Heritage Language Development: Understanding the Roles of Ethnic Identity and Saturday School Participation

Kiyomi Chinen, University of California, Irvine
G. Richard Tucker, Carnegie Mellon University

Abstract

This paper reports on a study of 31 Japanese-American adolescents enrolled in a Saturday Japanese heritage school (JHL) in Los Angeles. The study examined the relationship of the participants’ sense of ethnic identity, attitudes toward the JHL school and self-assessed proficiency in Japanese. The major finding of the study, consistent with previous research, was that the variables examined were significantly related. The results also revealed that the older students had a stronger sense of identity as Japanese than the younger students. Moreover, in six months, positive gains were observed in Japanese ethnic identity as Japanese, attitudes toward their JHL school, and self-assessed Japanese proficiency.

Introduction

Problem

According to the 2000 U.S. census, nearly 18% of U.S. residents age five and older speak a language other than English at home (Peyton, Ranard, and McGinnis 2001). While this language knowledge is a resource, it is also undervalued (Brecht and Ingold 2003; Roca, 1999). Brecht and Ingold summarize several reasons to account for the lack of attention to heritage language (HL) development: 1) the inherent fragility of HLs, 2) the limited number of programs designed to maintain and develop HLs, and 3) insufficient research to inform knowledge of HL and HL learners. Other researchers attribute the lack of interest in HL to the status of English in the world as well as to national policies that support English at the expense of other languages (Kono and McGinnis, 2001).

Definitions and Focus

In this study, we adopt a definition for HL and heritage speaker (i.e., HL learner) used in a job announcement from the University of California, San Diego that was listed in the Linguistic Society of America (LSA) Bulletin:

The term 'heritage language' denotes a language other than English that is associated with an individual's ethnic or cultural background and a 'heritage speaker' is someone who speaks or understands a language (other than English) that was spoken at home. (LSA Bulletin No 177, October 2002: 31-32).

The Heritage Language Research Priorities Conference 2000 (UCLA Steering Committee 2000) identified heritage speakers, families, communities, and school programs as
important research areas. We limit our focus in this paper to three factors: HL learners’ ethnic identity, HL school, and HL development.

**Research Questions**

Our study was undertaken in an attempt to answer two research questions as they apply to Japanese-American adolescents:

- RQ 1: How does ethnic identity influence linguistic achievement?
- RQ 2: What is the role of JHL schools?
- RQ 2-1: What role do JHL schools play in promoting Japanese self-identity?
- RQ 2-2: What role do the JHL schools play in promoting proficiency in Japanese?

**Literature Review**

Phinney (1990) claims that the absence of a widely accepted definition of ethnic identity indicates confusion about the term. In a number of literature reviews, ethnic identity is defined as a component of social identity (cf. Giles and Byrne 1982, Giles and Johnson 1987, Schumann 1978). Ethnic identity also appears to influence language development, especially HL development.

Several theories have been developed to account for the relationship between language and ethnic identity. One is ethnolinguistic identity theory (Giles and Byrne 1982), according to which members of a minority group strive for a positive ethnic identity by emphasizing their in-group speech style. That is, members of a minority group tend to speak their own language more than any other language. Giles and Byrne (1982) argue that these group members not only are likely to maintain their ethnic identity, and keep at some distance from outgroup speakers, but that that they also are less motivated to acquire native-like proficiency in the dominant language and wish to maintain the knowledge of their ethnic tongue. Giles and Johnson (1987) hypothesize that members of a subordinate ethnic group that considers language to be an important dimension of its identity are likely to maintain their language when they: 1) identify themselves strongly as members of a group, 2) make social comparisons with the outgroup and strive for a better and more stable status, 3) perceive their own group’s vitality to be high, 4) perceive their ingroup boundaries to be closed, and 5) identify strongly with few other social categories.

The acculturation model developed by Schumann (1978) emphasizes identification with a community as a primary requirement of second language acquisition. Schumann defines the term "acculturation" as "the social and psychological integration of the learner with the target language group" (1978: 29). According to Schumann, there are two types of acculturation: one occurs when an individual is socially integrated with the other community and psychologically open to the other language; the other occurs when the individual perceives the other community as a group whose lifestyle and values s/he wishes to adopt. Cho (2000) claims that HL proficiency correlates positively with a well-
developed sense of ethnic identity and affiliation with their ethnic group, such that group members have a greater understanding and knowledge of their groups' cultural values, ethics, and manners. Phinney and Tarver's (1988) model of ethnic-identity search also discusses the relationships between an individual’s ethnic identity and her knowledge about her ethnicity. They investigated the beginnings of ethnic-identity formation of Black and White eighth graders from middle-class families attending an integrated junior high school. They found that the students from both ethnic groups who had the strongest interest in searching for their ethnic identity expressed their interests and curiosities toward their culture by reading books, going to museums, and talking to others. Tse's (1997) model of ethnic-identity formation explains the relationships among ethnic identity, attitudes and motivation, and HL development. Based on a study of American-born Asian-American adults, Tse (1998) concluded that language acquisition is facilitated when an individual has positive attitudes toward the language and feels positively about her ethnic group.

Given the importance of group membership to ethnic identity development, HL schools can be seen as ideal places to contribute to HL development, not only because they teach the language but also because they offer an opportunity for ethnic group membership. Shibata (2000) conducted qualitative research addressing the problem of immigrant parents from Japan who want to pass on their native language to their children in a location where ethnolinguistic vitality is low. She concluded that Saturday schools (i.e., HL schools) are one of the most effective ways to teach children a HL.

Methodology

We analyzed our data both quantitatively and qualitatively; however, in this paper, we will only present the methodology and results of quantitative analyses. We intend to present the results of qualitative analyses based on interview data in future publications.

