

**Vernacular Cosmopolitanism in the Context of Neoliberalism:  
The Case of Plurilingual Asian Students in Japanese Higher  
Education**

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I, Tomoka Sato confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

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## Abstract

This thesis investigates Asian students who left their country to study in Japanese universities. Generally, Asian students who are studying in Western countries tend to be regarded as having an affluent family background and as belonging to an elite group who are equipped with plurilingual skills. Their affluence and elite social backgrounds are due to the fact that some Asian countries have achieved rapid economic growth in the wave of the neoliberal era in Asia which began at the turn of the millennium (Park, Hill, & Saito, 2012). At the same time, however, it is said that these Asian students tend to lack cultural openness, that they are often ignorant of inequality, and that in addition to being from an elite, they are in their character elitist. Therefore, they are referred to as “students of the new global elite” (Vandrick, 2011, p. 160) or as neoliberal “global cosmopolitans” (Bhabha, 1994). However, such a view is not well-founded in non-Western contexts. Hence, the aim of this study is to understand whether, how, and to what extent they have been influenced by neoliberal discourses in the development of their plurilingualism and to investigate their behavior as cosmopolitans.

Drawing on the notions of vernacular cosmopolitanism (Werbner, 2006, 2008) including its family concepts of cosmopolitanism, this study challenges the popularized idea of global (neoliberal) cosmopolitanism. The study documents the life stories of six participants. A narrative-oriented approach to data collection was employed, and thematic analysis was conducted.

The findings show that the notion of neoliberal cosmopolitanism is contested by the intercultural thoughts and actions of vernacular cosmopolitans. At the same time, the fact that their attitude toward English was also partially influenced by neoliberal discourses was made evident by this study. The findings also reveal that the notion of vernacular cosmopolitanism focuses too much on agency, the ability or will to act of individuals, while it neglects structural pressures, power relations, ideologies and discourses that construct subjectivity.

Based on the findings, the thesis concludes with an exploration of the relationship between power, agency and subjectivity which draws upon Allen (2002) and Foucault (1982) in order to point to a critical perspective on the notion of vernacular cosmopolitanism as a way forward. Finally, for the future studies, this thesis proposes a cosmopolitan pedagogy.

## Impact Statement

This study explores plurilingualism and cosmopolitanism in non-Western contexts in resistance to the dominant neoliberal cosmopolitan imagination. In much recent applied linguistics literature, it is a common view that plurilingualism parallels the production of a neoliberal subject who fits the needs of global capitalism and transforms plurilingual skills into a commodity that serves the interests of transnational corporations. Moreover, it has been pointed out that becoming plurilingual is generally linked to notions of cosmopolitanism, and the goals of becoming cosmopolitan are very much a privileged-class aspiration. Thus far, only neoliberal cosmopolitanism has been highlighted in a Western context, and cosmopolitanism and plurilingualism in non-Western contexts remains underexplored. In addition, cosmopolitanism from a critical/postcolonial perspective is missing. This is due largely to a current preoccupation with neoliberalism. However, the findings show that the notion of neoliberal cosmopolitanism is contested by the intercultural thoughts and actions of vernacular cosmopolitans, which contributes to fill in the gap in applied linguistic literature.

At the same time, the fact that their attitude toward English was also partially influenced by neoliberal discourses was made evident by this study. The findings also suggest that the notion of vernacular cosmopolitanism does not take account of subjectivity constructed through social power, structural pressure, discourses and ideologies, while it only focuses on agency, the ability and will to act of individuals, constructed through subjectivity. As the participants' narratives demonstrate, they try to conform to – and wish to be seamlessly woven into – Japanese society, even though they feel a strong sense of being discriminated against. In response, I would like to suggest as a conclusion for the future that the notion of vernacular cosmopolitanism needs to give more attention to global realities of power relations and inequality at the micro level. Based on this finding, I would like to point towards a more critical perspective on the notion of vernacular cosmopolitanism.

Finally, the findings of this research reveal the need for further studies of

concrete cosmopolitan pedagogy in the Japanese context. In addition to being a researcher, I am also – and perhaps more importantly – a teacher advocating internationalization in teacher training. As mentioned in the Introduction, the number of students from foreign countries has been dramatically increasing. Therefore, exploring the issue of how cosmopolitanism can be taught as a subject in a Japanese context can contribute to stimulating both further research and university-level reforms in this global era.

Therefore, based on the findings of this study, in the concluding chapter, I suggest a cosmopolitan pedagogy based not only on the notion of vernacular cosmopolitanism but also from a more critical perspective on such cosmopolitanism. To this end, I advocate Guilherme's (2002) critical pedagogy, in which protecting universal human rights is emphasized and dominant cultural patterns are questioned. In the context of Japanese university settings, the main focus has been on dominant cultural patterns, specifically the cultures of the English-speaking world. When speaking of the cultivation of global human resources, for instance, almost all Japanese universities tend to consider it the development of English ability, not as deepening cultural knowledge and understanding. In effect, most people blindly and unquestioningly accept this status quo and fail to pay close attention to other cultures other than the cultures of the English-speaking world, which leads to discrimination against people of other cultures and apathy toward inequality and human rights.

Given this current situation, we as educators should encourage students to address human rights issues and facilitate the development of a concern for social justice in their communities first and then at national and global levels rather than only emphasizing English language competencies. For this purpose, the notion of vernacular cosmopolitanism should first be taught as the *object* of classes. Then we should create a learning experience in which students can discuss human rights issues at local and global levels while engaging in critical self-reflection. In this way, we may make a contribution to creating vernacular cosmopolitans for the future.

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## Chapter 1 – Introduction

### 1.1 Backdrop of Global Mobility

The term “globalization” emerged as a buzzword in the 1990s to refer to the global integration of markets as a result of the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) revolution. Today, globalization remains a hot topic. Globalization is directly associated with neoliberal policies, which encourage deregulating national economies, liberalizing international trade, and creating a single global market (Steger & Roy, 2010). These political and economic policies have had a major impact on second and foreign language education (Gao & Park 2015; Bernstein, Hellmich, Katznelson, Shin, & Vinall, 2015), including study abroad worldwide. For instance, according to the website, *Open Doors Report* (2017) issued by the Institute of International Education in the United States, continued growth in international students studying in U.S. higher education has had a significant positive economic impact on the country. Analysis by the Association of International Educators (NAFSA)<sup>1</sup> shows that the 1,078,822 international students studying at U.S. colleges and universities contributed \$36.9 billion and supported more than 450,000 jobs during the 2016-2017 academic year. Top countries of origin for these international students were China, India, South Korea, Saudi Arabia, Canada, Vietnam, Taiwan, Japan, Mexico, and Brazil. At the same time, the number of American students studying abroad and receiving academic credit has more than tripled over the past two decades, even though their number was about one third (325,339) of international students studying in the U.S.

Meanwhile, the population of U.S. students studying abroad continues to diversify, including students from minority backgrounds. As the current focus of U.S. higher education is on preparing U.S. students for securing jobs after

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<sup>1</sup> NAFSA: Association of International Educators is the world’s largest nonprofit association dedicated to international education and exchange. It was founded in 1948 as the National Association of Foreign Student Advisers, with the original acronym has been retained to reflect NAFSA’s proud past and broad name recognition.

graduation and thriving in the multicultural global marketplace, study abroad is considered helpful in developing the skills needed to succeed in today's global business arena. Popular destinations for U.S. students studying abroad remain European countries, but destinations have become more diverse, including locations previously less traveled by American students such as Latin America, the Caribbean, and Asian countries. These changes symbolize globalization and diversity. The times in which we live are defined by unprecedented mobility of information, capital, goods, and people on a global scale. In this context, learning goals are largely set in accordance with a neoliberal ideology that sees study abroad as a means of gaining marketable skills (Wolcott, 2016).

## **1.2 Study Abroad in Japanese Context**

Japan has also become involved in this global trend as the wave of neoliberalism eventually reached in the Japanese educational sector. In 2009, the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT) started a project called Global 30. The project was set up to encourage foreign students to study at Japanese universities. A total of 13 universities took part in this project by creating and offering courses conducted entirely in English, with no Japanese proficiency required at the time of admission. As a result, these universities have broken down the language barrier that was one of the obstacles preventing foreign students from studying in Japan. In 2014, Global 30 was replaced with the Top Global University Project, which started as an initiative of the current Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, who stated that its goal was to make Japan's universities rank among the top 100 worldwide. This would require hiring more foreign professors and increasing foreign student attendance at Japanese universities (University World News, 2014). Referring to the Times Higher Education World University Rankings, Prime Minister Abe stated that "the number of foreign students in university will define its success" (East Asia Forum, 2014). The program is slated to continue to 2023. It has its own budget, and the funds have been used to hire full-time foreign faculty and Japanese

faculty who received their degrees from foreign universities. Designated universities must establish a unique curriculum for undergraduate degree programs, provide financial support for international students, and actively recruit students worldwide (*Japan Times*, 2014). MEXT adopted a two-track approach to the project, ranking institutions in one of two categories. Type A (Top Type) designates world-class universities that have the potential to be ranked in the top 100 in world university rankings, while Type B (Global Traction Type) represents innovative universities that lead the internationalization of Japanese society based on continuous improvement in their current efforts. In September 2014, MEXT announced the selection of universities for the Top Global University Project, designating 13 universities as Type A and 24 as Type B out of 109 applying universities. Since being assigned either Type A or B, these institutions have been striving to recruit foreign students. Consequently, the number of foreign students, in particular from Asian countries, has been increasing (Japan Students Service Organization, hereafter JSSO, 2016) (Table 1.1). Under the neoliberal economy, most of them appear to have been influenced by such slogans as “Studying abroad is one of the best ways undergraduate and graduate students gain the international experience necessary to succeed in today’s global workforce,” “International experience is one of the most important components of a 21<sup>st</sup> century education,” or “Studying in another country prepares students to be real contributors to working across borders and address key issues in the world we share.”

**Table 1.1: Total number of foreign students studying at higher education (Japan Student Service Organization)**

		Number	%
1	China	98,483	41.2
2	Vietnam	53,807	22.5
3	Nepal	19,471	8.1
4	South Korea	15,457	6.5
5	Taiwan	8,330	3.5
6	Indonesia	4,630	1.9
7	Sri Lanka	3,976	1.7
8	Myanmar	3,851	1.6
9	Thailand	3,842	1.6
10	Malaysia	2,734	1.1
11	USA	2,648	1.1
12	Mongolia	2,184	0.9
13	Bangladesh	1,979	0.8
16	Philippines	1,332	0.6
15	France	1,299	0.5
16	India	1,015	0.4
17	Germany	874	0.4
18	Russia	684	0.3
19	Uzbekistan	641	0.3
20	Cambodia	629	0.3
21	Italy	593	0.2
22	United Kingdom	560	0.2

### **1.3 Rationale for the Study**

Two universities where I currently teach were selected to join the Top Global University Project. One is of Type A, the other of Type B. As these two universities are among the most established universities in Japan and enjoy the highest name recognition, they already had more foreign students than other universities even before the project started. However, it is clear that there has been an increase in the number of foreign students year by year (e.g., MEXT and JSSO). Although both universities have been receiving students from different

parts of the world, students are predominantly from geographically and culturally close countries such as China, South Korea, and Taiwan, together accounting for over 60% of total student composition (Tables 1.2 and 1.3).

**Table 1.2: Type A university**

		Numbers	%
1	<b>China</b>	<b>711</b>	<b>42.4</b>
2	<b>South Korea</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>15.5</b>
3	<b>Taiwan</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>5.5</b>
4	France	81	4.8

(A University website, 2017)

**Table 1.3: Type B university**

		Numbers	%
1	<b>China</b>	<b>438</b>	<b>51</b>
2	<b>South Korea</b>	<b>203</b>	<b>24</b>
3	USA	28	3.3
4	Taiwan	26	3.0

(B University website, 2017)

The Japanese government anticipated the possibility that students from Asian cultures would continue to come to Japan to study at Japanese universities. Although the Japanese government as well as Japanese universities have been conducting promotional activities to solicit foreign students to study at Japanese universities, there is a lack of studies focusing on these students. What studies there are focusing on these students are based on statistical data (e.g., MEXT and JSSO). In contrast, many studies, from both quantitative and qualitative perspectives, focus on Asian students studying in English-speaking countries (e.g., Benson, Barkhuizen, Bodycott, & Brown, 2012, 2013; Block, 2006; Churchill, 2009; Jackson, 2008; Piller & Takahashi, 2006; Sato, 2014, 2015), on North American students who went to study in countries where their second language is spoken, including Russian, French, and Spanish (e.g., Block 2006; Kinginger, 2004, 2008, 2010; Pellegrino, 2005, 2007), and on European students who joined

the European Community Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students (ERASMUS) exchange program (European Union, 2014). What is notably absent from these studies is any attention being given from a qualitative perspective to Asian students who study at Japanese universities. As a result, sociological and cultural aspects of these students' lives and motivations remained veiled.

Generally, Asian students who are studying in Western countries tend to be regarded as having an affluent family background and as being elite and equipped with plurilingual skills (e.g. Block, 2014; Vandrick, 2011), due to the fact that some Asian countries have achieved rapid economic growth in the wave of the neoliberal era in Asia which begins at the turn of the millennium (Park et al., 2012). However, such a view is not well-founded in non-Western contexts. Are these students truly "global cosmopolitans" that Bhabha (1994, p. xiv) warns us against, who celebrate "imagined communities" where neoliberal forms of governance and free market forces of competition are put emphasis on, and as a result, the persistent inequality and poverty produced by unequal and uneven development are ignored. This image of a globalized world is from a Western perspective as the center (Holliday, 2011). Or are they truly globe-trotting elites and free-floating figures without any loyalties or commitments as Brennan (2001) and Calhoun (2002) criticize? This may be the image drawn from past concepts of cosmopolitanism, such as the Eurocentric imperialist view of Kant, who advocated a cosmopolitan law in which every human has fundamental rights. However, Kant did not embrace the equality of races due to the dominant racial taxonomies concerning the human species which prevailed at the time. He was convinced that Europe should be on top in the cosmopolitan order, so his version of cosmopolitanism was limited to those within the white European nations who were elite enough to attain "global citizenship" status (Sobré-Denton & Bardhan, 2013).

According to Sobré-Denton & Bardhan, cosmopolitanism, being politically-oriented and widely-recognized, is regarded as having its origins in the West and as having developed through Western modernity, which in turn created the

association with elite and privileged individuals. In this context therefore, the term “global cosmopolitan” carries negative connotations. Similarly, as some applied linguistics scholars such as Block (2014), Kubota (2014), and Flores (2013) point out, only the privileged can become plurilingualism, cosmopolitans, and elite, and they end up with developing neoliberal competition and capitalism. Furthermore, Werbner (2006) gives a concrete example of Chinese citizens as “global cosmopolitans” who “lack the kind of cultural openness and sensitivity” (p. 11) that marks members of the jet-setting wealthy Chinese living and studying in the U.S., with multiple passports and homes in several countries. Along similar lines, Nakajima (2017) points out Chinese students’ lack of openness to the Japanese society despite the fact that they live in Japan, analyzing that some Chinese “cosmopolitans” remain connected to only their family and friends in their country, which impedes them from constructing relationships with Japanese students. This is because Social Network Services (SNS) makes it easy for them to communicate with Chinese speakers only.

#### **1.4 Theoretical Framework of the Study**

The past three decades have seen a rapid speeding up of neoliberal globalization. While it is possible to describe globalization from cultural, economic, and political perspectives, Sorrells’ (2013) description reminds us that we can no longer conceptualize culture and identity in static, bounded, and nation-state centric ways:

Globalization is a dynamic movement, confluence, and interconnections of peoples, cultures, markets, and relationships of power that are rooted in history and yet are redefined and rearticulated in our current global age. Through advances in technology and open markets, people from around the globe with different cultural, racial, national, economic, and linguistic backgrounds are coming into contact with each other, consuming each other’s cultural foods, products, and identities, developing relationships and struggling through conflicts, building alliances and activist networks, and laboring with and for each other more frequently, more intensely, and with greater impact today than ever before. (pp. 26-27)

However, at the same time, this poststructuralist view reminds us that we need to problematize how we think about globalization within conditions of postcolonial globality. In fact, the poststructuralist view met with criticism as early as the 1990s, including in cultural studies (e.g., Kubota, 2014), due especially to a notion of hybridity that allows only the privileged elite to enjoy plurality, cultural diversity, individualism, and cosmopolitanism, a development complicit in neoliberal ideologies and that arose and has developed through the West. Instead, we have to pay greater attention to globalization from a postcolonial perspective. In other words, we need to take a close look at globalization from perspectives of cultural deterritorialization and reterritorialization (Popescu, 2010).<sup>2</sup>

There is a growing realization that we live in world where we must find ways to address global problems that cannot be solved by any one country or group of people alone, including global warming, terrorism, world hunger, and so on. For this to occur, we must find ways to communicate within expanding intercultural spaces as cosmopolitans who are able to think, communicate, and expand their cultural horizons in world-oriented ways while simultaneously maintaining local and national attachments.

The definition of cosmopolitanism used in this study therefore follows Kurosawa (2011), who argues that

Cosmopolitanism signifies a capacity for multi-perspectivism, that is to say, to move between and be able to decode a wide array of divergent socio-cultural practices and belief systems, as well as to be familiar with the self-understandings of various groups across the world... Such a cosmopolitan outlook seeks to translate seemingly incommensurable cultural frameworks to

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<sup>2</sup> These two terms are taken from the work of French theorists Deleuze and Guattari, who are often associated with poststructuralism and postmodernism. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) developed an understanding of capitalism, power, and identity locked in a fluid process of territorialization, deterritorialization, and reterritorialization of social structures and processes. Deterritorialization has often been associated with globalization (Popescu, 2010). According to Roy (2010), "deterritorialization is not only associated with the movement of people but also with the circulation of ideas, cultural objects, information, and modes of consumption generally in a non-territorial space." (p. 6)



make them mutually intelligible. (p. 279)

Cosmopolitanism emphasizes self-others mutuality and the need to forge meaningful communicative communication through empathy and with respect for difference.

The understanding of cosmopolitanism in this study derives from the viewpoints of postcolonial theory and anthropological studies, which all focus on these agendas. At the same time, they problematize the hegemony of the Western values, which is complicit in neoliberal globalization and keep unjust power hierarchies in place. This cosmopolitanism sees globalization from below. In this respect, I concur with anthropologist Werbner's (2008) argument that cosmopolitans are not necessarily members of the privileged elite, a view unlike that recently pointed out by applied linguists (e.g., Vandrick, 2001; Block, 2014), but "can equally be working class" (p. 12). Postcolonial elites are not necessarily rootless and corrupt. In response, Werbner sees cosmopolitanism from a non-elite, non-Western perspective, a view she calls "vernacular cosmopolitanism,"<sup>3</sup> and suggests focusing on what Holliday (2011) calls "periphery voices" in resistance to the dominant global cosmopolitan imagination. In addition, she emphasizes that "ethnic rootedness does not negate openness to cultural difference or the fostering of a universalist civic consciousness and a sense of moral responsibility beyond the local" (p. 59).

