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Insider Perspective: Attitude and Motivational Orientation among Heritage Learners of Japanese at Colleges in the Philadelphia-area

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Abstract

This study investigates the attitudes and motivational orientations of heritage learners of Japanese. Twenty-seven students enrolled in Japanese classes in colleges and universities in the Philadelphia area participated in this study. Participants fell into two categories: heritage learners (N=6) and foreign language learners (N=21). Data was collected through an online questionnaire consisting of both quantitative and qualitative sections. Descriptive statistics were used to determine participants' attitudes toward Japanese language, people, and culture and primary motivational orientations toward learning Japanese. The Fisher's exact test was used to determine the effect of heritage status on attitude and motivational orientation. Results show both groups of learners generally have positive attitudes, though heritage learners tended to enjoy studying Japanese less than their counterparts without familial or cultural connection to the target language. Based on the findings and my personal experience, recommendations are made language instructors of Japanese to address the unique needs of heritage learners.

Keywords: Japanese, heritage language, attitude, motivation, motivational orientation

Introduction

As of 2013, Japanese is the sixth most popular taught language and the most popular non-Indo European taught language in the U.S. (Goldberg, Looney, & Lusin, 2015). There are many reasons students are taking up study of this language in increasing numbers, including wanting to read and watch Japanese comics and animation, aspiring to work for a Japanese company,

and even dating Japanese people (Nakata, 2014). While the prototypical U.S. language student is a foreign language learner, without prior experience in the target language or cultural connection to the language, there are a number of students who do have a cultural connection or some proficiency in the language. These students are called heritage learners.

While defining the term foreign language learner is a fairly straightforward process, the same cannot be said for heritage learners, since these learners are those for whom terms like “first language” or “mother tongue” are complicated (Valdés, 2005: 410). While proficiency is one way to delineate heritage learners from their foreign counterparts, there is no one universal definition for the heritage learner—rather, the definition can be molded to fit certain needs. For instance, He (2006) defines heritage learners of Chinese as “a language student who is raised in a home where Chinese is spoken and who speaks or at least understands the language and is to some degree bilingual in Chinese and in English” (1). On the other hand, Kong (2011) excludes proficiency in her definition: “the broad and underlying definition of heritage learners are those who possess some kind of relationship with the language and/or culture of their ancestry” (95).

For the sake of the present study I have decided to make the distinction between learner groups along the lines of need to identify culturally with the language, instead of proficiency. This paper will define heritage learners as a language learner who has some need to make a cultural connection to the language. The term foreign language learners will refer to a language learner with little need to make a cultural connection to the language.

Foreign language learners and heritage learners tend to have differing motivations and needs when it comes to studying languages. Kono and McGinnis (2001) explain:

The motivation of heritage language learners in post-secondary programs is often quite different from that of traditional foreign language learners. Many are dealing with deeply felt issues of identity, struggling to understand their relationship to their home culture and language, mainstream American society, and perhaps other groups as well. (Kono & McGinnis, 2001: 199)

As a heritage learner of Japanese, I was motivated to design a survey, a typical research method in heritage language research (Yang, 2003, Gardner & Lambert, 1959, Kataoka, 1979), to examine the experience of my peers enrolled in Japanese language courses in colleges in the Philadelphia area.

I was born in Yokohama, Japan to an American father and a Japanese mother and lived there until I was ten years old. During my childhood in Japan, I attended an elementary school built for children of American military service members. While I could speak some Japanese, English became my strongest language. After moving to Maryland in the 5th grade, it was difficult to maintain my level of Japanese, as the only place I used Japanese was at home.

Friends in high school would often question my lack of knowledge of Japanese, usually in a disapproving way. Without support at school to learn Japanese, on top of the fact that I mainly spoke English at home, it was unreasonable to expect that I would speak Japanese as well as a native speaker. However, failing to live up to my friends' high expectations of proficiency made me feel like I wasn't "Japanese enough". Later, I was determined to study Japanese in college so I could improve my proficiency and be seen by others as a "complete" Japanese person.

