The Place and Value of a Heritage Language in the Lives of Japanese Canadians

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Abstract

This study explores the perceptions that Japanese Canadians hold about their heritage language. Their perceptions could be influenced by internal factors (personal events in their lives), and external factors (events that have occurred in the world around them, outside of their realm of control). Identifying their perceptions and the influential factors in the shaping of them, the study ultimately investigates the place and value of their heritage language in the lives of Japanese Canadians.

The participants in this study are Nisei (second generation) and Sansei (third generation) Japanese Canadians. They were selected to reflect two unique characteristics associated with their age, and the world events they have been exposed to. Most studies of heritage language speakers have been conducted on school-aged subjects. In order to examine experiences with language as more than an academic subject, the participants in this study are all adults who have not only completed their schooling, but have had time to garner a range of life experiences after doing so. These participants are also part of a population whose families were touched directly by events associated with the Second World War and the major social reformations that occurred in its aftermath. This combination uniquely places these participants to illustrate both internal and external influence on their perceptions of their heritage language.

A narrative inquiry approach is employed in this study owing to its effectiveness in addressing the complexity and richness of life stories. The stories of four focal participants, which were constructed from interviews and their own autobiographical essays are presented and briefer stories from the remaining seven participants are integrated into discussions.

The findings suggest that the most important function and value heritage languages serve for the Japanese Canadians in this study is the maintenance of family connections. However, the loss of their heritage language did not immediately translate into a loss of family connections. When language loses its function as a communication tool, if the family retains their cultural values, the symbolic functions of the language can continue to be maintained among family members who share the same culture. A loss of both heritage language and culture can devastate a family relationship. The reciprocal roles of family (in maintaining heritage language), and heritage language (in maintaining family connections) is the focus for discussion in this paper.
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Chapter 1

Introduction

After we were freed from the prison camp, we spoke Japanese less and less because we lived in mostly white communities. We spoke Japanese mainly to our father. As we slowly began to lose our fluency in Japanese, we began to depend more on our mother to translate our thoughts to father. It was during the period after being freed that most Japanese Canadians tried deliberately to "unlearn" how to speak Japanese. This was because we were afraid to be associated with any idea of Japanese-ness, fearing a backlash of hostility. (Karen, a second Generation Japanese Canadian)

It is a shame because that knowledge of the language does bring you closer, I missed that with my grandparents. By not being able to communicate with my grandparents, I missed out on some of my heritage. So the overall picture of Japanese language experience is almost null. I look Japanese, however, I am Canadian. Some people like me [are called] "banana" white on the inside and yellow on the outside. (Jenny, a third Generation Japanese Canadian)

Both Karen and Jenny were born into two different cultures. The first is the culture that their ancestors brought to them from their original country, Japan. The second is the one that they were born into in the society in which their ancestors chose to live, Canada. Their ancestral culture and language differ from those of the society in which they live. Because of this difference, Karen and Jenny are in a unique position to have a relationship with their ancestral language, Japanese, and demonstrate the place of that language in their life. What can their language experience tell us? If we listen to their stories carefully, we should be able to hear their vibrant voices and unravel the layers of meaning revealed in the complexity of the relationship they have with the Japanese language.

The desire to undertake this unraveling was triggered by my interest in exploring the preciousness and richness of the life experiences and perceptions of Japanese Canadians as they pertain to the use of the Japanese language. Their views about their heritage language could be influenced by both external and internal factors. The major external factors the
Japanese Canadians in this study had to deal with are directly associated with the Second World War and social reformations that occurred in Canada in the aftermath of it. Another external factor with the potential to alter their views of Japan that was looked at in this study was the social and economic reformation that occurred in Japan following the war. The internal factors of influence could include any of those associated with the events that individuals go through in the course of their lives. This study also attempts to examine how these factors affect Japanese Canadians’ perceptions about their heritage culture, a perception which could influence in turn their sense of identity and their interest in developing their heritage language ability. These avenues of inquiry ultimately led me to ask what I believe to be the most important question, "What is the function of the Japanese language in the lives of Japanese Canadians?"

A narrative inquiry method is employed in this study to analyze Japanese Canadians’ perceptions of their language experiences. In narrative inquiry, one of the important tasks is to appropriately locate the researcher's subjectivity. In my case, my lack of familiarity with heritage language learners and with being an immigrant might make it difficult to analyze the narratives of those who deal with these issues. Although, as a second language learner, I can easily connect myself to various second language acquisition theories, no matter how many languages I try to learn, I will never experience at first hand the process of heritage language acquisition. In my twelve years of teaching, my contact with heritage language learners has been limited, making it difficult to apply my experience to the study of heritage language issues. Hence, my biggest challenge in conducting this study was learning how to relate myself to the unique experiences of heritage language learners.

The contributors to this study are second and third generation Japanese Canadians who are descendents of immigrants who came from Japan at the beginning of the twentieth century. Their uniqueness as a group comes from two sources. The first is the fact that they experienced the great changes that accompanied the Second World War and its aftermath. These events, while completely beyond their control, nonetheless had a profound influence
on their lives. The second defining feature of this participant population stems from the fact that they were all past the years associated with formal schooling, and therefore brought a full range of life experiences with language to the study. While most research on heritage languages focuses on students currently enrolled at school, this study examines the experiences and perceptions of heritage language speakers beyond the point when language is looked upon as a school subject. The goal here is to investigate the meaning of heritage language ability when language performance is of more than academic importance.

This thesis consists of five chapters, organized as follows. The remainder of this introductory chapter consists of two sections. In the first section, I explain the key terms used in the thesis and provide information about the participants. In the second part, I present a brief summary of the history of Japanese language education in Canada. Although the explanations in this section are brief, they are necessary in order to help readers understand the circumstances in which the participants found themselves.

Chapter 2 reviews the literature on key heritage language issues. In recent years, issues surrounding heritage languages have begun to receive serious attention from scholars. I have selected for review those that deal with heritage language issues relevant to Japanese Canadians; language and power relationships, language and ethnic identity, and motivation. Chapter 3 discusses the present study's research questions, methodology, and the limitations of the research. Chapter 4 examines the life stories of the researcher and four focal participants. I believe my language acquisition experience significantly influences the way I teach second language learners, and that both my language learning and teaching experiences shape my approach to researching heritage language issues. I, therefore, present my autobiographical essay here in order to situate my own subjectivity as a researcher. At the end of the chapter, I also include the stories of non-focal participants in order to supplement the analysis and discussions. The first part of Chapter 5 presents discussions and findings organized under research questions, while the second part contains conclusions and some suggestions for language educators.
Terminology

Heritage Language

The concept of heritage languages is a relatively new one, and different terms have been used to describe it in different regions. These terms include, for example, "community" language in Australia and New Zealand, and "ethnic", "minority", "ancestral", "third" and "non-official" language at different times and in different provinces within Canada. It seems that in Canada the term heritage language also evokes controversy because of the connotation contained within it of learning about past traditions rather than acquiring useful skills for the future (Cummins, 1995, p. 137).

Among different disciplines, even when the same term is used, the definition of heritage language differs. For those who are interested in endangered indigenous or immigrant languages that are not taught in school, it means the language of one's ancestor. Under this definition a heritage language is considered an important aspect of culture and an important source of personal connections. This idea is widely accepted in the fields of sociology, anthropology, and psychology. Fishman (2001) suggests that in this concept a language has historical and cultural importance for individuals even if they lack actual speaking ability. Haida is the heritage language of any Haida, even for those who are monolingual English speakers. Similarly, Japanese is looked upon as the heritage language even for third and fourth generation Japanese Canadians who speak no Japanese.

For linguists and language educators, however, Valdes (2001) provides a narrower definition. She states that the heritage language speaker is "a language student who is raised in a home where a non-English language is spoken, who speaks or at least understands the language, and who is to some degree bilingual in that language and in English" (Ibid., p.2). Valdes' intention here is to distinguish heritage language learning from second and foreign
language learning, since she believes that heritage language learners (i.e., those who come to language learning with some familiarity with the language already embedded) acquire their proficiency in that language in different ways from those who are acquiring a second or foreign language (i.e., those who have absolutely no familiarity with the language to be learned).

As used in this study, the term heritage language employs Fishman’s notion that heritage languages are those that have a historical and cultural connection to those who speak and study them. The study includes those who do not possess any Japanese language ability beyond a few words or phrases, and yet have some personal and historical connection to the language through their connection to Japanese immigrants.

Japanese Canadians: The Nikkei

The participants in this study are Japanese Canadians who are often referred to as "Nikkei." The word "Nikkei" is used for Japanese immigrants or their descendants not only in Canada but also in the US and South America. According to the American National Museum research group, "Nikkei" refers to "persons of Japanese descent and descendants, who have immigrated from Japan and created unique communities and lifestyles within the context of the societies in which they live" (cited in Shibata, 2003, p.7).

A more specific term is used for Nikkei who were born in Canada but temporarily returned to Japan in order to receive a Japanese education or for other purposes. These people are known as Kikasha, a word that literally means "returnees to Canada" (Ki = return, ka = Canada, sha = people). Because of the outbreak of the Second World War, many Kikasha had to stay in Japan longer than they had planned. It took the Kikasha a significant amount of time to readjust to Canadian society and regain their linguistic ability upon their return to Canada. Some of the Kikasha who had been absent from Canada for a long time tended to segregate themselves and were frequently discriminated against by the rest of the
Nikkei people. In the worst cases, some Kikasha were never able to re-assimilate into Nikkei society. Two out of the 11 participants in this study are Kikasha. They are not reticent about telling their stories because they managed to assimilate back into society upon their return to Canada. There are, however, an unknown number of Kikasha who have had difficulty in becoming fully assimilated in both countries. The study could not include these Kikasha, because they are not amongst those who would come forward to tell their stories. Finding them, and so including their voice would be difficult.

The Japanese also have terms that distinguish between each generation of immigrants and their descendants. Issei is the term used to describe the first generation of Japanese immigrants, those who were born in Japan and moved to other countries. The second generation, or the children of Issei, were born outside of Japan, and are referred to as Nisei. The third generation is called Sansei, and the forth generation is known as Yonsei.

In terms of Japanese immigrants, there is one additional term that requires explanation. Those who immigrated to North America in the 1950s\(^1\) or later are distinguished from persons whose family moved abroad before the Second World War. Postwar Japanese immigrants are referred to as Shin-Issei and their children are called Shin-Nisei. The pre- and post-war groups differ significantly from each other in many ways. While the Issei usually left Japan in search of economic opportunity, economic issues seldom constituted a key motive for the Shin-Issei. The Shin-Issei are generally better educated and often less tradition-oriented, and they often immigrated in search of the challenge of a different lifestyle.

Who are the Nisei and Sansei in Canada?

The Japanese migration to Canada started in the 1870s and initially consisted of

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1 Between 1941 and 1950, there were only 32 Japanese immigrants to Canada, and until the mid-1960s migration from Japan to Canada remained extremely low (Ward, 1984).
single men who considered themselves sojourners, individuals intending to return to Japan as soon as they had earned enough money. There were few Japanese children born in Canada until the first "picture brides" began arriving in the first decade of the 20th century. The Canadian-born children, the Nisei, were typically born in the 1910s and 1920s and witnessed the Second World War as children or adolescents. Since the Issei parents tried to retain Japanese cultural values and to raise their children in the Japanese manner using the Japanese language, the Nisei became both bilingual and bicultural. However, while they were entitled to receive Canadian citizenship and education in English, legal restrictions barred them from engaging in certain professions such as law, medicine, and accounting, and they were denied voting rights. Thus, their bilingual and bicultural character was not fully appreciated and they were still seen as Japanese.

By the end of 1930s the majority of Japanese immigrants had managed to establish a comfortable life. Those who wanted to return to Japan started sending their Canadian-born children on ahead of them to obtain a Japanese education. Unfortunately, before their plans could be realized, the Second World War started. The War ultimately cut 30,000 Japanese Canadians off from the lives they had built for themselves by forcing them to move into government-designated internment camps. Many painful years would pass before they regained recognition as citizens of Canada.

After the war, the Nisei were busy rebuilding their lives, working to be accepted in society and raising their own families. In the process, they were often caught between the cultural values of their parents and those of mainstream Canadian society, including those of their own sons and daughters. The Nisei tried to pass on important aspects of Japanese culture to the next generation while simultaneously striving to become "good Canadians,"

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2 Picture brides are Japanese women who moved to Canada in order to marry Japanese immigrant men. Their marriages were arranged through exchanging their pictures with each other. This was needed because there were almost no Japanese women living in Canada when the single male Japanese immigrants were ready to settle down in Canada and start a family.
and the contradictory nature of this struggle was reflected in the relationships that developed between the Nisei and the Sansei. Makabe (1998) states that the most frequently heard Nisei complaint about Sansei is that "the Sansei are 'completely assimilated' or '100 per cent Canadian-ized.'" (p.4) He further says that vast differences exist between the two generations and that the Nisei confess their discomfort with their "Hakujn" (white people) offspring. Ironically, it was not until their children were fully grown that the Nisei realized that the rapid assimilation of the Sansei generation was a direct consequence of their own earlier struggle as immigrants. Having suffered from blatant discrimination in their day, the Nisei generation tried to make their children’s path to assimilation and social acceptance as smooth as possible, with the unforeseen result that specifically Japanese aspects of their children’s identities were overwhelmed if not completely displaced by those drawn from mainstream Canadian identities.

The Sansei were born, for the most part in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s, with only the oldest Sansei experiencing the War or its chaotic aftermath.³ They grew up in an atmosphere dominated by English, becoming monolingual and possibly even monocultural as their Nisei parents claimed. Unlike the earlier generations of immigrants, they could complete their education and pursue all kinds of professions without restriction. Moreover, the Sansei rarely encountered direct discrimination since their communities were largely populated by other Asian immigrants. As a result, they tended not to perceive their ethnic background as a handicap. Concrete proof of their fast assimilation can be found in the high rate of intermarriage that exists among them. The exact ratio is not available for the Japanese Canadian population, but Nakane (1998), who works with three generations of Japanese Americans, states that the ratio is around 50 per cent for Sansei in the US. Two out of the five

³ Those who were evacuated east of the Rockies were not allowed to move back to British Columbia until 1949.
Sansei participants in this study married non-Japanese partners.4

If the Sansei are "100 per cent Canadian-ized" as the Nisei claim, there would be nothing left to discuss about their identities. Ironically, however, only their parents seem to regard them as purely Canadian, while the rest of society continues to perceive the Sansei as different, predominately, at least superficially, due to their physical distinctiveness. Regardless of how they feel about their Japanese ethnic background, the Sansei have to deal with the way others perceive them as members of a visible minority, and in that respect they are not yet as thoroughly assimilated as they would like to be.

Japanese Language Education in Canada, 1900-1945

An urgent need for Japanese education arose as soon as the population of Canadian-born children in the Japanese community expanded. There were two key reasons for the rapid establishment of Japanese schools that followed in the wake of this expansion. First, as mentioned earlier, the early Japanese immigrants were sojourners who had planned to return to Japan once they saved enough money. Thus, they believed in preparing their children for eventual re-integration into Japanese society. If they could afford the costs, some parents sent their children to Japan to be educated in Japanese schools. Others, either because they lacked the necessary means or for some other reason, chose to build Japanese-style schools in Canada. The second reason is the high value placed on education by Japanese immigrants. Based on their own experience as immigrants, they believed that education was the best vehicle for achieving economic and social success in their adoptive homeland. Indeed, they prioritized education ahead of improvements in their standard of living, for in their eyes the latter was, in the long term, dependent on the former. Yokoyama (1986), a

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4 Ellen, one of the focal participants in this study, met her husband while she was living in Japan. Jeff, a non-focal participant, married a Shin-Nisei whose family immigrated to Canada when she was sixteen years old. Another non-focal participant, Linda, mentioned that she has a Chinese Canadian boyfriend.
former principal of one of the Japanese language schools in Vancouver, noted their determination: "Before they built their own houses, they set about to build a school." (p.2) However, given their sojourner status, the parents of the children in these schools saw no point in having their children attend Canadian public schools.

The Japanese National School (Kyouritsu Nihon Kokumin Gakkou) was considered the first Japanese school in Canada, and opened with thirty students under the slogan "nurturing a Japanese spirit" in 1906. Its goal could not be reached without following the Japanese school system, so the curriculum, textbooks, methodology, and school hours were identical to those of schools in Japan. Many teachers were sent by the Ministry of Education from Japan to support this and other such schools which followed it. A few more Japanese schools were built soon after, and by 1920 there were seven such schools in British Columbia.

Between 1911 and 1920, the Japanese population in British Columbia almost doubled, and the Japanese community became more stabilized. This was also the time when many sojourners changed their direction and started establishing roots in Canada with a view to permanent residence. The natural consequence of this change in expectations was that the Japanese schools gradually shifted their emphasis from preparatory education for those who would be returning to Japan to supplementary education for children who would be staying in Canadian public schools. The Japanese language became a main focus of the curriculum in the Japanese schools and even the school names were changed from Japanese school to Japanese language school. This shift to a more narrowly focused curriculum accelerated as the growing military strength and militancy of Japan aroused public fears in Canada. The schools were accused of perpetuating Japanese culture and promoting Japanese patriotism. Similar criticism aimed at German and Italian schools led to their closure in 1940.
The Japanese schools remained open, but had to avoid provoking additional antagonism towards the Japanese community.\(^5\) In spite of their meticulous efforts, the sequence of attacks on the school never ceased and actually escalated in the run-up to Pearl Harbor. In January 1940, a Vancouver newspaper reported the City Council’s request to investigate all Japanese language schools. In response to the report, the president of the Japanese Language School League, Tsutae Sato, agreed to an interview in which he addressed the misunderstanding about the schools. He particularly emphasized the purpose of the language schools, saying, "In the current Japanese community where Issei can’t acquire a high English proficiency, teaching Japanese to their children is crucial to maintain a bridge between the generations" (Sato & Sato, 1976, p. 238).