More specifically, I use this "vernacular cosmopolitanism" as the theoretical framework of this study, embracing postcolonial views of deterritorialization. The notion of vernacular cosmopolitanism is related to Appadurai's (2006) "cosmopolitanism from below," Appiah's (1998, 2006) "rooted cosmopolitanism," Kurosawa's (2004) "cosmopolitanism from below," Delanty's (2006, 2009) and Holliday's (2011) "critical cosmopolitanism," and Sobré-Denton

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<sup>3</sup> The term "vernacular cosmopolitanism" was coined by Bhabha (1994). It focuses on silenced and marginalized voices and sees global progress from these perspectives and as a process that "begins at home" (pp. xv-xvi).

and Bardhan's (2013) "cosmopolitan communication and peoplehood." All of these combine contradictory opposites: cosmopolitanism entails a deep appreciation for difference, the willingness to engage with cultural others and be transformed by such experiences, kindness toward strangers, social justice, and moral responsibility for others. Cosmopolitans may even – and often do – feel sentimentally attached to several homes in different countries but without abandoning their ties to morally and emotionally significant communities, such as families and ethnic groups. Hence, my working definition of "vernacular cosmopolitanism" is used by the new cosmopolitans in resistance to global or neoliberal cosmopolitans to emphasize openness to other cultures, ethnic rootedness, and a sense of social justice. In addition, it is also worth noting that the notion of vernacular cosmopolitanism values "the ability to be willing to be open to others and the world and the ability to engage in cosmopolitan action" (Sobré-Denton & Bardhan (2013, p. 68). In other words, the notion of vernacular cosmopolitanism focuses on the ability and will to act, namely, agency.

### **1.5 Research Inquiries**

To understand Asian students moving to Japan to study in Japanese universities, I will endeavor to shed light on how they became plurilingual and how they actually live cosmopolitan lives. In addition, I will explore whether they share the openness to other cultures, ethnic rootedness, and the sense of social justice emphasized in the notion of vernacular cosmopolitanism. My research questions are:

1. How did Asian students become plurilingual?
2. How do they demonstrate openness to other cultures?
3. How do they show ethnic rootedness?
4. How do they reveal a sense of social justice?

Before answering my research questions, a discussion of academic literature on neoliberalism in language and language education is required because this may also be a key element in understanding how individuals become

plurilingual and cosmopolitan (whether neoliberal or vernacular). To that end, Chapter 2 focuses on the literature on neoliberalism in language and language education. In addition, current trends in second and foreign language education and their critiques will also be introduced based on relevant literature. Then, as the theoretical framework of this study is based on vernacular cosmopolitanism, the differences between cosmopolitanism from elite and Western perspectives and vernacular cosmopolitanism need to be examined. To this end, Chapter 3 discusses existing literature on a variety of cosmopolitanisms from cosmopolitanism from elite and Western perspectives to vernacular cosmopolitanism including different labels but the family concepts of vernacular cosmopolitans mentioned above. Answering all four questions require interviews as data. I return to these questions in detail in Chapters 5 and 6.

### **1.6 Organization of the Thesis**

Following the Introduction, Chapter 2 examines previous publications about neoliberalism in language and language education. In addition, the chapter also reviews published academic literature on current trends in second and foreign language education as well as their critiques. That is, critical perspectives on neoliberalism in second and foreign language education, the myth of English as a global language, and critiques of the impact of neoliberalism on the promotion of plurilingualism and multilingualism are reviewed. In this sense, Chapter 2 links to research question (hereafter RQ) RQ1 (How did Asian students become plurilingual?).

Chapter 3 begins with exploring the history of cosmopolitanism and introduces literature on the vernacular cosmopolitanism advocated by the anthropologist Werbner (2008) as well as other cosmopolitanisms belonging to the same concepts as vernacular cosmopolitanisms, comparing these with cosmopolitanism from elite and Western perspectives. All these cosmopolitanisms are in turn connected to RQ 2 (How do they demonstrate openness to other cultures?), RQ3 (How do they show ethnic rootedness?) and

RQ 4 (How do they reveal a sense of social justice?)

My research methodology is the focus of Chapter 4, in which I will provide the rationale for the overall research design. Since this research required me to undertake the complex task of examining the living experiences of my participants, I decided to work within a qualitative paradigm, specifically by adopting a narrative approach. The research design therefore uses semi-structured interviews, specifically life story interviews. Ethical issues will also be discussed at the end of the chapter.

Chapter 5 identifies and discusses evidence found in my data. Following *the narrative analysis* approach advocated by Polkinghorne (1995), all my participants' stories are presented, followed by a discussion of RQ1: How did they become plurilingual?

Chapter 6 also identifies and discuss evidence in my data in response to RQ2 (How do they demonstrate openness to other cultures?) and RQ3 (How do they show ethnic rootedness?), and RQ4 (How do they reveal a sense of social justice?). Following Polkinghorne's (1995) *analysis of narratives* approach, excerpts from the participants' narratives were selected and categorized according to three themes identified as my working definition of vernacular cosmopolitanism: openness to other cultures, ethnic rootedness, and a sense of social justice, which were pre-determined. Two subthemes that emerged from their narratives under each theme were not pre-determined.

Finally, Chapter 7 sheds light on elements typically found in young Asian students today. In addition, the chapter focuses on an element missing from the notion of vernacular cosmopolitanism. These are important findings, with implications for critical pedagogy and a significant contribution of the thesis. Lastly, the limitations of the study are discussed.

## Chapter 2 – Neoliberalism in Language and Language Education

### 2.1 Introduction

Study abroad provides opportunities for students to be exposed to other cultures and languages as they interact with people from different backgrounds. As a result, cultural interactions and language learning experiences abroad can have a major impact on developing self-awareness and intercultural understanding. Recent research into study abroad by applied linguists has shown that such experiences may affect learner identity, cultural subjectivity, and intercultural sensitivity (Benson et al., 2012, 2013; Jackson, 2008; Kinginger, 2009, 2013; Sato, 2014, 2015). These studies employ a poststructuralist approach in their investigations of globalization and identity, in which the notions of globalization, multiplicity, plurality, heterogeneity, fluidity, and hybridity dominate. This expands and blurs the fixed boundaries between the social and linguistic categories defined within an essentialist binary logic in the previous modernist paradigm (Pennycook, 2010) and leads to the notion of identity being seen not as fixed but as (co-)constructed through the activities in which individuals engage. Although these scholars point out that globalization is not experienced in the same way everywhere and underscore the issues of unequal access and even hegemony, they tend to focus exclusively on culturally-based rather than economically-based theories of globalization (Block, Gray, & Holborow, 2012; Block, 2014). It is as though against the backdrop of the current global economy, they have been strongly influenced by the neoliberal ideology that has been adopted around the world equally, celebrating individual multilingualism and cosmopolitanism for the purpose of socioeconomic mobility, often at the expense of the material economic realities that are responsible for structural inequalities. For example, Block claims that “a focus on globalization processes and identity through a poststructuralist prism has been perfectly manageable in the wealthy post-industrial nation states of the world where neoliberal policies have been

implemented” (p. 11). Likewise, Kubota (2014) raises the alarm over a dominant emphasis on the poststructuralist understanding of identity and language dominant in applied linguistics, arguing that

In bolstering neoliberal discourses, the multi/plural approaches lose a transformative edge that seeks significant changes in the sociopolitical and economic conditions of people who are using, learning, and teaching language. Indeed, while our discipline engages with multi/plural frameworks, we continue to see not only the dominance of English and standard language ideology but also ethnic conflicts, civil wars, racism, xenophobia, and growing economic gaps both nationally and internationally. (p. 2)

Given this perspective, a key context for contemporary language education, including study abroad, can be observed in neoliberal globalization, where multilingual competence is increasingly assessed as a valuable resource and a source of advantage for individuals competing in the local or global job market (Cameron, 2005; Heller, 2010a; Park, 2010). In fact, many language educators have been influenced by a view of study abroad as a gateway to becoming a global cosmopolitan and have promoted study abroad along with the language learning contingent to it. Hence, it is crucial to emphasize the political and economic conditions of study abroad for the purpose of identifying the problems of its representation in the popular imagination as a culturally transformative yet politically neutral experience. Current cosmopolitanism and cosmopolitan identity may be properly accounted for if we address the concept of a neoliberalism coincidentally aligned with individualist poststructuralist perspectives on globalization in which cosmopolitanism and plurilingualism are celebrated (e.g. Kubota, 2014; Holborow, 2015). This chapter therefore opens with a review of how neoliberalism arose and how it has been conceptualized. It presents an overview of how neoliberalism has influenced language and language education and become intertwined with poststructuralist frameworks on language.

## **2.2 Conceptualizing Neoliberalism and its Influence on Language and Language Education**

Before proceeding with the realm of cosmopolitanism, I need to look into the huge power of neoliberalism and its effects on language and language education because all my participants have been educated in the era of neoliberalism and have become plurilinguals, which could be one of elements to be a vernacular cosmopolitan. In addition, in order to answer RQ1 (How did Asian student become plurilingual?), it is important to understand the effects of neoliberal on language and language education.

### **2.2.1 What is Neoliberalism?**

The term “neoliberalism” has become familiar over recent years and is referred to in very different ways. According to Holborow (2012), there are four kinds of neoliberalisms: (1) an economic theory; (2) a new form of capitalism; (3) a discourse; and (4) an ideology. It is therefore necessary to clarify my position toward neoliberalism. In this study, I shall be dealing with neoliberalism primarily as a discourse. Before moving on to the definition I use in this study, I will first consider other definitions of neoliberalism.

Neoliberalism originally emerged from an economic theory in the particular economic conditions of the late 1970s and expanded in the 1980s under the administrations of President Ronald Reagan (1981–1988) in the US and Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher (1979–1990) in Britain, both of whom took the initiative in expanding neoliberalism. In the 1990s, under the administration of President Bill Clinton (1993–2001) in the US and Prime Minister Tony Blair (1997–2007) in Britain, a second wave of neoliberalism emerged, and neoliberalism has flourished ever since. Its emphasis is free markets. To achieve this goal, less state intervention, more deregulation, and widespread privatization of public services were proposed, which were supposed to lead to the achievement of best economic outcomes. However, as Harvey points out, “neoliberalism in the

economy was not accomplished by any progress in the fields of human, civil, or democratic rights” (p. 123). Rather it entailed “creative destruction” (p. 3).

Therefore, neoliberalism as economic theory has been regarded as a “rascal concept” (Brenner, Peck, & Theodore, 2010, p. 184).

Neoliberalism is also defined as representing “a new form of capitalism”. (Deménil & Lévy, cited in Holborow, 2015, p.7) This new capitalism is an economic form emerging from contemporary social transformations. For instance, Doogan (2009) examines a new economic form through the lens of the labor market. Due to trans-nationality, mobility, and demographic change brought about by globalization, flexible and contingent labor markets have been spreading worldwide. Companies are outsourcing, jobs are migrating to other continents, and a life-long job is said to be a thing of the past. Under the new capitalism that results from these profound changes, issues such as job insecurity, precarious employment, and manufactured uncertainty have arisen. As Doogan argues:

Whereas discussion of “old capitalism” might invite consideration of social classes as agencies and the distribution of income as outcomes, new capitalism is a confluence of narratives that captures and represents the world in terms of abstract, self-sustaining social processes. In the absence of strategic actors such as governments, corporations, or classes, social processes appear disembodied, “all motion [and] no matter. (p. 44)

Neoliberalism has been criticized on the grounds that what it says and what it does constantly diverge. As Harvey (2005) points out, what the neoliberal state was in theory was not what it practiced. Although governments were publicly rejecting state intervention in the economy and advocating free markets, their actions proved that capitalism needed the state just as much in the neoliberal era as it had done in Keynesian times. Harman (2007) gives specific details of direct government intervention. The fact that governments helped failing banks by pouring huge amount of money demonstrated that governments were prepared



to protect the interests of the “free market.” Along similar lines, Mirowski (2013) argues that neoliberalism is built on “double truths” (p. 68), publicly proclaiming one thing while doing something very different. In practice, its vision is not necessarily realized in the real world. It is what Bourdieu (cited in Holborow, 2015, p.9) calls “an endless utopia.” That is, in this context, neoliberalism functions as an ideology. According to Holborow (2015), this characterization of neoliberalism

provides a crucial avenue for critique of both the doctrine and the political project, which ... has relevance for its various ideological representations in language. (p. 9)

These inconsistencies and contradictions deriving from neoliberalism as an ideology also apply to accounts of neoliberalism in applied and sociolinguistics.

Neoliberalism as a discourse, the construct I use in this study, have very real and tangible effects on many people and societies across the world. As an extension of the idea that language and communication have special and powerful functions, neoliberalism is often understood as being discourse-generated. Fairclough (2002) criticizes neoliberalism from this point of view, claiming that this new capitalism is discourse-led. Globalization is “enacted and inculcated” through both a global language, English and a global “order of discourse” (p. 164) expressed by corporations, governments, and international agencies.

The discourses of neoliberalism have been explored in language teaching as well as in the English language industry in general, including in the marketization of language teacher education (Gray, 2012; Kubota, 2011). Linking neoliberalism to applied linguistics has led to investigations into the presence of neoliberal keywords in public discourse (Holborow, 2015). In other words, neoliberal ideology has been seen through the metaphors expressed in institutional settings. Harvey (2005) concludes that “the theoretical utopianism

of the neoliberal argument has ... primarily worked as a system of justification and legitimation for whatever needed to be done to achieve this goal" (p. 19).

As described above, neoliberalism has invaded education, too. The shift from pedagogical to market values is one of a number of striking examples (Hill & Kumar, 2009). The privatization of educational services, particularly in higher education, has been promoted globally, and the priority of education is now to provide human capital and to serve as a driver for economic growth (Spring, 2009). I will now take a close look at the effects of neoliberalism on education, followed more specifically by its impact on language and language education.

### **2.2.2 Neoliberalism in Education**

Neoliberalism places human capital at the core of a competitive, market-based world. Therefore, people consume educational products at considerable financial cost because they believe that if they expand their own human capital, they will differentiate themselves from others in the labor market and secure higher salaries. In this scheme of things, higher education plays a crucial role in the realization of competing human capital. Ball (2013) argues that neoliberalism is realized in the relations between competition and exploitation not only within business but also in the institutions of everyday life. Against a backdrop of educational products competing in the market for student consumption as well as the knowledge that what students obtain as human capital is sold in the wider employment market, what Ball (2012) calls the "neo-liberal university" (p. 136), including off-shore campuses and the privatization practices of British universities have become established and now play a part in economic developments. Holborow (2015) considers current education an enabler of human capital development, arguing that

[Education] becomes the crucial driver of the economy, a power-house of economic potentiality from which anything non-functional, not measurable in monetary terms or not immediately economically useful is expelled. (p. 16)

Ball (2012, 2013) calls this phenomenon “performativity,” and highlights the fact that

[I]n regimes of performativity, experience is nothing, productivity is everything. Last year’s efforts are a benchmark for improvement—more publications, more research grants, more students (2012, p. 19).

As a result, the established notion that learning has intrinsic and social value (Ball, 2012; Holborow, 2015) has been banished.

In addition, Ball (2013) claims that neoliberalism gets into “our minds and our souls, into the ways in which we think about what we do” and that it “is ‘in here’ as well as ‘out there’” (p. 20). As a result, educational workers and learners are complicit in neoliberalism. Finding inspiration in Foucault, Ball (2013) focuses on the subjectivity in the discourses of neoliberalism but also espousing Peck’s description (2003) of neoliberalism as being “in our heads as well as in the economy,” thus considering neoliberalism “the reciprocal relations that exist between the state and subjectivity” (p.128). More specifically, neoliberalism has created a “new type of individual” formed through in the logic of competition, a calculating, solipsistic, instrumentally-driven “enterprise man” (p. 132). In addition to this individualization, inequality, insecurity, depoliticization, and financialization are foundations of neoliberalism, all of which are notable within almost all parts of contemporary higher education (Ball, 2013).

In a similar vein, Whitty (2016) discusses education under neoliberalism, even though he avoids using the term “neoliberalism” and instead using “new right ideology”. Whitty argues that education policy is often driven by political ideologies. He points out that education policy in England, in particular the reform of teacher training introduced in the 1990s, is driven largely by neoliberal ideology rather than by research evidence of the effectiveness of new provisions, based on the neoliberal view that “two or three years of subject study in a conventional vein is sufficient academic preparation for would-be teachers and

any training necessary can be done on an apprenticeship basis in schools” (p. 30). In practice, neoliberal ideology hands all initial teacher training over to schools (school-led) and regarding the existing teacher training curriculum (university-led) as dispensable. Whitty expresses deep concern over such significant changes in the structure of the teaching profession and the culture of schooling. Since the heydays of neoliberalism, teacher education has changed in such a manner that government, universities, and schools work closely together, and there is now a wide range of routes into teaching. However, Whitty suspects that the different models of teacher education are still based on ideological commitment rather than on credible research evidence. He therefore examines the efficacy of different approaches to teacher education in terms of the challenge of preparing teachers for 21st-century schools. His result demonstrates that research literacy is needed to enable teachers to improve their practices in a highly disciplined way.

From East Asian perspectives on the effects of neoliberalism on higher education, particularly South Korea, Kim (2008, 2010, 2011) points out that as neoliberal ideology spread, the policies linked to it became influential in the 1990s, which eventually lead to a shift in higher education policies. The government implemented a deregulation policy, refraining from intervention and encouraging market competition. As a result, the number of private higher education institutions increased. However, as the college-age cohort decreased, these universities, especially those located outside the Seoul metropolitan area, ran into financial difficulties, and some went bankrupt. Furthermore, the unemployment rate of university graduates has increased even though quality human resources in manufacturing and other engineering fields have been in demand. This phenomenon demonstrates that the rapid expansion of higher education has led to concerns about the quality of university graduates being required by business leaders. Kim (2008) argues as follows:

Given the oversupply of higher education and the consequent increasing unemployment rate of university graduates in Korea, the value of higher education has come into question. (p. 561)

In sum, the educational arena has been targeted by neoliberalism. Saltman (2009) describes this situation as follows:

Neoliberalism appears in the now commonsense framing of education exclusively through presumed ideals of upward individual economic mobility and the social ideals of global economic competition... The "There is No Alternative"<sup>1</sup>[approach] has infected education thought as the only questions on reform agendas appear to be how to best enforce knowledge and curriculum conducive to national economic interest and the expansion of a corporately managed model of globalization as perceived from the perspective of business. (pp. 55–56)

According to applied linguistic scholars such as Vandrick (2011), Kubota (2014), and Block (2014), this impact of neoliberalism has extended to language and language education in the countries that have celebrated neoliberalism, thereby creating global elites and privileged cosmopolitans.

### **2.2.3 The Impact of Neoliberalism on Language and Language Education**

For advocates of neoliberalism, like physical borders between countries, linguistic and cultural borders have become nothing more than impediments to the mobility of human resources and capital. From this point of view, English is seen as a convenient tool and thus becomes a prerequisite for surviving fierce economic competition in global markets, leading in turn to the notion of the "commodification of language," which indicates that languages are treated as if they were commercial commodities, including the language teaching industry, and in particular the teaching of languages having the potential to bring in

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<sup>1</sup> "There is no alternative," often abbreviated as "TINA," is a phrase that originated with the Victorian philosopher Herbert Spencer and became a favorite slogan of British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher in the 1980s, who used the phrase to respond to critics of her market-oriented policies of deregulation, political centralization, spending cuts, and a rollback of the welfare state.

enormous profits.