After entering college, I enrolled in my first Japanese language course at Haverford College, a small liberal arts college in Pennsylvania, and I continued to take Japanese for the next three years. In the first two years of study, I loved being in Japanese class. As someone with Japanese heritage and experience living in Japan, I was expected to be the best at Japanese in the class—an expectation I gladly fulfilled. In my third year of study, however, there was an influx of non-Japanese students in my class who spoke even more fluently than I did. After moving to the United States, the Japanese language was one of the few things remaining connecting me with my home country. However, after being surrounded by many non-Japanese students who were better than me at speaking Japanese, I felt like my connection to my culture through the language was cheapened. Though my original motivation to study Japanese was to strengthen my Japanese identity, it ultimately weakened. In addition to the insecurity I felt around other students, I also felt like the academic style of language we were learning in class was not directly applicable to how I use Japanese with my family. Moreover, I did not like being forced to talk to my classmates in Japanese as if the language was merely a tool of communication rather than an expression of culture and identity. In the end I felt like I was not getting the support I needed as a heritage learner, so I stopped enrolling in Japanese language courses.

Stories like mine are not uncommon among heritage learners. Carreira (2004) describes the experience of HLL4s, or heritage learners whose proficiency in their heritage language is too low to qualify for a course for native

speakers and are placed in courses for foreign language learners, or second language acquisition (SLA) courses:

The typical SLA curriculum offers little in the way of help to students in situations such as these. For one, it does not broach notions of identity that are so important to individuals whose very ethnic authenticity is frequently questioned or negated. For another, the cultural topics it does address—typically, high culture, literature, history, etc.—are in many ways foreign to most HLL4s and are therefore likely to exacerbate feelings of insecurity and outsider status in these students. Ironically—and to further complicate matters—heritage language students in SLA courses also have to combat the widely held assumption they are there to “get an easy A”. The bottom line is that even HLL4s who from a linguistic standpoint resemble second language learners have affective and intellectual needs that are generally not addressed and may even be invalidated in SLA courses. (Carreira, 2004: 15)

For marginalized ethnic groups in the U.S., maintaining a heritage language has been shown to lead to improved relationships with family members and stronger sense of ethnic identity (Lee & Kim, 2008, Oriyama, 2010, Metoki, 2012, Moloney & Oguro, 2012, Lee, 2005, Qin, 2006). Furthermore, the United States has a need for people competent in languages other than English in areas such as economics and foreign policy (Hamayan, 1986). Heritage learners have an advantage over foreign language learners in that they often have developed listening and speaking skills (Benmamoun, Montrul, & Polinsky, 2013) and have cultivated deeper cultural understanding of the language and its speakers. We should be invested in the maintenance of heritage languages as they are beneficial to both the individual heritage learner and to society at-large.

Attitude and motivational orientation are two sociopsychological factors that have been found to play an important role in learning a non-native language in an academic setting (Gardner, 1985, Ellis, 1994). In the context of language learning, motivational orientation is defined as the reason for studying the target language. Motivational orientation is distinct from motivation, which Gardner (1985) defines as the composite of four aspects, “a goal, effortful behavior, a desire to attain the goal and favourable attitudes toward the activity in question” (Gardner, 1985: 50). Previous research has

shown that heritage learners of Japanese have attitudes and motivational orientations unique from foreign language learners (Nunn, 2006, Kataoka, 1979).

The present study takes place in colleges and universities in the Greater Philadelphia area, where due to the relatively low population of Japanese people as compared to the west coast, heritage-oriented programs for Japanese language study are rare (Chinen, Douglas, & Kataoka 2013). As a result, Japanese heritage learners often have no choice but to enroll in language classes oriented towards foreign language learners. As a group of students with needs different from foreign language learners, it is crucial that instructors express care towards heritage learners by acknowledging their heritage status and working together with the student to ensure the best education for them. Lumpkin (2007) explains:

Teacher-learner relationships are founded on the fundamental human need of knowing that another person genuinely cares. Students know when they are recognized, understood, and respected for their unique abilities and interests by their teachers. (Lumpkin, 2007:158)

With the goal of enabling Japanese language instructors to best address the unique needs of heritage language learners, this study aims to acquire a closer look at the differences between heritage learners and foreign language learners in terms of their attitude and motivational orientation toward the Japanese language, people, and culture.

The role of attitude and motivational orientation in heritage language learning

Attitude

Attitude can be defined as “a relatively enduring organization of beliefs, feelings, and behavioral tendencies towards socially significant objects, groups, events or symbols” (Hogg & Vaughan, 2005: 150). Looking specifically at language learning, Gardner (1985, 36) proposes attitude be classified into two types: one toward learning the language and one toward the speech community associated with that language.