All the schools’ efforts and pleas to be allowed to continue language classes were in vain following the sudden attack at Pearl Harbour on December 7, 1941. Realizing the gravity of the situation, all 50 Japanese language schools agreed to voluntary closure; they would remain closed for the remainder of the war. It took more than ten years before the school bells were again heard at the schools. Once the internment order was enforced, the scattered Japanese children were denied access not only to formal heritage language instruction, but also to English-language schooling for several years.

Japanese Language Education in BC: 1946 to Present

The end of the Second World War in 1945 did not result in the immediate release of the Japanese evacuees east of the Rockies, who spent another four years before finally returning to British Columbia. Moreover, when they finally did return, the evacuees had to

\(^5\) Although the schools wished to publish their own books, the Japanese language schools had to use textbooks made under the Japanese Ministry of Education’s supervision due to the lack of a Japanese language printing facility in Canada. According to Tsutae Sato, the Language School League made the first draft and had an agreement with the Japanese government to subsidize the cost. However, one month later, after the draft was brought back from Japan in 1941, the war broke out. That draft was never printed and they did not receive any subsidy money from the government.
start their life from scratch, since their confiscated properties were never returned to them. In spite of the tough conditions, the Japanese community in B.C. gradually regained its pre-War vitality. At the same time, the relationship between Japan and Canada improved rapidly. Both countries recognized the potential for mutually beneficial trade, and the first Japanese ambassador was sent to Ottawa in 1952.

Also in 1952 the oldest Japanese school, the Vancouver Japanese Language School, reopened with a few students. A few other schools followed suit, but Japanese language education did not experience any real renaissance in the post-War period. Upon their return to British Columbia, the Nisei Japanese Canadians concentrated on re-building their lives, paying little attention to Japanese language training for their children. Meanwhile, Japan, starting in the late 1960s, began to experience rapid economic growth which had unforeseen consequences for Japanese language instruction in Canada. As the Japanese economy underwent rapid change, the typical Japanese emigrant changed as well. Many of those who immigrated to Canada from Japan now sought a different lifestyle, and unlike their predecessors, they tended to be highly skilled and well-educated urbanites of both sexes. They encountered fewer problems in settling down in the new country and did not show much interest in sending their children to Japanese language schools.

This changed again in the 1970s, as the number of Japanese enterprises operating in Canada expanded, leading to a marked increase in the number of Japanese workers and families who were in the country for defined time periods on work-related sojourns. This in turn resulted in a renewed demand for Japanese education for the children of these workers; education that included both the Japanese language and other subjects taught in Japanese. Early efforts by volunteer mothers within the expatriate community to maintain their children's language ability had limited success, and eventually the Japanese government responded to the demands of overseas Japanese. The Japanese ministries of Education and Foreign Affairs agreed to partially subsidize the costs of Japanese schools overseas. These
schools are called Hoshukou, or "supplementary school," and are designed to accommodate the demand for a Japanese education for the children of expatriate Japanese families. At first, the Japanese government only provided teaching materials, but eventually dispatched professional teachers to the Hoshukou in the 1980s. Since the day-to-day operations of these schools are still managed privately by expatriate communities, they normally exclude the children of immigrants. Due to the Japanese economic slump in the 1990s, the number of Hoshukou has not increased in the last decade, but Vancouver still has three of these schools.

Both the Hoshukou and the conventional language schools support the Japanese community in British Columbia, but they differ from each other due to different educational goals. While the Hoshukou provide an education designed to enable students to re-enter Japanese schools upon their return to Japan, the Japanese language schools focus only on teaching the language to students who generally have no intention of returning Japan.

In recent years, the demand for Japanese language education in Canada has also been stimulated by the federal government's policies supporting multiculturalism. The federal government initiated the Cultural Enrichment Program in 1977 and provided some support to various ethnic communities for the teaching of heritage languages. The program was discontinued in 1990 and many aspects of the multicultural policies were subjected to critical scrutiny (Cummins & Danesi, 1990). Nonetheless, the program led to the introduction of instruction in a wide range of ethnic languages in public schools. Apart from French, several other languages are now taught at many elementary schools starting as early as Grade 5. The students who enroll in these language classes are often heritage language learners, like Yonsei Japanese Canadians. Even though there are many issues related to the heritage

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6 There are two types of Hoshukou. One is a full-time Japanese school, and the other is a part-time supplementary school. Developing countries tend to have more full-time schools. The lack of education facilities, low academic standards, how hard the local language is to learn and the degree to which the local language is valued, have caused Japanese parents to seek a full-time Japanese school in developing countries. Currently, there is no full-time Japanese school in Canada (Ota, 1988).
language programs that still need to be worked out, the federal government's multicultural policies were successful to the extent that they brought heritage language instruction into the mainstream of public education.

Another recent and interesting phenomenon in the field of heritage languages is the enthusiasm for early language education for pre-school children. Nowadays, many language schools extend their curriculum to include kindergarten children. With respect to Japanese Canadians, many of these students are the children of mixed marriages, in most cases between non-Japanese men and Japanese women. Thus, in a very real sense, the purpose of early heritage language education is to maintain the children's mother tongue and mother culture. There are few non-Japanese children who either stayed in Japan for a certain period of time or plan to go to Japan in the near future who participate in these early language programs. The strong motivations that led parents to send their children to a Japanese language school are triggered by the parents' bad experiences as monolingual individuals and/or their anticipation of a benefit to their children of being bilingual in the future.

Summary and Moving Forward

As the number of heritage language learners has increased, more attention has been paid to unraveling and studying research problems associated with heritage language learning. Because of the historical connection between the Nikkei and the Japanese language, it was deemed important to present the historical background of the Nikkei in this chapter, so that the reader could understand the historical backdrop to the stories they tell. Having the understanding of their history as the first step, the following chapters progressively move towards creating a real voice for Japanese Canadians.

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7 In 2002 winter I voluntarily worked as an assistant teacher at one of these language schools in Vancouver. The following description of the demography there is based on my own observation at the school.
While heritage languages is still a new area of inquiry for me, I do feel that the most significant issue with respect to heritage language learners has not, to date, been addressed directly by researchers. We are born into the heritage languages of our parents. If one or both of those languages differs from that of the dominant culture, we are also born into a lifetime of issues associated with the personal and historical connections we have to our heritage languages. As our relation to culture, language and identity develop over time, so must our consideration of heritage languages and of what they mean for heritage language learning and for heritage language learners. Heritage language learning must, therefore, be considered as an issue requiring long term attention, and attention applied across the lifespan.

The Nisei and Sansei participants in this study demonstrate the profound ways in which the experiences they have dealt with in relation to their knowledge and use of the Japanese language in various circumstances - beyond the context of language as an academic subject - have affected their view of the language and of themselves. It is to their stories, and to their insights, that we now turn.
Chapter 2

Literature Review

Heritage language education has been treated differently from second or foreign language education in the field of applied linguistics. When people learn a second language, their initial proficiency is zero. In the case of learning a heritage language, people often do possess a certain level of proficiency. However, even if they do not have any initial proficiency, they still have a historically embedded personal connection to the language, and this connection is one of the key reasons that heritage language learning is distinctive from second or foreign language learning.

In this chapter, I will briefly sketch the literature associated with three issues that appear to have played an essential role in thwarting heritage language learning.

Language and Power Relationship

The reasons immigrants have for leaving their original countries vary widely. Once they arrive in their new land, however, they all share some inherent assimilation problems. To acquire the language of the mainstream becomes the first and most crucial adjustment when a common language does not exist between the original country and the new country. The ability to speak the mainstream language can be regarded as a second passport to a successful life in the new society. Therefore, finding ways of helping immigrant children learn the language quickly and efficiently has been a central issue at educational institutions, while the maintenance of their first language has not. The US has a diverse population and promotes a single official language as one way to unify the country. In the US it was believed that immigrant should try to acquire English in order to demonstrate their loyalty to the country instead of holding on to their original language. This approach was not questioned for a long
time, at least until the first half of the twentieth century, when Fishman’s discussions of language policy revealed the subordinated position in which minority languages were being placed.

Fishman (1966) is the first scholar to highlight the importance of maintaining endangered languages and to suggest bilingual education for ethnic minorities. He pointed out rather severely but accurately that, in the name of democracy, the monolingual policy of the US was implemented to inspire nationalism but that it did so at the cost of ignoring the value of minority languages. In this context, first language maintenance did not receive much attention. As Fishman lamented nearly four decades ago, "The cultural and linguistic self-maintenance efforts of American minority groups are surrounded by towering mountains of ignorance and vast oceans of apathy" (Fishman, 1966, p. 21).

His insightful claim brought the realization that there is an inseparable correlation between social power and choice of language. In fact, language itself has no power, but is merely a handy tool with which to practice power (Bourdieu, 1991; Corson, 1993). Language power is only exercised through discourses - and is felt in who speaks which language, to whom, and under what kinds of circumstances. Language power, like a mirror of the power that already exists in a society, receives life only when an unequal power relationship exists in a society with a rigid stratification (Snow & Hakuta, 1992). In other words, in a society where a power relationship is not salient among different language groups, which language is spoken by whom does not cause any problems. Take Switzerland as an example. This country recognizes three different national languages and there is remarkably little conflict among these three language groups. There, no one questions which language should be spoken in the society.

The biggest obstacle to heritage language education for immigrants is a widely held negative view that heritage languages lead to divisiveness and political unrest (Krashen, 1998). Unfortunately, this misleading view of heritage language maintenance continues to exist and polarizes views of bilingual education (Krashen, 1998; Tse, 2001; Wong, 2001).
is not difficult for language policy makers and educators to notice that school is seen as the most effective medium with which to enforce legitimate language power. It can determine not only which language to teach to whom, but also how to treat minority cultures (Corson, 1993). Hence, the implementation of bilingual education and an ESL program for immigrant children at school has raised a controversial issue among language educators.

Those who consider second (mainstream) language acquisition as a duty of immigrant tend to believe that heritage language education hinders acculturation to mainstream society. Consequently, they contend that all schools' efforts should be directed towards helping immigrant children learn the mainstream language. The underlying assumption is that developing this mainstream language ability will lead to a successful life in mainstream society. Although the opponents of bilingual education are aware of the fact that maintaining a heritage language and becoming bilingual are ultimately beneficial in terms of employment prospects, they can see no reason why educational institutes should have to promote heritage language programs in order for immigrants to maintain their heritage language with tax money. In their view, maintenance of the heritage language should be left in the hands of individual families or local communities who must use their own resources to support the language. Society as a whole is assigned the role of endorsing linguistically unified nationalism. Mainstream society financially cannot afford to support the "luxury" of bilingualism for only heritage language learners. Furthermore, proponents of this view believe that the maintenance of heritage languages hampers the process of second language acquisition, and is therefore seen as a cause of academic failure. They would contend that heritage language programs produce no positive outcomes but rather lead to behaviours, such as dropping out of school, which can devastate the future prospects of immigrant children.

In contrast, supporters of bilingualism in heritage languages vigorously refute these negative views of heritage language programs and condemn the blindness of this opposition to bilingualism. To the contrary, heritage language supporters claim that monolingualism is a good example of the consequence of the prevailing misunderstanding of multiculturalism.
Drawing on Ronald Dowrkin's remark, Corson (1993) explains the difference between treating people equally and treating people as equals, "When we treat people equally, everyone gets the same regardless of need; when we treat people as equals, the claims of each are equally considered" (p. 30). When one single language is selected to be taught to all the citizens of the nation equally, this means that an individual's choice of language is neglected. Heritage language supporters do not believe that imposing one national language is the best way to "treat people as equals." They question how educators should promote cultural differences and support the needs of all students among different cultural groups in multicultural societies.

With regard to expenditures on heritage language programs, supporters of the programs refute the labeling of money spent on individuals' heritage languages as "luxuries" believing this attitude reveals a rather short-sighted lack of consideration of the long-term costs of language loss. Snow and Hakuta (1992), who worked in the American context, report inevitable monolingual costs to society and to individuals when they lose a language. They particularly emphasize the cognitive costs to individuals which have not been fully investigated yet and are difficult to measure accurately. They suggest that monolingual children are most likely to lose the chance to develop an early appreciation of language which, in turn, nurtures flexibility in linguistic cognition late in life. Unless the consequences of heritage language loss can be fully examined, we cannot estimate the real cost of monolingualism to society.

Current heritage language researchers repeatedly report such positive outcomes of bilingual programs as individual well-being (Ada, 1997; Feurverger, 1989; Wong Fillmore 1991; Syed, 1999), socioeconomic advantages (Garcia, 1995) and better academic

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1 They state three kinds of costs to society: educational costs—training teachers, economical costs—a lack of bilingual businessmen, national security costs—language training money for military personal or spies. As an individual cost, they suggest, time and effort—to regain the language instead of maintaining, and cognitive costs—to develop deficiency in appreciation of different languages and cultures.
performance (Krashen, 1998; Oketani 2000; Tse, 2001). The notion that the maintenance of a heritage language impedes the acquisition of a second language and interferes with academic performance was challenged by the interdependent theory promoted by Jim Cummins (1991). He states that developing a cognitive foundation in a first language at an early age will eventually reinforce higher proficiency in a second language.

Moreover, Tse (2001) firmly rejects the perception that immigrants cling to their heritage language and states the opposite is true: the rate at which heritage language facility is being lost is increasing. Intergenerational conflict occurs in immigrant families even between the first generation, who are limited in their facility with the mainstream language, and the second generation, who are losing their heritage language. The conflict between first and second generation immigrants represents a shortening of the language-based communication gap, which typically used to happen between the first and the third generation. Wong Fillmore (1991, 2001) regards deteriorating family relations caused by the lack of a common language to be the most serious and damaging result of language loss. According to Wong Fillmore, language loss is not necessarily always an outcome of acquiring second languages, otherwise there would be no bilingualism in the any multicultural societies (2001, p. 207). She suggests that powerful social and political forces are responsible for the retention of minority languages in the United States.

Language and Ethnic Identity

While there are other factors which influence one’s ethnic identity, a significant amount of research in the area of psycholinguistics and sociolinguistics suggests that language plays an important role in the process of formulating ethnic identity (Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey 1990; Imbens-Bailey, 1996; Lanca, 1994; Phinney et.al. 2001). Because of an immigrant’s historically-based personal connection to a heritage language, for them, a choice of language to speak can be particularly influential in the forming of their ethnic identity.
the process of acculturation in a new society, it is a big challenge for immigrants to establish their ethnic identity. This is particularly true for immigrant children who are flexible but at the same time vulnerable to their surroundings. They can be easily caught between the mainstream culture in which they function, and their parents' original culture.

While engaged in learning the language of the mainstream, immigrants sometimes intentionally utilize distinctive features of their ethnic language to differentiate themselves from members of the mainstream, or to show solidarity with members from their own group. Giles, Bourhis and Taylor (1977) refer to this usage of language distinction as "ethnolinguistic vitality." They propose that the stronger a person's ethnolinguistic vitality is, the more likely they are to strive to remain distinct, and the more positive the self-concept they have will be as a consequence. In a later work, Giles and Johnson (1987) develop the ethnolinguistic identity theory and suggest several factors which contribute to positive linguistic distinctiveness. They identify the kinds of individual psychological climates within which people strive for a more positive identity and accentuate their distinctive language features, thereby retaining the usage of their ethnic language and contributing to ethnic language maintenance.

Much research has elaborated the ethnolinguistic identity theory and generally supports the main core of it (Allard & Landry 1991, 1992; Oketani, 2000). Nevertheless, the relationship between language and ethnic identity is not always positively correlated. As Edwards claims, "ethnic identity can be maintained in the absence of a revitalized national language" (Edwards, 1977, p. 259). The Irish language shift provides an example of people

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2 Ethnolinguistic identity theory draws on the theory of intergroup relations by Tajfel (1974). Bourhis and Giles (1977) summarized Tajfel's theory as follows: "when members of a group interact with members of another, they compare themselves on a number of valued dimensions with this other group. It is claimed that these intergroup social comparisons will lead group members to search for certain characteristics or qualities of their own group which will allow them to differentiate themselves favourably from the outgroup. Such positive ingroup distinctiveness will not only allow individuals satisfaction in their own group membership but will afford them a positive social identity" (p. 119).

3 Their earlier work (1981) suggested eight conditions which contribute to positive linguistic distinctiveness and the latest one (1987) included attitude and motivation of members of dominant and subordinate groups. (cited in Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey 1990)
who can possess an ethnic identity even though their ethnic language is disappearing.

