples of both positive and negative influence on the part of family members and role models, *relatedness* played an important role in the identity development of all three participants.

Yearning for a Life in the United States

The narratives of all three participants in this study depict strong attraction to English and to American culture and life. Natsuko had access to English cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1977) such as books and tapes which helped her create intangible assets for the future.

Mamiko's aunt brought American products such as chocolate and nicely perfumed soap that created positive attitudes in Mamiko's mind before she went to the United States. Mamiko was also impressed by the facilities where she was studying in America. It seemed that everything she saw and experienced there fascinated her.

Yumiko was brought up in a western-influenced home environment, and her father also took her to see western movies and international events on many occasions. Naturally, she began to develop positive images of western countries and people from the time she was a small girl. As she grew into adolescence, she noticed there was a big gap between the behavior of Japanese men toward women and the way western men treated women in the movies. When she met her American host father, she felt as if she had finally found the kind of man whom she had been dreaming of since she was small.

In describing their attraction to the study of English or to American life, all three participants often made use of the Japanese word "*akogare*", which means "yearning", "longing for" or "looking up to someone and wanting to be like that person". According to the three women's narratives, this sense of *akogare* gave the participants a strong motivation to learn English and its culture(s). Here I would like to suggest that this sense of *akogare* for a person or even a foreign language or culture helped shape the identity development of the participants in this study.

Gaining a Better Social Identity

Until recently, women's position in the Japanese workplace was generally held to be doing small chores for men, such as serving tea and making copies, until they found a husband and quit work. It was therefore felt that Japanese women did not deserve to learn any skills which they could apply if they wanted to be reemployed after they quit work for marriage (Kokugan, 1989).

During the period of rapid economic growth in the 1970s in Japan, business people such as Yumiko's father started to realize the importance of foreign languages. He encouraged Yumiko to learn English and also suggested that she become a stewardess, which was one of the most prestigious occupations open to Japanese women at that time. There were few higher status jobs available for

Japanese women then, and jobs such as flight attendants or interpreters often required foreign language skills. One of the prerequisites for becoming a stewardess was high English proficiency. Aware of the invisible "wall of silence" created by Japanese male society to refuse entry to women in the business world, Yumiko followed her father's advice, achieved a high level of English proficiency and became a flight attendant. This allowed her access to a better social group (Tajfel, 1981). Thus, Yumiko sought a career with symbolic power; having high foreign language proficiency permitted her to access more material power (Norton, 1995).

In Mamiko's case, her initial choice of majoring in Japanese literature would not have given her good chances of finding a job better than serving tea (*ochakumi)*. In the past in Japan, including the 1970s, when Mamiko was making her decision about her higher education, going to a four-year college entailed some risks for women. When female university students graduated from a college, they would be 22 years old, and since women at the time were expected to quit working when they got married around the age of 24 or 25, it was thought that they would be able to work for only a few years. Companies therefore often preferred junior college graduates, who were younger and therefore were seen to have a longer potential work life ahead of them. Considering this bias against graduates of four-year colleges, going to a junior college was a better choice for Japanese women who wanted to gain general knowledge at a college and work at a company before getting married.

During that period of time in Japan, being able to speak English and becoming a stewardess was a dream for many Japanese women, even though today, some people say that flight attendants are little more than *ochakumi* in an airplane. Learning a foreign language and aiming to become a flight attendant were ways for Japanese women to gain a professional career and to become independent. Hence, the participants' identity development was very much connected with gender and power (Norton, 1995; Weeden, 1987).

Identity Crises and Negotiations of Identities

Upon their return from studying in the United States, both Yumiko and Mamiko started working and experienced "feeling uncomfortable" when the communication or discourse strategies that they had thought applicable did not work. Communication difficulty is often noticed for those who undergo cross-cultural experiences because of cultural differences in discourse strategies (Gumperz, 1982).