An individual’s attitude toward learning the language has been shown to correlate somewhat strongly with their achievement in learning that language

(Jordan, 1941, Neidt & Hedlund, 1967). Gardner (1985)'s study on students learning French as a second language supports the notion that positive attitude leads to stronger motivation, which in turn leads to higher achievement. Studies on the relationship between attitude toward the speech community and linguistic achievement have been varied, with some finding a positive relationship (Jacobsen & Imhoof, 1974, Spolsky, 1969) and others not finding a consistent relationship (Anisfeld & Lambert, 1961).

Research has found that heritage learners of Japanese largely have positive attitudes toward maintaining their heritage language, citing its importance for reinforcing their Japanese identity and connection to Japanese culture, strengthening relationships with Japanese-speaking relatives, reading and writing, traveling to Japan, and opening up future job opportunities (Chinen & Tucker, 2005, Kurata, 2015, Metoki, 2012, Oriyama, 2010, Douglas, Kataoka & Chinen, 2013, Moloney & Oguro, 2012). However, certain negative views towards the language have also been found among Japanese heritage learners. Metoki (2012) conducted group interviews with seven college-age Japanese heritage learners who varied in proficiency and enrollment in a Japanese language course. While the participants generally had positive experiences with Japanese, a few mentioned negative experiences as children as a consequence of learning Japanese, such as being forced to go to Japanese language school and struggling to learn English. Nunn (2006) conducted a survey on high school students in the U.S. taking Japanese classes and found that overall, ethnic Japanese students did not enjoy learning Japanese as much as non-Japanese students, possibly because of parental coercion to study Japanese.

Motivational Orientation

Before considering motivational orientation, it is crucial to first understand the concept of motivation in general. In relation to language learning, motivation can be defined as involving “four aspects, a goal, effortful behavior, a desire to attain the goal and favourable attitudes toward the activity in question” (Gardner, 1985: 50), with “goal” being equivalent to “motivational orientation”. Effortful behavior, desire to achieve the goal, and attitude are measurable factors of motivation. Meanwhile, motivational orientation is not a measurable factor of motivation, but rather the reason for motivation arising in the first place. Motivation is essential to acquiring a second language: “motivation largely determines the level of effort which learners expend at

various stages in their L2 development, often a key to ultimate level of proficiency” (Saville-Troike, 2006: 85).

Gardner and Lambert (1959) theorized two categories of motivational orientation: integrative orientation and instrumental orientation. Integrative orientation represents the desire to be able to meet and understand a variety of people, while instrumental orientation represents the desire to use the language as a means to an end, such as for career or educational purposes. Gardner (1985) concluded that positive attitude and integrative orientation correlated with motivation, and motivation correlated with success in learning the language. Several studies have confirmed these findings (Ellis, 1994, Crookes & Schmidt, 1991), while others have challenged them (Savignon, 1972, Backman, 1976, Kataoka, 1979). The integrative-instrumental dichotomy has been criticized for not accounting that there may be overlap of the two orientations and for being insensitive to different language-learning contexts (Kataoka, 1979, Brown, 2000, Husseinali, 2006).

The context of heritage language learning can be considered one of those contexts in which the instrumental-integrative dichotomy does not suffice. In the survey by Yang (2003) on college students enrolled in East Asian language classes in the U.S., five other motivational orientations were examined in addition to integrative and instrumental: heritage-related orientation, travel orientation, interest orientation, school-related orientation, and language use orientation. Heritage students primarily had a heritage-related orientation for studying their heritage language, and heritage-related orientation was found to be the strongest motivator in Yang’s study. This result challenges Gardner’s conclusion that integrative orientation is the strongest motivator in language learning.

As previously mentioned in my overview of attitude, Japanese heritage learners are also motivated to study Japanese beyond heritage-related reasons—namely, being able to use Japanese for reading and writing, their future career, and travel to Japan. While Japanese heritage learners are often motivated by positive interests in their heritage, career, or travel, they may also be motivated by negative feelings like shame or embarrassment from not having sufficient knowledge of Japanese to communicate at the level of native speakers (Kurata, 2015). Rika from Kurata’s study shared that she felt pressure from classmates who seemed to speak and read Japanese better than her (124). Heritage language learners taking classes with foreign language learners are usually expected to be “experts” on the language and culture and contribute to the education of foreign language learners by shar-

ing their knowledge. For those who possess linguistic and cultural knowledge, having the opportunity to share their personal experiences can be identity-affirming and empowering (Carreira, 2004: 16). But for those who lack such knowledge, failing to live up to the expectation of cultural broker can be discouraging and threaten their self-identification as a heritage learner (Lee, 2005: 559).