Edwards also suggests that there are two separate functions of language in terms of language maintenance: communicative and symbolic. The communicative function can be found in daily conversation and demonstrates language being used as a communication tool as the means of exchanging ideas and instructions. Used symbolically, language provides the means by which to encapsulate a traditional culture. Symbolic language use is most strongly associated with ethnic events such as religious occasions and festivals. The two functions for language coexist, but the symbolic function can remain in the absence of the communicative function. This can be observed in the case of many third and fourth generation immigrants who still participate in religious events (e.g. traditional funerals and weddings), or ethnic festivals. These later generations often demonstrate a case of heritage language loss but somehow cling to their heritage culture by remembering a few essential traditional words or phrases which are associated with their participation in the cultural events.

The relationship between language and ethnic identity is made more intricate by a gap between an individual's view of their ethnic group and how others view their group (Syed 2001). It is hardly surprising that when minority culture and mainstream culture are dissimilar, there exists a disparity between "objective criteria" (a generalized public opinion, held in society at large), and "subjective criteria" (as held by an individual). Members of ethnic minority groups are inclined to emphasize "objective criteria" (Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1990), or to be vigorously influenced by public opinion because of the strong assimilative pulls of the mainstream (Kondo, 1998). In that case, the bigger the gap is between two different cultures, the more stress ethnic minorities face in their acculturation. Padilla et al. (2001), who investigated stress experienced among Japanese and Japanese American students in the acculturation process, report that Issei immigrants claim more stress and are more externally controlled than Nisei and Sansei Japanese Americans. The Issei feel that the remarkably big disparity that exists between Japanese and Western cultures exacerbates the stress that they experience. In contrast, the Sansei, whose experience of Japanese culture
tend to be encompassed within the family environment, do not claim a dichotomy of the two cultures and report less stress.

So far, I have illustrated how external factors affect the relationship between ethnic identity and language, but it is natural to wonder if there are personal, internal factors that account for ethnic identity formation in heritage language learners. As we move through different phases of our life (e.g., child, adolescent, adult, senior citizen) and experience milestone events (e.g., school, marriage, work, parenthood), we also develop different values and perspectives in and on our lives. Thus, it is likely that individual life events can influence the way we relate to our ethnic identity. Understanding how these personal factors play out on the evolution of our ethnic identity can only be addressed by working with adults who have gone through a range of these major life experiences. Research focusing on grown-up heritage language speakers is very limited, with a few exceptions; Pavlenko (2001, 1998) Tse (2000) and Morrow (1997) analyze published narratives of minorities in North America.

It is a ubiquitous complaint among immigrant children that they have to attend their Saturday school or any other extra curriculum forum for studying their heritage languages (Kondo, 1998; Mills, 2001). They are sent there because of their parents’ desire to maintain their heritage language, but the children hardly see the point of learning these languages. Eventually, parents give up their hope of retaining their heritage language and most of the children end up discontinuing the schooling. Interestingly, it is also common that later in their lives the same children who complained about the heritage language programs, notice the devaluation of their heritage language and blame their parents for not forcing them to persist with it. Once they nurture a positive attitude towards their ethnic culture and language, some are motivated enough to relearn the language for their own purposes. The retrieval of a once lost heritage language late in life is not a well-documented research area but de Bot and Stoessel (2000) brought delightful news for those who had lost their first language. Their study suggests that the part of the language that was learned in childhood can be retrievable even after 30 years of non-use. In addition, the process of relearning the
forgotten language is different from that of acquiring a second language (Au et al., 2002). Research into the revitalization of previously lost language ability might make a great contribution to discussions of heritage language issues.

Motivation

It has long been the prevailing notion that the motivational level of language learners is responsible for the degree of success encountered in second language acquisition. In fact, the personal goals people aim to achieve and the degree to which they are motivated to pursue them can influence the level of achievement they enjoy. Motivation is a rather common and convenient notion used to explain behaviour in any goal-oriented activity. Thus, there is no reason not to apply the notion of motivation to examine its effect on heritage language maintenance. It is important to bear in mind, however, that motivation cannot explain every success story. Motivation is a rudimentary human phenomenon. As Dornyei (2001) says it is "one of the most basic aspects of the human mind" but we still have to carefully examine how it works and why it is influential in this context.

In studies of motivation to learn languages, the most extensively discussed theory is that of Gardner and Lambert (1972) who proposed two distinctive motivations: integrative motivation - learning a language so as to integrate with people who speak the language, and instrumental motivation - learning a language in order to increase chances of employment. Since then, a number of modifications have been added to the original theory by Gardner, Lambert and other researchers, but the core of their proposition seems to have remained. In Gardner’s recent study (2002), he suggests that students with integrative motivation are more successful than students with instrumental motivation. With respect to heritage language learners, because of the ethnic component of their relation with language, it is expected that integrative motivation would be a crucial part of their motivation. To the extent that being bilingual is beneficial to job hunting, heritage language learners have a wide range of
languages to choose from. Why then would they choose their heritage language. By asking different generations of immigrants the reasons they have for choosing to learn their heritage language, we should be able to gain insight into the meaning of learning or not learning their heritage language for them.

In reality, research that supports a strong integration motivation among heritage language learners is extensive and shows that the desire underlying this motivation is maintenance of the family unit. Mills (2001) interviewed third generation Asian children in the UK to investigate their views on bilingualism. Her participants reported the crucial role of their language is the maintenance of the bond with their families and communities. Even at a relatively young age, children recognize the different functions of their heritage language and English, saying "but with English it's just a language…. Punjabi and Urdu are part of the culture, you can't have the language on its own." Sung and Padilla (1998) conducted research with three East-Asian language (Chinese, Japanese and Korean) learners in the North American context. According to their results, elementary students claim more heritage-related motivation than that of high school students. They suggest that this is due to a significant amount of parent participation in language education at the elementary level. In a way, they suggest that a parent's involvement can be attributed to a desire for heritage language maintenance. This result is in accord with the outcomes of Kondo's study (1998). Her study with Japanese language learners at university also reports that parents, particularly mothers, play a central role in keeping children close to their heritage language and culture.

It is, however, only fair to state that some research, including the research mentioned above, also reports an indirect and rather negative influence of family-connection motivation. For example, the participants in Mills' study lamented the painful effort required to please family and relatives by speaking their heritage language. As a member of the family or community to which they belong, the children acknowledge their obligation to meet family

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4 The age of the participants in her study varies from five to nineteen. The quotation is by an eighteen-year-old female student.
expectations in their immediate surroundings and the importance that is placed on speaking their heritage language as one of these expectations. We can imagine the result of failing to meet family and friends’ expectations. Such failure is reported in Kondo’s study. One of her participants visited Japan and was humiliated by other Japanese children’s comments on her lack of knowledge in Kanji. After this incident, the participant was inspired to study harder and was determined to improve her reading and writing skills. In this case, her experience of humiliation turned into a stronger determination to study more, but it could have created discouragement and stress. Jo (2001) presented an example of heritage language learners who are struggling to keep up with the authorised “standard language criteria.” Heritage language speakers are easily intimidated by a native speaker of their heritage language and discouraged by their own tendency to speak “non-standard language.” The participants in Jo’s study, whose heritage language is Korean, confront a difficulty with complex honorific expressions. It is not an easy task for Korean heritage language learners who normally live in a language environment devoid of the need to observe honorific forms to utilize appropriate honorific forms according to interlocutors and situations when faced with them. The difficulty in acquiring appropriate levels of language formality discourages the speakers from maintaining their heritage language.

An integrative orientation is a crucial part of learning motivation with heritage language learners, but it is not the only type of motivation that is relevant. In fact, instrumental motivation has become more common as economic situations have changed in Japanese and Canadian societies. Another of Kondo’s studies (2002) reveals the popularity of

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5 The Japanese orthography involves three distinctive writing forms: Hiragana, Katakana and Kanji. While Hiragana and Katakana are simply and easy to remember, Kanji, Chinese characters, has often a complicated structure and is difficult to master properly. At Grade 1, pupils are expected to learn 92 characters of Hiragana and Katakana within three months, but they are required to remember only 80 Kanji characters for one year. In order to be literate in Japanese, -- being able to read billboards on a street, names of products at shop, city maps and the like, one must know around 2000 Kanji characters the top of Hiragana and Katakana. Many Japanese language learners struggle in living in Japan, because their reading ability is hampered by a limited number of Kanji they know even their oral proficiency is high.
instrumental motivation among university-level Japanese language learners. Over 60 percent of her participants, regardless of the degree to which facility in two languages had been developed, claimed better job opportunities as the reason for studying Japanese, while, at 80 percent, heritage language maintenance was the most common reason cited.
Chapter 3

Parameters and Limitations of the Study

Statement of Purpose

Unlike would-be speakers of second languages, who may have absolutely no personal connection with the language, would-be speakers of heritage languages have a historically embedded personal connection to the language of their ancestors. This connection never disappears, regardless of the ability people do or do not develop in their heritage language. Drawing on this notion, and the important understanding that facility with heritage languages creates different issues at different points in a person’s life, this study investigates the place of heritage languages in the lives of Japanese Canadians. Specifically, it involves Japanese Canadian participants drawn from two post-immigration generations and a variety of life stages, to look beyond their experiences of Japanese as an academic subject and discuss their experiences with the language across their lifespan. At issue is an attempt to understand the place and value their heritage language holds in their lives, and what it has meant for them to have, or to have lacked, their heritage language at different points in their lives.

Given this focus, a narrative inquiry approach was employed in this study. This approach was chosen because of its effectiveness in revealing and exploring the complexity and richness of people’s life stories. In recent years, narrative inquiry has received more recognition as a legitimate data source (Pavlenko, 1998, 2001), and has been widely used in many disciplines such as Education, History, Literature, Anthropology and Psychology (Roberge & Phillion, 1997). To make use of a narrative inquiry approach more fully, the present study combines two different forms of narratives; one elicited by an interview, and the other an autobiographical essay written by the participants. By analyzing two forms of narratives, the study attempts to answer the following research questions:
1. How are Japanese Canadians' perspectives on their heritage language and culture affected by the level of their ability in the Japanese language?

2. How do external factors (defined as events or conditions beyond an individual's control that occur in Canadian or Japanese society), and internal factors (defined as events or life stages in an individual's life) affect the way Japanese Canadians perceive their heritage culture? In turn, how do these perceptions influence their interest in developing their heritage language ability?

The first questions led to what I perceive to be the most important question of the study:

3. What is the place and value of their heritage language in the lives of Japanese Canadians?

Narrative Inquiry

It is apparent that the popularity and credibility of a narrative inquiry approach has increased recently in many disciplines, and many researchers strive to demonstrate its efficiency and richness as a methodology. They not only present the potential of narratives but also give us a warning not to misuse them. Narratives should not be treated simply as factual statements or ethnographic data. Rather, as Pavlenko (2001) suggests, we must recognize that they are powerfully shaped by social, cultural and historical conventions as well as by the relationship between the storyteller and the interlocutor. Each narrative is constructed in order to make sense to the narrator, and the sense which is constructed by them is not necessarily shared by those who serve as audience for the story. That is to say, there are as many possible interpretations of a narrative as there are readers of it. Hence, we, as researchers, should bear in mind the interactive nature of a narrative inquiry approach.

First of all, one cannot ignore the role of time in narratives. In narratives, experiences float in between the fabric of time dimensions. The experiences being described took place
in the past, but are represented in the present when the narratives are being reconstructed (Schiffrin, 2002). We do not find it strange to hear someone saying, “My memory is as fresh today as it was thirty years ago. I even feel the pain I felt then.” In this narrative, the person’s pain is vividly in the present as he or she is recalling old memories. There is a reason why one can remember a certain experience. That which made a past experience memorable is what gives it a chance to be reconstructed and retold in the present. If the experience did not influence the way a teller became who they are at the moment of the telling, it would be omitted in their narratives (Ochs & Capps 1997). Narrative can transgress past, present and future and at the same time connect different timeframes.

In addition to the time dimensions of “backward” and “forward,” Clandinin and Connelly (1994) suggest personal experience should be focused in two more directions; “inward” and “outward.” The narrator’s internal conditions; feelings, values and morality, are explained through the inward focus. In a complementary way, the outward focus should take environments where the narrator is situated into account. Furthermore, Clandinin and Connelly point out that when it comes to the analysis of narratives, not just the teller, but the researchers and potential audiences for the tale should also be examined in these four directions. The same participant could tell personal experiences differently depending on their emotional conditions and on the person to whom the participant is speaking. At the same time, researchers can offer an analysis of the narrative that differs from that of the teller owing to their different, potentially even incompatible focuses or expertise. Here, the often discussed issue of the researcher’s subjectivity and objectivity, comes into the picture.

My biographical background, as a Japanese citizen who has lived in western society for several years, and studied in North America for three of those, inevitably influences the way I analyze the narratives of the participants in this study. Instead of trying to distance my

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1 They explain these four directions using a dream as an example. While “inward” could be the dreamer’s emotional state, how he/she is feeling, the situation where dialogues take place, and the person who he/she is talking to are in the direction of “outward.” With respect to the other axis of direction, “backward” is concerned with the histories of the dreamer and the listener, and “forward” connects to the future, to where the dreamer and listener are going to be.
subjectivity, I try to keep my personal experience in mind while analyzing the participants' life experiences.

Given that different timing and different moods of the narrator can produce different narratives, and that the different backgrounds brought to the analysis of a narrative by different researchers can provide completely different narrative analyses, how can one judge which moment is right, or which mood is appropriate, or which researcher's background is required to create the most accurate rendering and analysis of a story? There is no single answer to this question. It should be clear by this point that the reliability of narratives is not relevant in narrative inquiry since a narrative inquiry approach goes beyond what people are conscious of. The accuracy of events is far less important than is an understanding of the meanings and values they reveal. Bell (2002) nicely illustrates the nature of narrative inquiry in the following manner:

Participants construct stories that support their interpretation of themselves, excluding experiences and events that undermine the identities they currently claim. Whether or not they believe the stories they tell is relatively unimportant because the inquiry goes beyond the specific stories to explore the assumptions inherent in the shaping of those stories. No matter how fictionalized, all stories rest on and illustrate the story structures a person holds. As such they provide a window into people's beliefs and experiences. (Bell, 2002, p. 209)

The focus of narrative inquiry is to examine the construction and reconstruction of stories, not to examine the truth of the stories. If researchers are trapped in looking at the face value of facts, they are most likely to fail to reach the unconsciously constructed meanings of stories.

Participants

While the majority of research concerning the maintenance of heritage languages among immigrants has studied young subjects who are still at school, this study wanted to
look at the perceptions of adults. Therefore, the study required participants who have life experiences after completing their schooling. As the definitions provided in Chapter 1 indicate, there are two different groups of Nisei people identified according to the time of their original immigration. In this study, all the participants were from immigrant families whose original migration pre-dated the Second World War. The immigrant families in question, therefore, have members who have been living in Canada for at least three generations. The shin-Issei and shin-Nisei whose families immigrated to Canada after the War were excluded from this study because of the significant difference in the purpose behind their immigration. The selection of the earlier group of immigrants as participants for this study was done in order to be able to look at the impact of major societal events, such as the Second World War and attendant war time and post-war changes in society that participants would have experienced. In addition, the life experiences represented in this participant group are relatively long and can provide perspectives on their language experiences in relation to a broader range of major life events.

Six Nisei and five Sansei Japanese Canadians agreed to share their life stories as they related to their language experiences. Four Nisei participants were recruited with help from the research coordinator at the Japanese Canadian cultural museum. Prior to the recruitment, I contacted the research coordinator and explained the nature of the study including the criteria for participants. Immediately after this initial contact, the coordinator provided me with contact information for potential participants. All of the candidates were volunteer workers at the museum who generally organize events and often give talks on their personal experiences during the Second World War to the younger generations at the museum. The other Nisei and Sansei were found either through my own personal connections or through introductions by the first four Nisei participants. Personal background; occupation, education, and social status vary among the participants (Table 1,2 provides participant profiles). As the length of formal Japanese language education and the amount of exposure to the Japanese language environment were dissimilar, each participant's Japanese language ability varied
significantly along a continuum of bilingual to monolingual.

In order to assess general proficiency levels in Japanese in the speaking, listening, reading and writing abilities of the participants, a five-point scale was defined (see criteria in Table 3). I asked each participant to estimate their placement on each scale based on the criteria. Final placements on these scales were determined by the researcher, with the agreement of the participants, in the course of discussions and interviews (see Table 3). With respect to the Nisei people, all were bilingual. In contrast, only two of the five Sansei participants were bilingual while the rest rated themselves somewhere between monolingual and minimally bilingual (i.e., they could understand and conduct a basic conversation only). The variations in language ability were important to illustrate the impact of both heritage language maintenance and loss.

At the end of the interview, in a rather informal manner, I asked some of the participants who appeared to have more time and wished to rephrase their answers, whether they were interested in writing a short essay on their language experience. Four participants responded positively and submitted a short autobiographical piece with commentary triggered by further reflection on the interview questions. These autobiographical essays provided a rich resource full of life experiences, and those who submitted the essays became “focal subjects” whose responses were analyzed in depth.