Research Site

The research was conducted in a Japanese Saturday supplementary K-12 school in southern California. Students attend this school on Saturday from 8:45 am to 3:30 p.m. The school uses the textbooks and follows the academic calendar and curriculum used in public schools in Japan. The academic year begins in April and ends in March, and comprises three terms: April to July, September to December, and January to March. Students meet for 44 Saturdays per year for six periods of instruction. The goal is to provide instruction in subjects taught in Japan (e.g., Japanese, mathematics, science, social science) so that the students will have a smooth transition upon returning to the Japanese educational system. In this type of school, it is assumed that the students are able to follow instructions given entirely in Japanese.

In principle, this school teaches Japanese as a native language rather than as a foreign or heritage language. However, student demography has changed significantly in the last 15 years. Fewer families are now sent by Japanese companies to the United States, and
fewer first-generation students expect to re-enter the Japanese educational system. Moreover, many students at this school were born in the United States and they do not plan to attend school in Japan either. If we take into account the students’ cultural and linguistic background, the school can be considered a JHL school. To accommodate the needs of such students, an attempt to develop a curriculum aimed at students who are learning Japanese as a heritage language is in progress.

At the time of our research, the JHL school had 1,900 students enrolled, comprising approximately 1,400 kindergarten to sixth-graders, 460 seventh- to ninth-graders, and 40 tenth- and eleventh-graders. No students were enrolled in grade twelve. According to the school principal, only half of the students plan to return to Japan.

**Participant Selection**

Study participants were 31 Japanese-American students (9 male and 22 female) at this school. The term “Japanese-American” in this study refers to Japanese students who spoke Japanese at home with one or both parents and who were either Japanese-born or American-born, and raised in the U.S. Here, the term "U.S. raised students" is used to mean students who have received schooling in the U.S. since kindergarten. We chose as subjects students who used Japanese at home with one or both parents and who were in grades 7 to 11. We based this choice on the conclusion reached in Lambert, Frankel, and Tucker’s (1966) study indicating that the stereotyped impressions, or biased views, that members of one social group hold of representative members of a contrasting group are formed by age 12, and that these stereotyped impressions are, in turn, necessary to the formation of ethnic identity.

To control for cultural and linguistic variations, we limited American-born participants to second-generation students, who were likely to have more Japanese cultural awareness and linguistic skills than third or fourth generation students.

**Student Selection**

Subjects were given two questionnaires, the one in January of 2003 and the other in July of 2003. The first questionnaire, administered to all students in grades 7 to 11, solicited general background information and also measured the primary constructs of the study (i.e., ethnic identity, attitudes toward Japanese school, and HL development). We received 71 responses and based on the background criteria described above, we selected 60 students as participants for this study. The second questionnaire was given in July to these 60 participants, and we received 31 responses. Participants were examined twice to determine whether there were changes in their responses over time.

**Questionnaires**

Our questionnaires measured three variables: 1) ethnic identity; 2) attitudes towards Japanese school; and 3) self-assessed Japanese proficiency (i.e., HL development). We
prepared a bilingual (i.e., English and Japanese) version of the questionnaires and allowed the students to complete either version.

**Measuring Ethnic Identity**

To measure ethnic identity, we adapted Phinney’s (1992) Multigroup Measure of Ethnic Identity (MEIM). According to Phinney (1992), ethnic identity is an important component of self-concept and can be particularly salient during adolescence. She measures ethnic identity using a questionnaire based on characteristics understood to be common across different ethnic groups (i.e., positive ethnic attitudes and a sense of belonging, ethnic identity achievement, and ethnic behaviors or practices). A 6-point scale was used to measure the participants’ Japanese ethnic identity (cf., Appendices A and B).

Two additional questions were adapted from Lee's (2002) questionnaire: 1) whether the subjects thought of themselves as "Japanese" or "American" or "Japanese-American" and 2) how they would like others to perceive them.

**Measuring Attitudes toward the School**

The questionnaire included questions about students’ academic achievements, socialization, and personal feelings related to the HL school context. A 6-point scale was used to measure the participants’ attitudes toward their school.

**Measuring Heritage Language Development**

Because the school would not permit testing of their students, we were limited to eliciting self-assessment to measure the students’ HL knowledge. We designed a “can do” questionnaire with Professor Katoaka of California State University at Long Beach, a researcher who is well known in the field of JHL in the U.S. This type of questionnaire is considered a reliable and valid proxy for direct measurement (see Clark 1981). The questionnaire asked the participants how well they could perform a number of tasks involving reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Again, a 6-point scale was used to measure the participants’ linguistic skills.

**Procedure for Data Collection**

The questionnaire combined 1) modified versions of the MEIM, 2) a self-assessment questionnaire for attitudes toward Japanese school, and 3) and a self-assessment questionnaire for Japanese HL development.

**Quantitative Analyses**

To analyze quantitative data, we employed a series of correlational analyses, t-tests, and analyses of variance. We first investigated the relationships among ethnic identity,
attitudes toward the Japanese school, and HL development. In addition, we conducted comparative analyses across time (i.e., comparisons between the January data and the July data) and across grade levels.

Results

Research Questions

Research Question #1: RQ 1: How does ethnic identity influence linguistic achievement?

We first examined the relationship between students’ ethnic identity (cf. Appendix B; Questionnaire I, questions 1 to 18) and their self-assessed Japanese proficiency (cf. Appendix B; Questionnaire III, questions 1 to 19). The mean of each student’s responses to 18 ethnic-identity questions was used as the measure of ethnic identity. Likewise, the mean of each student’s responses to the 10 Japanese proficiency questions was used as the measure of self-assessed Japanese proficiency. The mean of ethnic-identity responses and the mean scores of self-assessed Japanese proficiency were correlated for the summer data. The correlation was positive and significant ($r=.44$, $df=29$, $p<.011$) (see Table 1). Therefore, we can conclude that students who identified themselves as more Japanese generally assessed their Japanese proficiency to be higher than the students who identified themselves as less Japanese.