Husseinali (2004) revealed that when students felt that what they were learning in class relates to their goals, they were more motivated to study the language, which led to higher success in acquiring the language.

Research Questions

With a focus on heritage learners of Japanese in colleges and universities in the Philadelphia area, the present study aims to further develop the understanding of the attitudes and motivational orientations of this group of learners. The following research questions guided the design of the present study:

1. How do college-level heritage learners and foreign language learners differ in their attitudes and motivational orientations?
2. What can Japanese language instructors do to address the unique needs of heritage learners?

Methodology

Instruments

A questionnaire was designed consisting of two parts: a student background information form and a 28-question survey. Six questions on the survey were open-ended questions asking about the participants' experience studying Japanese. Twenty-two of the survey questions were statements that participants rated their agreement on using a Likert Scale, with the options being "strongly disagree", "disagree", "neither agree nor disagree", "agree", and "strongly agree". Nine of the statements were attitude-related, with three subscales: attitude toward the language, attitude toward the culture, and attitude toward the people. The subscales were chosen based on Gardner's (1985) classification of attitudes into two types: one toward the language and one toward the speakers of that language. In addition, I felt compelled to include culture as a subscale by Ellis' (1994) insistence of its

importance. Fourteen items were related to motivational orientation, with seven subscales: interest, integrative, travel, use, instrumental, school, and heritage. Following after Yang (2003), I wanted to include a variety of orientations to avoid limitations from the instrumental-integrative dichotomy. No attempt has been made to statistically justify the grouping of the attitude and motivational orientation items by the subscales chosen. The majority of the items on the survey were adapted with permission from Gardner (1985) and Padilla and Sung (1997), with a few designed by myself. The order of the items was randomized to avoid bias from grouping like items together (Wilson & Lankton, 2012, Goodhue & Loiacono, 2002, White, Ashton, & Law, 1978).

Procedure

The questionnaire was piloted on a student who has experience studying Japanese in college. After piloting the survey, two items were changed and instructions were added. The online questionnaire was hosted on Qualtrics.com. I enlisted the help of Japanese professors from colleges around Philadelphia to e-mail the link to the questionnaire to students who were currently enrolled in their Japanese language classes. Participants were made to read a consent form which informed them of their anonymity and voluntary participation. There was no compensation for participating. After the initial launch of the survey, a design flaw was brought to my attention by several participants. After fixing the problem, the initial data collected was discarded and another e-mail was sent to students by the professors informing them that the survey was fixed and asking to retake it.

Participants

The participants were 27 students varying across first year level to fourth year level enrolled in college-level Japanese language classes in the Philadelphia area. There were six (22.22%) heritage learners and 21 (77.78%) foreign language learners, as indicated by their response to the question “Do you consider the Japanese language to be a part of your heritage?”. Seven (25.93%) students were male, 18 (66.67%) female, and two (7.41%) another gender. Four participants (14.81%) were of Japanese descent; most of the other participants were White (51.85%) or non-Japanese Asian (44.44%). Regarding Japanese course level, seven (25.93%) were in first year, seven (25.83%) in second year, ten (37.04%) in third year, and three (11.11%) in fourth year. The majority of participants (74.07%) reported English as their strongest

language. For only one student it was the case that Japanese was spoken in their family home.

Data Analysis

All of the participants responded to every survey item regarding attitude and motivational orientation. In the original survey, participants were given five options on how to rate their agreement with an item: “strongly disagree”, “disagree”, “neither agree nor disagree”, “agree”, and “strongly agree”. During analysis of the survey results, responses were collapsed into larger categories, in order to provide a more meaningful picture of participant responses—all responses corresponding with *disagree* were grouped together and responses corresponding with agree were grouped together. “Neither agree nor disagree” has been abbreviated to *neutral*.

