Narrative Inquiry of Japanese Mothers in London:
Their Ethnic Identities and Perspectives
on Children's Language Learning

Yosuke Takeuchi[*]

要旨

　本研究では，ロンドンに住む日本人母の民族アイデンティティと子供の言語教育について，対象者によるインタビューをナラティブ探求の手法で分析をした。結婚や子育ては自身の文化が表面化しやすく，本研究に協力した母親たちのように現地人の夫を持ち外国に住む場合は，自身の文化と現地の文化とが衝突することがある（Wakefield, 2013）。特に子供の言語教育については，二言語を母語話者のように話せるようになることは容易ではなく，親たちが自分の母語を教える傍ら子供たちは現地の言葉を習得していくことに，期待と不安を感じる。こうした親たちの民族アイデンティティと子供の言語学習について，研究協力者の母親たちにインタビューをナラティブ探究の手法で分析をした（Kim, 2016; Saldaña, 2016）。その結果 82 個のコンセプトが得られ，これを 14 のカテゴリに分類することができた。まず，協力者の民族アイデンティティやイギリスに対する個人の考え方などが挙げられた，続いてイギリスの食文化や若者について，子供たちの言語教育やアイデンティティの形成について，子供たちの言語を育てる手段について，そして将来への展望である。協力者は自身の母文化に対する肯定的な視点は持っていながらも，日本の中にある自分自身と相容れない文化の存在にも気づいていたが，同時にホスト文化であるイギリスへの愛着も持ち合わせていた。それぞれの文化の両面を認識し，少し離れた視点で文化を見つめるという特徴的な姿勢であった。また子供達には日英両言語の完璧なバイリンガルになってほしいと願っていたが，それは簡単なことではなく悩みがあった。しかし，子供たちが多言語を当たり前だと感じていることや，複数の国や文化にルーツを持つことは，子供たちの将来に良い効果があると信じており，その利点を活かすための子育てを進めようとしているということが考察された。

Keywords:
narrative inquiry, ethnic identity, language education, emigrated Japanese, parental perspective

　　　　　　＊ 立命館大学言語教育センター　外国語嘱託講師

Ⅰ. Introduction

As globalism increases, numerous people are traveling beyond borders and are experiencing foreign cultures (Castles & Miller, 2009). In terms of the situation of migration in EU countries, migrants often intend to remain in the target country for a limited period in order to achieve their short-terms goals; however, migrants tend to remain for longer than they expected or may even settle permanently in the host country due to changes in their social situations, such as becoming a base for other family members (Stalker, 2002). Global cities, such as London in the UK, are particularly attractive to people from all over the world, and such cities may allow migrants to remain longer to allow them to improve their lives.

Japanese people often emigrate to the UK. According to the statistics presented by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan (2022), the total number of overseas Japanese nationals was 1,344,900 in 2021; 63,653 people were living in the UK, while 32,371 people resided in the greater London area. People come to the UK for various reasons, such as to work, to study, and due to international marriages. This number includes children at the K-12 stage, and some of these children settle in the UK due to family decisions.

Although these children attend local schools, they have an additional need for Japanese

language maintenance. Several types of schools in London aim to meet this need, such as Japanese Saturday schools (The Japanese Saturday School in London, n.d.); these schools were established to enable native speakers of Japanese to study Japanese literature and language in the same way in which these subjects are taught in Japan. However, other courses are provided for those students whose Japanese language is less dominant compared to their proficiency in the English language. These courses were developed in response to long-term residents' demands, and have changed in line with social shifts. Japanese nationals living overseas and people who have connections to Japan maintain their ethnic identities as Japanese, and the Japanese language is the one of the bases of cultural maintenance.

As mentioned previously, both the numbers of Japanese people living abroad and of non-Japanese people living in Japan have increased due to globalization, and supporting immigrant parents is beneficial for their children's healthy development. Thus, it is worth investigating the ethnic identities of overseas residents, as well as how overseas parents consider their children to acquire Japanese language and maintain Japanese culture. I conducted qualitative research to answer these questions.