Research Question #2: RQ 2: What is the role of a JHL school?

- RQ 2-1: What role does JHL school play in promoting Japanese self-identity?
- RQ 2-2: What role does JHL school play in promoting proficiency in Japanese?

For this question, we examined the relationship between students’ attitudes toward their school (cf. Appendix B; Questionnaire II, questions 1 to 16) and their ethnic identity (cf. Appendix B; Questionnaire I, questions 1 to 18). We used the mean response for each student summed over the individual items for each construct (i.e., attitudes toward Japanese school and ethnic identity). The correlation was positive and significant ($r=.73$, $df=29$, $p<.001$), indicating that the students who had more positive attitudes toward the school generally identified themselves as more Japanese.

We also examined the relationship between students’ attitudes toward their Japanese school (cf. Appendix B; Questionnaire II, questions 1 to 16) and their self-assessed Japanese proficiency (cf. Appendix B; Questionnaire III, questions 1 to 19). The correlation was also positive and significant ($r=.64$, $df=29$, $p<.001$); therefore, students who had more positive attitudes toward the school generally assessed their Japanese proficiency to be higher than the students who had less positive attitudes toward the school.
Table 1: Correlations for Summer Data Obtained from 31 Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Correlation</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic Identity and Japanese Proficiency</td>
<td>.44</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>.011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes toward J. School and Ethnic Identity</td>
<td>.73</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes toward J. School and J. Proficiency</td>
<td>.64</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comparative Analysis Across Time

Some researchers claim that ethnic-identity formation by minority students occurs gradually and that over time students find suitable membership in their ethnic group and develop a positive attitude toward their HL (cf., Tse 1997). Based on these claims, we wanted to see whether the student responses showed changes in the six-month period from January 2003 to July 2003. We looked for changes in perceptions of ethnic identity, attitudes toward the school, and self-assessed Japanese proficiency. The following sections present the results of comparative analyses of the data from January and July. For this comparative analysis, we conducted a series of t-tests for paired samples.

Ethnic Identity

Questions 1 through 18 concerned ethnic identity (cf. Appendix A, Questionnaire I and Appendix B, Questionnaire I). The students responded to each question using a Likert-scale that ranged from 1 to 6, with 1 indicating identification as 100% non-Japanese and 6 indicating 100% Japanese identification. The mean for the responses given by the 31 students during the first collection was 3.54, whereas the mean for the responses collected during the second collection 3.58 (Table 2). The difference between these mean scores was .04, which was not statistically significant (t=.59, df=30, p<.554). In other words, the students’ perceptions of ethnic identity in January 2003 and July 2003 were not significantly different.

Attitudes toward School

We also examined students’ attitudes toward their Japanese school (cf. Appendix A, Questionnaire II and Appendix B, Questionnaire II, questions 1 to 8). The same scale that ranged from 1 to 6, with 1 indicating the most negative attitudes and 6 indicating the most positive attitudes, was used. The means were 4.38 for the winter data and 4.52 for the summer data (Table 2). The difference between these mean scores was .14, which was not significant (t=1.28, df=30, p<.208). Therefore, students’ attitudes toward the school in July 2003 did not differ significantly from their attitudes in January 2003.

Self-assessed Japanese Proficiency

We then examined students’ self-assessed Japanese proficiency (cf. Appendix A, Questionnaire III and Appendix B, Questionnaire III, questions 1 to 19). The same Likert-scale that ranged from 1 to 6, with 1 indicating the lowest proficiency and 6
indicating the highest proficiency, was used. The means were 4.75 for the winter data and 4.77 for the summer data (Table 2). The difference between these mean scores was .02, which is not significant ($t=.30$, $df=30$, $p<.76$). Therefore, students’ self-assessed Japanese proficiency in July 2003 was not significantly different from their proficiency in January 2003.

### Table 2: Paired Differences between Winter Data and Summer Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Winter</th>
<th>Summer</th>
<th>Diff</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic Identity</td>
<td>3.54</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.59</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>.554</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes toward School</td>
<td>4.38</td>
<td>4.52</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>1.28</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>.208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japanese Proficiency</td>
<td>4.75</td>
<td>4.77</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>.760</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Maximum score for mean score for winter and summer = 6

### Comparative Analyses Across Grade Levels

We conducted comparative analyses of the data across grade levels to investigate whether age difference and responses were related. For this analysis, we used responses from the questionnaire administered in the summer from nine seventh graders, 10 eighth graders, six ninth graders, and six high-school students.

The following sections present the results from a series of One-Way ANOVAs and the subsequent comparisons among the grade-level groups ($t$-tests for independent samples). The mean scores presented in the following sections are based on a series of 6-point Likert-scale questionnaire items described in the previous sections. The question items that we analyzed for each variable are the same ones listed in previous sections.

#### Ethnic Identity

First, we examined perceived ethnic identity by respondents across grade levels. The ANOVA results showed significant variation across grade levels ($F=5.31$, $df=3$, 27, $p<.005$) (Table 3).

### Table 3: Variance Across Grade Levels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>F</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic Identity</td>
<td>5.31</td>
<td>3,27</td>
<td>.005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes toward School</td>
<td>2.92</td>
<td>3,27</td>
<td>.052</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japanese Proficiency</td>
<td>1.54</td>
<td>3,27</td>
<td>.226</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We then examined the difference between the grade levels using $t$-tests and found that the high-school students were significantly different from the seventh graders (the mean was 4.25 for high-school students and for seventh graders was 3.24, $t=2.69$, $df=13$, $p<.018$)
(Table 4), the eighth graders (the mean was 3.79, $t=1.97, df=14$, $p<.068$), and the ninth graders (the mean was 3.06, $t=4.76, df=10$, $p<.001$).