### **2.2.3.1 The Commodification of Language: Conceptualizing Commodification**

According to the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English Online (n.d.), the term “commodification” means “a process by which something starts being sold for money, or its importance starts being measured according to its value in money.” However, in the context of the commodification of language, there is more to it than this basic definition.

Heller (2002, 2003, 2010a, 2010b) discusses the role of language in the globalizing new economy in the Canadian context over the past 15 years. Heller herself as well as Duchêne and Heller (2012a) use the term “commodification of language” in a metaphorical sense to refer to a process or change in how language is treated by its users around the world. Specifically, the “commodification of language” refers to a shift from valuing a language for its communicative functions and identity attributes, or what Duchêne and Heller call “pride,” to valuing it as an economic resource, which they term “profit.” They argue that language is increasingly being treated as a commodity around the world, including in job markets, educational systems, and the tourism industry, and plays an increasingly important role in these activities; this allows linguistic resources to be integrated into economic markets, drawing on Bourdieu’s (1991) theory of the linguistic market. Furthermore, Heller (2010b) claims that the commodification of language has occurred in two ways: through language constituting symbolic added value to industrially produced resources in the niche markets of tourism, advertising, language teaching, translation, and call centers, and by converting language into a technical skill amenable to managerial measurement.

Heller’s early work (2002, 2003) led many other scholars (e.g., Block, 2014, 2017; Park & Wee, 2012; Urciuoli, 2008; Boutet, 2012; Flores, 2013; Gray, 2010, 2012; Cameron, 2012; Holborow, 2015; Coupland, 2003; Simpson & O’Regan,

2018) to turn their attention to language as a commodity within neoliberal capitalism and to ask whether language skills truly serve as added value in the labor market. For instance, Park and Wee (2012) use Bourdieu's theory of linguistic markets to demonstrate how different types of resources, positions, and policies are evaluated socially. According to them, standard varieties of English are given greater value compared to vernacular varieties of English. They claim that "language varieties, linguistic utterances, accents, and their embodiments are all like commodities in a market, namely the linguistic market" (p. 27). Another example is Cameron's (2012) work, which focuses on the transnational or global linguistic market in which English is a highly-valued commodity. Cameron concludes that English is in the process of becoming a more powerful and valuable commodity in that market, creating added incentives for individuals, families, companies, and nations to invest resources in it. One consequence is that the current position of American English as a global norm is being replaced by the coexistence of global standardized English and heterogeneous "Englishes," which Cameron calls "glocal" varieties. Furthermore, she argues that the forms of commodified English designed as well as disseminated by capitalist enterprises may become accepted as standard and occur in formal usage, such as MacDonald's catchphrase "I'm lovin' it." Moreover, Gray (2012) points out that English as a commodity cannot be separated from neoliberal policies that "seek to incorporate as many aspects of human experience and activity as possible into the sphere of the economy and subject them to market forces" (p. 138).

Heller (2002, 2003, 2010b) and Duchêne and Heller (2012b) acknowledge that the concept of "commodification" is derived from Marx's view that capitalism was founded on the notion of turning work into a commodity. In fact, Heller, Pujolar, and Duchêne (2014) define "commodification" in the context of the tourism industry in Switzerland, Catalonia, and francophone Canada as follows:

“Commodification” is the expression we use to describe how a specific object or process is rendered available for conventional exchange in the market. Although the concept harks back to Marx’s idea that capitalism was founded on the notion of turning work into a commodity, the word “commodification” itself is recent, dating from the mid 1970s [...]. Thus, although capitalism is centrally about producing and distributing commodities, and has historically and characteristically expanded the scope of what can be turned into one, the concept as a nominalized process does not seem to appear until the process affects areas of life hitherto treated as “public” goods and not as profit-making ventures. (pp. 545-546)

In addition, Duchêne and Heller (2012b) argue that “commodities are...things that have value” before adding that “Marx pinpoints the fact that, in the end, the structure of work is determined by the market and by the interplay between useful and exchangeable products, both of which are linked to time, availability of labor, and the consumption of goods” (p. 371). However, the authors do not engage in an in-depth discussion of the notion of “commodity” from within Marxist theory. In contrast, Block (2014, 2017) draws on Marxist theory to point out this dimension and explores the notion of “use-value” and “exchange-value” (see below) to account for the concept of “commodity.”

According to Marx’s (1859/1904) definition, a commodity is a product of human labor, and all commodities have two values: use-value, and exchange-value. In other words, all commodities have different levels of usefulness in meeting individual needs. This is called “use-value.” For example, clothes are used to protect the human body from the weather or injury, among other purposes, such as identity marking, display, competition, seduction, etc. A car is used to carry people, a pair of scissors is used to cut paper, and so on. In contrast, in markets, all commodities have “exchange-value,” which means that they can be exchanged for money.

As regards language, Block (2014, 2017) attempts to connect Heller’s “commodification of language” with Marx’s definition of “commodity,” noting “a shift from English as having *use* value to English as having *exchange* value.” However, although he accepts Heller’s interpretation that language can be used



to communicate and can be traded in employment markets since it is normally required to get certain jobs, he takes the Marxist interpretation more strictly, stating from a Marxist perspective that language is not a commodity.

First, language is not a product of human labor, which is an indispensable condition for commodity status in Marxist theory. Second, Block argues that Marx's argument whereby "every commodity owes its usefulness to itself" (1859/1904, pp. 34–35) is not applicable to language in terms of the usefulness of items with which to satisfy basic needs, as in the examples given above. Third, Marx's argument that "as an exchange value, a commodity is always regarded as a result" (pp. 34–35), this is not the case for language since it is not produced by expending "labor-time" (see below).

In Marxist theory, the exchange-value of things is determined by the quantity of labor-time needed to produce them. That is, commodities are exchanged for money in a market, and they include all labor contributed to the production process. What Block (2017) aims to clarify here is that the recent trend affecting the use of the term "commodity" does not conform to its Marxist sense but is more like a buzzword or slogan to fit the era of neoliberalism. He points out that many scholars use the term "commodity" with only a general understanding of the fact that a commodity is something that can be bought and sold, with the result that "commodification" is now simply the process of something not previously salable becoming salable. Block takes issue with this untheorized use of the term, acknowledging that terms such as materialization, objectification, or "thingification," a term coined by Shankar and Cavanaugh (2012), are more appropriate expressions than "commodification."

Shankar and Cavanaugh argue that "[w]hereas all commodified language is objectified, the reverse may not be true...[and] objectified language need not circulate beyond its original context, but commodified language is always ready to move beyond local communities and societies into national and global contexts" (p. 362). In this view, the plurilingual competence of the participants in

the present study could be treated as “commodified language.”

Block (2017) concurs, embracing Shankar and Cavanaugh’s view that a language can be objectified, giving the example of workers in a call center who are provided with scripts to follow when speaking on the phone, with the language to be used consisting of only the language in the scripts (that is, language that “need not circulate beyond its original context”). However, Block argues that Shankar and Cavanaugh’s interpretation of “commodified language” as being “always ready to move beyond local communities and societies into national and global contexts” is insufficient to justify saying that language has been commodified in neoliberal capitalism. Hence, Block partially supports Shankar and Cavanaugh’s notion of the objectification rather than the commodification of language and suggests that scholars who have adopted the term “commodification” have never attempted to sell or impose a language, for example by means of the use of an advertising campaign. Rather, they use “commodification” metaphorically as “a casual and accidental slogan” (Block, 2017, p. 15). His conclusion is that language is objectified, not commodified.

Holborow (2015) also applies a Marxist notion to her understanding of the “commodification of language.” She takes a negative view of the notion that language is in part a product of labor. She explains that,

When people sell their labor on the job market, all of their skills, including their linguistic skills, are made available for capitalist production. Social relations in capitalism are such that the products of human labor are owned not by those who possess the skills but by those who are in position to exploit them. In this respect, language [is] commodified.... Put another way, the language skills of an individual employee appear compellingly as a commodity to those who will make profits out of their exploitation — employers. (p. 20)

That is, she claims that language as part of human capabilities in the workplace has always been part of labor power relations within the productive process as well as the service sector. For instance, translation and language teaching can be the product of labor based on linguistic competence. Therefore,

Holborow argues that when great profits are secured via language skills, which she terms “surplus value” or “extra value,” language is “commodified,” making clear the relationships between neoliberal thinking and the concept of commodity by stating that

Neoliberalism presents all human skills as simple commodities with a price tag. Skills used at work are separated from social relations and are presented simply as individuals putting them to use for the rewards – or wage “premiums” – that they can bring. (p. 20)

In the same manner, Urciuoli (2008) argues that in the neoliberal job market, competence in a language comes to be seen as an important “soft skill” that enhances the value of one’s human capital. Park (2010) also echoes claims that learning a language considered to be more “valuable” becomes a rational, productive, even a responsible act of investment. That is, beliefs that acquisition of a global language such as English will help one access better opportunities in education, and the job market can lead people to eagerly pursue the language, whether or not they like the language (Heller & Duchêne, 2012). These perspectives work well for “language as a commodity” in the capitalist economy, and the “commodification of language” fits naturally into neoliberal thinking. This is what allows the “commodification of language” to have a major impact on language education.

#### **2.2.3.2. Critical Perspectives on Neoliberalism in Second and Foreign Language Education**

Given that language is a commodity or at least can be commodified, employers are not alone in making use of it, for example in the service sector. Rather, those who possess it can take advantage of their linguistic possession as human capital. From an employer’s viewpoint, the language education industry has become a highly profitable market and is being increasingly commercialized to meet the needs of the free market. Language education is viewed and treated from a

neoliberal perspective. Furthermore, Bernstein et al., (2015) argue that second and foreign language education has not only been influenced by neoliberalism but also has contributed to reproducing many of its discourses. The impact of neoliberalism on second and foreign education is observable at many levels (pp. 6-9):

1. Language as a technicized skill;
2. Culture as a commodity;
3. Language teachers as expendable and replaceable knowledge workers;
4. Language learners as entrepreneurs and customers;
5. Creation of a global language teaching industry;
6. Emergence of new linguistic markets, including Global English.

Once language as a technicized skill has become a commodity, under capitalism, the more you have of that skill, the more you are considered “value-added” in terms of human capital, which contributes to social mobility and economic development. As a result, Kubota (2011) argues, people learn a language not because they like its culture or are interested in the language itself but because those language skills are essential to competing in the global economy. She calls this phenomenon “language instrumentalism.” This in turn influences decisions regarding what languages to teach and learn as well as when, where, and to whom languages should be taught and how to teach them. Some of these decisions may depend on the market. Some languages are highly valued while others are evaluated as less useful or even unprofitable. In this context, English seems well positioned for the “commodity” label as it grows as a global resource with exchange-value and is widely promoted as such (Rubdy & Tan, 2008; Heller, 2010b).

When language is perceived as commodities, even language teachers holding high academic credentials are not only less valued or professionally recognized but are also regarded as replaceable. The most notable example is the lack of job security. University instructors are increasingly recruited as contract workers paid per course. As some applied linguistics scholars such as Ellis (2013),

Machado, (2015), and Schmidt (2015) point out, language classes in higher education worldwide now rely on an increasing number of part-time teachers, and Japan is no exception. Meanwhile, language learners are being treated as entrepreneurs and consumers. For them, language learning is an act of investment in itself. They learn “routinized language” (Bernstein et al., 2015, p. 7) as well as culture used in specific settings such as business or traveling interactions so that learners can eventually contribute to the global economy as well as their own enjoyment thanks to their language skills.

While language teachers are treated as replaceable knowledge workers, the language teaching industry has become highly profitable and increasingly commercialized in response to the needs of the free market. Bernstein et al. (2015) offer the example of Rosetta Stone, showing that it offers 30 language teaching packages online or through DVDs. Meanwhile, state-supported institutes based in China, Germany, France, Britain, and the US have been promoting their language and culture globally since, for example, the Alliance Française was founded in 1883 and the British Council in 1934. According to Regan and Jones (2013), the global English Language Teaching (ELT) industry was estimated to be worth over \$63 billion in 2012 alone. As Pennycook (1998) pointed out two decades ago, the ELT industry makes huge profits through the production of teaching materials and tests, both of which have been associated with colonialism in both theory and practice. Moreover, Gray (2012) points out the dramatic rise in representations of celebrities in UK-produced ELT textbooks as the ELT industry expands globally and neoliberalism spreads across the world. In this manner, neoliberalism thoroughly permeates not only the business sector but also the education sector, including the perceptions of teachers and students. In this context, Macrine (2016, p. 312) argues that “formal and informal education on a global scale has become the major force in producing subjectivities, desires, and modes of identification necessary for the legitimation and functioning of a neoliberal society.” This is the case with my participants, who have been learning

languages in either foreign countries or their home countries and gaining “commodified language,” interpreted by Shankar and Cavanaugh (2012).

#### **2.2.4 Controversies over English as a Global Language**

Seen from the perspective that language is both a commodity and profitable, a linguistic hierarchy arises as “particular languages become invested with greater power, value, and influence. This is exemplified by the current status of English as the global lingua franca” (Bernstein et al., 2015, p. 8). As early as the early 1990s, Ammon (1989/1992) demonstrated the dominance of English on the basis of data. According to Ammon, (1) English has the greatest number of speakers, possibly as many as 1.5 billion; (2) English is designated as the official language of as many as 62 nations; (3) English is the dominant language of scientific communication, with 70–80 percent of academic publications using it; (4) English is the de facto official and working language of most international organizations; and (5) English is the most taught foreign language across the world (pp. 78–81). From this point of view, given that English is unrivaled as a dominant language and functions as a common medium for international communication, or a “lingua franca,” it can be seen as an empowering asset for accessing knowledge and opportunities. Hence, many learners see English as a key to a better life and believe that learning English will enable them to obtain social mobility and greater opportunities. Some scholars (Brutt-Griffler, 2005; Crystal, 2003; van Parijs, 2000) take the positive view that English can play a positive role in promoting social mobility and economic justice globally and that the spread of English has been a neutral, even positive process simply as a consequence of being “in the right place at the right time” (Crystal, 2003, p. 10). Similarly, van Parijs (2011) sees language as a “medium of communication, not as a core component of a culture” (p. 30), and emphasizes the need for English as a lingua franca in Europe and across the world in order to make the discussion of transnational politics more efficient. Referring specifically to English, he explains his

view in detail as follows:

Its adoption and spreading creates and expands a trans-national *demos* by facilitating direct communication, live or online, without the cumbersome and expensive mediation of interpretation and translation. It enables not only the rich and the powerful but also the poor and the powerless to communicate, debate, network, cooperate, lobby, [and] demonstrate effectively across borders. This common *demos*, in turn, is a precondition for the effective pursuit of justice, and this...provides the second fundamental reason why people committed to egalitarian global justice should not only welcome the spread of English as a lingua franca but see it as their duty to contribute to this spread in Europe and throughout the world. (p. 31)

On this basis, van Parijs suggests that massive investments should be made in English language teaching, which may lead to an increase in productivity and gross domestic product (GDP). His celebratory view of English as a lingua franca (ELF) recalls Holborow's (2012, p. 26) claim that "language ideologies which promote ELF are seen as a prop for neoliberalism." Moreover, although Ricento (2015) shows some sympathy for van Parijs's argument that a lingua franca is necessary in order to strengthen global networks and institutions that could help advance global economic justice and environmental sustainability, which may ultimately lead to a reduction in conflicts, what is notably absent from van Parijs's case is any attention given to contradictions between the values and goals of current economic neoliberalism, which exacerbates economic disparity, and the values and goals of liberalism in its original form, which idealizes the concepts of social and economic justice. Ricento argues for the impossibility of overcoming such contradictions thanks to a lingua franca. Ricento also critiques van Parijs's disregard for "symbolic and affiliational aspects" (p. 32) of language on the basis of his view of languages as vehicles for communication, which are characterized exclusively by instrumental purposes. Ultimately, Ricento denies the potential of English as a global lingua franca because he recognizes that since relationships between speakers of varieties of English as a second or third language and British or American English are not equal, the values of standard

varieties are dominant in politics, economics, and culture. Along similar lines, O'Regan (2014) analyzes English as a lingua franca (ELF), not from the perspective of neoliberalism or capitalism but from conceptual and theoretical perspectives. He criticizes the ideological suppositions of ELF, arguing that they are artificially concretized, a process he calls "hypostatization." To make this explicit, he draws on Marxist commodity fetishism as a parallel, arguing that "the type of fetishism that attaches to the commodity in the capitalist mode of production finds its metaphorical equivalent in ELF" (p. 539). That is, he claims that the hypostatization of ELF is a type of mystification in itself, because it conceals inequality behind a myth of linguistic democratization. In addition, he notes that the term "ELF" is presented as if it were equivalent to a variety with its own standards and norms, and it is in this manner that it is hypostatized, arguing as follows:

...in the fetishism of ELF, it is not only the real linguacultural relations of both learners and users which are obscured; a further dimension also obscured is the historico-social one of how speakers in the world are possessed of various forms of capital—social, cultural, linguistic, and economic—which depending on their distribution, afford differential access to English and to its prestigious forms. The distinctions of class, race, gender, and political economy are crucial here, but by their general neglect, the ELF movement succeeds only in constituting ELF as a mystical and universal *thing-in-itself*, devoid of class character and free of the political economy of capital as well as gender and race. (pp. 539–540)

In contrast, an example of the positive role English can play in promoting social mobility is proposed by Brutt-Griffler (2005), who examines two poor South African women and concludes that without high proficiency in English, there will be no possibility for them to have access to greater wealth in the world in which they belong. From this perspective, Brutt-Griffler concludes that English-language medium education is necessary for oppressed and impoverished people who aspire to economic development in order that they might escape poverty with the aid of English. In addition, Brutt-Griffler (2006) emphasizes the significance of the role of English from the viewpoint of



relationships between ethnicity and language, and criticizes environmentalist political discourse, and in particular the notion that the globalization of English causes the endangerment of ethnic language varieties. She points out that the complexities of linguistic processes can easily be overlooked by those who have attempted to fit the case of language endangerment into the established categories of environmentalist political discourse. Instead, she supports the arguments of scholars such as Rickford (2006) and Patrick (2006) that the English of African Americans such as the Gullah people, the descendants of enslaved Africans from various peoples who lived in coastal regions of the US states of Georgia and South Carolina, or that of indigenous Nunavut in Canada is rooted in history and plays a role in forming their ethnic identities, which ultimately calls for the protection of their cultures and rights. Brutt-Griffler thus criticizes the position taken by Phillipson (1992, 1999, 2001, 2003), who characterizes the role of English in the world today as linguistic imperialism, a notion to which I will refer below.