Initially, it was hoped that the study would be able to recruit Nisei and Sansei from the same family in order to look at the impact of heritage language loss or maintenance on successive generations within a single family and to try to trace how the parents’ views on heritage language retention affected the heritage language abilities and attitudes their children eventually developed. Three of the Nisei’s children were also available for an hour-long interview. However, unlike the Nisei people, who were all retired and could share their time freely, the Sansei in this study were occupied with their professions or bringing up their children, and did not have the time for in-depth discussions or for writing autobiographical essays. In some cases, the children of the Nisei participants have moved out of Vancouver.
# Table 1.1 Focal participants' personal background

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name (Generation)</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Present Social Status (former occupation)</th>
<th>Education in Canada</th>
<th>Japanese Language Education</th>
<th>Visits to or time spent living in Japan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Patrick (Nisei)</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>Retired (real estate agent) Married a Japanese Canadian Three children</td>
<td>Diploma in Economics</td>
<td>3 years (from Grade 1 to 3) of Japanese language school in Canada 1 semester language course at college level in Canada</td>
<td>Several short visits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karen (Nisei)</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>Retired (school teacher) Married a Japanese Canadian Two children</td>
<td>BA</td>
<td>No language education experience in childhood 1 semester language course at college level in Canada one 6-week summer course in Japan</td>
<td>Several short visits Home-stay for 6 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ellen (Sansei)</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Research coordinator at museum Married a Japanese No children</td>
<td>MA</td>
<td>1 year (in Grade 1) of Saturday language school in Canada 1 month conversation class in Japan Hired a tutor for several months in Japan</td>
<td>Lived for 2 years as an English teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jenny (Sansei)</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>Food analyzer Married a Caucasian Canadian Three children</td>
<td>BA</td>
<td>2 years (from Grade 1 to 2) at Saturday language school in Canada</td>
<td>Never</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 2.1 Non-Focal Participants' personal background: Nisei

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Present Social Status (Former occupation)</th>
<th>Education in Canada</th>
<th>Japanese Language Education</th>
<th>Visits to or time spent living in Japan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Taro</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>Retired (university professor)</td>
<td>PhD in Education</td>
<td>12 years (from Grade 1 to 12) of Japanese school in Canada</td>
<td>Several short visits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maggie</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>Retired (secretary)</td>
<td>Grade 9</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Lived 8 years (age 12-19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eva</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>Retired (farmer)</td>
<td>Grade 8</td>
<td>2 years of Japanese Schooling (Grade 1 and 2) in Japan</td>
<td>Lived 3 years in Japan (age 6-7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6 years (from Grade 3 to 8) of Japanese language school in Canada</td>
<td>Several short visits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haruko</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>Retired (housewife)</td>
<td>Grade 9</td>
<td>5 years (from Grade 1 to 5) of Japanese language school in Canada</td>
<td>Lived 2 years (age 5-6)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 2.2. Non-Focal Participants personal background: Sansei

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Present Social Status (Former occupation)</th>
<th>Education in Canada</th>
<th>Japanese Language Education Experiences</th>
<th>Visits to or time spent living in Japan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Catherine</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>Dentist</td>
<td>MdM</td>
<td>3 month conversation course at language school in Canada</td>
<td>A short trip in 1980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linda</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>High-school teacher</td>
<td>BA</td>
<td>7 years (from Grade 1 to 7) 2 hours a week at night school in Canada</td>
<td>10 months during high school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10 months in Grade 11 at Japanese high school</td>
<td>Lived there for 2 years as an English teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeff</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Businessman</td>
<td>BA</td>
<td>1 month intensive course in Canada (three times a week)</td>
<td>Lived there for 4 years as an undergraduate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 month conversation course in Japan</td>
<td>Lived there for 3 years as an English teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Studied undergraduate work at Japanese University for 4 years</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3.1 The language proficiency of the focal participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Speaking</th>
<th>Listening</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Writing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Patrick</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karen</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ellen</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jenny</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
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</table>

Table 3.2 The language proficiency of the non-focal participants: Nisei

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Speaking</th>
<th>Listening</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Writing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Taro</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maggie</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yan</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haruko</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.3 The language proficiency of the non-focal participants: Sansei

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Speaking</th>
<th>Listening</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Writing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Carol</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linda</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeff</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. The proficiency criteria

**Speaking & Listening**
- **Level 1** Knows only a few words
- **Level 2** Knows only a few words of greeting
- **Level 3** Is able to conduct conversations about simple matters in Japanese
- **Level 4** Is able to converse on general matters in Japanese
- **Level 5** Has native-like proficiency

**Reading**
- **Level 1** Is unable to recognize any Japanese characters
- **Level 2** Knows all Japanese basic letters (Hiragana or Katakana), excluding Kanji
- **Level 3** Knows all Japanese letters (Hiragana and Katakana) and a few Kanji
- **Level 4** Is able to recognize signs or read a short note in Japanese
- **Level 5** Native-like abilities — is able to read newspapers or books in Japanese

**Writing**
- **Level 1** No writing ability
- **Level 2** Is able to write a few Japanese letters (Hiragana or Katakana)
- **Level 3** Is able to write all Japanese alphabets and a few Kanji (Chinese characters)
- **Level 4** Is able to write a letter in Japanese
- **Level 5** Native-like abilities — is able to write a scholarly paper
Some of the Sansei who were recruited first claimed that they had never heard their parents speak about their childhood or their war experiences. It may be worthwhile noting that a few Japanese Canadians still carry the trauma associated with the war and have remained silent about it even sixty years after the declaration of the end of the War. Hence, the four focal participants were all from different families.

**Data Collection Process**

Semi-structured interviews, which were tape recorded, were employed to collect life experience narratives as the first step in the data collection process. The interviews, averaging an hour in length, were conducted in the participants’ preferred language, either English or Japanese. The interviews were held between June and August 2003 at a location of the participant’s choice. As the need for elaboration and clarification emerged after the initial interviews, follow-up interviews were required with four participants. Additionally, I attended and tape recorded talks on the war experience of two of the Nisei participants.

At the beginning of the initial interviews, when I asked which was their preferred language, one Nisei and one Sansei switched from English to Japanese instantly. The rest of the Nisei people and one bilingual Sansei persisted with their choice of English, but randomly code switched between Japanese and English. Interestingly, after the interviews when we started talking to each rather casually, even the Nisei people who chose to conduct their interview in English began to speak more Japanese. They hesitantly told me that they were not comfortable speaking Japanese while the tape recorder was on and they felt that it would be easier for them to express their profound thoughts and tangled feelings in English.

I was also aware of the fact that my status, as a native speaker of Japanese, may have inhibited their willingness to speak Japanese, at least to some degree. Heritage language speakers are cons 3ty to that of native speakers. They are also often afraid of error corrections and criticism from native speakers (Jo, 2000; Krashen, 1998). After the first interview, four of
the participants agreed to write a short autobiographical essay in English to rethink and rephrase their perceptions pertaining to their language experience. All of these participants submitted their essays within two months of the initial interview. The option of writing an essay was offered initially because some participants were dissatisfied with their answers since they were unable to put enough thought into the questions posed to them at the interview. They confessed that they had never thought about the heritage language issues that were raised in the interview. Thus, the four participants who wrote the essays eagerly took this second opportunity to present their perceptions. Unlike at the interviews, none of the participants chose to write an essay in Japanese, even though they were given the choice of writing in either language.

Data Processing and Analysis

Before all the tapes were transcribed, I listened to them several times and kept short notes about vocal inflection and emphasis for future elaborated analysis. This process helped me to sustain the climate of the interviews and the tone of each dialogue during the analysis of the data. During the process of transcribing, I could not help but notice the inevitable loss of meaning that occurs when the verbal expressions were transformed into written texts. Even with the help of my supplementary notes, the transcription of the interviews could not embrace all the elements of paralinguistic behaviour and the emotional state of the participants that gave their spoken words richness and depth. Therefore, the autobiographical essays, used to fill in the background information of the participants, supplied information that had been missed in the interviews, but still fell short of providing the fully layered meaning of the stories. It should also be noted that the study did not exclude the participants who had not written essays. Their stories were summarized briefly, and their voices were integrated into the discussion.

Prior to embarking on this study I wrote my own autobiographical essay, and have
included it amongst the stories in this study. As I explain above, with respect to narrative inquiry, the shape of the researcher’s subjectivity plays a crucial role in the process, and has the potential to offer misleading interpretations of the stories of others. My essay is rather short but it was included in the hope of exposing the researcher’s point of view and, thereby, assisting the readers of this work in understanding the observations presented for consideration by this study.

Limitations

The limitations of this study echo those of many other qualitative research studies. Since the number of participants in this study is small, the “generalizability” of its results is a potential question. While the number of participants is indeed limited, this does not negate the value of the stories which are told by them. A more important limitation in this study is a known group whose choice to remain silent has eliminated their stories from those that can be heard. Failing to recruit the participants who shut down their past memories is a vital limitation in this study. Narrative inquiry allows researchers to go beyond the surface of stories, but cannot generate stories which remain unspoken. In other words, narrative inquiry is limited to stories which have been told but not to “never spoken” stories. Interpreting silence is extremely difficult; attempting to risks misinterpretation, not attempting to excludes a potentially valid source of data. There are still Japanese Canadians who remain silent about their war experiences. To break into their silence or to interpret it is totally beyond the scope of this study, although it is worth bearing in mind that silence could be the most powerful way to convey someone’s feelings.

There is another crucial limitation this study could not accommodate. I, fortunately, could build rapport with the participants in this study, but it was inevitable that my status as a native speaker of Japanese, and as someone originally from Japan, influenced the
participants' responses. Additionally, it was not until the participants claimed difficulty in grasping the focus of the questions that I realized that my questions were formed only from the perspective of someone who has no immigrant experience. The lack of a shared background between the participants and the researcher, to some degree, could have impeded the formation of the interview questions. As a result, some of the questions used in early interviews were revised for use in later interviews.

Lastly, but most vitally, the study was hampered by the researcher's lack of research experience, which were discovered in the process of transcriptions of the interviews. Occasionally the flow of conversation during interviews was cut off by the researcher, whose commitment was to keeping the conversations on track and to ensuring all the necessary questions were asked before the allotted time was exceeded. Important elements which were introduced by participants, but in some cases were cut off at the first interview, were completed in the course of follow-up interviews. However, it is quite possible that the original climate and flow of the interview could not be restored completely, and some additional data that might have been offered was not.

In spite of the fact that the interview is the most popular method in the field of social science, very little empirical research focusing on interview skills has been conducted (Roulston et al., 2003). It is well known that the formation of key questions for use in an interview are crucial to research, and a good deal of research has gone into the formation of effective interview questions. It seems, however, that insufficient effort has gone into identifying effective ways of conducting interviews. Researchers, particularly novice ones, would be well advised to get ample practical training on how to interview, not just in theoretical frameworks of interview methodology. As one participant observed to Roulston and her colleagues, the best way to improve interview skills might be "by doing it" (p.662). Researchers are prone to rely on theoretical frameworks and underestimate the significant

2 It has been estimated that about 90% of all social science research employs some sort of interview method for data collection (Roulston et al., 2003).
role of interview skills. It appears to me that ensuring researchers possess effective interview skills is a key to the conduct of successful studies. Obtaining ample interview practice should help researchers gain the skills required to encourage participants to provide deeply considered answers even as the researcher keeps track of time and of the questions that need to be covered.
Chapter 4

Narratives

This chapter contains the stories of four focal participants and brief outlines of the stories of the remaining non-focal participants. When recreating and reorganizing the narratives of the focal participants, the narratives that emerged in the interviews were overlapped with each participant's autobiography. Then, since it was not feasible to include every single element from these two sources, the stories, as they are told here, pick out the highlights of each life which explicitly illuminate the participants' language-based experiences. The autobiographies are the direct voices of the participants who had extra time to rephrase their thoughts after the interviews. I present my own story first in order to illustrate the researcher's point of view and assist the readers in understanding the context for the insights I have drawn out of the study.

My Story: Language I've lived By

I also came to Canada as a bride when 'picture marriages' were common. In Victoria, I asked the owner of the Japanese hotel to send a telegram to my husband. I waited every day, but he didn't arrive. I felt so helpless I wanted to cry. A week later he finally appeared. It was in the middle of November and pouring rain. At the Port Hammond train station, his brother-in-law came with a wagon to meet us. Bouncing up and down, we traveled a brush road. At the end of it, I noticed what to me were strange shacks. They looked like the houses of beggars. So even in Canada, I thought, there must be beggars. Then our wagon stopped before the smallest shack of all, and I was told, 'This is your house.' (Issei Woman, in Dream of Riches: The Japanese Canadians: 1877-1977, 1978)

One hundred years after the picture brides began coming to Canada, I came to Canada, but under completely different circumstances. In my 30s, with my own money, it was my own decision to come. I came, as a single woman, to pursue my academic career. Just as the lady in the excerpt above would have been surprised to hear my story, I was astonished when I read her reminiscences of her first days in Canada. The common ground of our experience
is minimal, but in this study what I attempt to do is to illustrate the life experiences of Japanese immigrants like her by interweaving their experiences with my own. The following is a story I would like to share with readers of this study as well as with my participants in it.

I was asked the same question many times, "What made you decide to go abroad alone from such a small town?" In the early 1980s it was not so unusual for a single Japanese woman to go to study abroad, but it was fairly exceptional in my home town where people hardly locked their houses. My mother felt it was shameful that her only daughter went abroad alone instead of getting married, and felt she could not tell my whereabouts to our neighbours. Where I was from, it was only natural for people to ask me why a village girl wanted to go to London, not somewhere in Japan. Why? The answer lay in my curiosity and ignorance. I was dying to see the other side of the world, but having failed my university entrance examinations I missed a chance to move to other cities in Japan after high school graduation. If I did not travel, I would be stuck in the small town I called home.

When I was leaving for London, in order to convince my parents that I had a real goal in going, I registered for an English course at one of the private schools in London. I was going to learn how to speak English is what I told them, but learning the language was not my goal. I was, in fact, not fully aware of how important it was to be able to speak the language of the country to which I was heading. But, as soon as my flight took off from my homeland, the language environment changed completely, and I realized how hopeless I was without knowledge of the language. I was not even able to order what I wanted to eat and drink.

No matter how ignorant I was, it was necessary to learn the language of the country in which I would be staying so as to spend a day without hurting myself. Pains, struggles, frustrations, embarrassment, and fears were a big part of my daily routine in the one year I spent in London. Of course, these feelings never went away entirely, but they did get less and less as my English improved. Without having a specific goal, I struggled and fumbled about
trying to find the best way to approach the language. First I discovered the language school did not teach survival English and the textbooks excluded rudimentary daily expressions. Thus, eight months later, I moved to a smaller city in the southern part of England where I assisted my friend who worked as a coordinator for a travel agent. There, for about ten months, I concentrated on the job and did not go to school at all. In daily life and through the dictates of my job as an assistant, my English improved significantly, and gradually I began to feel comfortable in an English-speaking environment. On the other hand, my nearly exclusive focus on speaking skills meant that my reading comprehension level did not improve.

Dissatisfaction with my reading level sent me back to London for an advanced learning opportunity. Having set up a goal, I studied hard for the proficiency test. I carried my dictionary wherever I went and tried to read anything I saw: billboards, notices, advertisements, cautions, instructions and the like. One day while I was doing this, I was accidentally drawn to a little notice on the wall of the public library, which said “Language exchange, Italian and Japanese.” At the time, I had become interested in learning Italian because of my Italian friend. My exchange partner was a girl from Roma who loved to talk about Italian culture. Frankly, the lessons were not effective in terms of learning the language, but I certainly gained some other valuable insights. She was the first person to teach me about the strong connection between language and culture.

Through these language exchange lessons, I found pleasure in teaching my language and culture to others and this led me to take a Japanese language teacher’s linguistics course in London. Soon after, I had to decide whether to stay in London and study or go back to Japan to find a training program and teaching position. I decided to return to Japan where I would have easy access to reading materials in Japanese, as I felt a great need to read more about the Japanese language and its culture.

Back in Japan, I had to endure the countless rejections that all novice teachers seeking work encounter. Obviously schools preferred teachers with experience, which narrowed the
opportunities for novice teachers. For the first few months I worked as a teaching assistant at a small language school but soon I bluffed my way into getting a full-time teaching position. My first job seriously taught me what a teacher’s job is really about. I found that teachers cannot simply teach what they want to teach, they have to know what their students need first. The biggest task I had was not teaching the language, but keeping my students from getting involved in illegal activities. At the end of the Japanese bubble economy, a significant number of students who enrolled at the language school were from other parts of Asia and they were not serious about their studies. What they were serious about was earning money. Some of my students had more than one part-time job and by the time they came to class they were often exhausted.

I also had a few private students who were generally English teachers and could afford to have a tutor. Their wages were at least three times more than that of the students from Asia who were willing to risk their health to make money; something they saw as an investment in their future. Wages were not the only difference between these two groups of students. The attitudes of Japanese people towards them were also dissimilar. While English teachers received ample attention and respect, Japanese people tended to be disdainful of the people from Asia, seeing them as blue collar workers. Witnessing this, I could not blame the Asian students who eventually disappeared from the school to work illegally. Some simply left without saying anything, some lied to excuse themselves and others came forward to tell me they could no longer come to school because of their financial status. I wondered, in fact I am still wondering, how the tough experiences these students had in Japan affected the rest of their lives. I hope that they are all doing fine somewhere in the world.

My experience of learning a second language abroad helped me enormously to teach Japanese by enabling me to understand the perspective of a second language learner. My financial situation was very different from my Asian students. During my stay in England, I received my mother’s financial support and my native language was somehow valued well so that I could take advantage of being Japanese in terms of job hunting.
I left Japan a second time, this time to teach Japanese in China. Through a government volunteer organization, I was sent to a rural area of China for two years. Needless to say, my experiences there were invaluable and added a different dimension to my understanding of language learning. In this rural placement, it would be an understatement to say that my students did not have the best facilities in which to learn a language. This did not deter my students who were most enthusiastic, and knew how to study a language without any help from technical devices. Their exposure to Japanese was strictly limited, but their ability to memorize language seemed to be almost unlimited. Ultimately, they were highly successful language learners. While it is believed that languages are better learned in the context of better facilities and through the use of a variety of approaches, these were unavailable to my students. They had no choice but to resort to memorization to succeed, and proved that it is possible to do so.