Ⅱ．Literature Review

When people marry or cohabit, cultural differences appear and cause conflict in their daily lives. Shibuya (2014) mentioned that intermarried couples could have substantial and unexpected disagreements, and that raising children could be more challenging than it would be for couples who share the same origins. The author provided the example of an American woman who married a Japanese man; the American woman realized that her approach to raising children was different from that in the host society, and that this could affect her child's ability to communicate with the local people. Culture is omnipresent, and the approach to raising children is a salient example of a cultural difference (Wakefield, 2013).

According to Joseph (2004), ethnic identity stems from one's ancestors, and is shared by descendants who have the same origin. He used the example of the Basque group located between Spain and France to explain the differences in national and ethnic identities; the Basque people believe they are distinct from Spanish people because their language is not regarded as being part of the Romance language family. Similarly, Edwards (2004) pointed

out that language and religion are recognized as typical symbols of the ethnic identity of a group. In his meta-analytic study, Phinney (1990) concluded that it was difficult to provide a holistic picture of ethnic identity, and that ethnic identity had a significant impact on psychological aspects of those people who experience cultural differences. Of note, Barakat et al. (2014) indicated that people's cultural perspectives could be observed in their patterns of consumption, such as food and entertainment.

Thus, parents subconsciously follow their cultures' traditions when raising children. If the parents have different ancestors, speak different languages, or believe in different religions, it is inevitable that the parents will clash. In such cases, parents with different cultures may reach a compromise and support each other for the purpose of raising their children. However, the parent who has immigrated may need to make a greater effort to adapt to the host culture. Suzuki (2018) reported that Japanese women who had married Indonesian men and immigrated to their husbands' country occasionally needed to change aspects of their behavior in order to live there. Although the women had lived in Indonesia for over 20 years and some of them had acquired Indonesian citizenship, they considered themselves to be Japanese. A separate report on immigrant mothers in Taiwan by Tsai et al. is shocking; Tsai et al. (2011: 94) collected the voices of women who had emigrated from southeastern countries to enter arranged marriages, and found that the immigrant mothers were not treated respectfully, but were considered to be a "paid-nanny" and a "child-producing machine". Moreover, "many immigrant mothers want their children to learn the mother's native language and culture. However, the anticipated social prejudice and discrimination lead[s] these mothers to devalue their native cultural transmission" (Tsai et al. 2011: 98). Other studies, such as the work of Li et al. (2015) and Shimizu and Masuda (2001), have also reported on the vulnerability of immigrant mothers in Japan when receiving public healthcare and social services for their children during early childhood. The immigrant mothers' circumstances were often concealed by the host society's norms.

In particular, parents reflect their ethnic identities in their children's language learning. Children learn languages from their parents or caregivers from the very early stages of infancy (Lightbown & Spada, 2013). The children of international parents are likely to have the opportunity to acquire more than two languages. The children first learn the languages simultaneously and develop the two languages equally; however, they will be more likely to use a local language rather than a home language when they enter school. In this case, the home language is regarded as a heritage language that links parents and children

(Nakajima, 2003). The immigrant parents hope that their children will be bilinguals; what they imagine is a balanced bilingual who has native-like proficiency in each language, including in reading and writing (Hashimoto & Lee, 2011; Endo, 2013). The parents also expect that their children's bilingualism will expand their children's future opportunities, such as working opportunities (Kang, 2012). In addition, the parents believe that bilingualism will assist their children to succeed in developing their identities (Shibuya, 2010), and that the maintenance of the heritage language will decrease negative feelings about their mixed origin (Tse, 2000).

While the language barrier is a fundamental issue for the first-generation adult immigrants, maintenance of the heritage language is also a serious problem for subsequent generations. Hence, some families establish a family language policy to maintain their children's heritage languages (Kang, 2012). However, these children strengthen their skills in the local language that is used in the community and school every day, while their heritage language becomes weak due to a lack of use. Therefore, despite parental desire, the "reality was that it was nearly impossible for their second-generation daughters and sons to balance the competing and multiple demands in their lives" (Endo, 2013: 292).

Thus, the following two research questions were used to conduct the investigation.

1. How do international parents feel about their ethnic identities when caring for their children?

2. What types of hopes and concerns do the parents have regarding their children's language learning?

Ⅲ．Methodology

1. Narrative Inquiry

I employed a qualitative method to answer the research questions. Miles et al. (2019: 8) stated that qualitative data contain "lived experiences", which are valuable human activities derived from the places in which people live, the events in which people are involved, and the way that people think. A qualitative researcher, Atsushi Sakurai, who is an active proponent of the life story research method, mentioned that qualitative researchers shared a critical view of quantitative methods and positivism, which aim to form abstract theories via a massive data set (Sakurai, 2002). He also pointed out that qualitative methods enable researchers to illustrate detailed aspects of research objects and societies using rich

descriptions to reveal social changes.