The raw quantitative data was analyzed using two techniques. First, descriptive statistics were used to calculate the percentages of participants who agreed, disagreed, and were neutral on each survey item regarding attitude and motivational orientation. Second, the Freeman-Halton extension of Fisher’s exact test was used to discover significant relationships between learner variables and items related to attitude and motivational orientation. The Freeman-Halton extension of the Fisher’s exact test is a statistical test “used to determine if there are nonrandom associations between two categorical variables” (Weisstein, n.d.) on a 3x2 contingency table. When the sample size is small, as was the case in this study (N=27), Fisher’s exact test is more appropriate than the chi-squared test (McDonald, 2009).

Results

Japanese language learners in general

Attitude. Overall, it can be said that these college-level learners of Japanese possess a positive attitude toward Japanese culture, language, and people. Most participants agreed that Japan has a rich history and culture (96.30%) and would like to learn more about it (96.30%). Not all participants, however, actually preferred Japanese culture over other cultures (11.11% disagree, 44.44% neutral). The majority of participants enjoy studying Japanese (92.59%) and want to learn as much as possible (85.19%). However, a lesser amount of participants (62.96%) actually like using the language as much as they can both in and out the classroom, indicating that enthusiasm towards the Japanese language is not always reflected in use of the

language in real life. Most participants would like to know more Japanese people (85.19%) and agree that Japanese people should be proud of their race (77.78%), though only about half of participants (48.15%) agree that Japanese people are kind and considerate. It is worth mentioning that those who did not think Japanese people are kind and considerate (51.85%) did not outright disagree that Japanese people are kind and considerate—they were neutral, indicating perhaps that they thought Japanese people were not any more kind and considerate than other ethnic groups

Motivational orientation. Most students are motivated to study Japanese because of interest in the language itself (92.59%), wanting to better understand and appreciate Japanese culture (85.19%), wanting to understand TV, music, or literature (77.78%), and wanting to travel to Japan (74.07%). A moderate amount of participants agreed that the following reasons motivated them to study Japanese: wanting to study abroad in Japan (66.67%), wanting to meet and converse with more people (66.67%), finding Japanese more interesting than other foreign languages like French, German, or Spanish (62.96%), wanting to get a good job (44.44%), having heard good things about the language program (44.44%), and being able to use Japanese in practical situations (40.74%). Motivational orientations that were weak among the participants include fulfilling a foreign language requirement (29.63%), wanting to connect with their own culture (25.93%), and wanting the respect of others (22.22%).

Heritage learners versus foreign language learners

Attitude. Overall both groups of learners had a positive attitude towards Japanese culture, thought as expected more heritage learners than foreign language learners preferred Japanese culture to other cultures. Both groups have similar attitudes toward the language except for the fact that less heritage learners than foreign language learners enjoy studying the language. A Freeman-Halton extension of Fisher's exact test confirms the relationship between heritage status and enjoyment of studying Japanese—heritage learners tend to enjoy studying Japanese less than foreign language learners do. Both groups generally have similar attitudes toward Japanese people, though it seems foreign language learners are slightly more skeptical of the notion that Japanese people should be proud of their race.

Motivational orientation. The most common motivational orientations among heritage learners include wanting to connect with their own

culture (83.33%), wanting to travel to Japan (83.33%), and wanting to understand Japanese TV, music, or literature (83.33%). For foreign language learners, the top orientations were interest in the Japanese language itself (100.00%), wanting to better understand and appreciate Japanese culture (85.71%), wanting to understand Japanese TV, music, or literature (76.19%), wanting to travel to Japan (71.43%), wanting to meet and converse with more people (71.43%), and finding Japanese more interesting than other foreign languages like French, German, or Spanish (71.43%).

Using the Freeman-Halton extension of Fisher's exact test, significant relationships were found between heritage status and three motivational orientations. More foreign language learners than heritage learners were motivated to study Japanese because the language itself is interesting. Likewise, foreign language learners tend to agree more than heritage learners that they are studying Japanese because it is more interesting than other foreign languages like French, German, or Spanish. Finally, as expected, heritage learners tended to agree much more than foreign language learners that they were studying Japanese to connect with their culture. It is notable that 9.52% of foreign language learners who, despite reporting that Japanese is not a part of their heritage, agree that they are studying Japanese to connect with their culture. Assuming this is not just a mistake, it would be interesting to know how these two students interpreted the statement "I am studying Japanese because I want to connect with my culture".