About two years ago I started my master's degree in Education at UBC and began to gain a new status as a "language researcher." Reading various articles about second language acquisition, I have learned useful theories about how language is learned and should be taught. At the same time, I was surprised to find out how my experiences as a language learner have been translated into academic language. In the name of research, a language is laid out on a dissection table as if it was removed from some living body, or it is displayed like artefacts at a museum. Languages, like objects, are removed from their original contexts and are carefully and coldly preserved by a professional caretaker. They might last longer than they would if they were left in the field, and they definitely receive more focused attention from a bigger audience, but they lose something in the process.

Language, in its place in everyday usage, has a life and emotional content or force of its own. Imagine a statue of ancient Buddha at a museum. It was obviously not made to be in a display case but to be worshiped or to embody the Buddhist doctrine for those who practice Buddhism. Once the Buddha is transferred from the spot where its worshippers gather to a museum, the purpose of the statue changes. Likewise, if language is treated as an object to
study, something of the life of the language is inevitably left behind.

I could not help but feel a gap between the languages I dealt with as a learner and teacher and those same languages in the hands of researchers. This feeling reminds me of my first encounter with English at junior high school. It was one of the major subjects of study and I learned it without knowing its real function in practice. No one talked about a communicative pedagogical approach at the time, so learning English meant ticking the right answer or putting the appropriate word in the blank on a paper. I had no idea that by learning English, I could communicate with people from different countries. My first flight to England taught me what I could do with English or more correctly, what I could not do without it.

As a researcher, I strongly believe that my task is to bring the life back into a language when it is discussed in a paper. My learning experience influenced significantly the way I teach Japanese so I want to interweave both my learning and teaching experiences into my research, bringing life into my look at the meaning of language for those who use it. Weaving my story into my research, does not mean that I should make my analyses, in this case of the life experiences of Japanese Canadians, only as they relate to my own experiences. Rather, I hope that my learning and teaching experience will help me to stay close to the function of languages instead of leaving language on the experimental table separate from the vibrancy, complexity, and beauty that gives a language life.

The Stories of the Focal Participants: Patrick, Karen, Ellen and Jenny

Patrick’ Story : The Nikkei Spirit an Issei Father Gave Me

Patrick is the one of the participants introduced to me by the secretary at the Japanese museum and he was the very first person I interviewed. I spent more time with him than with any of the other participants since we had a conversation over a meal a couple of times after
the initial interview. I also went to listen to a talk that he voluntarily gave to university students from Japan. He struck me generally as a positive person and always offered me help in many ways. With his help, I was able to find two more participants to interview; one was his friend, also a volunteer worker at the museum, and the other was his oldest son. Most of all, I appreciate that he agreed to write his autobiographical essay even though he was busy with his involvement in his community.

Patrick was born on a small island in the Fraser Valley and there he grew up bilingual because his parents talked with him only in Japanese while he was getting educated in English. His father originally came from the northern part of Japan where a distinctive dialect is spoken. In fact, many of the other immigrants who moved to Canada at the same time as his father were from this same area of Japan. In their new homeland, they all settled down in the same area and their distinctive dialect remained intact and served as a major communication language among them. This dialect was the only Japanese Patrick had either heard or spoken until his family moved to an internment camp. Meeting with new people at the camp, he realized that no one else, apart from the people from his island, spoke Japanese the way he spoke it.

The small Japanese communities from the two Fraser Valley islands managed to set up one Saturday school. Patrick and his older brothers took a ferry to attend that school virtually every Saturday, except during holiday seasons, for three years. He thinks that his two older brothers studied subjects other than the Japanese language and possessed a higher level of proficiency in Japanese than he did. He only remembers studying the Japanese language. In spite of the limited facilities, he recalls that the school was a well organized system and that all the children seemed to enjoy it.

When the notorious War Measures Act came down in 1942, Patrick's family decided

1 One pioneer first moved from the northern part of Japan from where Patrick's father came to Canada. A few years later, he invited another 100 men from the same region to immigrate to Canada. Most of them were extended family members who possessed the same family name. Moreover, one of the islands in the valley was named after his family. The area where Patrick spent his childhood was densely populated with people who shared the same dialect.
to move to one of the internment camps rather than return to Japan, and his peaceful island life had to end. At the camp his family tried to stay together and kept talking in Japanese at home, but with other Japanese children he often talked to them in English or a mixed language. During and after the War, his level of facility with Japanese has remained almost the same (at least in terms of his ability to hold everyday conversations is concerned), but he is always conscious about his “non-standard Japanese.” He laments:

Ever since I was born I would hear all these words, the only thing is a lot of the phrases they’re so old fashioned. That when my son was going to university in Japan and he would come back and I would mention some words and he would laugh. He says, “Nobody in Japan would understand you …” because my Japanese was learned basically from my parents and because the phrases are very old fashioned, I’m very conscious of that. So therefore, I don’t want to say something that people are going to laugh at, even though they are too polite to laugh.

He married another Japanese Canadian lady whose Japanese is, he says, better than his own. According to him, his wife avoids speaking Japanese and he believes that it could be a result of what she had to deal with during and right after the War. He himself mentioned a few of his own experiences of discrimination, but seems not to take them personally or at least seems to have tried to understand them in positive terms. Due to his wife’s unwillingness to speak Japanese, his family language environment with her was limited to English. The consequence of this is that his three children missed a chance to learn the Japanese language at home. However, his oldest son² went to and graduated from a Japanese university and worked there for nearly three years, becoming bilingual.

Throughout the interview he generally projected a positive mood, except when it came to discussing his two monolingual children. In response to my question about how he feels about having not talked to his children in Japanese, his response contained more pauses

² Patrick’s oldest son, Jeff, is one of the non-focal participants I had a chance to interview. His summarised story is included at the end of this chapter. It stresses how he became bilingual and how well he speaks Japanese.
and I could sense he was more hesitant, “I know it’s a shame...... but...... at the time it wasn’t ....priority... it could have been nice... I think....”

On the other hand, he believes that his two monolingual children and himself can understand Japanese culture better than they understand the language. Regarding his cultural understanding he says, “My cultural things, I think I’m quite advanced in that, because that’s whole my upbringing.” About his children he says, “I think my remaining children [those who are monolingual] have retained the cultural part quite a bit of them. Lots of things they don’t realize. They knew lots of Japanese words, but they don’t speak it.” It is evident that his upbringing was greatly influenced by his father whom he describes as “strict.” He has tried to bring up his own children in the same way his father brought him up, but stated sadly, “It hasn’t been working well.” He also claims, “If you learn the language more, you appreciate more culture things.” It seems that he believes that he has cultivated some aspects of Japanese culture such as values, mannerisms, and traditions in his children, but not the language which could have helped his children appreciate the Japanese culture in greater depth.

All the Nisei people in this study are bilingual even though their proficiency levels vary widely. Since they often have a limited formal language education and have had very few occasions to use formal language, two struggles that they all share are lower reading and writing levels and misused formal forms. Hence, it should not come as a surprise that many have carried around a desire to study the Japanese language formally, and a few have attended various kinds of educational institutions to learn the language. Patrick is one. He took a Japanese language class with young learners for two semesters at the local college, but the classes were unable to meet his needs. Dealing with numerous Japanese clients, he thought that he could learn more formal Japanese usage through his work, which he did, but this did not help him develop his reading and writing skills. At the college, he found the reading materials did not cover appropriate topics and were rather discouraging and too frustrating to deal with. The college language experience reminded him of his limitations in
reading the language. When I asked him what it means for him to speak Japanese he said:

I don’t know what it really means other than the fact that if I wasn’t able to speak Japanese, even a little bit that I do speak, I think I would be very frustrated. Because I was brought up as a Japanese Canadian, Nikkei. I don’t think I'm Japanese...I don’t think I’m Canadian. I am a real Nikkei, you know.

Karen’s Story: Going to Japan and Going Back to her Father’s Home Town

Karen is one of the volunteer workers at the Japanese museum and regularly gives talks there. As a home-stay host, and through her volunteer work, Karen has had some experience with new immigrants and Japanese ESL students. The day I interviewed her, she gave a talk on her war experience in Canada to a group of ESL students from the local college. She kindly invited me to join them and allowed me to tape record her talk. The one-hour long talk covered her childhood through to the recent recognition by the Canadian government of the treatment of Japanese Canadians during the War. Her talk helped me not only to know her life experience but also to understand the impact of her war experiences on her and how she dealt with it. Two weeks after the interview, she sent me a short essay and told me that she was also working on her autobiographical essay for purposes of having it published.

Before the war, her language environment was Japanese at home and English at school and she was able to converse without any difficulties in both languages. Because there was no Japanese school where her family lived, she did not have an opportunity to learn how to write and read in Japanese. At the age of seven, her formal education was interrupted when her family was forced to move to an internment camp where no legitimate school system was provided. She still vividly recalls the impact of the War on her and says she, like many other Japanese Canadians, became reluctant to speak Japanese. Consequently, her Japanese proficiency began to drop and her use of English began to dominate. As she got older, her everyday life became more complicated so that her limited Japanese ability could not meet
the demands of conducting complex conversations. While she remained able to conduct a simple conversation with her father, she tended to rely on her mother’s help to converse in Japanese with him concerning any complicated matters.

By the time she got married to a Japanese Canadian man, whose Japanese was a little better than hers, her immediate world was functioning only in English. This continued as the way in which she conversed with her two children. Her family environment was limited to English except when they occasionally went to visit her parents. Her children spent some time with their grandparents, but they never had a chance to learn Japanese until they took a Japanese language class at university. She claims that both children’s understanding of Japanese is almost zero.

Karen was always conscious that every year she was losing more of her Japanese, and that the more she lost, the more she wanted to learn it again. Her earnest wish was fulfilled at the age of 48 when she started taking a Japanese language course at university. Despite a long drive and difficulties she had in the class, she completed the course and regained a little of her language ability. She believes that her first trip to Japan in the 1970s inspired her to learn the language again. She remembers that the trip was enjoyable, but at the same time made her feel frustrated because of her lack of language ability. Except for the first few days, she understood most of the conversation in Japanese but she was not able to express herself well. She said that in her mind she knew what to say, but the words would not come out of her mouth. Between that first visit and the end of the 1990s she repeatedly went to Japan and began to regain more language ability.

Owing to her frequent trips to Japan, she witnessed the social changes there with her own eyes, rather than just reading about them. But the fast development and economic growth did not make as much of an impression on her as did, what to her eyes, appeared to be

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3 At the interview, as I started a question with: “When you went back to Japan...” Before I completed my question, she stopped and corrected me by saying, “You see, I don’t go back there, I just go there.” However, as seen below in the excerpt, she inadvertently said, “to go back,” when describing her trip to the father’s hometown (refer to the note 4).
the continuing subordinated position of Japanese women. Observing her relatives’ lives in Japan made her realize how submissive Japanese women were. Each trip made her think more strongly that she could never fit into Japanese society. Another encounter with Japanese culture occurred when she hosted a home-stay student from Japan. Interacting with a few Japanese students, she felt that they demonstrated a lack of social skills, poor behaviour in public and selfishness. Overall, her perception of Japan is generally associated with a negative image. She says, “All my visit to Japan, I was like a tourist, only I was able to meet my relatives.” The only connection to Japan she feels is her family link:

I don’t have any attachment for Japan. The only time I felt an attachment was when I went back to my father’s Furusato [hometown] and he said, “This is where I was born.” And all of a sudden I just felt as if the roots grew from my body into the soil of Japan. And then I felt connected and then I understood my father better because I used to walk around where he was born and he used to talk to people and then I thought, “Oh, yes” … And I understand the different things he was trying to tell us before. And in that way, another book was open to me because I saw my father’s life in a different light. After I got there and I started talking to his relatives and he would tell me all the things that he used to do when he was a youngster and take me all over the place.

Throughout the interview Karen was generally calm and relaxed except when she started talking about her father’s Japanese background. Then, as in the excerpt above, she was more emotional and talked almost endlessly about her experiences in her father’s hometown. I had to lead her to back to the interview questions, otherwise she would have kept going on and on. It is evident that her family connection is the only attachment she has with Japan and its language. It is equally obvious that this connection is vital to her. Learning French gave her a level of satisfaction as did learning Japanese, but unlike Japanese, French could not link her to her family.

The frequent trips to Japan, the home-stay hosting experience, and the formal
Japanese language education she received gave Karen an opportunity to regain her ability in the language. However, she never feels confident or satisfied with her Japanese. This was clear when she used the word “native” a few times during the interviews. She said, “Sometime I wish, I could speak like, what you call it... a native speaker, so that I’d constantly be talking... If I was more fluent, I could be like a native, I’d be very happy.” Recently she began to help her grandchildren with their Japanese, but she still feels frustrated with not being able to talk to them in Japanese on a regular basis. I sense that her big regret is that she was not able to help her own children learn the Japanese language when they were young:

Right now, I think it’s so advantageous to be able to speak many languages. And if my grandchildren say, “I want to learn Japanese” well, I’ll help them if they want help. But like my daughter keeps saying, “Mom, why didn’t you teach me Japanese?” So I said to her, “Well, I couldn’t teach you Japanese because I didn’t know how to speak it very well,” at that time when my children were growing up because I had lost most of my speaking ability.

Although she hated losing her ability to speak Japanese during the years she brought up the children, speaking to them in Japanese required too much effort. She also recalls that there was no need for her children to speak Japanese in the community where they were raised. It was not until recently that she felt that she should have tried harder to maintain their heritage language.

She feels remorse that she failed to pass on her heritage language to the next generation. On the other hand, she feels pride in the many aspects of Japanese values, ethics and manners she did teach her children without needing the language. These aspects of heritage culture were transmitted by the way in which the children were raised – as she was raised. She also thinks that through interaction with her parents, her children learned about Japanese behaviour and a strong tie developed between them. She said that her son’s hero is Gi-chan (grandfather) and he used to carry around Gi-chan’s picture. Her daughter was closer to
Karen’s frustration with her lack of Japanese exceeds her satisfaction with the language proficiency she does have, but there are a few incidents that have made her happy about being able to use her Japanese. For example, after having received some formal language education, she was able to read a letter written in Japanese from one of her cousins. Unlike many other Japanese Canadians who went to Japanese school, she did not learn how to write or read in Japanese until the age of 48. Therefore, when she understood the letter without much help, it made her extremely happy. Other occasions that make her happy are those in which she is able to make herself understood when speaking Japanese. As she says, “Whoever I’m talking to anytime, doesn’t matter what’s the situation, if I can communicate somehow what I want to say to the other person, that gives me lots of satisfaction.” The greatest satisfaction she ever derived came when she began to understand her father who could only speak Japanese.

When I go to Japan, it’s more advantageous to be able to speak Japanese. I can communicate better. I understand situations better. If you don’t know the language, you don’t get into the thinking of the people, you know. If you could understand what people are saying, then you appreciate things differently. You know you appreciate the situation differently and then you say, “Oh why I know why she behaves that way. Because this is the way she thinks.”

I also explained to her the current move towards including heritage language education in schools, and then I asked her opinion about the importance of heritage language retention for immigrants:

You don’t have to lose your first language to learn another language. A language is so valuable. You never, never, ever give up. First of all, immigrant children have to learn English, right? That’s the priority but they shouldn’t lose their heritage language. I always tell anyone who speaks any other language, teach to your children, speak to your children.
Ellen's Story: A Discovery of the Nikkei History in Canada

Ellen enthusiastically showed her support for my research from the beginning and understood my situation well. It was probably due to her own experience with conducting research for her MA degree in Anthropology. In addition to the first interview, we had a couple of telephone conversations to address follow-up questions. She was also the first person who agreed to write a short autobiographical essay.

The language environment in her home was completely English, although her father had some difficulty expressing himself clearly in that language. Consequently, her mother occasionally acted as an interpreter between father and children. Ellen confessed that sometimes there were misunderstandings between her father and his children, but she did not think it was attributable to a lack of shared language. She felt rather that it was the cultural gap between them that caused the tensions. The only time she heard Japanese spoken was when she visited her grandparents or they came to visit her family. Around the dinner table, she learned some Japanese manners and a few names of Japanese food.

It was not until her school life began that Ellen realized her ethnic background. At school some boys teased her by pulling up their eyes and singing, “My mum Chinese, my dad Japanese……” She used to go home and look at herself in the mirror but did not understand what these boys were talking about or why they were doing it. This experience of racism during her childhood was very unfortunate, and contributed to her negative image of her heritage.