Qualitative data, such as interviews, provide narrow yet in-depth insights based on the participants' experiences. I adopted the viewpoint of narrative inquiry to study the participants' stories; Chase (2018: 549) explained narrative as follows:

> I have noted that in this new working definition (italics reflect changes): a *personal* narrative is a distinct form of *communication*: It is meaning making through the shaping of experience; a way of understanding one's own or others' actions; of organizing events, objects, *feelings, or thoughts* in relation to each other; of connecting and seeing the consequences of actions, events, *feelings, or thoughts* over time (*in the past, present, and/or future*).

The narrative inquiry approach enables researchers to explore complex human stories from transdisciplinary perspectives (Kitade, 2021). Human stories are often unclear, ambiguous, and mysteriously understood, but investigating the perspective of the people concerned allows us to shed new light on their reality, which provides in-depth insights that link human psychology and social factors. In this regard, Yamada (2000: 21) indicated that people have lived stories and that we perceive the world via the "story (monogatari) mode." In the present study, the parents' narratives will reveal the actual perceptions of people who are living and raising their children in a foreign country. The stories are expected to be a combination of hardship and enjoyment, and the participants' experiences will suggest further ways of supporting these people across the world.

2. Data Analysis

According to Yamada (2000), a narrative data analysis concerns stories and spoken events. During the process of analysis, researchers identify the linkages among the events, which form the meaning of what the interviewees have expressed. Similarly, Kim (2016: 189) explained that "data analysis involves interpretation, which in turn affects our choice of representations of stories." Thus, researchers ask themselves why the interviewees have told these stories, and consider what the stories mean to the interviewees during the process of data analysis. Kim (2016: 189)described the extraction of the meaning of such stories as "interpretation."

In order to identify the meanings in the stories, I conducted two-cycle coding following

the guidelines provided by Miles et al. (2019) and by Saldaña (2016). The first cycle of coding is "concept coding to assign meso and macro levels of meaning to data or to the data analytic work in process" (Saldaña, 2016: 119). This coding enables one to "transcend the local and particular of the study to more abstract or generalizable context" (Saldaña, 2016: 122). The second cycle of coding is focus coding to categorize the extracted concepts according to larger categories to provide a clear order to understand the meaning (Saldaña, 2016). As Kim (2016: 206) indicated, "we identify our inquiry phenomena as they appear in the data during data analysis." The participants' lived experiences are refined and reorganized to represent the meanings through these steps of coding, analyzing and reviewing the interview data.

3. Participants

The participants were recruited in the Japanese community in London. The author first met Natsuko, who then invited her friends Mariko and Rie; they were Japanese citizens who had grown up in Japan and had immigrated to the UK to study, to work, or to accompany their husbands. They had British husbands and children who spoke both English and Japanese. The author had several opportunities to meet the participants; for example, I was invited to a lunch meeting of Japanese mothers in London and to children's Japanese language sessions.

The group interview was held in July 2016 after explaining the project and obtaining consent for participation. The interview was unstructured to decrease the stress of being interviewed and to allow the participants to present their perspectives freely. The topic of the discussion was their perspectives regarding their ethnic identities and their children's language learning; the author sometimes guided the conversation.

The interview lasted for approximately two hours; the recorded part was one hour and 51 minutes. After the interview, the audio data were transcribed and analyzed, and were complemented by meeting notes and additional questions via email.