Through their experiences studying English, Yumiko and Mamiko initially developed English-influenced discourse styles which they believed would give them access to a better social group where they could develop better identities for themselves. However, when they came back to Japan after spending some time in English-speaking countries, they realized that they were complex social beings (McKay & Wong, 1996), and they found they had to renegotiate their identities to adjust to Japanese society, where it is generally thought that women are supposed to be cooperative rather than assertive.

Tannen (1982) suggests the following relationship between conversational strategies and identity:

> It is sharing of conversational strategies that creates the feeling of satisfaction which accompanies and follows successful conversation: the sense of being understood, being "on the same wave length," belonging, and therefore of sharing identity. (p. 217)

Thus, using English-influenced discourse styles in Japanese settings gave Yumiko and Mamiko the

"uncomfortable feeling of not belonging to the group", and this, in turn, must have triggered the need for them to renegotiate their identities.

CONCLUSION

This study has attempted to describe the experiences of identity formation in three Japanese women who are in international marriages to native speakers of English. Although not all of the participants from the wider study are described in this paper, those whose narratives have been related here received strong positive influences from close family members or radio and TV English teachers who served as good role models. This *relatedness* led them to develop *akogare* [yearning for something or yearning to be like someone] and influenced the way their identities were formed during adolescence. Some other participants in the larger study, through their experiences in studying abroad, developed a similar sense of *akogare* for American facilities and American men. Their identity, developed through these positive experiences, was largely based on the formation of positive attitudes towards Western culture and their strong motivation to learn English. However, after coming back from studying in the United States, they realized that their identity needed to be re-shaped in order to adjust to Japanese society.

The extracts taken from the participants' life stories have shown that these Japanese women who are in international marriages were interested in their husbands' culture and language before they met their husbands. The renegotiation of their identity as a result of spending time abroad suggests that these women's identities are a site of struggle and subject to change (Norton, 1995). In addition to a view of identity formation, these stories also show that their identities are multiple and changeable, as Norton (1995, 2000) suggested.

This paper also lends support to Norton's suggestion that foreign language learners' investment[6] in language learning is closely related with their identity; that is, the amount of time and energy they are willing to spend on learning a foreign language depends on how they would like to look at themselves, as well as how they wish to be regarded by others (Norton-Pierce, 1995). In addition, this paper suggests that we need to investigate language learners' family background, including close family members' experiences with and attitudes toward foreign languages, if we are to understand their investment in language learning.

NOTES

* This paper was originally presented in a colloquium at JALT 2004 and an abridged version was published in the conference proceedings.

1. The term "international marriage" is a direct translation of the Japanese term "*kokusai kekkon"*, which is widely used in contemporary Japan, means marriage between a man and woman of different nationalities. However, "intermarriage" or "mixed marriage", which mean marriage between a couple of different nationalities, races, tribes, or religions, are more common terms in English. The term "international marriage" was not employed until fairly recently in Japan; instead, the terms "*naigaikon*" (inside-outside marriage) and "*zakkon*" (mixed marriage) were commonly used. The question then arises: when did the term "international marriage" take the place of these terms? As modernization and internationalization progressed in Japan, the popularization of the term "international" (*kokusai*) in Japan might have caused the replacement of those terms (Koyama, 1995). Certainly, "international marriage" sounds more sophisticated than *naigaikon* or *zakkon.* Therefore, the term "international marriage" will be used hereafter when referring to this type of marriage.

2. Pseudonyms are used in this report to protect the participants' privacy.

3. A *"kyoiku mama"* is a mother who is very keen on her children's education. In particular, she is interested in sending her children to a very prestigious school. She therefore spends a great deal of time and money on her children's education.

4. A *"juku"* is a special kind of private "cram school" for students who are preparing for entrance examinations.

5. The interviews were conducted in Japanese; all excerpts are translations made by the author. For the longer numbered excerpts, the English translation is provided first, followed by the original Japanese.

6. Norton (1995) used the term "investment" rather than "motivation", which is dominant in the field of SLA, because motivation does not "capture the complex relationship between relations of power, identity, and language learning…" (p.17). I would like to use "investment" here rather than motivation.

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