I didn’t notice I was visually different. So I had to look at a mirror and go, so what are they talking about, my eyes don’t look like that. And, also, you know, having people saying oh your face looks like bulldozer ran over it, because your nose is so flat. And, I would look in the mirror and say my nose isn’t so flat…. but, it took a while to, I guess, a few years to really notice that I was different. Then, I started pulling my eyes at the corner down, ha, ha. I tried to see what I look like if I could pull my nose out, and things like that. So, that became a concern for me. I was sure that I wanted to look like everyone else, who may be blond or something, and I thought the perfect image was a blond and blue eyed girl from England. … I didn’t want to be Japanese, and I didn’t
Ellen’s negative reaction to the experience of being teased because of her Japanese appearance was so strong, that she herself began to devalue and actively dislike not only the Japanese culture but eventually all Asian cultures. Whenever she heard Asian languages, she felt, “It’s almost these people’s fault that I got teased.” When going shopping with her family, she always felt uncomfortable because she was “hyper conscious about looking Japanese.” She intentionally tried to hang out with only non-Asian friends until she began high school. Her own racism started fading away gradually as she accumulated different experiences at school and in society. There were two major experiences that redirected her views of her own heritage. The first was the research she did for a Master’s degree in Anthropology, in which she looked at the Japanese Canadian generation gap. Ironically, this topic was not her first choice but she was inspired to pursue it by her First Nation friend’s question, “Why don’t you study about your own people?” Then, she realized how little she had paid attention to the culture of her heritage so far. Her project gave her a great opportunity to learn how much the Issei and Nisei people struggled to be Canadian in the first half of the twentieth century. According to her, the most surprising discovery she made about the history of Japanese Canadians was that they finally received recognition from the Canadian government with the action of “redress” in 1988. She said “It made me realize that Canada recognizes me as Canadian.” After that she broke through her old shell of pain and no longer hesitated to say, “I’m Canadian.”

Her second view-altering experience came when she lived in Japan for two years. This made her realize who she was. She found it fascinating to connect with her extended family in Japan and to learn the Japanese culture through them. Nevertheless, her cultural experience did not result in a tight bond forming between herself and her ancestral background. Instead it made her feel how different she was from her relatives and in the end she felt homesick, and found herself missing Canada. Despite what her friends expected she
would find when she went to Japan, Ellen did not “discover her roots” in Japan. Living in Japan turned out to be merely a great opportunity to see and experience a different culture, and this experience made her realize how Canadian she was.

Ellen’s lack of Japanese language ability did not bother her significantly. In fact she regarded it as an advantage. She witnessed other Nikkei people suffering because they possessed a relatively high degree of language proficiency, but could not meet the Japanese expectations around being “real Japanese.” Her assertion echoes a common observation that Japanese people do not expect foreigners, non Japanese, to speak native-like Japanese, but do expect anyone who looks Japanese to speak and behave like a Japanese. If they do not conform to these expectations, they are not considered to be “real Japanese” (Kanno, 2002). In addition, Ellen’s job as an English teacher did not require much understanding of either the Japanese language or its culture as long as she could teach English well. Even after living in Japan for two years, her progress in Japanese was rather limited, she hesitantly admitted.

Ellen is not an exception among foreign English teachers in Japan. No matter how long they live in Japan, some English teachers never have a chance to improve their Japanese because of their job environment. They are always surrounded by people who are eager to speak English, which is a situation that discourages the teachers from learning Japanese. Even having a Japanese boyfriend and living in Japan did not make Ellen feel any urgent need to improve her Japanese language ability.

It is not true, however, that she never felt a need to speak Japanese. She acknowledged the fact that she would have a better relationship with her husband’s family, who still live in Japan, if she could communicate with them in Japanese. She also believes

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5 Kanno studies Japanese returnees who are the children of Japanese expatriates who spend several years abroad because of their parents’ overseas job transfers and who then return to Japan. Because of their brief absence from the home country and the bicultural experiences they have, they miss the opportunity to learn about their society and parts of their language. That leads them to behaviour that is deemed not to be “real Japanese.”
that an improvement in her Japanese language ability could connect her more closely with the members of her family whose stronger language is Japanese. Regarding the importance of learning her heritage language she mentioned:

It's always an advantage to be bilingual, but it doesn't necessarily mean being able to speak your heritage language. I think that's a personal matter for each person to decide for themselves. I don't really regret not having learned [she uttered this sentence very slowly and deliberately]. But it's up to me to try to learn, because one of the things that makes me think I should learn is that my mother-in-law, father-in-law, my sister-in-law... I'd like to be able to speak Japanese to them. I'd like to get to know them.

Apparently her frustration with not being able to communicate with her husband's family led her to rethink the language experiences she'd had with her grandparents and father when she was still living at home. Although she does not think that language loss is something damaging or harmful, she realized that a better knowledge of the Japanese language would have helped her to understand her father better. She describes her view about the cases for language maintenance and loss as follows:

(for maintenance)... better understand who your parents are and your culture. It comes with the language. Somewhere facilitate in the language too.

(for loss) Well, I guess I don't see it as a great loss, like something damaging because you do acquire other things too in your life. But you're losing that attachment to your culture so your identity is not quite the same. It's different.

It seems that, although Ellen realized the benefit of having Japanese language ability, she was never motivated enough to learn Japanese seriously.

Jenny's Story: Between Issei Grandparents and Yonsei Children

I got to know Jenny through my friend since Jenny was one of my friend's co-workers at a Government laboratory. During our first conversation on the phone, Jenny introduced me to her mother who lives not far from her house, suggesting that I interview her mother as well.
In fact, the interviews with both Jenny and her mother took place on the same day, beginning with her mother at the mother's house. I received warm hospitality at both homes with homemade Japanese sweets by her mother and Japanese dinner at Jenny's house. It was clear to me that they intentionally prepared all Japanese food and organized this long before I came. The way they treated me made me feel as if I was an important guest from Japan, instead of a researcher from Canada. Thus, the interview atmosphere was rather casual and I was lucky enough to meet Jenny and all her family members at her home.

Jenny's language environment both at home and outside of the home was limited to English most of the time. Her maternal grandparents spoke to her only in Japanese, but her paternal grandparents, uncles and aunts always talked to her in English. Even though she lived close to a Japanese community and some of her classmates were Japanese Canadian, she did not make friends with other Japanese Canadians. It was not her intention to distance herself from them. Rather, she was not conscious of her ethnic background. Growing up in a multicultural society, she did not see herself as different from the rest of her classmates. In her view, people who looked Asian or non-white were as Canadian as she was.

Apart from the rare contacts she had with her mother's parents, Jenny's first exposure to Japanese culture came when she was sent to the Japanese Saturday school in her neighbourhood. She described her teacher as "very strict and unfriendly" but this characterization could reflect the contrast she perceived between this teacher and her Canadian teachers. Generally speaking, teachers are more authoritarian figures in the Japanese education system than they are in the Canadian one, and cannot be described as friendly or unfriendly. By Japanese standards, her teacher's level of strictness could have been quite normal. Jenny never liked the school and beseeched her parents to stop sending her, which they did two years later. Jenny was not alone in her dislike of the language school. An abhorrence of Saturday schools among heritage language learners appears to be ubiquitous (Kondo, 1998; Kanno, 2000).

Jenny now laments the fact that her parents did not persist in forcing her to learn the
Japanese language during her childhood. This regret is also shared among many heritage language learners. In her case, Jenny only became conscious of her heritage when she started having her own children. About the same time as she began having children, she lost one of her grandfathers. Since he could not speak English, while she was visiting him in hospital, she felt extremely frustrated with not being able to communicate with him. Finding herself between the Issei and the Yonsei, she started questioning her heritage and identity. She realized that as a Sansei person she had lost her heritage and had no heritage to pass on to her children, due to the language loss.

She thinks that the language loss vastly affects her personal identity. She apparently has struggled to find herself between her own identity and how other people see her. Even someone who has known her for a long time will come up and ask her to translate from English to Japanese, without knowing how little she knows about the Japanese language. As she explained the problem:

I look Japanese, right? That’s the difference is that I still look Japanese. So to lots of people they see me as being Japanese, they don’t see me as being Canadian. They look at me, “Oh yeah, she’s Japanese.” Even if you know me for a long time, because I look Japanese so I’m still Japanese. It doesn’t matter, you know, if you’re more Canadian, it’s because of what we look like. People judge you by what you look like. Because I think I’m more Canadian because I can’t speak Japanese, I’ve never been to Japan, so that’s the fact I look Japanese that’s why people say you are Japanese, right? I’m proud to be Japanese, I’d like to be different.

Ironically, her look is the only thing that reminds her of her Japanese heritage. As she explained, “I don’t really have a connection to Japan because there is not really anything I can connect to, other than looking Japanese.” Therefore, Japan is, to her, one of the foreign countries that happen to be where her grandparents came from about one century ago. This lack of connection to the country was confirmed by her perception of the social changes in Japan. When I asked whether the fast economic growth and other major social changes occurring in Japan influenced the way she perceives the country, she firmly stated that it had
no impact on her view of Japan. While acknowledging Japan’s fast development, she does not feel proud of it in the same way that she feels proud about Canada’s prosperity.

Her strong desire to speak and learn the Japanese language has been on her mind constantly since having her own children, but she has not been motivated enough to take any Japanese language lessons. She attributes this to a lack of urgent need:

I’ve never been put in a situation that I needed to know my Japanese. Maybe I was .... When I was with my grandparents, but when I’m a grown-up I can’t think anything. I think that if I go to Japan I think, I’m better off not to even think, even try. I think I would be better off just to be able to speak English. I’m not going to be able to learn the language before I go there. So I should go as Japanese, I mean, Canadian Japanese. I don’t have an urgent need to, all of sudden feel I need to speak it. Like if I couldn’t to my parents, then you feel an urgency. But I communicate with everybody that I need to communicate with.

Considering her full-time position and three children, it is only natural that she has priorities other than learning Japanese. She hopes that one day, when she is no longer a full-time worker, she can study the language. She also wishes that when she was young, Canadian schools could have offered Japanese language classes as they do now. In fact, she was pleased about the fact that her daughter showed some interest in the Japanese language and took the Japanese class at school. Furthermore, she was quite happy to see her daughter getting help from her grandparents, something which she could not offer. She could see the link it forged between the older generation (Nisei) and the younger generation (Yonsei).

One of Jenny’s brothers went to Japan to study and has become semi-bilingual. He married a Japanese lady and their children are all bilingual. She thinks “it’s great” but at the same time she feels envious. At family gatherings, when her brother’s family and her parents are talking in Japanese, she always feels isolated and even inferior. This is the moment that she most strongly wishes she was able to converse in Japanese.

Throughout the interview, her desperate desire to be able to speak Japanese was evident and her frustration with not being able to seemed almost painful a few times. After
becoming conscious of her heritage, she feels that a lack of ability in her heritage language
gives her a sense of missing something:

I guess I'm incomplete. Like I don't feel Japanese whole. I wish I could speak Japanese to be
Japanese. Does that make sense? I don't feel complete as a Japanese person, that's why I feel
complete as a Canadian person, but in being a Japanese person, I'm not complete. I have a
little bit of a heritage in the sense of the many traditions; I have girls' day, Japanese dolls, I eat
the food, I know some words, but that's it. If I had the language I would feel more complete
and ... I would ... yeah ... I feel a sense of loss not having the language.

Additional insights: The stories of non-focal participants, Taro, Maggie, Eva, Haruko,
Catherine, Linda and Jeff

Taro's story

At 83 years of age, Taro is the oldest participant I interviewed. He probably possesses
the highest level of proficiency in Japanese among all the participants in this study. His father
was one of the teachers sent by the Japanese Ministry of Education to work at Japanese
schools in Canada in 1918. Although his father's initial contract was for three years, it kept
getting extended. Finally, in 1939, they visited Japan on a business trip. They saw the rising
militaristic movement in Japan and were discouraged from returning there, and thus, his
father decided not to go back to Japan. After that, Taro's father encouraged his children to
study in both Japanese and English. His father believed that bilingualism would be
advantageous for finding a job, but would also be beneficial to Canadian society.

Taro stayed in the Japanese school owned by his father until completing the high
school level of Japanese education. At university, he majored in Economics because his
father anticipated Canada and Japan would become good business partners soon and Taro's
bilingual ability would then be beneficial for business. He says that his educational
experience in Japanese is significant in that he is still able to read a Japanese newspaper, even
though his higher education\textsuperscript{6} is all in English.

None of Taro's children speaks Japanese since neither he nor his wife, who is also Japanese Canadian, did not speak to them in Japanese at all. When his children were growing up, Canadian society did not value bilingualism and looked down on Asian languages in general. It did not occur to Taro that it was important to maintain the heritage language of his children.

Taro sees himself as a Japanese Canadian who does not belong to either nation exclusively but is a mixture of both. He explains, "We live in this space of difference. That's where we live, a place between West and East." After studying Asian philosophies such as Taoism, Confucianism and Buddhism, he, who has high proficiency in Japanese and English, could not help but realize that an English translation cannot accurately depict the entire essence of these ideas.

**Maggie's story**

Maggie is the only Nisei who chose to speak Japanese at the interview and she kept saying that both her languages are incomplete due to a lack of education. Her education was cut off because of the Second World War and she could not go back to any schools after it was over because of the unfortunate circumstance she was in at the time. By the end of the War she had already lost her father and returned to Japan with her mother and sister. Since there had not been a Japanese school where she lived in Canada, her Japanese language education was minimal and her knowledge of the language was limited. She recalls that when the family returned to Japan there was no time to study because earning money to live was the first priority.

Owing to her westernized behaviour, she experienced more discrimination in Japan.

\textsuperscript{6} Taro possesses the highest educational background among the participants. Just before his family moved to Alberta he managed to complete his undergraduate degree. After the War, he completed his master's and doctoral degrees in Education.
than she had when she was in Canada and she hoped to return to Canada as soon as possible. Eight years later her dream came true and she did return, but again she encountered difficulty, this time fitting into Canadian society. Even though she managed to find a job that required bilingual skill, she never felt confident in either language. She married another Japanese Canadian and had three children who are all English monolingual. She believes that she has been able to pass on Japanese traditions, especially morality, to her children, and she now tries to teach them to her grandchildren as well. While she helps her grandchildren with their Japanese, she particularly emphasizes what she was taught by her parents; not to create any problems within the family. In a rather strong manner, she said, “This is much more important than the language. My role is to teach that to my grandchildren,” and “That is the heritage I’d like to pass on to them.”

Her identity is neither Japanese nor Canadian. She explains that she worked very hard to be accepted as a Canadian and received an acknowledgement of this from the government and society in the end. However, after all the effort, she does not feel she is Canadian. She alludes to a level of comfort she feels with not being labelled “Canadian” or “Japanese Canadian.” What she does value are the experiences she has had of both cultures. In her words, “I value what I have.”

Eva’s story

Eva was born in Canada in 1925, but her family went back to Japan when she was six and she started school there. Two years later, the whole family moved back to Canada and she had to restart Grade 1 at a Canadian school. Her father taught her English prior to her entrance and helped greatly with other school subjects as well. She does not think that she had difficulty learning English while continuing to attend Japanese school in the afternoon. She recalls that she often was exposed to Japanese reading materials since her mother used to subscribe to Japanese magazines and possessed many Japanese books.

Her family is one of the Japanese families who decided to go back to Japan when the
evacuation order came down in 1942. It was against her will, but she had to follow her father’s decision and so her education was discontinued in Grade 8. Returning to Japan for the second time, she found the country different than she had remembered it as a child, something which was largely due to the strong military presence that had grown up in the interim. For the first few years she helped her family, particularly caring for her sick father. After the war she started working as a secretary. At the age of 22, her parents allowed her to follow her wish to return to Canada on her own. Soon after her return, she married a Japanese Canadian farmer. Until her mother passed away, Eva regularly wrote letters to her mother and in this way she maintained a relatively high reading and writing ability in Japanese.

English was the dominant language in her new home, but her husband’s parents, who lived nearby, frequently visited the family and constantly talked to their grandchildren in Japanese. Because of this, her oldest child maintained her Japanese at a semi-bilingual level, but the two younger ones completely lost their heritage language. She regrets her failure to pass on the language, but attributes this to the lack of necessity for her to focus on heritage language practice in order to maintain her own level of competence.

Haruko’s Story

Haruko is Jenny’s mother and she also agreed to share her life story, inviting me into her house for the interview. Before the interview, our conversations on the phone were mostly in Japanese, but at the interview she chose to speak in English. At Haruko’s house she welcomed me with home-made Japanese cakes that are rarely baked at home these days, but are normally bought from shops.

Every afternoon from Grade 1 to 3, when the regular Canadian school was over, Haruko went to Japanese school. Although her father had to be fluent in English because of the requirements of his job, Haruko spoke only Japanese to her parents. Like other Nisei, her education was cut off when the War broke out and the family was moved to one of the internment camps. There her parents hired a tutor to teach her Japanese with some of the
other Japanese children. After the War, she went back to the regular Canadian school but stopped studying Japanese.

At the age of 21, Haruko began to feel that she was losing her Japanese ability so she started taking a Japanese conversation class in the evening. She realized that she could no longer carry on a complex conversation with her parents and had begun to feel somewhat distant from them which was painful for her. After her marriage to a Japanese Canadian, the frequency with which she used Japanese dropped sharply since she spoke only English at home. Although she sent her children to the Japanese Saturday school, she did not think that it was necessary to encourage them to speak Japanese. In reality, it was much easier to conduct their daily lives in English than it was to try to utilize her Japanese ability. She believed that, as the family regularly cooked Japanese food and celebrated some of the traditional Japanese events, such as New Year, her children could at least experience the Japanese culture.