**Table 4: Variance among High-school Students and Other Students for Ethnic Identity**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>2.69</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>.018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>3.79</td>
<td>1.97</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>.068</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>3.06</td>
<td>4.76</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. The maximum score for the mean score = 6

**Attitudes toward School**

We next examined attitudes toward the school by respondents across grade levels. The results showed a significant variation among the grade levels ($F=2.92, df=3, 27$, $p<.052$) (Table 3). We then examined the difference among the grade levels using t-tests and found that the high-school students were significantly different from the seventh graders (the mean for high-school students was 5.12, and for seventh graders was 4.07, $t=1.97, df=13$, $p<.070$) (Table 5).

**Table 5: Variance among High-school Students and Other Students for Attitudes toward School**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>1.97</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>.070</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>4.74</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>.294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>1.80</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>.101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS</td>
<td>5.12</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. The maximum score for the mean score = 6

**Self-assessed Japanese Proficiency**

Thirdly, we examined self-assessed Japanese proficiency by respondents across grade levels. The ANOVA results showed insignificant variation among grade levels ($F=1.54, df=3, 27$, $p<.226$) (Table 3). Therefore, no multiple comparisons were performed.
Other Analyses

In addition to the analyses already described, we also conducted comparative analyses across response languages and gender in an attempt to determine whether there was a relationship between the response language and each of the variables (i.e., ethnic identity, attitudes toward school, and Japanese proficiency) or between gender and these variables. In general, the students tended to respond similarly, whether they responded in English of Japanese; in addition, no significant relationships were found between gender and students’ responses.

Discussion

The results show a positive and significant correlation of all variables mentioned in the research questions. The correlation between learners’ ethnic identity and their attitudes toward their school (r=.73) was the most robust, emphasizing the school’s strong contribution in fostering Japanese ethnic identity among the students. The questionnaire included three questions on the students’ attitudes toward their school (cf. Appendix A; Questionnaire II). Students were asked how much they agreed with the following statements: 1) “Sakura Gakuen is an important school” (question #1); 2) “If I were a mother or a father, I would like to send my child to a Japanese school” (question #14); and 3) “I enjoy Sakura Gakuen” (question #15). The mean score and standard deviation for each question, based on the summer data, are given in Table 6.  The possible maximum score for the mean is 6. The mean score and standard deviation for all responses to this questionnaire (i.e., attitude toward the Japanese school) are: M=4.53; SD=.93. The mean scores indicate that the students enjoyed attending their school and saw it as important.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question #</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.87</td>
<td>1.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>4.92</td>
<td>1.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>4.65</td>
<td>1.62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The interview data showed a correlation between students’ positive attitudes toward the school and their sense of Japanese identity. Six of eight focus-group students commented on these two factors. All six students mentioned that getting together with Japanese friends at the Japanese school was “fun.” One of the students said that she felt very comfortable with her Japanese friends. She explained, “We all share the same background, and we understand each others’ problems and feelings very well.” Another student said, “Being with Japanese friends at school is fun. I can understand Japanese jokes and tell Japanese jokes and talk about things that only Japanese can understand.”
These comments suggest that the school is an important place for the students to socialize and to nurture their Japanese identity.

The enjoyment students gain from socializing with their Japanese friends can be understood in terms of Phinney’s model of ethnic-identity search. Phinney and Tarver (1988) claim that individuals who are highly engaged in an ethnic-identity search are experiencing immersion in their own culture through activities such as reading, talking to people from the same ethnic group, and participating in cultural activities.

As for the role of the school, Fishman (1980) says that a main function of ethnic-community mother-tongue schools is to teach children about their ethnic identity. Long (1987) has a similar view toward heritage schools. “By giving him [the student] the opportunity to know his background, the school provides the child with more options to choose from when he begins to develop his own perspective on his identity” (135). Shibata (2000) is more explicit about the school as a place for socialization:

The role of the [Japanese] Saturday school is not only to teach the Japanese language and culture but also to offer a place to use it [this knowledge] through interaction with other children and adults. School is also the place to nurture ethnic identity and friendship[s] among children of the same age or beyond (471).

A key expression that captures the school’s role as fostering ethnic identity is “ethnic group membership.” Tse (2001) says:

While researchers have looked quite extensively at the language exposure we need to learn a new language, a second set of factors that are equally important has received far less attention. These factors related to “group membership,” or the allegiances we feel with particular-language-speaking groups and the attitudes and feelings that flow from being associated with them. In other words, group membership is important because we tend to learn language better when we feel like a member of the group of people who speak that language (60).

Tse (2001) claims that group membership is important because it promotes efficient language development. Her claim may be extended to say that group membership promotes not only efficient language development but also ethnic-identity enhancement. This extension of Tse’s idea is based on Giles and Byrne’s (1982) ethnolinguistic identity theory, according to which the members of a subordinate ethnic group strive for a positive ethnic identity by emphasizing their in-group speech style. Giles and Byrne (1982) argue that members of a subordinate ethnic group are likely to maintain their ethnic identity. Therefore, the students who emphasize their in-group speech style (i.e., the students who develop Japanese proficiency) by attaining group membership are likely to maintain or enhance their Japanese ethnic identity. The relationship between ethnic identity and language can therefore be understood as reciprocal.
No statistically significant changes were noted across time of ethnic identity, attitudes toward school, and Japanese proficiency. While the changes that did occur were minimal, however, they were always in a positive direction, and all variables showed modest gains.