In response, Ricento (2015) criticizes Brutt-Griffler's view of English as a vehicle for social and economic mobility, citing Pennycook's (2004) critique of Brutt-Griffler, which points out that her case study cannot generalize the relationship between access to English and economic mobility in poor countries because it is too limited and because the evidence that English helps reduce poverty in poor countries is insufficient.

Similarly, Phillipson (1992, 1999, 2001, 2003, 2016) has been a vocal critic of the worldwide expansion of English as what he terms "language imperialism" based on uncritical acceptance of English. Phillipson describes how English is now marketed as a language everyone needs and that all should learn under neoliberal economic policies, arguing as follows:

The international expansion of English has been predicted and promoted regularly by leaders on both sides of the Atlantic over the past 200 years.... The goal of spreading English as a world language on a basis of UK-US collaboration

led to US funding of activities on both sides of the Atlantic in the 1930s and again in the 1950s with the creation of the English Language Teaching profession and departments of applied linguistics. These are now a billion-pound/dollar industry in “English-speaking countries.” (2016, p. 6)

Phillipson criticizes worldwide Americanization based on US norms and lifestyles, or what he terms “*cultura nullius*,” meaning “worldwide penetration of American imperialism” (2014, p. 1), as well as British promotion of English worldwide as if English is a universal basic skill, or what he calls “*lingua nullius*.” Meaning that “English is now increasingly marketed as a necessity, internalized as though it serves all equally well.” (2014, p. 1) He considers this phenomenon reminiscent of colonial discourse and argues that the currently fashionable English as a Lingua Franca (EFL) movement is a clear instance of promoting English as a *lingua nullius*. In this respect, he espouses O’Regan’s (2014) above-mentioned demonstration. Furthermore, he claims that privileging English widens the gap between rich and poor. From this perspective, he calls for critiques of global English.

Pennycook (1994, 1998, 2007, 2012) also critically observes the role of English in the world as follows:

English holds out promise of social and economic development to all those who learn it (rather than a language tied to very particular class positions and possibilities of development) and that English is a language of equal opportunity (rather than a language which creates barriers as much as it presents possibilities). ... [Contrary to these myths about English, I would point out] the collusionary, delusionary, and exclusionary effects of English. This thing called “English” colludes with many of the pernicious processes of globalization, deludes many learners through the false promises it holds out for social and material gain and excludes many people by operating as an exclusionary class dialect, favoring particular people, countries, cultures and forms of knowledge. (2007, pp. 101)

What Pennycook argues here is that for learners, English is associated with “social and economic development” and “equal opportunity” but in reality, it functions as a guide to neoliberalism and deludes learners by making false

promises, which eventually leads to inequality, including the few and excluding the vast majority. For instance, in Chinese cities such as Shanghai, Beijing, and Guangzhou, “bilingual education becomes a form of elite education which is associated with family income, hence, privileged to higher social classes (Tong & Shi, 2012, p. 168). In this manner, even outside of English-speaking countries, there is a great deal of stratification based on competence in English in society (Blommaert, 2010).

Under these circumstances, in contrast to the diffusion of English, the notion of “language ecology” has been proposed by Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas (1996, 2017), Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson (2008) and Tsuda (1986, 1990, 1992, 1993a, 1993b, 1994, 1996, 2014). This notion represents linguistic diversity worldwide, promoting multilingualism, pluralism, foreign language learning, and granting linguistic human rights and equality to speakers of all languages. That is, in order to maintain linguistic diversity worldwide, its promoters call for more active language policy formation and especially the concerted promotion of minority languages. Their key words are “diversity” and “egalitarian language policies.” However, Ricento (2015) criticizes the obscure definition of the construct of “language ecology,” questioning how “equality for speakers of all languages” can be understood. For Ricento, “the conceptual apparatus for linguistic imperialism depends on an analysis of the negative effects of Western economic and political imperialism on mostly low-income countries, with putative bad effects on languages under pressure from (neo-)colonial languages” (p. 29). Moreover, he adds that the concept offers no concrete solutions for halting the expansion of English or the protection of other languages or for achieving “equality for speakers of all languages.”

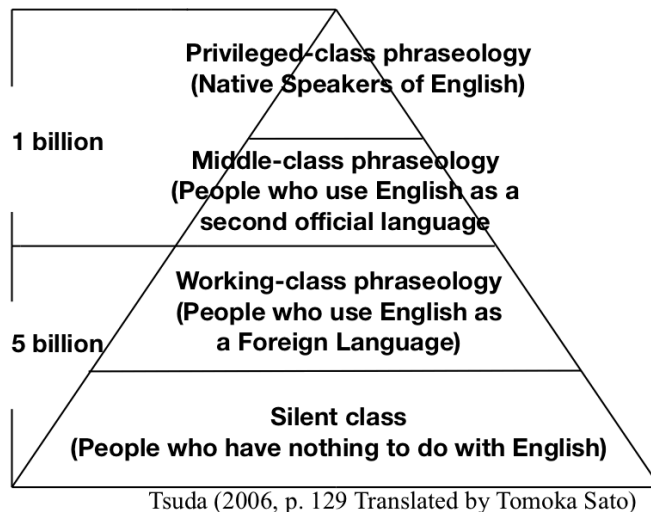
Likewise, although Holborow (2012) concedes that linguistic imperialism as seen by Phillipson (2008) is understandable in terms of a theory of economic neoliberalism and neo-imperialism superimposed onto language, the concept of “language ecology” is difficult to accept. Holborow does not believe that the

promotion of minority languages is as emancipatory as its promoters claim because she wonders how minority languages could become viable alternatives as international languages, giving the examples of Latvian and Esperanto. In addition, she claims that for many African countries where a variety of English is spoken internally, English has little or no meaning in terms of linguistic or material capital in the global world order, while in Ireland, before rapid economic growth (leading to the country being labeled the “Celtic Tiger” after the rapidly developing “Asian Tigers”), English did not contribute to economic growth but only provided “a quicker route to emigration” (p. 28). In fact, according to Holborow (2012), following the 2008 financial crisis, English has been seen in the same way for Irish people. Hence, she concludes that English for emigration has nothing to do with linguistic imperialism.

Like Phillipson, Tsuda (2014) has also attempted to critically examine the hegemony of English as a problematic situation in international and intercultural communication since the late 1980s. He attributes the hegemony of English to neocolonialism and globalism and expresses concerns about the possibility that the dominance of English may function to perpetuate neocolonialist structures, which would lead to three serious consequences: (1) linguistic and communicative inequality to the great disadvantage of speakers of languages other than English; (2) linguistic discrimination and social inequality; and (3) colonization of consciousness (p. 445). Furthermore, Tsuda raises the alarm over the current impact of globalization on world cultures, which has been created by the dominance of English, for three reasons: (1) Anglo-Americanization; (2) transnationalization; and (3) commercialization of contemporary life (p. 445). Hence, he advocates “the ecology of language paradigm” as opposed to the hegemony of English. To solve these problems, he proposes three approaches: (1) the right to language, which coincides with Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson’s (1995) notion of “linguistic human rights” and “mother tongues” and refers to individuals rights and freedom to use a language of choice in all circumstances;

(2) equality in communication, especially in international gatherings through “linguistic localism” (or the use of local languages), or what Tsuda calls “neutrolingual communication” (the use of third languages) or the effective use of translators and interpreters to promote equal use of languages. He believes that equality in communication can establish “symmetry” (p. 453) among people. That is, they can exchange ideas without major constraints, which contributes to the creation of an “ideal speech situation” (p. 454); and (3) multilingualism and multiculturalism, also called “linguistic and cultural pluralism.” Tsuda strongly opposes monolingualism and monoculturalism, or what he calls “monolithic singularism,” which aims at promoting one language and one culture in a society, emphasizing this point as follows:

**Figure 1**



...diversity is the most important index of a truly democratic society. Pluralism is a philosophy of tolerance and conviviality that pursues a harmonious coexistence of different cultures, languages, and peoples. Pluralism also pays most attention to minorities, the dominated, and the disadvantaged, as it believes that these people should be given equal opportunities. (p. 454)

Tsuda (2006) also analyzes the possibility that the worldwide spread of “Englishization” may create a hierarchical structure. As the chart created by Tsuda demonstrates (Figure 1), the upper sections of the pyramid consist of the cohort of English-speaking countries such as the US, the UK, and Australia. Tsuda calls this top cohort “privileged-class phraseology.” People who belong to this cohort can take the initiative in terms of communication in any circumstances, whether it be foreign diplomacy or business or academic

meetings. In his hierarchical structure, the second cohort is called “middle-class phraseology.” For this cohort, English is used as a second or official language. This cohort includes people in former British colonies such as India, Malaysia, or Kenya and those under US administration in colonies such as the Philippines or in Puerto Rico. For most of these people, although English is not their first language, most forms of education, especially post-secondary education, are conducted in English, and English is indispensable in their daily lives. In higher education and the professions in these countries, English is the common language. Hence, these speakers’ English is close to that of native speakers of English. According to Tsuda, this “middle-class phraseology” is at the core of the hierarchical structure created by English dominance, and these speakers come close to being native speakers of English, especially as they strive to rise to the “privileged-class phraseology.” The total number of members of the “privileged-class phraseology” and “middle-class phraseology” groups accounts for approximately 1 billion. This group dominates the other 5 billion in terms of language. Third in the stratification is “working-class phraseology,” which represents people who study English as a foreign language and live in countries such as Japan, Germany, France, China, South Korea, Thailand, and so on. These people generally learn English in school. According to Tsuda, the reason for naming this cohort “working-class phraseology” is that they need to learn English throughout life. That is, they are forced to do the hard work of “English learning.” However, due to their limited English proficiency, they are doomed to be oppressed by members of the “privileged-class phraseology” and “middle-class phraseology” cohorts. They thus reconcile themselves to an absolute disadvantage in foreign diplomacy, business, or academic meetings in terms of communication, and yet they need to publicize news, academic papers, and novels in English and are forced to enrich not their own culture but English culture. This is what he terms “exploitation.” The top three layers closely match Kachru’s (1982, 1985) concept of “Three Circles” of World Englishes. Finally, the

bottom layer of this hierarchy is what Tsuda calls the “silent class.” People in this layer have little or nothing to do with English in that they have little or no chance to learn or use it. In terms of relevant countries, anti-American states such as Iran, Iraq, or North Korea match this category. Members of these groups deliberately avoid using English and exclude information coming from English speaking countries. Because the voices of these groups are shuttered down, we seldom hear their voices.

Tsuda argues that in societies where Englishization has been encouraged, undeniable stratification has been generated only on the basis of English proficiency. He criticizes the fact that contributions in local languages to politics, economics, academia, and world culture are ignored as a result of the hierarchy being determined exclusively by English proficiency, an indication of an unequal global order.

Against the backdrop of the hegemony of English (or English monolingualism), increased focus in applied linguistics and European language education policies has been placed on multilingualism and multiculturalism as well as plurilingualism and pluriculturalism.

## **2.2.5 Poststructuralist Framework for Plurilingualism and Multilingualism**

### **2.2.5.1 What is the Difference between “Multilingualism” and “Plurilingualism”?**

Before I proceed with my discussion of the neoliberal influence on language use, I now take a closer look at the terms “multilingualism” and “plurilingualism.” These two concepts are frequently confused and used interchangeably. However, the *Guide for the Development of Language Education Policies in Europe* (2003) created by the Council of Europe differentiates between multilingualism and plurilingualism. According to this document, multilingualism is meant to refer to a society in which different languages coexist side by side, focusing on whether a nation is monolingual or multilingual. In contrast, plurilingualism is meant to

refer to a speaker's ability "to use languages for the purposes of communication and to take part in intercultural action, where a person, viewed as a social agent, has proficiency, of varying degrees, [as well as] experience of several cultures" (p. 168). In other words, the term "multilingualism" is used when referring to a nation's social structures, whereas the term "plurilingualism" is used when referring to individual language competence. In addition to this interpretation, the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR: Learning, Teaching Assessment, 2018) by the Council of Europe states that plurilingualism can also be used to mediate conflict between those with no common language. In this context, plurilingualism does not necessarily mean individual language competence for the purpose of experiencing several cultures but rather for political purposes. Furthermore, from a slightly different perspective, Lüdi & Py (2009) suggest that being able to understand different dialects or regional versions of one language opens the door to plurilingualism. However, in this study, I treat plurilingualism as individual language competence for the purpose of being involved in intercultural action and experiences of several cultures.

Furthermore, according to Canagarajah and Liyanage (2012), in plurilingual communication, even if speakers do not have advanced proficiency in all the languages in their possession, they mix words and grammatical structures from one language into the syntax of other languages to form an integrated composite. Since I include an understanding to individual language competence for the purpose of experiencing several cultures in my definition of "plurilingualism," this interpretation of plurilingualism could also be connected to the notion of vernacular cosmopolitanism.

That said, in plurilingualism, speakers can negotiate their different languages for intelligibility and effective communication. This notion is similar to *Lingua Franca English* (LFE), as advocated by Canagarajah (2007), and different from *English as a Lingua Franca* (ELF), which examines grammar and phonological



characters among non-native speakers of English and tries to establish new norms of English for communication in order to challenge the conventional norms of Anglosphere English, starting with early research by Jenkins (2000, 2009) and Seidlhofer (2004).

For its part, LFE puts the emphasis on pragmatic strategies when English is used as a common language in various contexts. As Canagarajah (2007) argues,

LFE's form is hybrid in nature. The language features words, grammatical patterns, and discourse conventions from diverse languages and English varieties that speakers bring to the interaction. Participants borrow from each other freely and adopt the other's language in their interaction with that participant. (p. 926)

In response, I will use the term "plurilingual" to describe my participants in accordance with both the notion of plurilingualism as defined by the Council of Europe and LFE as defined by Canagarajah as my participants fit both of these definitions.

The terms "plurilingual" are attributed to postcolonial theory, which has been influenced by poststructuralism and has supported both hybridity and fluidity while problematizing an essentialist understanding of language and identity. However, this conception, promoted mainly by the European Union, has been criticized for the overlap with neoliberalism in that plurilingualism is promoted for economic and political purposes and for speakers of majority languages, not for immigrants, which creates "elite cosmopolitanism" (Kubota, 2014, p. 14). In this study, however, I take the position that plurilingualism does not necessarily create solely elite cosmopolitanism in the Asian context. It can be equally be working class. As Canagarajah (2013) points out, for instance, migrants living in the same districts tend to have similar jobs and help each other by using several languages. Therefore, being plurilingual is advantageous in terms of the types of businesses operated by migrants because not only colleagues but also customers use several languages. Moreover, plurilingualism creates vernacular

cosmopolitanism that entails a deep appreciation for difference, the willingness to engage with cultural others and be transformed by such experiences and kindness toward strangers. To this end, plurilingualism has prevailed.

In the next section, I look more closely into the much-criticized relationship between neoliberalism and plurilingualism,

#### **2.2.5.2 Critiques of the Impacts of Neoliberalism on Promotion of Plurilingualism**

Flores (2013) criticizes the uncritical acceptance of plurilingualism in TESOL. He argues that the shift from monolingualism in a standardized national language as the desired outcome for all citizens to plurilingualism as a policy ideal among language education scholars coincides with neoliberal ideology, which focuses on producing subjects who fit the political and economic contexts and is especially promoted by transnational organizations such as the Council of Europe and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). He points out that the notion of plurilingualism has been promoted to support learning to communicate across borders via various linguistic repertoires and respect for linguistic diversity, language rights, freedom of expression, and democratic citizenship. This notion overlaps with the neoliberal aim of promoting the development of individual competencies in the service of economic growth (Kubota, 2014). These individual competencies include language repertoires required in transnational companies as well as cross-cultural adaptability, which ultimately contribute to economic growth in individuals as well as in nations. As mentioned earlier, Phillipson (1992, 2008, 2009) and Tsuda (2006, 2014) advocate “the ecology of language paradigm,” emphasizing plurilingualism for challenging the hegemony of English that corresponds to neoliberalism, with plurilingualism ironically becoming complicit in neoliberalism.

For her part, Motha (2014) cautions that it is important to recognize a duality

between neoliberal pluralism and a neoliberal desire for English for economic purposes, which resonates with a legacy of a colonial discourse of the superiority of whiteness, modernity, and liberation. From this perspective, Flores (2013) also claims that in global capitalism and neoliberalism, linguistically hybrid plurilingual English-speaking subjects are transnational elites who are considered superior to monolingual users of a single national language. In the same manner, Kubota (2014) argues that economically privileged and ethnically dominant students who can have access to plurilingualism become more privileged than monolingual students. She suggests that inequality arising from being plurilingual and multicultural versus monolingual and monocultural should be paid attention to when celebrating linguistic plurality and hybridity. Ultimately, she sheds light on economic and educational gaps that lead to racism and other injustices by criticizing multi and plural trends that align with neoliberalism.

Likewise, in her recent book entitled *Linguistic Diversity and Social Justice*, Piller (2016) focuses on linguistic injustice driven by linguistic diversity in terms of economic inequality, cultural domination, and political participation. She employs a case study approach and investigates the relationships between linguistic diversity and inequality under different situations such as employment, education, and community participation. According to Piller, the position of privileged students coincides with neoliberalism and neoliberal multiculturalism in its support of diversity, plurality, flexibility, and individualism while neglecting the positive effects of rootedness in forming local solidarity among minoritized groups. These privileged students have been criticized as rootless and elitist cosmopolitans, with no linguistic identity. However, she emphasizes the development of individual linguistic competencies for the service of economic growth. In this way, the term “cosmopolitanism” has been used with a negative connotation by critics of multilingualism and plurilingualism and regarded in applied linguistics as a fallout of neoliberalism.

A key issue is why applied linguistics scholars retain the image that being plurilingual is linked to notions of neoliberal cosmopolitanism and in turn link the goal of becoming cosmopolitan to a privileged-class aspiration as if all plurilingual students matched that representation without this interpretation being further interrogated. However, given these scholars' preoccupation with neoliberalism, I do not mean to deny their conceptualization of plurilingualism. In fact, this interpretation makes sense in today's globalized world. Instead, my aim is to examine whether there is a different form of plurilingualism, one that does not match the purpose of the Council of Europe and the OECD and leads to vernacular cosmopolitanism.

### **2.3 Conclusion: Summary of the Chapter**

This chapter begins with an understanding of neoliberalism as a discourse and its impact on education and more specifically language and language education, focusing on the commodification of language and the hegemony of English. Then the assertion by some scholars that the dominance of English should be replaced by plurilingualism is presented, followed by the reviews of criticisms of the conceptual features of plurilingualism as they become complicit in the production of a new elite class of English-speaking plurilingual subjects solely at the service of neoliberal expansion. This contributes to the development of the notion of elite cosmopolitanism having the plurilingual language skills desired by transnational corporations. I do not mean to deny this understanding of plurilingualism in today's world. In fact, these conceptualizations are realistic and justified in today's global economy. Instead, my aim is to examine plurilingualism from a different perspective away from the purposes of the Council of Europe and the OECD. In the next chapter, I look more deeply into various cosmopolitanisms.