The participants in this study are listed below:

Mother's name (alias)	Number of years they had lived in the UK	Child's name (alias) and gender	Husband's language(s)
Natsuko	19 years	Yasuhiro (boy)	English
Mariko	14 years	Sakura (girl)	English
Rie	11 years	Toshiki (boy)	English and Japanese

Table1: List of participants

IV. Results

I obtained 82 concepts in the first cycle of concept coding and 14 sub-categories in the second cycle of focus coding, as listed below:

	Name of Sub-category	Number of Concepts
1	Distinctive aspects of British culture that are different from Japanese society	5
2	The decision to emigrate	3
3	Cultural gaps between the UK and Japan	3
4	Beliefs about Japanese culture	9
5	Unacceptable food culture	6
6	British teenagers	4
7	Learning languages	8
8	Psychological aspects of children's language learning	5
9	Language and identity building	6
10	Parental beliefs about language learning	13
11	Books	6
12	Supplementary Japanese schools	5
13	Short-term attendance at schools in Japan	5
14	Future aspirations	4

Table 2: List of sub-categories

1. Distinctive aspects of British culture that differ from Japanese society, the decision to emigrate, the cultural gaps between the UK and Japan, and the beliefs about Japanese culture

The first four sub-categories pertained to the participants' personal beliefs about and recognition of UK and Japanese cultures. During the time that the participants had lived in the UK, they came to realize that social classes and the mixture of races in UK society were due to the history of the country. These aspects were unlike Japanese society; hence, the participants continued to be astonished and uncomfortable when their opinions did not mesh with those of British people in some cases. They felt uncomfortable when speaking to non-Japanese people in English or other languages, which were second languages for the participants.

However, their immigration to the UK was voluntary. They had come to the UK to study, to work, or because they were married to British husbands. Thus, while the participants discussed uncomfortable experiences in the UK, they understood and even

enjoyed the cultural differences between the UK and Japan. The participants evaluated both British and Japanese cultures and societies during the conversation, and agreed that there was no such thing as a perfect world; each culture had positive and negative aspects that combined to make up the complicated world.

> Mariko: Well, each country has merits and demerits. Of course, there are good points and bad points in Japan. I am the kind of person who chose to get out of my home country. I understand it indeed.

The participants also mentioned the disadvantages of the Japanese culture, which could be reasons for immigrating to the UK. They said that Japanese culture was problematic. When discussing Saturday school for supplementary Japanese language education, they expressed being tired of the Japanese school rituals that they had to follow even though they were in London, such as certain types of duties and rules in Japanese schools. The participants thought that some of these were unique, unreasonable, or unnecessary. In addition, they pointed out the conservative aspect of Japanese society whereby foreign people or even mixed-race people were often excluded due to conservatism. In other words, Japanese people were hospitable to guests such as foreigners, although they would never accept them as members of the Japanese community. Some foreigners might feel comfortable in such a situation, but the Japanese mothers who had children with mixed nationalities were concerned about whether their children would be accepted as Japanese nationals in Japanese society.

2. Unacceptable food culture and British teenagers

As mentioned previously, the participating mothers described both positive and negative aspects of living in a foreign country. During the interview, the topic of British food culture was raised. The participants had extremely negative attitudes toward British food, and questioned British people's stance regarding diets and healthy lifestyles. For example, they acknowledged the improvement in the quality of food in some restaurants, but complained about school lunches and the unbalanced diets of their children's friends. Whey they invited the children's school friends to their homes, the friends were unable to eat their homemade dishes because the friends had relatively limited experience of eating different types of foods. The participants were disappointed with the poor repertoires of other mothers' cooking and

the frequent use of ready-made microwaved meals. The participating mothers believed that they were responsible for educating their children about eating, and taught their children to eat healthy diet.

The participants also discussed the expected development of children; children obey their parents when they are young and avoid unusual things, but some of them are attracted to exotic oriental culture. These people consider Japanese culture to be "cool" and enjoy Japanese culture, including the food. However, Natsuko said that, even if they wanted to eat unfamiliar food, they would not enjoy the food because their range of acceptable food was limited due to their poor dietary habits in their younger days. Another reason that the participating mothers served their children different types of foods was to train their children to expand their rage of food options in the future.

3. Learning languages, the psychological aspects of children's language learning, and language and identity building

The participants' children were English-Japanese bilinguals, and English would clearly be the dominant language while they lived in the UK. Although the mothers spoke Japanese to their children every day, the children's English became a priority at school and in other daily activities. In addition, the mothers understood the importance of the English language in the modern world. At the time of the interview, the three children spoke Japanese well and had effortless communication with their mothers and other people. Mariko and Rie sent their children to the Saturday school and Natsuko used an online education service to develop her child's Japanese. The mothers also occasionally organized additional Japanese language sessions. The children seemed enjoy learning the language because the mothers used games and other communicative activities to amuse the children. However, they wondered if the children would continue to study Japanese because many school pupils joined local sports teams, such as football and rugby teams. The mothers thought that these activities were more popular and attractive than learning Japanese despite it being the children's other native language.