Discussion

The present study investigated the attitudes and motivational orientations of college students enrolled in Japanese language courses in the Philadelphia area. Both heritage learners and foreign language learners have fairly positive attitudes toward Japanese language, culture, and people. Additionally, both groups are motivated to study Japanese by desires to travel to Japan and to understand Japanese TV, music, or literature.

Statistically significant differences were found between the attitude of heritage learners and foreign language learners. Heritage learners were more likely than foreign language learners to prefer Japanese culture over other cultures and to think Japanese people should be proud of their race. Past studies (Chinen & Tucker, 2005, Kurata, 2015, Metoki, 2012, Oriyama, 2010) have similarly found Japanese heritage students to have positive attitudes toward Japan. This result is encouraging, as it has been found that not all heritage

learners of Japanese necessarily have positive attitudes towards Japanese people, especially towards those from Japan (Kondo, 1998, Kataoka, 1979). Perhaps most worrisome, though expected, is that heritage learners do not enjoy studying Japanese as much as foreign language learners. Nunn (2006) similarly found that heritage learners in high school do not enjoy the challenge of learning Japanese as much nor do they enjoy using the language outside of class as much.

One possible explanation for heritage learners' lesser enjoyment of studying Japanese is that oftentimes, studying their heritage language is not their choice. For heritage learners, deciding to learn their heritage language is not simply a matter of whether they would enjoy learning it, but rather something necessary for consolidating their ethnic identity or communicating with family members. The responses below by two heritage learners to the question "Why did you decide to study Japanese in college?" demonstrate the presence of the desire to communicate with family and make a cultural connection:

I didn't know any Japanese and since I am half Japanese I wanted to be able to contact that side of my family.

Because I wanted to connect more with my culture.

On the other hand, foreign language learners in this study tended to be motivated to study Japanese because of an interest in the language or culture. The following quotes are a selection of short answers by foreign language learners in response to the question "Why did you decide to study Japanese in college?":

I would like to spend time in Japan. I'm interested in the culture and history of Japan and I think it would be a useful language for business in my planned field of study.

Visited Japan a few years ago and fell in love with the people, food, culture, cities, and natural landscape! Want to go back as much as possible.

Unlike heritage learners, foreign language learners actively choose to engage with a language they are drawn to, which explains why they would enjoy studying it.

Another possible explanation for why heritage learners do not enjoy studying Japanese as much as foreign language learners is the pressure to

live up to expectations of high proficiency and cultural knowledge (Carreira, 2004, Lee, 2005). One heritage learner from the present study, who was neutral on their enjoyment of studying Japanese, reports being pushed to study Japanese by the expectations of others for them to embody the characteristics of a “typical” Japanese person:

I identify as a fourth generation Japanese American. I grew up in Hawaii, where there are many third and fourth generation Japanese Americans who do not speak or understand the Japanese language. I was no exception; the language was not spoken at home and I had a very slim understanding of cultural traditions and practices. When I entered college I found that I was one of only a handful of individuals who identified as having Japanese heritage within the entire school. This is a crude way of putting it but if you look different—if you’re an ethnic minority here—people will ask you, “what are you?” or “where are you from?” as if they have a right to question your authenticity as an American citizen or something, as if that makes you any less of a person. Coming to [college omitted] was the first time in my life that I was confronted with my race, and it was incredibly disempowering to only be seen as Asian or Japanese and yet, not understand a thing about Japan, let alone identify with the country and its people. I suppose this was an impetus and it made me curious to learn more about Japan and my heritage.

After coming to a college in the Philadelphia area with relatively few Japanese people compared to their home state of Hawaii, this heritage learner found themselves being reduced to their Japanese ethnicity and facing pressure to live up to the image of a typical Japanese person by learning more about Japan. Considering the feelings of disempowerment motivating this student to learn Japanese, it is not surprising that they would not particularly enjoy studying the language. Negative in-class experiences may also explain this student’s lack of enjoyment. The same learner goes on to describe their experience of feeling insecure around classmates who are native speakers of Japanese:

Talking in class with native speakers and others who have lived in Japan for several years is...challenging. They express their ideas

well, and often times it seems effortless. My grammatical foundations are weak and I still sometimes have trouble with conjugations and articulating my thoughts in a logical order...Sometimes I am hesitant to speak because I feel that I lack the words to communicate effectively, while my classmates seem to say what they like with ease. This has been frustrating but it has also made me want to be better and try harder.