## Chapter 3 – Conceptualizing Cosmopolitanism

### 3.1 Introduction

Cosmopolitanism, the notion of belonging to a world beyond our own localities, has been discussed by scholars from various disciplines for centuries. Therefore, definitions of “cosmopolitanism” have varied depending on times and disciplines. As mentioned in the previous chapter, “cosmopolitanism” has recently been defined as “neoliberal cosmopolitanism” and criticized for being an elite and Western version of it. Before proceeding to a discussion of cosmopolitanisms, this chapter begins with the history of cosmopolitanism.

### 3.2 History of Cosmopolitanism

The history of cosmopolitanism dates back to ancient Greece. Alexander’s Great Expedition to the East led to the Hellenistic age, when cultural fusion of east and west occurred. It was in the Hellenic age that the idea of cosmopolitanism first appeared. Initially, Plato (B.C. 427-347) and Aristoteles (B.C. 384-322) focused only on the Greek *polis* (city of Greeks). Diogenes (B.C. 412 or 404-323), a contemporary of Plato, refused to be defined by his local origins and group memberships, and was the first commentator to use the word “cosmopolitan” for “citizen of the world.” However, as his definition of cosmopolitanism was limited to those people who did not belong to a specific *polis*, cosmopolitans were perceived as rootless wanderers suffering from a lack of a sense of belonging. This image still lingers in modern era speech when referring to cosmopolitans. The Stoics added a more outward-looking interpretation to Diogenes’s interpretation of “citizen of the world,” putting emphasis on matters not only of the immediate circle of self, family, or even the *polis* but also on the larger community of human beings in the world.

However, in the history of cosmopolitanism, it is Cicero who played the most influential role in defining subsequent cosmopolitans. His cosmopolitanism is

based on “natural law.” In his view, all people are granted the ability to think rationally and conform to ethical norms. Moreover, communitarian exists beyond borders. Hence, “natural law” should apply to all countries. This view of cosmopolitanism was then inherited by scholars of the medieval era, Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) in the early modern era, and now current cosmopolitanisms, including Nussbaum’s (1996).

In the early modern and European Enlightenment, a renewed version of cosmopolitanism spread in Europe. This understanding of it was politically oriented. One of the prominent proponents of cosmopolitanism at that time was Immanuel Kant. His notable works are *Idea for a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Point of View*, written in 1785, and *Perpetual Peace*, written in 1795.

Kant was the first to advocate a rationalistic international order and cosmopolitan law. He called for global civic order and relations between nations in order to avoid war. As part of cosmopolitan law, he proposed that the fundamental rights of every human rights should be guaranteed. His “guarantees of human rights” applied not only to internal civil law but also to international and cosmopolitan law:

The peoples of the earth have thus entered in varying degrees into a universal community, and it has developed to the point where a violation of laws in *one* part of the world is felt *everywhere*. The idea of a cosmopolitan law is therefore not fantastic and overstrained; it is a necessary complement to the unwritten code of political and international law, transforming it into a universal law of humanity. — Kant, *Perpetual Peace* taken from Reiss (1991, pp. 107-108)

It was Kant who first forcefully advocated human dignity. In this, he was influenced by the Stoic idea of interpreting humans not as a means but as an end (Nussbaum, 1997a). In his *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, he makes the imperative statement that man should “act in such a way that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never merely as a means to an end, but always at the same time as an end” (Bennett, 2017, p. 29). In

Kant's philosophy, human dignity can be seen in the autonomy of individuals following universal moral imperatives of their own free will rather than obeying their impulses and emotions. That is, those who act upon their impulses and emotions have no dignity. No human dignity can be seen in those who lose touch with reason and fall prey to desire. Kant's concept of human dignity had a major impact not only on the moral domain but also on the political one.

Cosmopolitanism is at the center of Kant's historical philosophy. However, at the same time, since Kant was also influenced by the Eurocentric thinking of his time, when racism based on racial taxonomies of the human species spread, he did not believe in the equality of the races (Eze, 2001). In fact, Kant's views of colonialism are comparable to that of the Stoics: while the Stoics did not accept colonial conquest, what Kant objected to in colonialism is the oppressive and brutal treatment of local people, which means that Kant accepted colonial conquest *per se* (Nussbaum, 1997a). Arising from such a position, Kant's cosmopolitanism was

an absolute Western, white, modernist and rationalist universalism, and imagined a world modeled after Europe in which the non-white races could never be equal to the white race. (Sobré-Denton & Bardhan, 2013; p. 18)

Thus, although Kant contributed to establishing rationalistic international and cosmopolitan law to protect human rights, his vision of cosmopolitanism was limited.

In the 1960s and 1970s, new scholarship in the study of intercultural communication promoted a notion of cosmopolitans that mainly implied those U.S. businessmen and diplomats who helped rebuild Europe and Asia after WW II and were "privileged enough to travel easy to foreign places" (Sobré-Denton & Bardhan, 2013, p. ix).

In the present context of globalization, attention has been paid to the revival of Kant's political cosmopolitanism. However, the focus of this thesis is not on an Enlightenment form of cosmopolitanism, or elite cosmopolitanism.

### 3.3 Various Cosmopolitanisms

#### 3.3.1 Elitist, Kantian and Global Cosmopolitanisms

As mentioned in the previous chapter, in the field of applied linguistics, some scholars warn against a poststructuralism that encourages the multi/plural turn, pointing out that multilingualism and plurilingualism are complicit in neoliberalism and linked to notions of elitist cosmopolitanism that are indifferent to power and inequality. In this manner, cosmopolitanism is easily associated with elite positions and accessible only to the privileged and remains categorized from a “Center-West perspective” (Holliday, 2011, p. 12).<sup>1</sup> This image of cosmopolitanism derives from an Enlightenment-based form of cosmopolitanism, Kantian cosmopolitanism as mentioned above, in which only the elite can attain global citizenship status and is directed at absolute Western modernist and rationalist universalism (Sobré-Denton & Bardhan, 2013). According to Sobré-Denton & Bardhan, this image of Kantian cosmopolitanism has spread as traditional cosmopolitanism that speaks to a Eurocentric, top-down elite and even despotic cosmopolitanism. Furthermore, Appadurai (2011) defines normative cosmopolitanism in the globalization as follows:

Most definitions of cosmopolitanism, either directly or indirectly, assume that it is a certain cultivated knowledge of the world beyond one’s immediate horizons, and is the product of deliberate activities associated with literacy, the freedom to travel, and the luxury of expanding the boundaries of one’s own self by expanding its experiences. For this reason, cosmopolitanism is usually contrasted with various forms of rootedness and provincialism.... The cosmopolitan is often identified with the exiled, the traveler, the seeker of the new, who is not content with his or her historically derived identity, biography and cultural values. (p. 4)

Bhabha (1994) calls this normative cosmopolitanism “global cosmopolitanism,” defined by the Center-Western perspective of a global

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<sup>1</sup> The term “Center” is opposed to “Periphery,” much like “West” and “non-West.” Holliday defines “the Centre-West as the economic and political powerhouse of the Center within its current Western location” (p. 12).



political and economic order and distinguishes global cosmopolitanism from vernacular cosmopolitanism and measures global progress from a minority perspective that “begins at home” (pp. xv–xvi). Bhabha sees “global cosmopolitanism” as follows:

Global cosmopolitanism...configures the planet as a concentric world of national society extending to global villages. It is a cosmopolitanism of relative prosperity and privilege founded on ideas of progress that are complicit with neoliberal forms of governance and free-market forces of competition. ...Global cosmopolitans of this ilk frequently inhabit “imagined communities” that consist of silicon valleys and software campuses; although, increasingly, they have to face up to the carceral world of call centers and the sweatshops of outsourcing. A global cosmopolitanism of this sort readily celebrates a world of plural cultures and peoples located at the periphery so long as they produce healthy profit margins within metropolitan societies. (p. xiv)

### **3.3.2 Vernacular Cosmopolitanism and Related Cosmopolitanisms**

Instead, Bhabha puts emphasis on periphery cultural realities as a vernacular cosmopolitanism (the term is attributed to Bhabha). In line with Bhabha, Hannerz (2006) also proposes “[i]t maybe worth looking more closely for the sings of small, banal, or quotidian, or vernacular, or low-intensity cosmopolitanism” (p. 27). Furthermore, Holliday (2011) expresses skepticism about “global cosmopolitanism” and insists that “periphery cultural realities should be allowed room to express themselves in resistance to the dominant global cosmopolitan imagination” (p. 12). From anthropological perspective, Werbner (2008), anthropologist, advocates their vernacular cosmopolitanism and uses the term as a synonym for “the new anthropological cosmopolitanism”. She explains it as follows:

Against “globalization,” a term implying the free movement of capital and the global (mainly Western) spread of ideas and practices, cosmopolitanism is a word used by the new cosmopolitans to emphasize empathy, toleration and respect for other cultures and values. Thus, at its most basic, cosmopolitanism is about reaching out across cultural differences through dialogue, aesthetic enjoyment, and respect; of living together with difference. It is also about the

cosmopolitan right to abode and hospitality in strange lands and, alongside that, the urgent need to devise ways of living together in peace in the international community. Against the slur that cosmopolitans are rootless, with no commitments to place or nation, the new post-1990s cosmopolitanism attempts to theorize the complex ways in which cosmopolitans juggle particular and transcendent loyalties – morally, and inevitably also, politically. (p. 2)

Namely, they advocate non-elite and non-Western cosmopolitanism and propose instead a “cosmopolitanism-from-below” (Appadurai, 2011; Kurosawa, 2004) approach acting against neoliberal globalization ideologies and emphasizing empowerment of the urban poor. What they call “cosmopolitanism- from-below”

...begins close to home and builds on the practices of the local, the everyday, and the familiar, but is imbued with a politics of hope that requires the stretching of the boundaries of the everyday in a variety of political directions. It builds toward global affinities and solidarities through an irregular assortment of near and distant experiences and neither assumes nor denies the value of its universality. Its aim is to produce a preferred geography of the global by the strategic extension of local cultural horizons, not in order to dissolve or deny the intimacies of the local but in order to combat its indignities and exclusions. It is thus closely tied to the politics of hope and the promise of democracy as a space of dignity as well as of equality. (Appadurai, 2011, para. 2)

A cosmopolitan-from-below approach directly incorporates the “rooted cosmopolitanism” claimed by Appiah (1996, 1998). He argues that all forms of cosmopolitanism are ultimately rooted in localities where the local and the global intersect. He proposes that cosmopolitans begin from membership in morally and emotionally significant communities (families, ethnic groups) while espousing notions of toleration and openness to the world, the transcendence of ethnic difference, moral responsibility for the other. This echoes Nussbaum’s (1996) notion of cosmopolitan patriotism, arguing that rooted cosmopolitans have attachment to morally and emotionally communities such as family and ethnic group while being open to the world. By extension, Werbner (2008) argues that

Vernacular cosmopolitanism—an apparent oxymoron that seems to join contradictory notions of local specificity and universal enlightenment — is at the crux of current debates on cosmopolitanism (p. 14). ... [E]thnic rootedness does not negate openness to cultural differences or the fostering of a universal civic consciousness and a sense of moral responsibility beyond the local (p. 15). [R]ooted cosmopolitans first make parochial interpretations of culture, religion, and ethnicity in order to transcend them and assert wider cosmopolitan values. (p. 16).

What Werbner wants to emphasize is a cosmopolitanism that is not in opposition to nationalism, a view that embraces postcolonial views of “cosmopolitanism from below.”

This view is similar to “methodological cosmopolitanism” advocated by Holliday (2009), Beck and Sznajder (2006), and Mignolo (2002), which emphasizes the notion of openness toward national and other borders, the ability to conceptualize cultural borders as connections rather than separations, and the ability to work through and with many versions of universalism by demonstrating how we can make the empirical investigation of transnational phenomena a transnational phenomenon *per se*. In other words, there is no opposition between cosmopolitanism and nationalism. This methodological cosmopolitanism goes against the notion of “methodological nationalism” supported by Morris (2009) in that culture and societies are described as bound by nation-state boundaries. Beck (2000) is a fervent advocate of methodological cosmopolitanism, but according to Bhabra (2011) and Chernilo (2006), his approach of methodological cosmopolitanism primarily emerges from the viewpoints of Western Europe and the U.S. In addition, Beck (2000) is criticized for overstating the “death” of the nation-state since he ignores the fact that the nation-state’s impact on the world is still highly present, and he pays scant attention to people’s emotional meanings of the nation-state, especially for postcolonial nations (Werbner, 2008). As a result, his approach of methodological cosmopolitanism has been criticized as being elitist, West-centric, and

hegemonic, and a cosmopolitanism-from-above. Therefore, I take the position that the nation-state still exists and impacts cultural emotions and identities while at the same time, I accept Beck's view that we must move beyond the nation-state in terms of identifying and theorizing culture and societies based on the fact that nation-state boundaries are blurring and weakening through the mobility of capital and people. To be more precise, vernacular cosmopolitanism-as-method based on Werbner's approach to cosmopolitanism is used as epistemology in this study. It should be noted that according to Sobré-Denton and Bardhan (2013), vernacular cosmopolitanism research can be conducted not only by local activists but also any researcher advocating ethics, social justice, and human rights. Furthermore, they suggest that vernacular cosmopolitanism can be applied to situations of diversity within cities and localities and within nation-states as well as across nation-states.

Opposed to Beck's extreme methodological cosmopolitanism, Delanty (2006, 2009) also stresses that cosmopolitanism is not just opposed to nation-state. At the same time, cosmopolitanism does not arise simply in situations of cultural diversity or taking the perspectives of others. Rather than he sees cosmopolitanism simply as an ideal, the cosmopolitan perspective requires the "cosmopolitan imagination." He terms this cosmopolitanism "critical cosmopolitanism." Delanty (2009) highlights four dimensions of the social that are constitutive of the cosmopolitan imagination. First, a view of societies as mixed and overlapping cultural differences and pluralities. "[T]he recognition of cultural differences as both a reality and a positive ideal for social policy" (p. 7). Second, a view that cosmopolitanism arises in the context of global and local relations. "[C]osmopolitanism is not reducible to globalization but refers to the interaction of global forces with local contexts" (p. 7). Third, the imagination of borders and their ongoing reconfigurations, along with the ambivalences that such processes produce, rather than territorial space. Fourth, the reinvention of political community for the sake of global ethics. He argues that "[t]he social

cannot be separated from cosmopolitan principles and the aspiration to establish a new kind of political community in which national interests have to be balanced with other kinds of interests” (p. 7). In this way, he stresses that cosmopolitanism has a social dimension. That is, he advocates for the cultivation of cosmopolitan imagination for bringing about social and global justice, intercultural understanding and change (see also Kurosawa, 2011). The notion of Delanty’s cosmopolitan imagination is similar to Appadurai’s (2000): the imagination helps us establish connections between the local and the global and grasp the interrelatedness of social, political, economic and cultural phenomena in our world. It helps us understand, contextually, how the global enters and alters the local and how the local can move outward and alter the global. Sobré-Denton and Bardhan (2013) define critical cosmopolitanism in a more easily comprehensible manner, as follows:

...critical cosmopolitanism entails a deep appreciation for difference, the willingness to engage with cultural Others and be transformed by such experiences, kindness toward strangers, and the labor of the imagination to envision a world that aspires toward peace, possibilities, and intercultural respect for those near and far. (p. 7)

In the spirit of these aforementioned cosmopolitanisms, Sobré-Denton and Bardhan (2013) offer the notions of “cosmopolitan communication” and “cosmopolitan peoplehood.” They define “cosmopolitan communication” as follows:

Cosmopolitan communication is a world- and Other-oriented practice of engaging in deliberate, dialogic, critical, non-coercive, and ethical communication. Through the play of context-specific dialectics, cosmopolitan communication works with and through cultural differences and historical and emerging power inequalities to achieve ongoing understanding, intercultural growth, mutuality, collaboration, and social and global justice goals through critical self-transformation (p. 50).

According to cosmopolitan communication, we can perceive the self as not

essentially bound by one's cultural assumptions but capable of making choices to expand the horizons of the self beyond bounded conceptions of cultural identity.

Moreover, they define "cosmopolitan peoplehood" as follows:

Cosmopolitan peoplehood is an open-ended Other-and world-oriented and dialogic ("in-between") identity orientation that is morally committed to addressing social and global injustices in their many forms. It is an embodied way of being in the world that engages views from the margins, celebrates the powers of empathy and the imagination to connect the local and national with the global, and sees ambiguity as opportunity for intercultural growth and learning. Through non-violent entanglement between Self and cultural Others (near and far), it entails differential belonging, intercultural bridgework, kindness to strangers, and continuous engagement in critical self-transformation through cosmopolitan communication. (p. 89)

They borrow the term "cosmopolitan peoplehood" from Delanty (2009) and develop further. According to Delanty, "cosmopolitan peoplehood suggests...a reframing of identities, loyalties and self-understandings in ways that have no clear direction" (p. 59). Sobré-Denton and Bardhan (2013) interpret this to be a process of selfhood that is perpetually aimed towards the horizon and discovers its cultural direction as life unfolds. In their cosmopolitan peoplehood, however, cultural identity is positioned "not just as an individual possesses but as an outwardly-oriented, dialogical, ethical, critical and ongoing communicative process" (p. 62). They argue that "cosmopolitan peoplehood and cosmopolitan communication are co-constitutive" (p. 51).

The notion of "vernacular cosmopolitanism" as interpreted in my study includes these all family concepts. Namely, it is the notion indicating individuals who have the desire to widen their perspectives through being exposed to different cultures, appreciates them while remaining attached to their own culture, and have a sense of morality and social justice. In addition, it is also worth noting that the notion of vernacular cosmopolitanism values "the ability to be willing to be open to others and the world and the ability to engage in

cosmopolitan action” (Sobré-Denton & Bardhan, 2013, p. 68). In other words, the notion of vernacular cosmopolitanism focuses on the ability and will to act, namely, agency. Based on the notion “vernacular cosmopolitanism,” I will examine Asian students studying at Japanese universities from a microscopic perspective.

### **3.4 Conclusion: Summary of the Chapter**

This chapter has examined the history of cosmopolitanism and the literature on cosmopolitanism in order to provide a theoretical framework. In this study, I use vernacular cosmopolitanism integrating its family concepts, such as rooted, cosmopolitanism-from-below, critical, cosmopolitan communication and peoplehood. Namely, “vernacular cosmopolitanism” in this study is the notion indicating individuals who have the desire to widen their perspectives through being exposed to different cultures, appreciates them while remaining attached to their own culture, and have a sense of morality and social justice. Moreover, it is worth remembering that vernacular cosmopolitanism values “the ability to be willing to be open to others and the world and the ability to engage in cosmopolitan action” (Sobré-Denton & Bardhan (2013, p. 68). In other words, it focuses on the ability and will to act, agency.

## **Chapter 4 – Research Methodology**

### **4.1 Introduction**

Having discussed the context and the conceptual background for this study in the previous two chapters, I now discuss the methodology adopted in exploring the issues central to this research. In this study, I adopt a qualitative approach, which relies primarily on the use of interviews, specifically life-stories, in an effort to understand participants' lives, including language learning experiences and study abroad experiences, and personal feelings from the participants' point of view.

### **4.2 Research Questions**

Based on the theoretical assumptions presented in the previous chapter, I identified the following questions to be explored throughout the research:

1. How did Asian students become plurilingual?
2. How do they demonstrate openness to other cultures?
3. How do they show ethnic rootedness?
4. How do they reveal a sense of social justice?