On a trip to Japan she was convinced that she was capable of conducting a conversation in Japanese, but noticed that the lack of formality inherent in her use of the language could cause serious problems. Her lack of reading ability is the biggest source of frustration and embarrassment for her. Because of her fluent Japanese and because she looks Japanese, people naturally expect her to be able to read the language. In reality, she has difficulty understanding the street signs and billboards. Interestingly, she claims that she is still learning Kanji (Chinese characters) from Karaoke songs. Since the Karaoke videotapes often employ Kanji, she needs to know them in order to enjoy singing. According to her, she gets more pleasure when singing in Kanji characters that in Roman scripts.

Catherine’s story

Catherine is Eva’s oldest daughter and fortunately, she had a great deal of contact with her grandparents, a fact which ultimately contributed to her becoming semi-bilingual. Her parents generally talked to their children in English. When they did not wish the children to
understand their conversations they code-switched to Japanese. Ironically, that was the time
when Catherine was most interested in learning Japanese, and when she made her most
concerted, and successful, efforts to learn and understand more of the language. Otherwise,
learning the language was never encouraged at home and she felt no necessity to develop her
own facility with Japanese.

Until she was in her late 20s, Catherine did not realize how nice it was to be able to
speak two languages. At the age of 30 she took time off from her work and traveled to Europe
and East Asia, a trip which included Japan. She observed that, “Once you meet new people
who speak a different language, you want to be able to communicate with them.” In Japan
she met relatives with whom she could converse in Japanese and she was glad that she was
able to communicate with them.

Catherine married a non-Japanese man and now has three sons. The two oldest sons
are taking a Japanese course at their school and she hires a tutor for them. She wishes to talk
to them in Japanese, but speaking English is much easier and saves time since her Japanese is
limited. However, she has been trying to pass along some cultural values and knowledge of
cultural events to her sons. She said that recently she noticed, “My view of life, lots of
things I do, are based on his [grandfather’s] philosophy which comes to me from my dad. I
know it’s old fashioned.”

She thinks that the heritage language class at her sons’ school helps the children relate
to their language but at the same time she feels that parents play an important role in
maintaining the heritage language and its culture at home. Once children start school, they
have enough exposure to English but not enough to their heritage language. Therefore, the
amount of access to heritage languages that children have depends on their family. She firmly
insists that it is the parents’ responsibility to encourage their children to maintain their
heritage language.
Linda's story

Linda is one of a few bilingual Sansei who currently teaches the Japanese language at high school. Her parents do not speak to her in Japanese although their stronger language is Japanese. She told me that both of her parents spent some part of their lives in Japan, but that they never mentioned any details of their upbringing to her. She said her parents are amongst the silent witnesses whose wartime experiences remain beyond the reach of researchers.

Her bilingual status seems to be the consequence of the frequent interaction she had with her grandparents until she was in Grade 12. She was often left with her grandparents when her parents were too busy to take care of her. She was also exposed to Japanese because of her dance teacher who did not possess a good command of English. Additionally, she was sent to Japanese school a couple of evenings a week for seven years. She has a rather negative memory of the Japanese school and does not think that she learned much there. During high school, through the student exchange program, she studied at a Japanese high school for ten months in the northern part of Japan. She recalls the motivation for doing this was that she vaguely anticipated that this experience would be beneficial in the future. Overall, she evaluated the experience as being worthwhile and felt that it greatly improved her ability to read and to write.

After completing her undergraduate degree, Linda went to Japan and worked as an English language teacher at a private language school for nearly two years. She found her bilingual ability was advantageous in many ways. For example, she could better help her students in class and she was also offered a temporary but well-paid job apart from the regular teaching job in Japan. On the other hand, her Japanese appearance was an obstacle sometimes. She was expected to behave like a Japanese girl and to understand the Japanese culture well. She told me that she purposely pretended not to understand Japanese at the beginning and acted like a stereotypical girl from North America in classes so that her students would consider her Canadian not Japanese Canadian. This second living experience
totally reminded her of how Canadian she was and made her say, “If it’s Olympic, I cheer for Canada.”

For her, maintaining her heritage language formed an important connection between her grandmother and herself and she cannot think how she would be without the language and the connections it has allowed.

Jeff’s Story

Except for our first contact on the phone, Jeff spoke to me in Japanese for all of our conversations. During these conversations, including the interview, Jeff’s Japanese was at a level equal to that of a native Japanese. However, his case cannot be considered to be language maintenance, since he possessed no Japanese ability before his seven-year stay in Japan. He may, however, have re-acquired language that he absorbed while listening to his grandparents speaking Japanese to him when he was a child. His parents did not speak Japanese at home, but his grandmother, whom he saw at least once a week, was always talking to him in Japanese. He recalls that he could not converse with her without his parents’ help to interpret, but she kept on talking to him without concern about how much he understood. Ironically, he never felt it was important to understand what she was trying to tell him in Japanese.

Through his childhood and adolescence, Jeff was hardly conscious of his heritage. When he finished high school, he was offered a scholarship to go to one of the Japanese universities, mainly as a hockey player. Prior to entering the university, he attended two language classes, one for a month in Canada and one for six months in Japan. He believes that his remarkable improvement in the language is heavily attributable both to his Japanese home-stay family, with whom he stayed for four years, and to his hockey activities. In other words, his language acquisition was not from textbooks but from his life experiences in Japan. He also believes that he could not have learned the Japanese honorific forms without these
actual experiences, particularly without the rigid senpai-kohai relationship that existed on the hockey team.

After receiving a Bachelor’s degree in Economics, Jeff remained in Japan and worked as an English teacher at a private language school for three years. Although he did not learn the language because of the English language environment he was in, he continued to learn the culture through his work. Now he is employed as a bilingual salesman at a lumber company in Canada and he conducts more than half of his work in Japanese dealing with Japanese clients. He thinks his bilingual ability opened up wider job opportunities for him. In addition, his heritage language ability has given him pleasure because it has enabled him to talk with his grandmother.

Moving On: Where do we go from here?

The stories of the participants, as told in this chapter, highlight their experiences with the Japanese language; how they have lived with it, how they have related to it, and how they have treated it. The stories illustrate various issues that surround the use and study of heritage languages. As a native speaker, my first, dominant and heritage language are the same, and so I have been able to take the role that my heritage language plays in my life for granted.

It is through the eyes of the participants in this study that I came to appreciate the differences between acquiring any second language and attempting to retain a heritage language. While my lack of personal experience as a heritage language learner creates a gap between my experiences and perspectives and those of my participants and therefore problematizes the analytical tools I bring to their stories, it also sharpens my appreciation for the differences between us. In the next chapter I explain the layers of meaning, that the

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7 The senpai-kohai relationship is a widely accepted hierarchical system typical among students and company workers in Japan. The senpai is generally older and someone who begins educational or occupational training previous to the kohai, who is of a younger age and at a subordinate position that entails respecting the senpai. Japanese children learn this relationship as soon as they join after school club activities in secondary school. It is regarded as important since it is the first step in learning the social hierarchy system.
similarities and, especially, the differences in our experiences, have highlighted.
Chapter 5
Conclusion

Findings and Discussion

The stories of Japanese Canadians are rich data sources which highlight profound perspectives on their language experiences. Each of the stories presented in the previous chapter is unique and illuminates precious moments from the lives of the participants in this study. It is not easy to summarize and pin down the essences of these lives. However, in this chapter, I will try to present the clearest, most insistent voices contained in these stories and discuss the issues raised by them under the research questions posed earlier:

1. How are Japanese Canadians’ perspectives on their heritage language and culture affected by the level of their ability in the Japanese language?

2. How do external factors (defined as events or conditions beyond an individual’s control that occur in Canadian or Japanese society), and internal factors (defined as events or life stages in an individual’s life) affect the way Japanese Canadians perceive their heritage culture? In turn, how do these perceptions influence their interest in developing their heritage language ability?

3. What is the place and value of their heritage language in the lives of Japanese Canadians?

How are Japanese Canadians’ perspectives on their heritage language and culture affected by the level of their ability in the Japanese language?

The participants in this study report two layers of discrepancy with regard to their heritage language. The one is a discrepancy between their desire to develop language ability and what they are willing to do to improve it. The other is the discrepancy between their perceptions of their language ability and the perceptions others have of it. It seems that when 73
they become aware of these discrepancies, they begin to struggle more, and in the worse case, are discouraged from speaking the Japanese language.

It is said that there is a disparity often between language attitude and actual language behaviour (King, 2000) – between wishing to speak a language, and actually making the effort to learn it. With respect to Japanese Canadians, the disparity that emerges between the wish and the act, can in part be explained by the gap that exists between an interest in learning Japanese or a wish that one could speak it, and any actual need to speak it. While the Nikkei parents in this study wanted their offspring to learn Japanese and sent their children to Japanese language schools to further that desire, the parents only spoke to their children in English and did not make particular efforts to maintain the Japanese language in their homes. The Nikkei parents admitted with regret that they wished they could have spoken Japanese to their children. Even when both parents were bilingual and could conduct a daily conversation in Japanese with ease, by the time they got married, English was their stronger language. In daily life they naturally chose to utilize the language in which they were most fluent for purposes of conducting daily tasks. Since everybody at home understood English fine, there was no need to converse in Japanese.

Interestingly, there was a moment when the Nikkei parents felt the strong necessity to speak Japanese. Jenny and Cindy told a story about how their parents shifted from English to Japanese only when they did not wish their children to understand what they were discussing. This provoked the children’s curiosity, raising in them a sense of urgency and purpose to listening to and learning Japanese. Cindy recalls that it was at those moments when she paid closest attention to, and tried hardest to listen and learn the language. For both the parents and the children, the choice of language was strongly triggered by an actual need in daily life. For the parents the need was to discourage understanding; for the children it was to facilitate it. In this case language mattered.

The reason why the monolingual Sansei were not motivated enough to learn the Japanese language, except in the case mentioned above, was the lack of necessity. As Jenny
claims, if she had not been able to communicate with her parents, an urgent need to learn and comprehend the language would have existed, yet this situation never arose. She felt no pressure to learn her heritage language since her immediate world functioned without the need for any ability to use the Japanese language. The presence of bilingual Nisei parents made it easy for the monolingual Sansei to remain monolingual.

Another factor which influences whether or not Japanese Canadians pursue their heritage language is the degree to which their attempts to use the language outside the context in which they learned it meet with success. The bilingual Nisei are often informed that their Japanese is "non-standard" or old fashioned, or that their Japanese lacks formality. Since their use of the Japanese language usually takes place in the enclave of a family environment, unless their parents speak "standard Japanese," the Japanese they use outside the family will most likely duplicate that of their parents’ non-standard Japanese (Jo, 2001).

In Patrick's case, the language environment in which he functioned extended beyond the family into a whole community which spoke the same "non-standard Japanese." Patrick also mentioned that his oldest son, who has become bilingual in Japanese and English, pointed out to him, "Nobody in Japan would understand you... because the phrases [Patrick uses] are very old fashioned." Patrick's Japanese comes basically from his parents who used to speak Meiji, a century old form of Japanese. This is also true for the other Nikkei in this study whose Japanese forms are based on those spoken when the first family members immigrated in the early 1900s. They are conscious of the fact that their Japanese is non-standard and old fashioned, but it is the only Japanese they were exposed to when they were being brought up.

Some participants also report that they had bitter experiences stemming from a lack or misuse of the formal language. Haruko said that during her stay in Japan she could not receive the proper service at a department store because she talked to a young shop assistant as she would have talked to a close friend, which upset the assistant. A family rarely uses formal language at home, resulting in a deficiency in the children's ability to recognize and understand the appropriate formalities. It is also not expected for young children to
comprehend the formality of the social hierarchy and the language structure that accompanies that system. As long as they are within their community in Canada, the Nikkei generally can get by without using the formal structure of the language. However, once they break with the confines of their community, the norms of language usage change. Consequently, unequipped to make the transition, they fail to meet others’ expectations for using appropriate speech styles in accordance with differing situations.

Unlike European immigrants, the appearance of Japanese Canadians tends to evoke a discrepancy between their perceptions of themselves and the perceptions others hold of them. Japanese Canadians and other Asian immigrants are referred as members of a “visible minority.” That is, their visible appearance is distinguishable from mainstream Canadian society, something that is undeniable but unacceptable for some Asian immigrants and their descendents. Ellen did not notice this disparity until her friend started mocking her for her Japanese appearance. Needless to say, her experience with this mockery scarred her and led her to believe that “the ideal look is British girl with blond hair and blue eyes.” Unfortunately, experiences, and consequent struggles, with this kind of perception gap, were widely shared among many Sansei.1 One of them expressed it in this way:

The Nisei handed down to us a sense of responsibility towards others, of moral obligation, and provided us with a ready-made reputation for reliability, honesty and intelligence. I respect those values and hold to them. But what I’m missing is a connection between what I look like and what I am. I want to be able to look in the mirror and recognize myself. (Dream of Riches, 1978, p. 157)

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1 Lucy Tse’s article (2000) analyzes published narratives of Asian American descendants. In it she cites several passages from these works to illustrate struggles with appearance: “I thought white people were very attractive. In fact I used to wish I had blue eyes and blond hair” (Korean man); “desire to have blond curly hair and blue eyes” (Chinese woman); and “I dislike particularly what seemed to me – the pseudo-Caucasian—eyes that were too thin, too narrow, even though my own eyes have the full and tight epicanthic fold that makes Japanese eyes seems smaller to Westerners” (Japanese woman). There are ample samples to echo the voice of the Sansei in this study.
Jenny, whose proficiency in her heritage language is almost non-existent, suffers the most from the discrepancy between her perception of herself and the perceptions her friends have of her. She has never been to Japan, and has never studied much about the country. She is married to a Caucasian Canadian man. As a result, the only reminder Jenny has of her heritage is her physical countenance, the marker by which many others ascertain her identity. She feels that she cannot speak Japanese as much as her friends expect her to, because they see her appearance and think of her as a Japanese Canadian, not, as she sees herself, as simply a Canadian. She inherited her appearance from her parents, but her facial features did not come with any Japanese language ability. Their unfulfilled expectations of her have awakened in her what she calls a feeling of “incompleteness.”

Jenny, like the Kikokushijo Japanese returnees studied by Kanno (1998), now tries to view what she perceives as her difference from the mainstream as her uniqueness, and strives to retain a positive perception of herself. It may be worth noting here that the Nisei apparently desire to blend into the Canadian mainstream society in a different way. They seem to accept their visual difference and are not bothered by it. Nevertheless, the Nisei people are the ones who have struggled to obtain recognition by the Canadian government as Canadian citizens. The severe discrimination they experienced earlier because of the War made them hungry for equal treatment in society, not for visual homogeneity.

How do external factors and internal factors affect the way Japanese Canadians perceive their heritage culture? In turn, how do these perceptions influence their interest in developing their heritage language ability?

Undoubtedly the difficult war time experiences of Japanese Canadians had a profound impact not just on Japanese Canadians’ views of Canada, but on their views about Japanese culture and language as well. What happened to the Japanese Canadians in British Columbia?

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2 Kanno (2000) states that her kikokushijo participants represent two conflicting desires: a desire to be accepted in mainstream society and a desire to assert their uniqueness.
was totally beyond the control of these individuals. Suddenly, because their native land and their new home were at war, they were labelled enemies to the country in which they lived. Their belongings, radios, furniture, boats, and even their houses were taken away from them under the government's law, "The War Measures Act." While the option remained to speak their heritage language, doing so placed them in life-threatening circumstances. Even small children could sense the danger of speaking in their mother tongue. During this time, in fact, an important duty of the parents was to ensure that the children did not exhibit any signs of Japaneseness in order to evade any potentially disastrous situation. This meant that parents actively discouraged their children from speaking Japanese. There was no chance for these children to nurture positive attitudes toward their ancestral country unless they returned there. What they were asked to do was to demonstrate a willingness to be a "good Canadian citizen." Abandoning their heritage language was one of the primary ways in which they could exhibit loyalty to Canada.

One may discern the immeasurable impact of the war experience not only on this study's participants but also on some Nisei who are not represented in this study, and are numbered amongst those who continue their reticence to speak out and who bear the burden of the past trauma in silence. As mentioned in Chapter 3, one of the Sansei participants told me that her parents never discussed their past experiences with her and refused to speak Japanese. She assumed they would not allow their experiences to be publicly exposed. Their

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3 *The War Measures Act* is a regulation that allows the federal government to have full authority to do everything deemed necessary for the security and defence of Canada and was originally enacted on August 22, 1914. It was used first during the First World War and again during the Second World War to intern "enemy aliens" such as those of German, Italian and Japanese racial origins. About 22,000 Japanese Canadians were given 24 hours to pack before being sent to internment camps. The property of the Japanese Canadians—land, business and other assets—was confiscated by the government and sold, and the proceeds used to pay for their internment.

4 To demonstrate the motivation behind its publication, the book "Dream of Riches" begins with a story about an old Japanese Canadian who died in a governmental mental institution. The old man was arrested in 1941 for not carrying his ID card identifying him as a person with a Japanese origin. One of the book's main editors visited him regularly and tried to talk to him. She was never able to converse with him because he did not speak English and refused to speak Japanese, saying, "Don't speak Japanese. They are watching us." This may be an extreme case, but the choice of language we speak can, in certain circumstances, lead to a dangerous situation.
silence is difficult to interpret accurately, but their refusal to speak the Japanese language explicitly demonstrates the negative influence of the war on the Japanese Canadians’ view of their heritage language.