Another issue was that Japanese was regarded as being less important in the UK, and acquiring a language is time consuming and requires a significant amount of parental support. Rie's husband spoke Japanese, while Mariko's and Natsuko's husbands did not; this meant that the children's Japanese language support was solely the mothers' responsibility in those families. The mothers still believed that learning Japanese was beneficial for their

children because they had roots in Japan. The excerpt below is taken from Natsuko's expression of wanting to respect her child's Japanese identity because he would do something according to this Japanese identity in the future:

Although the balance of Yasuhiro's Japanese and English is appropriate at this moment, this (English) goes this way (increase). Then, how do I foster his Japanese identity, the half of his Japanese side of his cultural heritage? That is an issue of language, and how he links himself to Japan. What he likes, why, yeah, the things are not that his mother is Japanese, but what he wants. I want to support this (his desire).

The mothers persisted in maintaining their children's Japanese language because they believed that a multicultural identity was not only their individual basis, but also a resource. Early childhood is the time during which an individual's nature is constructed, and the mothers considered language to be an essential part of their children's identity building. They had observed both successful and unsuccessful cases of the development of bilingual children, and wanted to provide their children with a rich environment to ensure their balanced development. However, the unsuccessful examples confused them, and they were unsure how to approach the children's languages and to guide them.

4. Parental beliefs about language learning, books, supplementary Japanese schools, and short-term attendance at schools in Japan.

As mentioned previously, the participating mothers devoted themselves to developing their children's language abilities; however, the aim was not only for the children to be bilingual, as they wanted their children to have well-rounded personalities, refined sensibilities, and extensive experiences. They believed that bilingual people were more open minded and liberal in terms of accepting a wide range of diversity compared to monolingual people, who might have narrow and conservative perspectives. They realized that they had advantages that conservative monolingual families did not have, and expected their children to be able to attain a higher standard. Mariko pointed out that this parental expectation was the rationale for the mothers' devotion to all the activities in which they engaged to support their children.

Mariko: But, well, it's all about the children's desire. But, parents', now, at this age,

parental expectations affect

Natsuko: Right.

Mariko: Yeah, and a friend of mine said that if they live here (in the UK), to what extent do the parents expect their children to be proficient in Japanese? … I also considered the level of Japanese language which my child will require in the future. This is worth arguing.

However, no one can predict what their children's desires will be in the future. Although the mothers valued their children's languages and provided opportunities to develop them, such as giving them picture books and having them attend the supplementary Japanese school, they always wondered whether their expectations would be a burden on their children. It takes time and costs money to provide a variety of language experiences in Japanese, while the children studied in English at their schools. It is essential to establish a family language policy, but it is difficult maintain it because children are capricious, and husbands cannot support the Japanese language.

The resources for the children's language development were books and the supplementary school. As the participating mothers had been accustomed to reading books when they were young, it was natural for them to read picture books to their children. They mentioned two differences in the situation regarding picture books. Although they lived in a global city, London, they did not have easy access to Japanese books, and had to ask their relatives in Japan to purchase books and send them to the UK. Furthermore, since seasonal topics, such as shaved ice in summer and picking up chestnuts in fall appear in Japanese picture books, their children were unable to understand these seasonal and cultural aspects.

The Saturday school was another provision to support the children's learning of the Japanese language. The supplementary school was established for students who lived in a foreign country temporarily and then returned to Japan. Therefore, the school was not intended to teach Japanese culture. However, as the number of students who lived in the UK increased, the school began to offer an introduction to Japanese culture. This shift was aimed to support the students, and they were able to experience communicating with other children and participating in school events. The school library was also helpful for encouraging the students to read Japanese books.

Rie: Yeah, Japanese culture. Let's play, like that? We did it, how to play kendama (cup

and ball). But the students didn't know that, so the teachers explained how to play it … Before we did, I felt it was troublesome, but actually it was good. We learned something new. We would never have seen what it was unless we experienced. So did the students. And it will probably be mentioned in Japanese textbooks? Like "Tato is good at kendama." (If they had not experienced playing the game) the students wouldn't be able to understand it but now they will say, "ah, we played kendama the other day!"