My purpose is to examine how participants have become plurilingual and think about learning languages and how they live their lives on an everyday basis. I will do this in the light of literature of various cosmopolitanisms in order to challenge the negative assumptions of cosmopolitanism as elitist and to explore the students' experiences which might help students construct their agency.

### **4.3 Methodological Framework: Narrative Analysis**

#### **4.3.1 Qualitative Approach**

To address the above research questions, I decided to take a qualitative approach. This decision is underpinned by Merriam's (2002) definition of qualitative research, which is based on the idea that "meaning is socially constructed by



individuals in interaction with their world” (p. 3) and is suitable for researchers who are interested in “[l]earning how individuals experience and interact with their social world, the meaning it has for them” (p. 4) and investigating how major contextual factors such as social and political aspects affect the ways in which individuals construct reality.

There are several advantages to this approach. First, it is *interpretive* in that allows researchers to “understand the meaning people have constructed about their world and their experiences; that is, how do people make sense of their experience?” (p. 5). Merriam cites Patton’s (1985) explanation of qualitative research, which closely fits my purpose for this research, as follows:

...to understand situations in their uniqueness as part of a particular context and the interactions there. This understanding is an end in itself, so that it is not attempting to predict what may happen in the future necessarily but to understand the nature of that setting—what it means for participants to be in that setting, what their lives are like, what’s going on for them, what their meanings are, what the world looks like in that particular setting.... The analysis strives for depth of understanding. (Patton, cited in Merriam, 2002, p. 5)

This idea is derived from the view that

meaning is socially constructed by individuals in interaction with their world. The world, or reality, is not the fixed, single, agreed upon, or measurable phenomenon that it is assumed to be in positivist, quantitative research. Instead, there are multiple constructions and interpretations of reality that are in flux and that change over time.” (Merriam, 2002, p. 3)

Second, in this approach, the researcher is the primary *instrument* for data collection and data analysis. Since understanding is the goal of this study, the human instrument, which allows the researcher to be responsive and adaptive, is the ideal means of collecting and analyzing data, although it has shortcomings and biases that might have an impact on the study. Furthermore, researchers can expand their understanding not only through verbal but also nonverbal communication, process information (data), clarify it, confirm it with participants

for accuracy of interpretation, and explore unusual or unanticipated responses.

Third, the process is *inductive*. That is, the researcher gathers data in order to build concepts, hypotheses, or theories rather than deductively deriving postulates or hypotheses to be tested in the positivist manner. Findings derived from qualitative data are in the form of themes, categories, typologies, concepts, tentative hypotheses, even substantive theory.

Finally, the product of a qualitative inquiry is richly *descriptive*. Words and pictures rather than numbers are used to convey what the researcher has learned about a phenomenon. In addition, data in the form of quotes from documents, field notes, participants' interviews, excerpts from video tapes, electronic communication, or a combination thereof are always included in support of the findings.

While Merriam (2002) emphasizes *interpretive* qualitative research studies, Lather (1992) categorizes three theoretical perspectives in terms of *understanding* (interpretive), *emancipating* (critical and feminist perspectives being included in this category), and *deconstructing* (postmodern). Based on this categorization, Merriam notes that if researchers' primary interest is in *understanding* a phenomenon, qualitative research designs, such as grounded theory, phenomenology, narrative research, ethnography, case studies, or simply a basic interpretive approach are all suitable. On the other hand, critical, feminist, postmodern, and emancipatory studies all have goals that include but go beyond understanding.

Since my focus in this study is not only on *understanding* the phenomenon of Asian students studying in Japan but also on suggesting that vernacular cosmopolitanism be much more conscious of subjectivity and that neoliberalism and structures of power and discourses cannot be avoided. Therefore, my particular theoretical stance as regards methodology is a *critical* as well as *interpretive* paradigm. In addition to Merriam's description, Holliday's (2011) work about culture and intercultural communication also encouraged me to base

my work on an interpretive paradigm, which implies “thick description,” or “an analysis of all the facets of a social phenomenon that make up its full complexity, and involves piecing together interconnected data to build a picture of what is going on” (p. 29). Such a paradigm is reasonable as “the world is inextricably bound up with the self and is, correspondingly, not amenable to objective verification” (MacDonald & O’Regan, 2012, p. 561). The specific research design I employed in conducting my study is narrative analysis.

#### **4.3.2 Narrative Analysis**

To understand the phenomenon of Asian students studying in Japan, more particularly how my participants experience and interact with their social world, the meaning it has for them, the use of my participants’ stories, and especially first-person accounts of their experiences told in story form seen as data is imperative. Manning and Cullum-Swan (1994) provide a useful definition of the approach, as follows:

Narrative analysis typically takes the perspectives of the teller rather than that of the society...If one defines narrative as a story with a beginning, middle, and end that reveals someone’s experiences, narratives takes many forms, are told in many settings, before many audiences, and with various degrees of connection to actual events to persons. (p. 465)

Narrative research is considered ideal for uncovering the complexity of human behavior because it is human-centered, it situates itself in practice, and explores the perspectives of those under study (Webster & Mertova, 2007). Narrative analysts interrogate not simply the content to which language refers but also how and why incidents are storied, for whom the story was constructed, and for what purpose (Riessman, 2008). Riessman’s description also justifies my decision to employ narrative analysis:

A good narrative analysis prompts the reader to think beyond the surface of a text, and there is a move toward a broader commentary. Just because narrative approaches interrogate cases (rather than population-based samples), it cannot

be generalized. But inference is of a different kind.... Making conceptual inferences about a social process (the construction of an identity group, for example, from close observation of one community) is an equally "valid" kind of inquiry with a long history in anthropology and sociology. (p. 13)

Merriam (2002) shows three communal approaches to analyzing narratives of people's stories: psychological, biographical, and discourse analysis. In the psychological approach, the story is analyzed in terms of internal thoughts and motivation, while in a more biographical approach, a person is focused upon in relation to society, considering the influences of gender, class, and family beginnings. Finally, a discourse analysis approach investigates the written text of the story for its component parts or examines the spoken words by looking for intonation, pitch, and pauses as windows into the meaning of the text. Whatever the approach to analyzing the data, the data are in the form of a story. Since my focus throughout this study is on understanding how my participants have become plurilingual and how they live their lives in such a context, the biographical approach is appropriate for analyzing the data. As Riessman (2008) comments, citing Dinzin, "narrative forces the social sciences to develop new theories, new methods, and new ways of talking about self and society" (p. 16).

#### **4.4 Data Collection**

##### **4.4.1 Participants**

There were six participants: three male and three female students. All participants study at a university in Tokyo. All students except Yongsoo come from other Asian countries. Yongsoo is an ethnic Korean resident of Japan, and Japanese call people like him *zainichi* Korean, a label with a clear discriminatory connotation. His nationality is South Korean, but he was born and raised in Japan. The ordinal numbering of languages (e.g., first foreign language) is based on the sequential order of the participants having started to learn these languages and is not based on language proficiency. For instance, Tham, a male student from Vietnam, is much better at Japanese than English, but he started to learn English

before Japanese in school in Vietnam; English is therefore considered his first foreign language. Table 4.1 provides a brief description of each of the participants. I personally knew all the participants well because they used to be my students. They were selected for this study on the basis of their willingness to be interviewed. All names are pseudonyms.

Table 4.1 Participating Asian students' backgrounds

Name	G	Nationality	Mother or Dominant Language	First Foreign Language	Second Foreign Language	Third Foreign Language	Interview Language
Yongsoo	M	South Korea	Japanese	Korean	English	French	Japanese
Yushan	F	Malaysia	English and Chinese	Malay	Japanese	Korean	Mainly Japanese
Tham	M	Vietnam	Vietnamese	English	Japanese	French	English and Japanese
Somin	F	South Korea	Korean	English	Japanese	Spanish	Japanese
Yuxia	F	China	Chinese	English	Japanese		Japanese
Tsou	M	Taiwan	Chinese	English	Japanese	Spanish	Mainly English

#### 4.4.2 Method: Interviews

The interviews were my chosen data collection method. In narrative research, multiple, lengthy, and in-depth interviews are recommended for uncovering life stories (e.g., Atkinson, 1998). Following Atkinson, I understand a life-history interview to be “the story a person chooses to tell about the life he or she has lived, told as completely and honestly as possible, what is remembered of it, and what the teller wants others to know of it, usually as a result of a guided interview” (p. 8).

To collect narrative data from the participants, face-to-face interviews were conducted between April 2016 and May 2018 in Tokyo. The interviews were carried out in a relaxed manner and held at times and in places convenient to the participants on the university campus we all belong to. I conducted the interviews based on Seidman’s (2006) model for “in-depth, phenomenologically based interviews” (p. 15). This method combines life-history interviewing with focused, in-depth interviewing informed by assumptions drawn from phenomenology. Seidman suggests three 90-minute interviews separated by several days’ intervals, which allows both interviewer and participant to

understand the experience and to place it in context. According to his framework, the first interview focuses on life histories in order to establish the context of participants' experience. The second interview focuses on the details of the experience. Participants are asked to reconstruct the concrete details of their present lived experience in the topic area of the study. The purpose of the third and final interview is reflection on meaning. Participants are asked to reflect on the meaning of their experience based on the first two interviews and to examine how these experiences connect to their present lives. Taking into account the participants' and my own schedule, it was necessary to adjust the number of interviews held for this study. Some participants were only interviewed twice, and the interviews were complemented by email contact and SNS contact, but I still followed the progression on Seidman's (2006) protocol, which is described below.

The interviews were conducted as follows. First, the participants were asked to recount biographical details, including their living, studying, and language learning experiences from birth to the present. Second, they were asked to describe how they live their lives on an everyday basis and their personal feelings toward each event recounted. This is not only for the purpose of addressing my research question but also in reaction to the need highlighted by Rovisco and Nowicka (2011) and Hannerz (2006), who argue that instead of theorizing cosmopolitanism as an abstract ideal, we need to look closely for everyday mundane forms of cosmopolitanism to be emphasized. Third, participants were asked to reflect on their social experiences to examine how these are connected to their present lives. Finally, they talked about what they envisaged doing in the future.

Following Seidman's suggestion, I tape-recorded all interviews. Seidman argues for several merits of tape-recording. First, in order that the researcher may transform spoken words into a written text to examine, tape-recording is most reliable. Second, preserving the words of the participants allows the researcher

to work from original data as the researcher can return to the source and check for accuracy whenever necessary. Tape-recording also benefits the participants. The fact that what they have said is recorded can give them confidence that their words will be treated valuably and responsibly. In addition, it also allows participants to decide what in the recording they choose to retain and have analyzed and what they wish to delete.

Prior to the interviews, I prepared detailed interview guides designed to generate “specific concrete life stories” (Chase, 2002, p. 84). I prepared semi-structured questions that would encourage participants to speak freely. During the interviews, they were free to direct the flow of the conversation. In advising on life story interviews in the field of sociology, Chase (2003) suggests that researchers should formulate questions that invite interviewees to tell their stories in their own words, phrase questions in everyday language, and not orient the interviewees toward the researchers’ interests. The interview should focus on “reiterating the invitation (to tell a story) through questions that encourage fuller narration of the complexities of the story” (p. 289). I followed this recommendation. As a result, some of the participants were sometimes sidetracked by their topics. Since the interviews proceeded in a dialogical manner, topics were brought up by the participants that I did not anticipate while preparing the interview guides.

By nature, interviews are not equal interactions since the interviewer holds power over the direction of the interview (Briggs, 2002; Kvale, 2006). However, interviews are also unpredictable and subjective and involve, at least to a degree, a collaborative relationship between interviewer and interviewee (Josselson, 2007). Therefore, the interviews were doing more than questioning and answering based on my prepared questions. Since I knew all them well, they spoke freely without being urged by me. A good interviewer-interviewee relationship should be built on a degree of rapport and trust (Arksey & Knight, 1999). The fact that the participants sometimes interrupted their discourse to ask

me about my own experiences and feelings and ask for sympathy (they knew that I had similar experiences to theirs) may indicate trust in me as an older and more experienced “buddy.” Overall, the atmosphere of the interviews was serious but lively and intimate, such that in most cases, it was difficult for me to call an end to the meeting. This willing participation indicated the participants’ general disposition to explore and reflect on the living world.

As regards the interviewing language, I gave my participants a choice of either Japanese or English. Most participants chose Japanese. However, translanguaging between English and Japanese often occurred in all of the interviews. It is worth mentioning that as a whole, they may have felt more at ease speaking English, while speaking Japanese might have inhibited frank communication. This is not because of their lack of proficiency in Japanese, but a potential result of the hierarchal nature of Japanese society, which influences the language itself. Especially when talking to an older person, formal, distant language as well as honorifics are used. Some participants started talking in Japanese and then they changed to English to avoid complex Japanese language rules that may perplex them. Pavlenko (2007) problematizes the use of one language with multilingual interviewees, citing narrative studies in which people express themselves differently in different languages, while others, such as Nekvapil (2003), show that the interviewing language makes no difference. Nekvapil also suggests that when interviewing bilingual or multilingual interviewees, researchers usually start by asking interviewees what their preference is regarding the language of the interview. I followed this approach.

#### **4.4.3 Data Organization and Data Processing: Transcription as Interpretation**

As the next stage, field texts (participants’ discourse gained from interviews) need to be reconstructed as research texts in order to discover and construct meaning (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Similarly, Riessman (2008) argues that investigators conduct interviews to learn about a process, then through the



investigator's knowledge of the prior "real" events and experience they need to interpret. That is, investigators need to think consciously and critically about "how we as interpreters constitute the narrative texts that we then analyze" (p. 22). As Riessman argues, oral data (or field texts) require transformation into a textual form (or research texts). For the purpose of this task, I transcribed each interview immediately following it. Translating talk with "fluid and dynamic movement of words and gestures" (p. 29) into linear written language is never easy.

Following Nagatomo's (2012) method for constructing a transcript from a taped conversation, I conducted the transcription process as follows: In the first version of the transcription, I included all of the participant's utterances, such as hesitant phrasings and filler words in both Japanese and English. Then, retaining this copy, I created a "refined" version of the transcription, in which hesitant phrases, filler words, and grammatical mistakes were eliminated. This second version was sent to the participants immediately after each interview for them to confirm the accuracy of what they conveyed.

My study focuses on *what* is said, rather than "*how*," "*to whom*," or "*for what purposes*." For this purpose, I used the second version of the transcriptions. The participants' narratives were written in sentence form (when necessary, I inserted appropriate punctuation) for readability in the analysis and interpretation. I kept the participants' narratives as close as possible to the original, with sentence structure and word order remaining unchanged, but eliminated excessive conversational fillers such as "you know" (*anoh/etoh* in Japanese) and "like" (*...mitaina* in Japanese). Simple grammatical mistakes were repaired.

#### **4.5 Process of Analysis: Thematic Analysis**

As Wolcott (1994) suggests, a major challenge for qualitative researchers is not how to elicit data but how to decide what to do with the data they elicit. All of the interviews were read through a number of times. In this study, I employed

Polkinghorne's (1995) two types of approaches to data analysis: *narrative analysis*, and *analysis of narratives*. According to his definition (pp. 5-6), "narrative analysis" refers to "studies whose data consist of actions, events, and happenings but whose analysis produces stories." In contrast, "analysis of narratives" refers to "studies whose data consist of narratives or stories but whose analysis produces paradigmatic typologies or categories." This phase is also called "thematic," "content," or "grounded theory" analysis.

Given this distinction, the first phase in my data analysis was "narrative analysis," in which I took narrative data and turned these into stories. I used this form of analysis to answer RQ1. The second phase of my data analysis consisted of an "analysis of narratives," in which I used participants' narratives as data and categorized these into themes, focusing on "what is said rather than the how, to whom, for what purpose" (Rissman, 2008, p. 54). I used this form of analysis to answer RQ2, RQ3, and RQ4.

Excerpts from the narratives were first selected and categorized according to three themes based on my working definition of vernacular cosmopolitanism: openness to other cultures, ethnic rootedness, and a sense of social justice. I then coded and reconstructed the narratives under these themes. These themes were built into my research questions from the outset, and the analysis of the narratives involved a search for evidence related to them.

According to Barkhuizen et al. (2014), one of the risks involved in thematic analysis is that we have a tendency to simply look for occasions on which pre-determined themes are explicitly mentioned in the narratives. As a result, we fail to dig more deeply into the data. Therefore, to reduce this risk, I paid close attention to the meaning of data excerpts, which led to the emergence of subthemes that were not pre-determined. While analyzing participants' sense of social justice, for example, I left the question of how they demonstrate a sense of social justice open. I also interpreted certain data excerpts as providing evidence of being "against discrimination" even when being "against discrimination" was

not explicitly mentioned. For example, I interpreted the following excerpt as evidence of the “against discrimination” position:

... I felt sad that there is still overt racial discrimination like this in Japan despite the fact that Japan is one of the developed countries and has attracted foreigners.  
(Yu Shan)

Barkhuizen et al. (2014) stress that “whether themes are determined in advance or not, good thematic analysis always involves repeated reading of the data and several rounds of analysis, in which the researcher moves back and forth between the data and its coded and categorized forms in order to refine themes and theoretical relationships” (p. 77). Each subtheme is developed and illustrated by excerpts from the three participants’ narratives, which highlight the dimension of the subtheme (see Section 6.1 below).

Although Riessman (2008) stresses that the thematic approach is neither intuitive nor straightforward but methodical and painstaking, it enables the researcher to pay attention to macro contexts as she tries to make connections between the life depicted in personal narratives and larger social structures and power relations, hidden inequalities, and historical contingencies. These aspects are the strength of thematic narrative analysis. For these reasons, I employ thematic analysis in this study.

#### **4.6. Ethical Issues**

As in other types of research, there were a number of basic ethical issues I needed to consider. I followed the *ethical guidelines for educational research* of the British Educational Research Association (BERA), and I gained formal ethical approval from my research institution, UCL IOE. First, all participants were fully informed of the purpose of the project as well as the procedures that were to be followed. Second, I obtained the participants’ informed consent to participate in the study (see Appendix 1). This covered not only for their interviews to be recorded but also for me to reproduce portions of interview transcriptions in publications

written in plain language and providing detailed information about the use of data collected for the project. Third, participants were promised full confidentiality, with anonymity guaranteed. In addition, pseudonyms were used, and I worked to ensure that all transcripts were loyal to the participants' oral statements. Finally, I asked participants to read their sections to find out whether they saw anything objectionable.