The Nikkei who intentionally avoid speaking Japanese are sometimes the people who did not experience the War in Canada but in Japan. Ellen’s father may be one of these. In the absence of an interview with him, we can only speculate that the reason Ellen’s father refused to speak anything but English was his intention to distance himself from Japan. He fits into the sub-category of Japanese Canadians called Kikasha. The Kikasha were sent to Japan in order to receive an education there and then return to Canada either by their own choice or their parents’ desires. Due to their long absence from Canada, the Kikasha had to undergo readjustment into Canadian society when they returned. This included regaining their ability with the English language and dealing with the discomfort of other Japanese who had remained in Canada during the War. The Kikasha’s broken English and strong Japanese accent made them conspicuous and a target of discrimination. Thus, there was a strong conscious decision on their part to improve their English (Morimoto, 1997).

The Second World War devastated every society involved in it, but obviously the defeated nations had a harder time reconstructing theirs. After the War, Japan underwent major social reformations, yet it prospered at an amazing pace, driving the country into the position of being the world’s second largest economy. How did this prosperity affect the Japanese Canadians’ views of Japan? Did it contribute to a positive view? Did Japan start to shine in a favourable light? Much to the researcher’s surprise, not one of the participants reported that the societal changes going on in Japan had an affect on their views of the country. Even the Nisei who witnessed the remarkable changes with their own eyes claim that, while they were pleased about Japan’s resurgence, their view of the country was not changed by it. Having lived in Japan, Karen discovered that she would not fit into Japanese society when she saw the subordinate status of Japanese women there. Her view of Japan is relatively negative and Japan still remains a foreign country to her. All the participants in
this study were born, raised and educated in Canada and they have also worked, and maintained a standard of living in Canada, even those few who lived in Japan for a short period of time. Japan is merely one of many foreign countries to them, especially to the Sansei who identify themselves as non-hyphenated “Canadians.” Linda explains her “Canadianness” by saying, “If it is an Olympic game, I would cheer for Canada; I will be upset if Canada loses a game against Japan.”

This study also reveals that individual views of one’s heritage culture can be greatly influenced by inner factors; by personal developments and by major life events. Particularly when people begin making bridges between themselves and either the past or the future, they start to see their positions in relation to their heritage differently. In high school Ellen became old enough to understand the discrimination she had experienced because of her Japanese appearance, but still had no conscious connection to her Japanese heritage. Only at university, through MA research she undertook, did she unexpectedly discover what had happened to Japanese Canadians in the past. Having interviewed a few Nisei and having learned about the paths their lives had taken, she unearthed the story of how her family had come to be Canadian and what it had taken for her to be able identify herself as a citizen of Canada.

The evaporating past may urge people to cling to their roots. Jenny experienced this rather uniquely when she visited her hospitalized grandfather. He could not speak English and so she had to sit next to him wordlessly and hopelessly because she had no language to comfort him. Suddenly she envisioned her family path emanating from him. At the same time, she noticed the connection between the Nisei grandfather and her own Yonsei child that she held in her arms. At that juncture, she could see one line coming from her grandfather in the past and the other line reaching to her daughter in the future. It is difficult to judge whether her recognition of the past and future connections led to a positive attitude toward her heritage, but it nevertheless contributed to the formation of her identity.

Karen’s case illustrates the fact that the connection to the future is not necessarily
between two consecutive generations. She now devotes herself to passing on her heritage language to her grandsons, something she did not do with her children due to her lack of consciousness of her own heritage when she was raising them. Now, at the age of 72, she is fully aware of the fact that the connection to her heritage that she can offer is valuable and is something to be embraced.

What is the place and value of their heritage language in the lives of Japanese Canadians?

This question was apparently difficult for the participants to answer; I certainly found it difficult to ask in a way which would extract direct answers. In this study the participants all agreed on the benefits of being bilingual and maintaining their heritage language. But, how is it different to learn their heritage language from learning Spanish or French to achieve bilingualism? If the goal is to be bilingual, does it matter which language is chosen? Why is it important to maintain one’s heritage language? Only when these questions got explained did the answers become more straightforward. The participants all believe that having a family connection is what makes the difference; it’s what motivates them to maintain their heritage language. In a cyclic way, the maintenance of a heritage language preserves family links, connecting people both to their past and to their future.

Karen’s story about visiting her father’s hometown exemplifies the power of a strong family tie. When I began to ask her, “When you went back to Japan...”, she immediately reacted and corrected my expression, “went back to Japan.” From her point of view, the appropriate phrase was “went to Japan” instead of “went back to Japan.” Interestingly enough, within a half hour she inadvertently said, “When I went back to my father’s hometown...” In this case, “went back” accommodated her feelings better. Japan as a nation did not appeal to any personal attachment in her, but her father’s hometown connected her to her heritage. As Karen explained, when she saw where her father grew up, she suddenly, as if by finding a magical bridge to the past, felt “roots growing into my body” and
began to understand better the father with whom she did not have the language to converse about complex issues.

Patrick and his bilingual son expressed the notion that they enjoyed a great advantage at work because they were bilingual, for Japan had become a prime business partner. They further insisted that they could not have been successful without bilingualism. This illustrates an “instrumental motivation” for language learning – better job opportunities. Beyond its practical use, the father and the son found great satisfaction in having learned Japanese because it allows them to communicate with members of their family who have no command of the English language. Having become bilingual, Patrick’s son Jeff was thrilled to talk to the grandmother who once spoke to him in what was a completely alien tongue. Jeff told me that conversing with his grandmother in Japanese was the best gift he could give to her, and was a great reward for himself.

If maintaining a heritage language enables family connections to remain intact, would anyone who lost their heritage language thereby lose their family connections? Unfortunately, the answer is in part “yes.” Loss of a heritage language in a family and community distances the people who only possess heritage language ability from others, particularly, but not exclusively, those who have lost their heritage language ability. For Ellen, tension often followed misunderstandings she had with her father. She does not, however, attribute the causes of tension between them solely to problems understanding each others’ language, hinting that cultural differences might also underlie the problems. Ellen thinks that because her father stayed in Japan between the ages of three and 18, his cultural background is more Japanese than Canadian.

Jenny’s case reflects the same communication difficulties, but in less day-to-day circumstances. One of Jenny’s brothers, who is bilingual, married a Japanese woman and their children are all bilingual. When her brother’s family is conversing in Japanese with her parents, she feels completely isolated. She does not feel this level of isolation, however, when listening to conversations between non-family members speaking in Japanese.

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Nevertheless, the answer to the question, "Does language loss mean loss of family connections?" is also "no" because evidently there are clear cases in which people can reach an understanding with each other without a common spoken language, like the instance between Karen’s grandparents and her children. She explains how her children used to spend time with their grandparents without understanding verbal communication. She also contends that the time her children spent with their grandparents became a substantial part of their lives: Ji-chan (Grandpa) became her son’s hero, and Ba-chan (Grandma) was and still is her daughter’s great teacher.

Related to loss of heritage language are questions of the loss of heritage culture in the absence of heritage language. Patrick earnestly asserted, “My children retain culture,” and Karen insisted, “I taught lots of Japanese values, ethic, manners.” Yet, how should we interpret their claims? Neither one of them spoke in Japanese to their children. Do they believe that culture can be transmitted without the use of the heritage language? Here, we have to take into account their definition of “heritage culture.” In contrast to living immersed in one’s heritage culture in the country of its origin, for immigrants and their descendants, exposure to their heritage culture is limited to contact with their families or close communities, and the aspects of that culture that are preserved within them. Through interactions with members of families and communities, a chance is provided for immigrants and their descendents to learn and practice their heritage culture. Cut off from the mainstream version of this culture, family and community practices of it can be, or over time can become, idiosyncratic. Should the family enclave be the only place in which someone experiences the Japanese culture in practice, it is of no surprise that what is generally believed to be Japanese culture in Japan may differ from the family-based version of it as practiced in the context of the culture of the adoptive country. Just as what the Japanese Canadian hear at home is often the only Japanese they know and speak, the culture that a family practices at home may be the only Japanese culture known to Japanese Canadians, regardless of how different it is from “standard Japanese.” The Sansei receives the same lessons that the Nisei received in
their rearing by the Issei who used to practice the old Japanese manners.

Edward (1977) speaks of language as having both a communicative and a symbolic function. In his words, the symbolic function refers to "the ways in which language, though not serving a regular communicative function, acts as a symbol of tradition, heritage and ethnicity [...] languages may still be spoken in certain specific domains" (Edward, 1977, p.262). This appears to be a crucial function of heritage languages for Japanese Canadians. Karen's monolingual children keep using "Ji-chan" for grandfather and "Ba-chan" for grandmother. Moreover, Jenny continues to call sticky rice cakes "Mochi." These Japanese words embed the cultures imparted from their families so that the English translations of the words mean the same, but do not share the same function. The Japanese words have particular meanings and function among people who live in the culture of the Nikkei in Canada. The particular meanings of words can be shared only among those who live in the same cultural domain.

Wong Fillmore's (1991) study of Korean children who were abused by their father exemplifies the worst result of losing heritage language. In one case, the children apparently failed to display the proper level of respect to their grandfather. In response, the grandfather first scolded the children's father. In turn, the father punished the children for their insubordination with a stick. What caused the lack of demonstrated respect? Was it a lack of facility with Korean on the part of the boys that resulted in their inability to demonstrate respect through linguistic conventions? Or, should the role of culture be taken into consideration as well when examining the incident. This unfortunate incident with the Korean boys may not have been caused only by the children's misuse of the language. It is possible that the Korean father failed to teach his children how important showing respect was, or how to show respect to elderly people in the Korean culture. The incident may well be the result of a lack of both shared cultural and linguistic norms between the grandfather and the children.
Conclusion

This study explores the perceptions that Japanese Canadians hold about their heritage language, and the internal and external factors that influence these perceptions. It examines these things in order to identify the most important roles played by their heritage language in their lives. Having a family connection appears to be the most important value for the Japanese Canadians in this study, and was the most important reason they cited for maintaining their heritage language. However, the loss of their heritage language did not immediately or directly translate into a loss of family connections. This lack of a direct correlation can be explained by the fact that even when language loses its function as a communication tool, it can maintain its symbolic function in "certain specific domains," among family members who share the same culture.

The relationship between culture and language is a complex one. Language is a one component of culture and language is a key to understand culture. However, both language and culture are in constant evolution. Therefore, language and culture entangled in a reciprocal relationship wherein culture provides the context through which language is understood. Thus, when both heritage language and heritage culture are lost, family connections can be in jeopardy.

Japanese children in Japan learn the language in the context of Japanese society. In contrast, when learning Japanese as a heritage language, the context of the broader culture is missing, the family becomes a crucial, and sometimes the only place and resource for the teaching of both heritage language and culture. As their Japanese language is not always necessarily compatible with "standard Japanese," their heritage culture could differ from what is widely known to be Japanese culture in Japan. But, that is the culture their family practices and values at home. Losing a family connection risks a chance to learn about the heritage culture, reciprocally, losing heritage language and culture can weaken or sever family connections.

Events happening in a person's immediate world, particularly ones which involve
family connections such as losing grandparents or bearing a child, are influential factors in how Japanese Canadians perceive their heritage. Recognizing a family connection helps Japanese Canadians link themselves to their past and to their future. As Hall (1998) observes, when connecting with the past or the future, we are most likely to succeed in negotiating our identity. The path from the past can lead us to our present location. Locating ourselves in the present is a key element in the process of forming one's identity. It cannot be concluded, however, that connecting to heritage culture directly affects one's attitude toward one's heritage language.

More than a decade ago, Wong Fillmore (1989), who conducted research on a vast scale into bilingual education for immigrant children in the United States, pointed out how the loss of family links had serious consequences in terms of heritage language loss. Since then, heritage language issues have received more attention in research, but there has not been enough attention paid to the ultimate costs of losing family connections in the wake of language loss. In terms of research, this lack of attention is probably related to the heavy focus placed on academic success. In the context of this focus, the function of heritage language retention or loss is considered almost exclusively for its impact on the academic success of immigrant children, rather than for its impact in other realms. A second consequence of this focus is the population of heritage language learners that is studied; almost exclusively those who are currently engaged in formal education. Academic success can be one of the easiest ways to accurately indicate the degree to which bilingual education is being successfully conducted, but says nothing about the degree of the loss of family links in the large society. The implications of heritage language loss or retention go beyond academics, and continue long after people finished their schooling, continuing to be felt throughout a speaker's life. It is, therefore, important to bear in mind that heritage languages should be treated as a life time issue.

This study employs a unique population to examine an ethnic minority's views about their heritage language. All the participants have completed their schooling and their life
stories provide a broad spectrum of language experience. The Nisei Japanese Canadians experienced the severe discrimination that came with war during the first half of the twentieth century and witnessed a major societal change in their ancestral country during the latter half. The society, educational system, and demographics that existed in Japan when the families of the participants in this study first came to Canada in the early 1900s differ completely from the conditions of contemporary Japan. In fact, it is difficult for the participants in this study to locate commonalities between themselves and Shin-Nisei, or any other second generation of immigrants in Canada. However, it does not mean that the experiences of this population are not relevant to immigrants and their children at the present time. The stories of the Nisei and Sansei can convey important messages for any immigrant family, since their stories contain their lively voices; and through them can be heard the pains, struggles, frustrations, embarrassments, joys, satisfactions, and pride that their heritage language experiences have brought to their lives.

Suggestions for Educators

If heritage language retention is merely a family matter, would there be nothing that schools could offer to help immigrant children with their heritage language? The opponents of bilingual education for heritage language learners claim that the retention of heritage languages is a "luxury" and tax money should not be spent on such luxuries. In fact, schools cannot afford to teach every heritage language that immigrants bring into the classroom. So, what is a role of schools in terms of the heritage language issue? There are two key things educators can offer in order to support the maintenance of heritage languages.

First, teachers at schools can help immigrant parents to understand the important role that families play in the retention of heritage languages. The parents should be encouraged to speak their heritage language and practice their culture with their children at home. Once the school year begins there are ample opportunities for immigrant children to access and learn
the mainstream language. Once these children become fluent in the mainstream language, the occasions that children use that language at home increases (Tse, 1999). If the parents possess a good comprehension of the mainstream language and allow the children to speak it, the usage of the mainstream language at home is encouraged. As facility with the mainstream language increases, the pull to use the mainstream language as the language of daily conversation is inevitable, unless an urgent need to communicate in the heritage language emerges. Therefore, the parents have to make an effort to provide a need for the children to speak their heritage language in the family atmosphere.

While immigrant parents are engaged in establishing their new life, it is only natural for them to hope their children will acclimatize into the mainstream society smoothly and swiftly. During this busy settlement period the parents may not be able to pay attention to the retention of their heritage language, as the Nisei parents claim in this study, because of many other priorities in their new life. This is why school teachers need to cooperate with parents to keep each other informed about the children’s progress.

The second thing schools can do to support the retention of heritage languages, since it is not feasible to teach every immigrant’s heritage language at school, is to teach and promote cultural differences among immigrant children. Educators should make sure immigrant children learn how to value their cultural differences, instead of seeing them as negatives or as things they want or need to hide. Cultural differences exist not only between the mainstream culture and others, but also amongst those “other” cultures. In a class where cultural diversity exists, teachers cannot simply point out cultural traits or differences. Instead, teachers should emphasize how each cultural difference is to be valued equally. Bhabha in the interview article “The Third Space” explains the way cultural difference should be articulated, “The articulation of cultures is possible not because of the familiarity or similarity of contents, but because all cultures are symbol-forming and subject-constituting, interpellative practices” (Bhabha, 1998, p. 210). The ultimate goal should be to teach every student, including non-immigrant students, how to recognize and appreciate cultural
differences.

The Japanese Canadians in this study report struggles they experienced because of a gap between their perception of themselves and the perception others had of them. This clearly suggests that to teach immigrant children to be proud of their heritage culture is not enough. All children must learn to recognize the value of each culture, learn how to appreciate cultural differences.

At the end of the stories

Although my experiences with language differ from those of the participants in this study, they do find points of contact and of overlap. As I listened to the life stories of my participants, I tried to interweave my own perceptions of language experiences with theirs. While it was undeniable that there was a gap between the language experiences of the participants and myself, it is also true that the gap did not make analysis impossible. Rather, the gap functioned less as a barrier than it did as an invitation; an invitation to listen harder, and to look deeper for points of comparison and understanding. The lively voices that told the stories are still in my mind and urge me on. Just as the life stories of my participants will continue down their own paths, so must this research continue, and follow its own path.
References


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Appendix I

Interview Questions

*Personal background information
  Age    Occupation    Birth place
  Time of arrival in Canada
  Type of schools attended in Japan and Canada
  Type and length of formal Japanese language programs
  Length of visit in Japan
  Self-report Language Proficiency in Japanese

* Were there any events which made you feel embarrassed to speak Japanese or English?

* Did you always think that it is important to maintain the language? If you did, why did you think so?

* Have you experienced any benefits or advantages of being able to speak Japanese? If you have, what kind of experience have you had?

* Were there any events which made you feel good about being able to speak Japanese?

* Have you had any difficulties or struggles because you cannot speak Japanese?

* Were there any events which made you feel bad about not being able to speak Japanese?

* Do you think what has been lost through your heritage language loss?

* Could you describe to me what it means to you to be un/able to speak Japanese?

* What is your advice to new Japanese-Canadian immigrants pertaining to Japanese language and culture?