Because the formation of ethnic identity is a dynamic process, the quantitative analyses completed for this study may not show important, and ultimately “significant,” changes that take place within a long period of time. But there is a strong possibility that the minimal positive gains that occurred in six months may lead to a significant change over the long run. In this study, we believe that we have captured a partial cross section of the students’ ethnic identity formation that is in progress.

The results of a series of comparative statistical analyses across grade levels indicated that grade level appeared to play an important role in ethnic identity. A sense of Japanese ethnic identity seemed to be most salient among the high-school students. Interview data supports the notion that the formation of ethnic identity requires a certain time for “gestation.” One of the students we interviewed said, “Compared to before, I have more Japanese friends, and I know more Japanese stuff. I feel like I’m becoming more Japanese. Next year, I may be even more Japanese.” This student asked me to interview her again in the following year so that she could talk more about “being Japanese.”

The results of the comparative analyses can be best understood by applying the ethnic-identity formation model developed by Tse. Her model (1997) explains the relationships among ethnic identity, attitudes/motivation, and HL development. In her model, she posits four stages of ethnic identification: lack of awareness, ethnic ambivalence/evasion, ethnic emergence, and ethnic identity incorporation. At each stage, she provides a corresponding language attitude description. At the third stage, the HL learner begins to show interest in learning about her ethnic culture and acquiring her HL. At the final (fourth) stage, the learner discovers her ethnic minority American group, finds membership in that group, and establishes positive attitudes toward the HL.

The students we surveyed appear to have been moving in a positive direction (i.e., stronger sense of being Japanese, more favorable attitudes toward the Japanese school, and higher Japanese proficiency). The high-school students of the group were at the third or fourth stage of Tse’s model. Several high-school students said that they felt comfortable being with a group of friends who share the same bilingual (i.e., Japanese and English) and bicultural (i.e., Japanese and American) background. These students’ descriptions of their feelings correspond to Tse’s final stage, in which the learner finds suitable membership in the ethnic minority American group. Because her model suggests that ethnic-identity formation follows a predictable developmental path, we may anticipate that the junior-high students in our study will have a greater sense of Japanese ethnic identity and attitudes/motivation in a few years.
Conclusion

Previous studies have suggested that internal factors such as attitudes, motivation, and social identity play an important role in language learning. In addition to these factors, according to many HL learner studies, ethnic identity is also a key factor in HL development.

The most significant aspect of the present research is that it captured the process of HL development holistically by looking at multiple factors (JHL learners’ ethnic identity, attitudes toward the Japanese school, and HL development) simultaneously and examined the overall relationships among these factors.

Another significant aspect of the research is that it looked at the contribution of a JHL school to the students’ formation of attitudes and language proficiency. There is much speculation about the supposedly positive role played by HL programs on the development of target language proficiency but there are thus far insufficient data.

Limitations of the Research

One limitation of this study concerns the findings related to the development of ethnic identity. We collected data on two occasions only six months apart, and this period may be insufficient to observe significant change.

Another limitation pertains to the number of participants in this study. It would be desirable to have data from a larger number of participants so that it could be analyzed in a statistically more sophisticated manner.

The third limitation is that the students who volunteered to participate in this study might have had more positive attitudes/motivation toward learning Japanese and their HL school than those who chose not to participate. In other words, our research might have involved relatively few students who had negative attitudes toward learning Japanese and their school and may therefore have resulted in some bias in the research findings.

The fourth limitation concerns another possible bias in student participation. A major finding of this study is that the high-school students had a more positive sense of Japanese ethnic identity, more positive attitudes toward their school than students in lower grades, and higher self-assessed sense of Japanese proficiency. We must caution that this could be a circular argument and that these students stayed at the school through high school because they had a positive sense of Japanese ethnic identity, positive attitudes toward their school and confidence in their Japanese proficiency.

Implications for Future Study

Although positive correlations between ethnic identity, school participation, and Japanese proficiency may be expected, it is nonetheless important to demonstrate that they do
occur. That is, we believe that we have demonstrated that there is “value added” to Saturday school attendance. It can be anticipated that the persistent students want to develop literacy skills and the control of more complex forms of the oral language; that they appear to do so is noteworthy despite a possible sample bias.

This study serves as the first part of a series of planned-variation studies (Chinen and Tucker 2002), which will include additional thorough, in-depth, and longitudinal studies with more participants from different ethnic groups, at different types of HL schools, and at different regions of the U.S. In addition, information about the socio-economic status of an ethnic group and rates of marriage within and outside of that group would provide a better understanding of the group’s characteristics.

The development of knowledge about HL maintenance and development requires a comprehensive exploration of HL learners. The present study’s findings have provided insights into the importance of a sense of ethnic identity, and the role of a JHL school in the cultivation of that identity, to HL development.

Notes

1 The summer questionnaire included questions that did not appear in the winter questionnaire.

Works Cited


Appendix A
English Questionnaire (Winter Version)

Background Information
The following questions are about your background.

Please write your name and answer the questions. For questions 3 – 13, please circle only ONE item.

1. Name: ______________________________________________________

2. Age: ________ yrs old.

3. Grade at Sakura Gakuen: 7th 8th 9th 10th 11th

4. Gender: Male Female

5. Were you born in Japan?: Yes No
   - If yes: How old were you when you came to the U.S.? ________ yrs. old
   - If no: Are you: second-generation / third-generation / Other

6. Do you have sisters and brothers?: Yes No
   - If yes: Are you … first born / second born / third born

7. Which language do you use at home? : Japanese only / Japanese and English / English only

8. How many years have you been studying at Sakura Gakuen?
   1–3 yrs. / 4–6 yrs. / 7–9 yrs. / 10-12 yrs.

9. Have you attended other Japanese schools?: Yes No

6. Do you have sisters and brothers?: Yes No
   - If yes: Are you … first born / second born / third born

7. Which language do you use at home? : Japanese only / Japanese and English / English only
8. How many years have you been studying at Sakura Gakuen?
1–3 yrs. / 4–6 yrs. / 7–9 yrs. / 10-12 yrs.