Since the participants of this study were plurilingual foreign students from Asian countries studying in Japan, issues of language in interviewing also needed to be taken into consideration. The issue of language choice in interviews is illustrated in Miller's (2011) study of a Cantonese-speaking immigrant. Miller interviewed the student three times over a year. The first and second interviews were conducted in English. The third interview was conducted in Cantonese, in which a native speaker of Cantonese from Hong Kong who is Miller's student was hired to act as interpreter. Edwin was instructed to follow the procedures for interviews and provided with guiding questions. It turned out that the interview conducted in Cantonese enabled the participant to speak more comfortably and to construct a more detailed and nuanced account. Miller found that the richer content of the participant's response because of the interview conducted in Cantonese allowed her to observe the participant's agentic subjectivity, although she acknowledges the limitation of translation. Therefore, as Barkhuizen et al. (2014) note, it is important for researchers to allow interviewees to choose the interview language. In my contact with all my participants, the use of either Japanese or English was no impediment to smooth communication. All of these participants were comfortable speaking either or both. Although most participants chose to use Japanese, translanguaging between English and Japanese often occurred in all of the interviews. As I can handle both Japanese and English, the choice of language in interviewing was up to the participants.

Finally, the selection of the venue for conducting the interviews needed to

be carefully made. During interviews, the participants shared some very personal experiences, and their privacy and confidentiality had to be protected. I therefore chose a venue that was quiet enough to provide an environment where participants were able to narrate with an easy mind.

## Chapter 5 – Participants’ Stories

### 5.1 Introduction

In the next two chapters, I present the most significant findings emerging from my participants’ interviews. As previously described (see Chapter 4), I employed Polkinghorne’s (1995) two approaches to data analysis: *narrative analysis*, and *analysis of narratives*. In this chapter, following a narrative analysis, in which “data consist of actions, events, and happenings, but whose analysis produces stories” (pp. 5-6), my participants’ stories are presented. I first provide biographical information about them and recount their past and current experiences to address RQ1: How did they become plurilingual?

### 5.2 Participants’ Stories

#### 5.2.1 Yongsoo’s Story

Yongsoo was born and raised in Fukushima, northern part of Japan until 14 years old as a third-generation ethnic Korean, called *zainichi* in Japan. With the preservation of their language in mind, his parents made their children attend Korean schools in Japan managed by the (North) Korean Workers’ Party (KWP), while they spoke to their children in Japanese at home so that their kids were able to interact with Japanese society where they lived in. Since these schools are administered by the KWP, portraits of the Kim family are displayed inside the school building. In these Korean schools, speaking Japanese is strictly prohibited, and only Korean is allowed. In addition, students are forced to believe in the ideology promoted by North Korea, in which Japan and Japanese are harshly condemned. Yongsoo observed the rules of Korean school in the campus, but once he stepped out into Japanese social environment, he questioned what the school taught and eventually figured out it was exaggerated or fake. He escaped being brainwashed by North Korea’s propaganda and abhorred the dictatorship under the Kim regime of North Korea. At the same time, however, he expressed empathy for people under the Kim regime of North Korea who are not informed

of what's going on in the outside world. As he led "double life" in language, he became a fluent Japanese and Korean bilingual. In Korean school, he had few opportunities to learn English. In addition, his parents did not particularly try to persuade him to study English. He was not keen on learning English until he moved to Tokyo.

In the aftermath of the Fukushima earthquake and tsunami in 2011, his family moved to Tokyo when he was 15 years old. Unlike the Korean school in Fukushima, where there were only five students, the total number of students of Korean school in Tokyo was much larger, and they were from various family backgrounds, which expanded his views and made him consider learning English that he thought could allow him to make friends around the world. In addition to the stimulus arising from meeting many people, English songs his older brother always listened to triggered his interest in learning English further.

It was very difficult for him to decide to study abroad when he was 15 years old. Although he had a strong passion for studying abroad, he was not ready to leave his parents and friends because he was too young to be independent. Therefore, he was not able to make a decision until the very last minute. However, his passion for studying English exceeded his sentimentality, and he finally decided to study in Canada as a high school student. At first, he was completely overwhelmed by a sense of alienation causing from his lack of English proficiency, but he never gave up, remembering how much his father supported his study abroad financially. Therefore, Yongsoo studied English harder than ever before.

After a three-year experience in Canada, his English dramatically improved, enough for him to engage in academic debates in English and read authentic English texts. He came back to Japan to enter a Japanese university. He discovered himself after living in Canada that he liked taking leadership, which he had never noticed when he was in Japan where, in his words, "Tall trees catch much wind". However, once he returned to Japan, he started to conform to

Japanese convention, keeping in mind the aphorism that the nail that sticks out gets hammered down. Furthermore, returning to Japan reminded him of his identity in Japan as *zainichi*. His grandparents are Korean, and his parents are second generation, so their souls are always in Korea. Yongsoo also feels his roots are in Korea. He is proud of being Korean origin, and he retains a sense of strong Korean identity. However, many Japanese cast biased eyes on him due to the fact that he is *zainichi* within a variety of social settings.

Continuing to use English in school, part-time jobs, and internships, Yongsoo currently wants to learn French and is thinking about studying in France. His only concern is that studying in France will place a heavy financial burden on his family again. Therefore, he has been working part-time and working on an internship to help his parents cover the cost of his studies in France. His first study-abroad experience in Canada in his high school days inspired him to study abroad again. This enabled him to realize that both Japanese and Korean societies have a limited view of foreigners and judge them based on a stereotype.

Yongsoo sees himself as a person who likes to challenge himself to new things and wants to found his own company to do something for Fukushima in the future to help this prefecture recover from the devastating earthquake and tsunami in 2011. He has strong emotional attachment to Fukushima because he was born and raised when he was little, and its local people treated him gently without a biased eye.

### **5.2.2 Yu Shan's Story**

Yu Shan was born in Malaysia. Although a Malaysian citizen, she is ethnic Chinese because her parents have that ethnicity in common. However, her parents divorced when Yu Shan was in primary school, and since then, she has been raised by her mother and father in turn. She has been in contact with both as their child, although her parents live separately. Her mother works as a teacher at a primary school, while her father is retired.



Yu Shan's dominant language is English, although her parents always talked to her in Chinese at home. This is because her mother made her go to kindergarten in which English was used as the medium of instruction in the hope that she would grow up to be a competent speaker of English. In addition, her mother made her daughter attend an extra English school called "Smart Reader Kids" twice a week. Her mother is convinced that the west represents the truly advanced world, and English represents modern ideals. Therefore, her mother immersed her daughter in English environments from an early age. In this manner, Yu Shan's dominant language became English, and she used English all the time except when speaking to her parents.

While her mother was enthusiastic about having her daughter learn English, her father was strongly against it. He was born in China in 1948 and left China when he was two years old and grew up in Malaysia with a strong sense of Chinese identity. Therefore, he compelled his daughter to go to a Chinese primary school and to write a diary every day in Chinese so that she could take over his heritage language. This daily assignment made her dislike him because she was already accustomed to English well enough to read English children's books and even write a book in English. Now, however, she appreciates his language education because she can enjoy reading Chinese literature and write in Chinese well, thanks to him.

In her Chinese primary school, English classes were also offered. Students were also required to learn Malay because it is the official language of Malaysia. However, she was not interested in learning Malay as she was already absorbed in English books and was accustomed to Chinese. In addition, her parents' ideology about language influenced her attitude to Malay. They considered Malay useless. However, when she was in fifth grade, she had a Malay language teacher who she came to like very much, so she studied Malay very hard. As a consequence, she was successful in the nationwide primary school achievement test taken by all students in Malaysia at the end of their sixth grade in primary

school before they enter secondary school. This test is offered by the Ministry of Education, which uses it to send students to top schools controlled by the government or to ordinary schools. If students get good results, they have a chance to get into top schools, but students have no choice on what type of school they go to or where they are sent. Students have to wait to be informed in a letter from the government.

As regards non-language subjects, she had a choice over being tested in either English or Malay. She chose English for mathematics and science. In addition to non-language subjects, there were three language tests: Malay and Chinese comprehension and writing, and English. She achieved good overall results and was chosen to get into one of the top schools. However, despite this success, her father sent her to a Chinese school for her secondary schooling since he wanted her to protect his heritage language as a Chinese descendent. Although she had acquired Malay in her upper grades in primary school, she hardly used it after she entered the Chinese secondary school. As a result, her Malay became more limited.

In her secondary school years, she became crazy about Japan and its pop culture. In fact, her interest in Japan started before she entered secondary school. One of her classmates in fifth grade lent her a Japanese cartoon. The story in this cartoon made a strong impression on her. This was the trigger that inspired her love for Japan. From that time on, her longing and passion for Japan became stronger and stronger, enough for her to get together with a group of people who were crazy about Japan and cut out clippings from various magazines and daily newspapers whenever she found the word “Japan” (日本) written in Japanese, even if she did not understand the content of the articles. This addiction to Japanese pop culture motivated her to begin learning Japanese and to understand Japanese cartoon stories without translation because, in her words, she did not like to be “lost in translation.” Instead, she wanted to grasp nuances of meaning in Japanese. As the proverb goes, “What one likes, one does well.”

As a result, her Japanese dramatically improved, enough for her to apply to Japanese universities.

Furthermore, she also became interested in Korean because one of her friends persuaded her to watch Korean dramas. At the time, K-pop (Korean pop culture) was becoming explosively popular in Asian countries. Initially, she was not interested in Korean dramas at all because she was already a big fan of Japanese culture, but she yielded to her friend's persistent requests to watch. After she reluctantly tried watching, she got hooked on good-looking Korean stars in the dramas as well as the stories. Again, this was the trigger that motivated her to study Korean. She started watching a great deal of Korean drama, which enabled her to acquire enough Korean to watch the dramas without English or Chinese subtitles and ended up speaking Korean better than Malay. As a result, she was unable to make up her mind which country to go to for her study abroad: Japan or Korea. Her father had a strong anti-Japanese sentiment, and he tried to convince her not to go to Japan, saying that their ancestors were massacred by the Japanese in the past and Japan may have another war with China, so he was afraid that his daughter could be killed because of her nationality. On the other hand, for some reason, her mother disliked Korea and believed that the West (which her mother identifies with English-speaking countries) is best and wanted her daughter to study in Australia and learn acupuncture or nursing, which Yu Shan never wanted to learn. Despite all of this, she decided to study in Japan because in addition to her fascination with Japan and its pop culture for a longer period of time than with Korea, Yu Shan's Japanese friends indirectly convinced her father to let his daughter go to Japan. They came to Malaysia for a sightseeing and visited the Peace Memorial Statue in Malaysia on the anniversary of Japan's surrender in World War II. Their visit alleviated her father's anti-Japanese sentiment, and he allowed his daughter to study in Japan. Now she belongs to then intercultural communication department in a Japanese university and uses Japanese most of the time.

Today, Yu Shan uses her fluent Japanese on a daily basis at school and in her part-time workplace, but she had a hard time at first as she was frequently subject to racial discrimination at work. Yu Shan has been disappointed by some heartless Japanese people. Before she came to Japan, she had only a positive image of Japanese, especially due to the news about the huge earthquake and tsunami in 2011, in which disaster victims were well-behaved and patiently queueing for the hot meals provided even under such terrible conditions. However, the more she engaged in Japanese society, the more she found out what some Japanese people really think in their minds. She has learned that some Japanese people, no matter how old they are, discriminate against other Asian people.

While she currently wants to make further improvements in her Malay and Korean, she also wants to learn German. As she wants to visit and see many countries to broaden her views, anywhere is fine for her. Her main concern is financial. While going to university in Japan, she has to work to cover living expenses because her parents stopped sending her money after her second year of her stay in Japan. Although she has received a scholarship from the Japanese government, that is insufficient to live in Tokyo. In contrast, in Germany, education is available free of charge if students have German-language ability. She was fascinated with this system. However, her mother asked her to get a job in Japan and make money to buy her a new house in Malaysia and cover her younger sister's study abroad expenses. Her mother has never given up wanting her children to study in Australia, ultimately with the aim of them obtaining permanent resident status, so that she could go and live there if she wished. Yu Shan knows that her mother counts on her. She did not want to obey her requests, but as she was ultimately allowed to study in Japan and wanted to support her younger sister, whom she considers talented and promising, she decided not to study in Germany but instead to follow her mother's wishes and work in Japan after graduating from university. In addition, she now receives a large

scholarship from the Japanese government every month. Therefore, the Japanese government expects her to make a major contribution to the relationship between Japan and Malaysia once her studies are finished. For these reasons, she has no choice but to find a job for the moment. She does not want to get into job hunting, as all third-year Japanese university students do in unison in military-like fashion. She feels pressured by the scholarship she earned from the Japanese Government. She still wants to be a student in a different country and to see other cultures. She grew up in an environment where her parents always quarreled. One day when she was little, she was hiding and saw her mother wielding a knife in front of her father. This traumatic event served as a trigger to turn her attention to the outside world. However, since she was discouraged from studying in Germany by her mother, she reluctantly started job hunting.

### **5.2.3 Tham's story**

Tham was born in Hanoi, the capital of Vietnam. He received all his education from elementary to university run by the municipal government. His mother teaches Vietnamese, the national language, in junior high school, while his father used to be an automotive engineer but now runs his own auto-repair shop. They raised their son in the same manner as ordinary Vietnamese children, and their son also spent his schooldays like them. In his father's schooldays, he had to learn Russian, so he does not speak English, but he encouraged his son to study English for his future job. However, Tham ignored this advice because he was not interested in learning English. He simply attended English classes as one of several mandatory subjects during junior high and high school. Until entering university, he did not show any interest in learning another language. He spoke only his mother tongue, Vietnamese, like all his local friends. He attended a technology department and simply planned to take over his father's job.

The moment he became interested in learning Japanese was while he was writing his bachelor's thesis in Vietnam about car suspensions, and he became

increasingly interested in advanced Japanese technology as his studies went on. Coincidentally, he watched TV programs featuring Japanese traditional culture, such as shrines and temples. He was strongly attracted by the beauty of these historical landscapes and landmarks. More recently, Japanese popular culture, including noodle shops, sushi bars, cartoons, and convenience stores have been rapidly spreading in Vietnam. This made him decide to study Japanese and even work there. He completely fell in love with Japan in his imaginary world.

Six months before graduation from a university in Vietnam, he had started learning Japanese in Vietnam in the hope that he could get a job in Japan immediately after graduation. As soon as he graduated from a university in Vietnam, he came to Osaka, in the western part of Japan with the intention of working, but he realized that his Japanese was not sufficient, so he attended a Japanese language school and studied there for a year and a half. During his first year of living in Osaka, his father was able to support all his son's expenses, but after a year spent in Japan, as his father's business started to suffer from a cash shortage, Tham was not able to get full financial support from his father any more. Tham was forced to work part-time at a Japanese-style pub in order to partially cover his living expenses and study at the language school. Working in the pub also allowed him to save money on food as he ate staff meals.

While learning Japanese in Osaka, he realized his limited knowledge of the liberal arts despite the fact that he had already graduated from university in Vietnam, which made him want to study these subjects at university in Japan instead of working for a company. At this point, he was worried about money. As his father's business experienced severe financial difficulties, Tham was not able to count on his father anymore. One day he came across the information that some Japanese universities offer Asian students 30 % exemption from full tuition, and the government provides large scholarships for Asian students. On top of that, he knew that he could legally work part-time while attending university. Therefore, he thought he could barely make a living in this way and decided to

apply to a university. Spending two years in Osaka while mingling with local people through working at a Japanese pub completely changed his mind and led him to a different interest.

He chose a university located in Tokyo, where he is now, through the advice of his language school in Osaka. He is no longer in the department of engineering and technology but in the department of intercultural communication. While attending university, he is working part-time at a Japanese-style pub in Tokyo. He found that unlike people in Osaka, people in Tokyo are unfriendly. Even his classmates look superficially nice, but he has an intuitive feeling that they do not like Asian students. At first, he was perplexed at his classmates' attitude. In class, in front of their teacher, they played a role as nice students who try to interact with foreign students, but once they left classroom, they ignored Tham as if they did not know him. In this way, when he started to live in Japan, Japanese *tatemae* (publicly stated opinions) perplexed him and even irritated him, but now he accepts it as one of Japanese cultures and gets used to it and even thinks of it as a convenient way to have a good relationship with people.

In his part-time job place, he has been overwhelmed by a sense of alienation, but he attributes his unsuccessful relationship with Japanese to his lack of Japanese skills, and still tries to adapt to Japanese society. Although he feels discriminated against by co-workers at his part-time workplace, he joins an after-work drink whenever asked. He pushes himself to interact with Japanese going so far as to spend money. In fact, his financial position has become severe. Now that his father can support only a small part of the tuition (about 30%), Tham has to pay the rest of the tuition (about 70%) and other living expenses by himself. To cover these costs, he has to work over 30 hours per week while attending classes and over 50 hours per week during holidays. He works night shifts because nighttime hourly pay is much higher than daytime pay, and the workload is less demanding as customers are very few in number. He already knows that his current workload will impact his studies, but he has no choice. As

he expected, due to this hard work, he wasn't able to get good grades. As a result, he failed to receive the scholarship from the Japanese government. It seems he has become trapped in a vicious circle.

Japanese students' attitude of unfriendliness to him and his university in Tokyo that put considerable emphasis on English made him change his attitude toward learning English. His friends from other Asian countries also enlightened him about the importance of English. He was impressed with their English skills as well as Japanese.

In addition to Japanese and English, he is interested in learning French. Although he worries about confusion between languages, his excitement about learning French and French architecture overweighs his worry. He is planning to take French class next year.

While he is interested in other cultures, he has a deep affection for his home country. He is concerned about its social issues, particularly he laments over education in Vietnam which he believes is the foundation of nation-building. He thinks that Japan is a good country in terms of its systematic approach in every way and claims that Vietnam should imitate it to some extent.

Recently, he has become tired of part-time jobs and has started to question his life and realized that he should do what he wants to do during his university days. He does not want his time to be occupied by only part-time jobs, but needs money, so he has been caught in a dilemma.

#### **5.2.4 Somin's Story**

Somin was born on the outskirts of Seoul. As she is an only child, her parents invested in their daughter's education from a very young age. She went to a kindergarten run by their church, where she was taught to believe in Jesus through Bible study. At the same time, her mother forced her to learn English at home with the use of learning materials designed for home schooling and widely used in the US. In addition, Somin was encouraged to watch Disney DVDs in



English, through which she gradually came to understand the natural use of English in communication, how to pronounce and use vocabulary, and eventually picked up an English vocabulary. Thanks to her mother's enthusiasm for English education and her daughter's obedience to her mother's passion, Somin acquired listening skills. Even after she entered a public elementary school<sup>1</sup> where English classes were regularly provided,<sup>2</sup> her mother also made her daughter go to an English academy where children had to participate in activities in English as if they were in an American kindergarten and where speaking like native speakers of English was emphasized, with almost all the instructors being native speakers of English themselves. Attending this kind of English school alongside going to elementary school is common for Korean kids. In Korea, it's common for parents to invest in the education of their children even if they cut their spending. For Korean parents, providing a good education for their children has to be a first priority.

Furthermore, after entering junior high school, alongside attending the English academy, she was made to attend a cram school where all subjects, including English, are taught in order to prepare students for the entrance exam for high school. She did well, and was always ranked top in academic performance in her junior high school days. As she was an excellent student, her classmates' mothers wanted to imitate the way her family acted, so they sent their daughters or sons to the same cram school one after the other in the hope that their children would achieve like Somin. Although she was always a top student, she did not enjoy learning English at this cram school due to the large difference in teaching style with the English academy. In an English cram school, the aim is solely to pass exams. Yet, she endured studying as she always did well in tests.