Another opportunity for exposure to authentic Japanese was short-term attendance at Japanese schools. Since the UK's summer vacation is long, the children go to Japan and attend local Japanese schools for a while. Although this practice is popular, the participants were skeptical because they were concerned that the Japanese teachers would not understand the visiting students. They assumed that it would be difficult for the students to join the school communities because of the differences in the school culture in the UK and in Japan.

5. Future aspirations

The participating mothers discussed various aspects of their ethnic identities, Japanese culture, and their children's language learning, including both positive and negative attitudes toward the British and Japanese cultures. In addition, they understood that the values associated with the Japanese language and culture were not completely understood in UK society, and that it would be a waste if the children were to cease learning Japanese. However, their ultimate goal was clearly the wellbeing of their children. They believed that their children's non-UK and non-European aspects would be beneficial for British and European people because the different countries have different perspectives that combine to create the modern world. Japanese-English bilinguals would be able to bridge the gap between the two groups or could at least introduce different viewpoints in discussions when they became adults.

Natsuko: (There are contradicting ideologies and) this side and that side don't understand each other. That side is, yeah.
Mariko: They don't intend to understand the counterculture.
Natsuko: No, no, no.
Mariko: Then, if you want to understand the other side, you should learn languages.

You should be able to accept that kind of thing. If you live in a monolingual and monocultural country, you never see the differences. It's extreme, but that (bilingualism) makes this world peaceful.

V. Discussion

1. Mothers' ethnic identities and child-raising

The participating mothers had family and work in London, and had successfully settled in a foreign country for an extended period. They had immigrated voluntarily, and enjoyed their cross-cultural lives. They regarded themselves as immigrants and maintained their Japanese ethnic identity (Suzuki, 2018), but also had an objective view of Japanese culture and people, and often evaluated the differences in Japanese and UK cultures. They were active models of the "international woman" (Kelsky, 2001), and had established themselves firmly in the local communities.

However, they also experienced cultural conflict due to British culture, such as social class, and experienced miscommunication with other people on a daily basis, which surprised and confused them; on some occasions, their ethnic identities were challenged and became salient both consciously and subconsciously. Although they had adapted to British society, they were comfortable talking to other mothers from Japan about childcare, which was strongly affected by what the mothers had learned in their home culture (Wakefield, 2013). The mothers formed communities in which they shared the same origin and exchanged information about childcare and language development according to their needs (Hanai, 2016; Velazquez, 2013).

A characteristic of the participating mothers' expression of ethnic identity pertained to food culture. Since food culture and buying habits represent one's ethnic identities in modern society (Barakat et al., 2014), the mothers were skeptical about British food and British people's attitudes toward diet. The participants were proud of Japanese food culture, not only as an individual preference, as they also wanted their children to follow their example. Thus, they made tremendous efforts to prepare home-cooked meals with balanced nutrition and a variety of food types.

Although the participants expressed an affiliation to their home culture, their lives were based in London. They were flexible in terms of altering their attitudes and behavior according to the situation, and they adapted to British culture as foreigners. Childcare in

other countries emphasizes parents in terms of social support systems, the culture of the spouse's family, and governmental agencies (Li et al., 2015; Shimizu & Masuda, 2001). Since the interview was conducted shortly after the Brexit referendum, the participants were feeling anxious about their futures because they had to follow the rules in the UK. Although they were less dependent on one country, they expressed subtle concerns about their hopes and opportunities for their children.

2. Children's language education

The participants described language as a vital factor when raising children. The development of children's language causes parents to feel both proud and concerned, but the situation becomes more complicated when children are raised in a bilingual environment (Nakajima, 2016). The mothers believed that the Japanese language was important for developing their children's identities, as well as for maintaining a means of communication between mothers and their children. When Rie discussed the term "heritage language," she said that Japanese was not a heritage language, but an active home language. By contrast, Natsuko was the sole model of a Japanese speaker for her child. She addressed this situation via the one parent one language policy; that is, she spoke only Japanese to her son, while her husband spoke English. One of the reasons for this difference was due to the environment; Rie's husband had lived in Japan and was able to speak Japanese. Unless a parent has language support from another spouse, it is difficult to maintain a suitable environment for developing children's languages (Hanai, 2018).