This student feels insecure and frustrated that their speaking abilities in Japanese fall behind that of their native speaker classmates. A concern for heritage learners being surrounded by native speakers with higher proficiency is that they may feel “less Japanese”. Oriyama (2010) states, “Close contact with the Japanese community and Japanese natives via formal Japanese education...seems likely to raise awareness of one’s differences from the Japanese which may affect a view that one has a legitimate claim to Japanese membership” (253). It is all too easy for heritage learners to feel discouraged by “what they see as sub-standard levels of proficiency” compared to native speakers (Cho, Cho, & Tse, 1997: 111), and yet for this heritage student these feelings of insecurity and frustration have apparently served as a motivational force to improve their proficiency.

In addition to attitude, significant differences were also found between the motivational orientations of heritage learners and foreign language learners. As was previously reported, for heritage learners, wanting to connect with their culture was one of the most prevalent reasons for studying Japanese, a finding that aligns with Nunn (2006) and Kataoka (1979). For foreign language learners, interest in the language itself is the most common orientation, a finding consistent with Yang (2003) and Okamura (1990). Moreover, foreign language learners were much more likely than heritage learners to be studying Japanese because they found it more interesting than French, German, or Spanish. Clearly foreign language learners are more attracted by the linguistic appeal of Japanese than heritage learners. Instructors must balance the needs of both groups by engaging foreign language learners’ curiosity about features of the language itself while also addressing heritage learner’s needs to culturally identify with the language.

Limitations and Conclusion

This study has reaffirmed the notion that heritage learners and foreign language learners differ in their reasons to study Japanese and their atti-

tudes toward Japanese culture, people, and language. In particular, heritage learners tended to enjoy studying Japanese less than foreign language learners, which I hypothesized to be because heritage learners are either passively studying Japanese or dealing with negative experiences in the classroom such as unfair expectations of high proficiency and cultural knowledge. Another major finding was that heritage learners were largely studying Japanese to connect with their culture whereas foreign language learners were most interested in linguistic features of the language.

There were a few limitations that stemmed from the survey design. One such limitation is the use of self-rating to ascertain participants' attitudes and motivational orientations. With self-reported data, there is always the possibility that participants will report in self-flattering ways or interpret the rating scale differently from other participants (Hoskin, 2012). Future studies looking for more rigorous or in-depth exploration of attitude and motivational orientation can conduct interviews (Cf. Metoki, 2012, Qin, 2006, Kurata, 2015) or experiments (Cf. Lindemann, 2002).

Another limitation of this study is that because the motivational orientations tested were pre-chosen based on previous studies, other motivational orientations that were present in this group of participants were potentially untapped. For example, in response to the open-ended question "Why are you studying Japanese in college", one student responded that they wanted to improve Japan-China relations. Future studies could look into first allowing participants to freely share what their reasons are for studying Japanese, then formulating subscales of motivational orientations after analyzing their answers for recurring themes (Cf. Winke and Weger-Guntharp, 2006).

While the sample size is too small to generalize the findings to all heritage learners of Japanese, language instructors should find the findings of this study useful for evaluating their approach to teaching students of different backgrounds. Caring for students' learning takes form in knowing what students' goals and attitudes are and structuring the curriculum around fulfilling those goals and nurturing positive attitude. Doing so is paramount if instructors want to ensure that their students stay motivated to study the language (Husseinali, 2004).

The different attitudes and motivational orientations between heritage learners and foreign language learners pose a challenge for instructors of Japanese, who must find a way to balance the needs of two groups of learners. Other authors recommend that colleges and universities set up separate tracks for heritage learners and foreign language learners (Kataoka, 1979,

Husseinali, 2006, Sohn, 1995). Indeed, the previously discussed heritage student who shared a classroom with native speakers of Japanese suggested creating a track for heritage learners separate from native speakers:

I tried to get into a Japanese class one level lower than this one at [college omitted]...The teacher of that class believed that the one I am currently in is the better fit for me. I agree with that, but I wish there was something in between, perhaps a class with the same reading material but with classmates who weren't as good at speaking! (i.e. others who started studying Japanese at the university) They are kind people but I can't help but compare myself to them and feel bad about my own language abilities.