9. Have you attended other Japanese schools?: Yes No

10. Do you have a private tutor or do you go to juku?: Yes No

11. Are you a member of a Japanese-culture related club? (ex. kendo sports club): Yes No

12. How many times have you visited / stayed in Japan while you have been living in the U.S.?
0-1 time / 2-3 times / 4-5 times / 6-7 times / 8 or more times

13. How long have you stayed in Japan if you added up all the times you were there while you have been living in the U.S.?
less than 1 month / 1-3 months / 4-6 months / 7 months–1yr. / 1 or more yrs.

14. Where do you live? Please write the name of the city:________________________________

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Questionnaire I
Ethnic Identity Questionnaire

The following questions ask you about your ethnicity or your ethnic group and how you feel about it.

Please circle one.

My father is:
a) Japanese b) American c) Japanese-American d) Other ___________

My mother is:
a) Japanese b) American c) Japanese-American d) Other ___________

I identify myself as:
a) Japanese b) American c) Japanese-American d) Other ___________
Please place an X in one of the spaces below to indicate the extent to which the statement applies to you.

Ex) I have many Japanese friends.

Strongly disagree : : X : : Strongly agree

I somewhat agree that I have many Japanese friends.

1. I have spent time trying to find out more about the Japanese ethnic group, such as its history, tradition, and customs.


2. I am a member of organizations or social groups that are mostly composed of Japanese.


3. I have a clear sense of being Japanese and what it means to me.


4. I like meeting and getting to know people from ethnic groups other than Japanese.


5. I think a lot about how my life will be affected by being Japanese.


6. I am happy that I am a member of the Japanese ethnic group.


7. I sometimes feel it would be better if different ethnic groups did not try to mix together.


8. I often spend time with people from ethnic groups other than Japanese.

9. I have a strong sense of belonging to the Japanese ethnic group.

Strongly disagree ____:____:____:____:____:____ Strongly agree

10. I understand pretty well what being Japanese means to me in terms of how I relate to Japanese and non-Japanese people.

Strongly disagree ____:____:____:____:____:____ Strongly agree

11. In order to learn more about my Japanese background, I have often talked to other Japanese about the Japanese ethnic group.

Strongly disagree ____:____:____:____:____:____ Strongly agree

12. I have a lot of pride in the Japanese ethnic group and its accomplishments.

Strongly disagree ____:____:____:____:____:____ Strongly agree

13. I do not try to become friends with people from other ethnic groups.

Strongly disagree ____:____:____:____:____:____ Strongly agree

14. I participate in Japanese cultural practices, such as special food, music, or customs.

Strongly disagree ____:____:____:____:____:____ Strongly agree

15. I am involved in activities with people from other ethnic groups.

Strongly disagree ____:____:____:____:____:____ Strongly agree

16. I feel a strong attachment towards the Japanese ethnic group.

Strongly disagree ____:____:____:____:____:____ Strongly agree

17. I enjoy being around people from ethnic groups other than Japanese.

Strongly disagree ____:____:____:____:____:____ Strongly agree

18. I feel good about the Japanese cultural or Japanese ethnic background.

Strongly disagree ____:____:____:____:____:____ Strongly agree

19. There are many different ways in which people think of themselves. Which ONE of the following best describes how you view yourself? Please circle ONE.

a) I consider myself basically a Japanese person. Even though I live in America, I still view myself as a Japanese person.
b) I consider myself basically as an American. Even though I have a Japanese background and characteristics, I still view myself as an American.

c) I consider myself a Japanese-American, although deep down I always know I am Japanese.

d) I consider myself a Japanese-American, although deep down I view myself as an American first.

e) I consider myself a Japanese-American. I have both Japanese and American characteristics and I view myself as a blend of both.

20. I would like other people to regard me as (please circle ONE):

1) Japanese 2) American 3) Japanese-American 4) Other _________________

Questionnaire II

Saturday School Questionnaire

The following questions ask you about the Japanese school (Sakura Gakuen).

Please place an X in one of the spaces below to indicate the extent to which the statement applies to you.

1. I enjoy Japanese school.
   Not at all ____:____:____:____:____:____ Very much

2. I have many friends in Japanese school.
   None at all ____:____:____:____:____:____ Very many

3. Which of the following describes the language used with your friends at the Japanese school?
   Japanese only ____:____:____:____:____:____ English only

4. I feel more Japanese when I attend Japanese school.
   Not at all ____:____:____:____:____:____ Very much
5. I talk with my friends from Japanese school on weekdays.
Not at all ____:____:____:____:____ Very often

None at all ____:____:____:____:____ Very much

Not at all ____:____:____:____:____ Very much

None at all ____:____:____:____:____
Very much

9. What do you like the most about the Japanese school?
______________________________________________

10. What do you like the least about the Japanese school?
_______________________________________________

Questionnaire III

Japanese Language Proficiency Questionnaire

The following questions ask you about your Japanese language proficiency.

Please place an X in one of the spaces below to indicate the extent to which the statement applies to you.