The participating mothers wanted their children to be able to speak two languages equally. This meant that they not only maintained the channel for communication between mother and child by talking about daily topics, but also hoped that their children would be able to read and write at the same level as children in Japan, and would be able to use Japanese proficiently at work. However, raising bilingual children is not a simple task. There are many hindrances to raising balanced bilinguals, and the parents' devotion, including financial and psychological support, is necessary (Nakajima, 2016). In this regard, the participating mothers mentioned that London was preferable to rural areas in which access to Japanese culture and language is more difficult. They were able to access mothers' networks and services in London to maintain their children's Japanese language, such as Saturday schools.

Another obstacle occurs during children's development, as their lifestyles change

dramatically when they begin to attend school. Children become independent, and spend more time alone or with their friends. They understand the differences between school and home, and behave accordingly. Children may lose interest in the Japanese language, or may want to engage in other activities. Apart from changes in the children's interests, language learning is time consuming. Hanai (2018) discussed the case of a child in an international family who stopped learning Japanese at the age of 10 because they did not want to continue learning kanjis, which they did not use in their daily life. Thwarting their children's desire is a dilemma for parents, particularly when children do not want to continue to study the heritage language (Hashimoto & Lee, 2011; Endo, 2013). The mothers in this study voiced the same concerns, and were struggling to find a solution. They enjoyed reading Japanese picture books to their children during early childhood, but they expected the children to become interested in reading books individually, and were concerned that their children would simply say "I want to quit the Saturday school and join the football club."

Several studies have investigated parents' decisions regarding their children's language learning while raising their children. Shibuya (2010) studied a balanced bilingual and her mother's account of the heritage language; the child emphasized the importance of the heritage language although she did not use Japanese outside of the home. In Chinen's (2008: 176-177) study of Japanese-American people in the US, many children stated that their dual identity was "imperfect" in terms of ethnicity, and that this led them to feel "home-less-ness", which indicates that they did not feel that they belonged in the US or in Japan. This echoes the participants' concerns about their children not being as emotionally stable as monolingual children. Moreover, Tse's (2000) study found that the maintenance of the heritage language was important for reducing children's negative feelings about their ethnicity and ethnic group (ethnic ambivalence/evasion). These studies illustrated the complicated reality of language learning for bilingual children, as well as families' confusion about decisions given an unpredictable future.

Nevertheless, the participants believed that bilingualism would be both practically and psychologically beneficial for their children. From the practical perspective, the mothers mentioned that the English language, which is used as a tool for global communication, could become their children's main language; however, if they were able to speak two languages, they might have the opportunity to work for companies or organizations anywhere in the world (Kang, 2012). Apart from the realistic view, another benefit is that children who are raised in a bilingual environment are more likely to be "strongly politically

aware with sophisticated cultural understanding" than are monolingual children (Wallace, 2013: 42). In particular, the children's sense of belonging to a non-European or Asian culture would contribute to the host country's cultural context by being representative of embracing diversity.

VI. Conclusion

This study addressed immigrant Japanese mothers' ethnic identities and their perceptions of their children's language learning. The participating mothers expressed affiliation with the Japanese culture, such as food, and identified as Japanese despite having lived in the UK for some time. The participants traveled between the two countries and enjoyed two cultures, but kept some distance within each domain. They had objective attitudes toward the cultures and differences in the societies; in other words, they adopted a bird's eye view of the two different countries and considered how they affected their families. It could be said that they were active global citizens, which affected the provisions they made for their children's language learning.

The participating mothers wanted their children to be balanced bilinguals, but they also understood the difficulties that this entails. Another unfortunate possibility is that the children would not fit into either of the societies due to having instable identities as a result of their bilingual and bicultural backgrounds (Chinen, 2008; Tse, 2000). Nevertheless, the participating mothers were optimistic and ambitious. They made efforts to provide language support because they valued diversity and believed that their children would appreciate their rich heritage and contribute to society by having diverse views.

This study involved a small number of mothers in a global city; thus, despite having presented the real voices of people who were experiencing raising bilingual children, the small sample makes it difficult to generalize the study's findings. Therefore, it would be useful to compare other types of cases, such as immigrant fathers, other locations across the world, and the emerging types of different families to obtain a fuller picture of future families.

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