However, given the proportionally low numbers of heritage learners enrolled in college-level Japanese language classes, in addition to the great variability in proficiency among Japanese heritage learners (Shimada, 2012, Oguro & Moloney, 2012), creating a separate heritage track is not necessarily the most realistic option for college Japanese departments. However, there are ways that Japanese language instructors can meet the needs of heritage learners, even in a foreign language classroom.

A major finding of this study was that heritage learners do not enjoy studying Japanese as much as foreign language learners. One heritage learner's responses to the open-ended questions pointed toward unfair expectations of cultural identification with Japan and feelings of insecurity in a classroom with native speakers as explanations for why they were ambivalent about enjoying learning Japanese. Regarding the unfair expectations of cultural identification with Japan, instructors may find it beneficial to broach this topic in class to bring awareness to other students that not all who identify as Japanese are necessarily familiar with Japanese language, people, and culture originating from Japan itself. Some heritage learners, like the aforementioned participant from Hawaii, come from diasporic backgrounds. As will be further discussed, instructors can include heritage learners' unique backgrounds as part of what they cover in class so that heritage learners will feel that their cultural background is valued. As for this participant's insecurity around native speakers, one possible solution is to coordinate activities where students of similar proficiency levels work together in small groups. Doing so may ease the pressure on lower-proficiency students to perform at the level of higher-proficiency students, allowing them to build confidence in their own language abilities.

It must be stressed that the experience of one heritage learner does not represent all heritage learners' experiences. Heritage learners come from various backgrounds and thus have different needs. For example, it is possible that some heritage learners with extensive linguistic and cultural knowledge may not enjoy studying Japanese because they are not learning anything new in class (Cf. Sohn, 1995). The diversity of needs within heritage learners is another challenge language instructors face, as there is no one-size-fits-all solution to satisfy everybody. This is an area where the relatively small number of heritage learners may be an advantage. Instructors show care for their students by centering the student in the learning process, which involves engaging with students in making decisions about their own learning (Weimer, 2003). Instructors may meet heritage learners individually, hear what their unique needs are, and work together with them to reach a mutual solution.

Although heritage learners have varied needs, one common thread tying them together, as was found in the present study, is the desire to connect with their cultural background. Considering that heritage-related motivation can be a strong motivator (Yang, 2003), instructors may see favorable results from fostering heritage learner's interest in their own heritage. For example, in Denham's (n.d.) study of college-level heritage learners of Spanish in the U.S., a heritage learner reported enjoying when his own Mexican culture was reflected in the curriculum (21). In a similar vein, Japanese language instructors can encourage heritage learners to share their own cultural knowledge with the class. Doing so will not only let heritage learners feel that their unique backgrounds are valued, but will also allow foreign language learners to appreciate the diverse experiences of those who identify with the Japanese language and culture (Dones-Herrera, 2015, Carreira, 2004).

The Japanese department at Haverford College has already taken measures to incorporate cultural topics such as diversity in their third and fourth year courses. Integrating discussion of cultural themes as part of the curriculum is an excellent way to create opportunities for heritage learners to contribute their unique perspectives. Instructors may also encourage heritage learners to draw from their own cultural background as topics for open-ended assignments. As a case in point, one time in my second-year Japanese class the professor gave students the opportunity to give a short speech on whatever topic they desired. I chose to talk about the experience of being half-Japanese in Japan, a topic that was not included in the curriculum. Having my story heard and appreciated by both the professor and the for-

eign language learners in the class made me feel valued as someone with a lived experience with the Japanese culture. Even in first-year courses where students' grasp of the language might not be sophisticated enough to discuss cultural issues in depth, instructors may still find ways to make heritage learners feel like their cultural backgrounds are recognized. For example, instructors may want to utilize materials such as books, audio, and video where a heritage learner is represented as a character.

The present study has supported past studies' findings of Japanese heritage learners' strong desire to connect with their culture (Nunn, 2006, Kataoka, 1979) and mixed attitudes toward studying their heritage language (Kondo, 1998, Kurata, 2015). Anecdotal evidence in particular has enlightened us on the specific challenges heritage learners face, such as feeling pressure from unfair expectations of knowledge of the language and culture. I encourage future studies to make use of qualitative evidence from surveys or interviews, through which individual heritage learners are given the voice to explain what their cultural and linguistic backgrounds are and how those backgrounds influence their experiences in the foreign language classroom.

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Gilmore, M. (2017) Japanese language learning book spines stacked vertically [Photograph].

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