1. I can read Japanese newspapers and fiction stories.
Strongly disagree ____:____:____:____:____ Strongly agree

2. I can read Japanese textbooks that are appropriate to my grade level.
Strongly disagree ____:____:____:____:____ Strongly agree
3. I can read Japanese popular magazines.
   Strongly disagree ____:____:____:____:____:____ Strongly agree

4. I can read Japanese readings that contain furigana.
   Strongly disagree ____:____:____:____:____:____ Strongly agree

5. I can write academic reports of several subjects in Japanese.
   Strongly disagree ____:____:____:____:____:____ Strongly agree

6. I can write short essays and sakubun expressing my personal preference and opinions.
   Strongly disagree ____:____:____:____:____:____ Strongly agree

7. I can write short personal letters.
   Strongly disagree ____:____:____:____:____:____ Strongly agree

8. I seldom make grammatical errors when writing the above mentioned writings.
   Strongly disagree ____:____:____:____:____:____ Strongly agree

9. I can write the above mentioned writings using appropriate kanji.
   Strongly disagree ____:____:____:____:____:____ Strongly agree

10. I can understand my relatives' conversations with other adults in Japanese.
    Strongly disagree ____:____:____:____:____:____ Strongly agree

11. I can understand Japanese TV shows, videos, and movies.
    Strongly disagree ____:____:____:____:____:____ Strongly agree

12. I can understand the Japanese language that teachers use in Sakura Gakuen classroom.
    Strongly disagree ____:____:____:____:____:____ Strongly agree

13. I can speak politely in Japanese when conversing with Japanese teachers and adults whom I am not familiar. (not in a casual language when talking with friends.)
    Strongly disagree ____:____:____:____:____:____ Strongly agree

Strongly disagree ____:____:____:____:____:____ Strongly agree

15. I can describe my past experience in detail in Japanese. (ex. what you did in Japan when you were there the last time.)

16. I can handle complex situations in Japanese. (ex. reporting that personal belongings have been stolen from a locked school locker, or asking my teacher to postpone a test because a friend gave me incorrect information to study when I was sick and did not attend class.)

Strongly disagree ____:____:____:____:____:____ Strongly agree

17. I do not make grammatical errors when I converse in Japanese.

Strongly disagree ____:____:____:____:____:____ Strongly agree

18. I can correctly understand and use the Japanese popular words or phrases that teenagers are using in Japan.

Strongly disagree ____:____:____:____:____:____ Strongly agree

19. What do you think about yourself in terms of the language you use?

Japanese speaker ____:____:____:____:____:____ English speaker
Appendix B

English Questionnaire (Summer Version)

Background Information
The following questions are about your background.

Please write your name and answer the questions. Please do not forget to write your address at the bottom of this page. In appreciation for your cooperation, I would like to send you a $10 book certificate to your home.

1. Name in English (first last) _________________________________

2. Name in Japanese _________________________________

3. Do you have plans to go back to Japan and live there? (please circle either Yes or No)
   - No
   - Yes: If yes: Planning to … (you can circle more than one)
     a. attend junior high school in Japan
     b. attend high school in Japan
     c. attend college/university in Japan
     d. work in Japan

4. Have you lived outside the LA area in the US? (please circle one)
   - No
   - Yes: If yes: Where? ____________ When? ____________

5. Have you lived outside the US or Japan? (please circle one)
   - No
   - Yes: If yes: Where? ____________ When? ____________

6. Please write your address.

_______________________________________________________________________

House # and street

_______________________________________________________________________

City Zip Code
Questionnaire I

Ethnic Identity Questionnaire

The following questions ask you about your ethnicity or your ethnic group and how you feel about it.

Please circle one.

My father is:
a) Japanese b) American c) Japanese-American d) Other

My mother is:
a) Japanese b) American c) Japanese-American d) Other

I identify myself as:
a) Japanese b) American c) Japanese-American d) Other

Please place an X in one of the spaces below to indicate the extent to which the statement applies to you.

Ex) I have many Japanese friends.

Strongly disagree ____ : ____ : ____ : ____ : ____ : ____ Strongly agree

I somewhat agree that I have many Japanese friends.

1. I have spent time trying to find out more about the Japanese ethnic group, such as its history, tradition, and customs.

Strongly disagree ____ : ____ : ____ : ____ : ____ : ____ Strongly agree

2. I am a member of organizations or social groups that are mostly composed of Japanese.

Strongly disagree ____ : ____ : ____ : ____ : ____ : ____ Strongly agree

3. I have a clear sense of being Japanese and what it means to me.

Strongly disagree ____ : ____ : ____ : ____ : ____ : ____ Strongly agree

4. I like meeting and getting to know people from ethnic groups other than Japanese.

Strongly disagree ____ : ____ : ____ : ____ : ____ : ____ Strongly agree
5. I think a lot about how my life will be affected by being Japanese.

Strongly disagree ____:____:____:____:____:____ Strongly agree

6. I am happy that I am a member of the Japanese ethnic group.

Strongly disagree ____:____:____:____:____:____ Strongly agree

7. I sometimes feel it would be better if different ethnic groups did not try to mix together.

Strongly disagree ____:____:____:____:____:____ Strongly agree

8. I often spend time with people from ethnic groups other than Japanese.

Strongly disagree ____:____:____:____:____:____ Strongly agree

9. I have a strong sense of belonging to the Japanese ethnic group.

Strongly disagree ____:____:____:____:____:____ Strongly agree

10. I understand pretty well what being Japanese means to me in terms of how I relate to Japanese and non-Japanese people.

Strongly disagree ____:____:____:____:____:____ Strongly agree

11. In order to learn more about my Japanese background, I have often talked to other Japanese about the Japanese ethnic group.

Strongly disagree ____:____:____:____:____:____ Strongly agree

12. I have a lot of pride in the Japanese ethnic group and its accomplishments.

Strongly disagree ____:____:____:____:____:____ Strongly agree

13. I do not try to become friends with people from other ethnic groups.

Strongly disagree ____:____:____:____:____:____ Strongly agree

14. I participate in Japanese cultural practices, such as special food, music, or customs.

Strongly disagree ____:____:____:____:____:____ Strongly agree

15. I am involved in activities with people from other ethnic groups.

Strongly disagree ____:____:____:____:____:____ Strongly agree
16. I feel a strong attachment towards the Japanese ethnic group.

Strongly disagree ____:____:____:____:____:____ Strongly agree

17. I enjoy being around people from ethnic groups other than Japanese.

Strongly disagree ____:____:____:____:____:____ Strongly agree

18. I feel good about the Japanese cultural or Japanese ethnic background.

Strongly disagree ____:____:____:____:____:____ Strongly agree

19. There are many different ways in which people think of themselves. Which ONE of the following best describes how you view yourself? Please circle ONE.

1) I consider myself basically a Japanese person. Even though I live in America, I still view myself as a Japanese person.

2) I consider myself basically as an American. Even though I have a Japanese background and characteristics, I still view myself as an American.

3) I consider myself a Japanese-American, although deep down I always know I am Japanese.

4) I consider myself a Japanese-American, although deep down I view myself as an American first.

5) I consider myself a Japanese-American. I have both Japanese and American characteristics and I view myself as a blend of both.

20. I would like other people to regard me as (please circle ONE):

1) Japanese 2) American 3) Japanese-American 4) Other
Questionnaire II

Saturday School Questionnaire

The following questions ask you about Sakura Gakuen.

Please place an X in one of the spaces below to indicate the extent to which the statement applies to you.

1. Sakura Gakuen is an important school.
   Not at all ____:____:____:____:____:____ Very much

2. I have many friends in Sakura Gakuen.
   None at all ____:____:____:____:____:____ Very many

3. Which of the following describes the language used with your friends at Sakura Gakuen?
   Japanese only ____:____:____:____:____:____ English only

4. I feel more Japanese when I attend Sakura Gakuen.
   Not at all ____:____:____:____:____:____ Very much

5. I talk with my friends from Sakura Gakuen on weekdays.
   Not at all ____:____:____:____:____:____ Very often

   Not at all ____:____:____:____:____:____ Very much

   Not at all ____:____:____:____:____:____ Very much

8. I am learning much about Japanese culture in Sakura Gakuen.
   Not at all ____:____:____:____:____:____ Very much
9. Studying at Sakura Gakuen helps me to develop my reading skills in Japanese.
Not at all ____:____:____:____:____: Very much

10. Studying at Sakura Gakuen helps me to develop my writing skills in Japanese.
Not at all ____:____:____:____:____: Very much

11. Studying at Sakura Gakuen helps me to develop my listening skills in Japanese.
Not at all ____:____:____:____:____: Very much.

12. Studying at Sakura Gakuen helps me to develop my speaking skills in Japanese.
Not at all ____:____:____:____:____: Very much

13. Studying at Sakura Gakuen helps me to develop confidence in my Japanese proficiency.
Not at all ____:____:____:____:____: Very much

14. If I were a mother or a father, I would like to send my child to a Japanese school (any Japanese school).
Not at all ____:____:____:____:____: Very much

15. I enjoy Sakura Gakuen.
Not at all ____:____:____:____:____: Very much

16. I attend Sakura Gakuen regularly every Saturday.
Not at all ____:____:____:____:____: Very much
Questionnaire III
Japanese Language Proficiency Questionnaire

The following questions ask you about your Japanese language proficiency.

Please place an X in one of the spaces below to indicate the extent to which the statement applies to you.

1. I can read Japanese newspapers and fiction stories.
   Strongly disagree ____:____:____:____:____:____ Strongly agree

2. I can read Japanese textbooks that are appropriate to my grade level.
   Strongly disagree ____:____:____:____:____:____ Strongly agree

3. I can read Japanese popular magazines.
   Strongly disagree ____:____:____:____:____:____ Strongly agree

4. I can read Japanese readings that contain furigana.
   Strongly disagree ____:____:____:____:____:____ Strongly agree

5. I can write academic reports of several subjects in Japanese.
   Strongly disagree ____:____:____:____:____:____ Strongly agree

6. I can write short essays and sakubun expressing my personal preference and opinions.
   Strongly disagree ____:____:____:____:____:____ Strongly agree

7. I can write short personal letters.
   Strongly disagree ____:____:____:____:____:____ Strongly agree

8. I seldom make grammatical errors when writing the above mentioned writings.
   Strongly disagree ____:____:____:____:____:____ Strongly agree

9. I can write the above mentioned writings using appropriate kanji.
   Strongly disagree ____:____:____:____:____:____ Strongly agree
10. I can understand my relatives' conversations with other adults in Japanese.

Strongly disagree ____:____:____:____:____:____ Strongly agree

11. I can understand Japanese TV shows, videos, and movies.

Strongly disagree ____:____:____:____:____:____ Strongly agree

12. I can understand the Japanese language that teachers use in Sakura Gakuen classroom.

Strongly disagree ____:____:____:____:____:____ Strongly agree

13. I can speak politely in Japanese when conversing with Japanese teachers and adults whom I am not familiar. (not in a casual language when talking with friends.)

Strongly disagree ____:____:____:____:____:____ Strongly agree


Strongly disagree ____:____:____:____:____:____ Strongly agree

15. I can describe my past experience in detail in Japanese. (ex. what you did in Japan when you were there the last time.)

Strongly disagree ____:____:____:____:____:____ Strongly agree

16. I can handle complex situations in Japanese. (ex. reporting that personal belongings have been stolen from a locked school locker, or asking my teacher to postpone a test because a friend gave me incorrect information to study when I was sick and did not attend class.)

Strongly disagree ____:____:____:____:____:____ Strongly agree

17. I do not make grammatical errors when I converse in Japanese.

Strongly disagree ____:____:____:____:____:____ Strongly agree

18. I can correctly understand and use the Japanese popular words or phrases that teenagers are using in Japan.

Strongly disagree ____:____:____:____:____:____ Strongly agree
19. What do you think about yourself in terms of the language you use?

Japanese speaker ____:____:____:____:____ English speaker