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<sup>1</sup> The term "public school" is equivalent to "state school" in Britain.

<sup>2</sup> According to Somin, in Korea, public elementary schools also provide English education as a compulsory subject.

However, the situation changed in her high school days. She was able to attend one of the elite high schools in Korea. According to her, this elite high school does not necessarily mean that all students are from economically affluent families, although many students have both academic and financial abilities. She was able to get into this school due to her high academic performance on the entrance test. The economic background of her family was not as affluent as that of others. Her father is a bank employee, and her mother is a housewife. As Somin was an only child, they could afford to send her go to this school and to pay the tuition and boarding fees.

As her high school life went on, she realized that she had been in top place in the suburbs, while other students had been in top places in the central part of Seoul, where affluent and elite families who are enthusiastic about education reside. She noticed that these children were extremely brilliant as their parents had spent a fortune on their education from early childhood, as they could well afford to do, resulting in wide differences in the level of performance among students in the school. She recognized this clearly in the fact that she was ranked in a low cohort based on her test scores, and thus suffered from a sense of defeat. She started to feel that it was impossible for her to compete and surpass her classmates, which eventually led to a loss of interest in studying.

Ultimately, in third grade, she completely gave up studying. Instead, she escaped from reality by becoming addicted to playing computer games. During this period, her relationship with her parents deteriorated. She found that her parents were also disappointed about her state rather than trying to comfort her. She knew that her parents tried to do something to help her out while looking back on the fact that their daughter was always in top place and highly motivated to study in junior high school. However, this pressure created further stress. As she commented, "their words were more like a poison." The only thing that saved her life was Japanese pop culture, especially underground band music. As she wanted to understand the lyrics deeply, she devoted herself to mastering

Japanese. In fact, she had already learned Japanese when she was in junior high school, so she knew basic Japanese. In junior high school, as learning a second foreign language in addition to English was a compulsory subject, she chose Japanese, and she has been interested in Japanese language and culture ever since. Therefore, when applying to a high school that specializes in foreign languages, without any hesitation, she chose the Japanese language department from alternatives such as Chinese, French, or German. While other students in her high school studied hard to enter a prestigious university in Korea, she studied Japanese hard enough to write essays in Japanese during high school and went to a prep school<sup>3</sup> for a year targeting entrance examinations for Japanese universities in order to apply to a Japanese university after graduating from high school. Although she started to learn English much earlier than Japanese and had such a high TOEFL score that some universities in the US offered her a place, she considers Japanese her first foreign language because she prefers Japanese language and culture to English and its cultures. Through her high school life, she realized that it was difficult for her to survive in Korea.

Somin was tired of the society of cut-throat competition in Korea, and only after experiencing a feeling of despair, she started to look anew at the world around her and critically look at political and social issues. She objectively observed other young Koreans who had escaped to another country and analyzed their reasons, but for herself, she had forced herself to believe that she wanted to study in Japan because she liked the Japanese language, until she talked about this to me. She then realized that she also wanted to escape to Japan to feel hopeful about her future. However, although she left her home with a feeling of despair, this does not necessarily mean that she does not have any affection for her country.

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<sup>3</sup> In Japan, a "prep school" (*yobiko*) prepares high school students for university entrance examinations whereas a "cram school" (*juku*) prepares younger students for junior and senior high school examinations.

Somin is currently planning to go on to graduate school or to go on a working holiday to Spain after graduating from university. Currently she has two interests: studying Spanish, and social justice, including women's and minority rights. She likes learning languages, among which she chose Spanish. She believes that learning Spanish allows her to connect to other parts of the world as she knows that Spanish is the second largest language spoken in the world. She wants to broaden her horizons. At the same time, she is studying women's and minority rights. As she came to understand these rights, she started to have critical views of media that create programs targeting only majority groups and ignore minorities, including disabled people. Therefore, she argues that media programs should be produced in a more balanced manner, and she wants to be a media producer to solve this problem. Somin can understand and agrees with the voices of feminists and minorities who are still generally considered strange and a nuisance in Korea. She thinks that this is due to the media and questions biased news coverage.

Moreover, even while she is currently learning Spanish as a third foreign language, she makes further efforts to improve her Japanese so that she can take part in local Japanese communities and enjoy traditional Japanese cultures. She is even happy about being mistaken for a Japanese, and she's frequently asked for directions by Japanese people. She criticizes closed attitudes to other cultures, referring to recent jingoism among young people in Korea.

### **5.2.5 Yuxia's Story**

Yuxia is from Swatow, in the southern part of China. Her father is an engineer and her mother is a housewife. Unlike dual-income families in China, her mother does not work as she has to care for her mother-in-law at home. Yuxia has a younger brother and a younger sister. Unlike Yuxia, they do not like studying. Yuxia has always liked studying and has been doing well in school since she was a little girl. As a result, unlike other traditional Chinese families, in which the

eldest son is valued, her parents have favored her. In fact, while people around her, including some relatives, objected to her studying in Japan, her parents respected her decision and supported her. In fact, her father sold his farmland to send financial support to his daughter.

Yuxia went to a public school run by a local municipality all the way through her education in China. From third grade to the end of elementary school, she was offered chances to take an after-school special preparation course for a math competition called the “Math Olympics” hosted by her local municipality. It was because she did so well in overall academic performance that her elementary school expected her to win the competition and offered her the course free of charge. Students who do not meet the minimum level to join this course but want to take it have to pay. In her eagerness to learn further, she also went to a cram school to strengthen her math and Chinese writing. Her parents were happy about this even though they were short of money. The training Yuxia received at both her elementary and cram schools enabled her to gain greater confidence in math; as a result, she was good at math even during her high school days.

She went to junior high school on the outskirts of Swatow. As she did well in school, she was able to receive a scholarship annually from her school, thus allowing her to save money. In addition, as she was good at math since she was in fifth grade in elementary school, she started to earn money by helping with bookkeeping at a variety of stores managed by a friend of her father’s. This was a part her parents played in her education. They wanted their daughter to understand how hard it is to earn money. Yuxia thus saved money for studying in Japan as she already hoped to study there. Her longing for Japan was influenced by her grandfather, who was highly knowledgeable and “like a walking dictionary” and continuously talked about many different countries because he used to do business with foreign countries and had visited many of them. His broad perspective inspired her to become skeptical about history education in China. In fact, her skepticism grew after entering high school.

Yuxia started to learn Japanese by herself in her third year in high school. Even though her parents understood that their daughter's longing for Japan was growing, they demanded that their daughter go to one of the better universities specializing in foreign languages in Guangzhou to master Japanese. They intended to have their daughter go to this university, study Japanese hard, and then go to Japan. Although she had no intention of going to university in China, she studied hard to get into the university her parents recommended, being afraid that if she could not pass the entrance examination for the university her parents wanted her to enter, she might be considered by her parents as not deserving to study in Japan or not having the ability to learn Japanese. However, she passed the exam and was able to persuade her parents to let her study in Japan. She still thinks that if she had not passed the exam, she would not be in Japan now.

now, she is willing to do volunteer work as much as she can if she can balance her studies with volunteer work and a part-time job.

Although she does not currently work part time because she wants to focus on studying, she can just about manage financially. This is because she has her own savings in addition to a remittance from her father who, as we saw, sold his farmland to raise money for this contingency. She is a good manager of money and good at planning for money. She did not come to Japan immediately after graduating from high school but first worked full-time. As she graduated from a good high school, she was hired as a white-collar worker. She received monthly pay and saved most of the money for studying in Japan. She admits that she is a frugal person, and although she had saved money before she came to Japan, she feels guilty about receiving money from her father and is thinking about working part-time.

She fell in love with Japan and has no intention to return home immediately after graduation, but she still feels an attachment to her hometown. She has an awareness of inequality in education and wants to contribute to school education

in her home in the near future. To achieve such purposes, she has a clear plan: to be a certified public accountant (CPA). She currently receives a monthly scholarship from the Japanese government and saves money for the prep school dedicated to preparing students for the CPA test. She knows that the CPA test is extremely difficult and practically impossible to pass without going to prep school. Although her immediate goal is to become a CPA, this does not necessarily mean that she is indifferent about learning another language. In fact, she expresses her eagerness to brush up her English, which she only learned as a compulsory subject in China. She also knows that English allows her to discover a whole new world.

#### **5.2.6 Tsou's Story**

Tsou was born in the Dominican Republic due to his father's job and grew up there until he was four years old. His father took over the family business, which is foreign trade. His father's family background is wealthy, and he is university educated, while his mother's family background was deprived, and his mother has only a high school degree. Thus his mother was always looked down upon and bullied by his father's family. This is the environment Tsou grew up in. Tsou's education was influenced by his father's transfer overseas and his parents' eventual divorce.

After living in the Dominican Republic until he was four years old, he moved to Taiwan, his parents' home country, and lived there until he was seven (second grade in elementary school). He started going to a local kindergarten, where English was already taught as a subject. Then he was enrolled into a private bilingual elementary school. Due to his father's job, he moved again, this time to Shanghai, and lived there for two years. In Shanghai, he went to a Taiwanese school, in which two tracks were provided: one was Chinese, the other English. Although he originally planned to follow the English track in third grade, he was forced to re-enter second grade (although he had finished second grade in

Taiwan) in the Chinese track due to his lack of proficiency in both English and Chinese. Although he was able to transfer to the English track the very next year, he had to move back to Taiwan because of his parents' divorce as his mother took her children back to Taiwan.

His mother wanted to live with her children, but she was not able to raise them by herself. Therefore, after moving back to Taiwan, Tsou started to live apart from his mother and was taken care of by his father's parents. As solidarity among his father's family was very strong, not only Tsou's grandparents but also his father's relatives looked after Tsou and his younger sister. In fact, his aunt supported the children's daily lives. Thanks to their support, Tsou was able to go to a bilingual school, followed by a Catholic international school. As he moved back to Taiwan in the middle of the academic year, he was not allowed to enter the international school he was supposed to attend. Instead, he attended the bilingual school for only one semester before going to the international school.

However, as his mother sorely missed her children, she decided to live with Tsou's father's parents even though she was divorced, but the relationship between Tsou's mother and his father's parents was bad, so after a time, Tsou's mother moved out. Tsou started then to live with his father's parents.

At the international school, Tsou was allowed to skip fifth grade because he passed the English exam, so he entered sixth grade and studied there until the end of seventh grade. After spending two years in the international school, he transferred to a public school, for two reasons. First, his mother was eventually able to make a living by herself and took her children to be by her side. She was also lucky with an investment and bought a house to live in and also for investment purposes. Above all, Tsou struggled with his language identity.

In the public school, Tsou wanted to learn Chinese because he realized that Taiwan is his roots, but for various reasons, he was encouraged to take a sports course. As he liked sports too, he followed his teacher's advice and took this course, where his studies consisted of playing volleyball. However, after one



term, he came to realize that he transferred to this school to learn Chinese, but what he was doing day after day was just playing volleyball, and he was tired of it. After one term in the public school, he transferred to a private school that required all students to live in the dormitory. During this period, he studied both Chinese and other subjects hard, and he had opportunities to attend English conversation classes taught by foreign teachers, so his English proficiency was preserved.

Since childhood, he had let himself “go with the flow.” He frequently transferred schools and never settled down in one school for long, yet he never rebelled against his parents or argued with their decisions. Only when he lived apart from his mother did he become addicted to games as well as less sociable, as he tried to hide from reality. Meanwhile, he also tried to understand his parent’s divorce. All the education he received until high school was as a result of his parents’ decisions.

However, when he had to decide where to go for high school, it was the first time in his life for him to express his strong will: to study in Japan. He had had a longing for Japanese animation culture since he was in fourth grade in elementary school, when he became addicted to games and TV programs in Taiwan when he lived apart from his mother. One day, he watched a Japanese animation entitled Pokémon, which reminded him of an identical animation he had watched in Spanish when he was a little boy in the Dominican Republic. He was surprised to know that Pokémon was a Japanese animation. In addition, while he was living with his grandfather, he overheard his speaking Japanese to his Japanese coworker, which he thought sounded exciting. From that time on, he became interested in the Japanese language in addition to its animation and started to watch Japanese animation with Chinese subtitles and eventually gained Japanese listening skills. From these experiences, he started to feel like studying in Japan. He knew that he would not have a difficult time learning Japanese, and all he needed was opportunities to use Japanese in real-life settings.

He persuaded his mother to let him study in Japan, and as his mother consented, he was able to achieve his dream of studying in Japan. He chose Fukuoka, a large city in southern Japan, but he studied in Yanagawa City, a country town near Fukuoka so that he could focus on studying and observe “genuine” Japan. He fell in love with the countryside and its local community.

Tsou had fulfilling days when he was in high school in Yanagawa. He merged into local society by doing volunteer activity. He was lively and energetic. He had never experienced such a feeling of self-fulfillment before. As a result, he wanted to stay in Japan, and his high school recommended the university he is currently in. However, his concern was financial. When he was a little boy, he lived without any worries about money, but after his parents’ divorce when he was eight years old, his life changed as his father supported both his living and school expenses only for a couple of years after the divorce. Then, he stopped supporting Tsou’s living expenses and only supported his school expenses until he finished the first academic year in university. At the start of his second year, his father completely stopped supporting his school fees, while his mother had no working experience, so it was difficult for her to earn enough money to support her son financially. Making money through investments was not steady, so she had a difficult time raising two children without any support from her ex-husband. Tsou understood his circumstances well and started working part time. In addition, he applied for a scholarship from the Japanese Government and currently receives one. Furthermore, he gets a 30% tuition discount from his university based on economic grounds. He manages to survive on his income and scholarship without his mother’s financial support.

He started working part-time at a Japanese fast-food chain restaurant. He even worked at night to make better money. He enjoyed observing customers’ behavior, but he realized that he learned nothing from this part-time job and felt that the job did not help him grow as a person because all he had to do was follow the manual. He talked to his mother about it, and she advised him to change jobs,

which he did. He is currently working part-time at an Apple store, which values not only his language skills but also his communication skills. He tried applying to this company without any expectation he would be hired, only because he likes Apple products, and the workload was much less than in the fast-food chain restaurant. More importantly, he likes Apple's philosophy, which encourages employees to help local communities through the Apple Global Volunteer Program. The Apple philosophy enlightened him about his identity. He admits that when he is asked whether he is Chinese or Taiwanese, he always says without hesitation that he is Taiwanese. In addition, he points out conventional views in Taiwan that cause inequality in the society. He has observed it in Taiwanese society since he was little, and he believes that his parents' relationship is also based on this social system. Recently, he conducted research on gender equality and work and life balance in Taiwan, and found that there are still many obstacles for women to gain a feeling of equality. Furthermore, he recently took a university course called Company Social Responsibility (CSR), through which he started to think about what it means to be kind and charitable to others, especially the deprived, who are distant cultural others.

When he joined a volunteer club in his high school days, he mainly conducted a fundraising activity for disaster victims, the disabled, the elderly, and children who need support to grow. He also carried out a fund drive for the charity on Japanese 24-Hour Television. However, after entering university and working for Apple, he started considering what effective donations are. In addition, he currently wants to resurrect his lost Spanish because there are two coworkers in Apple who speak Spanish. Although he has been absorbed in Japanese culture, he has started to think that it is about time for him to expand his cultural horizons by engaging them.

In the future, he wants to become an entrepreneur and engage in management and marketing, which he is currently studying in university (he does not plan to continue working for Apple), while his greatest concern is his mother and

younger sister. He thinks he needs to be financially responsible to support his mother and his sister, who plans to go to university. His father is not in touch with his ex-wife and children anymore. Tsou may have been educated as a member of an elite when he was little, but he was never spoiled. His mother educated him about social rules since he was very young so that he could do anything by himself. For instance, she taught him how to buy air tickets and withdraw money from his savings when he was five years old. He did not understand why she taught these things to her little boy back then, but in retrospect, she might have already anticipated a divorce and having to work, so she wanted her son to do everything by himself. Thanks to his mother's discipline, he has been independent since he was a child and has a strong sense of responsibility.

### **5.3 Plurilingualism Amongst Asian Students**

This section addresses Research Question 1: How did Asian students become plurilingual?

#### **5.3.1 Parents' and School's Involvement**

The choice of my participants' first foreign language (FFL)<sup>4</sup>, in addition to their mother tongue, was imposed by their parents and by the schools they attended. There seem to be three types of parents emerging from my participants' interviews. The first type is influenced by ideological wants and desires that align with the dominant neoliberal emphasis on human capital acquisition even if this is not wholly unique to neoliberalism. They regard English as an important soft skill that adds value to their human capital and believe in it without questioning it. In addition, they also believe that learning English from an early age is advantageous in accessing better education and job opportunities. This is what

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<sup>4</sup> In this paper, the ordinal number denotes the order participants started to study languages, so it is not based on the fluency or skills.

O'Regan (2014) and Simpson & O'Regan (2018) refer to as the "fetishism of English". As a result, from kindergarten onward, they "force" (the word "forced" was actually used by all my participants) their children to go to schools where English is used as the medium of instruction. These parents expect their children to become fluent English speakers despite the fact that, or precisely because they themselves have little knowledge of English. The children of these parents use their parents' native language only at home, which enables them to become competent bilinguals over time. Yu Shan's, Somin's and Tsou' English educations were imposed upon her by her mother.

The second type of parents that emerged in the interviews want their children to maintain their national language and identity, as in the case of Yongsoo, who was required to go to a Korean school in Japan, and Yu Shan who was made to go to a Chinese secondary school in Malaysia by her father, although she was accepted by one of the top schools controlled by the Malaysian government. It can be argued that these parents are more concerned with the protection of their national language and identity than with the human capital acquisition that learning English is supposed to bring. In fact, Yu Shan's father abhorred her learning English, and Yongsoo had little chance to become familiar with English until he found himself interested in American music.

The third type of parents referred to in the study do not actively get involved in their children's language education. They seemingly encourage their children to study English because it is an important language, but they are not very serious about it. Tham's and Yuxia's parents belong to this type. While being influenced by the pull of English globally and what it appears to offer, they do not pursue it because they are too busy with work to focus on their children's education. Since Tham was not at all interested in learning English, his first foreign language (FFL), it was easy to ignore parental suggestions about English, and he spoke only his mother tongue, Vietnamese, at home and outside. Tham considered English only as a mandatory subject at school and university, and studied it reluctantly, until

he found himself interested in learning Japanese, which led him to Japan and an eventual awakening to English as a language that could be useful to him. On the other hand, Yuxia, a Chinese female student, liked studying all subjects, including English, when she was an elementary school student, so she was good at English as her FFL, too. Nevertheless, it did not mean she was interested in English. She studied it solely to get good grades. Her language interest was more in Japanese, which she started to learn by herself when she was a high school student in China up to a high enough level to get into a Japanese university despite pressure from her society to the effect that learning Japanese is as unpatriotic.

Both the schools they attended in the past and the Japanese university they currently attend also influenced my participants' first foreign language (FFL). As mentioned above, the schools Yu Shan and Yongsoo attended had particular ideological motivations with regard to the reasons for learning languages, and this had an effect on their acquisition of FFL. As a result, Yu Shan's FFL was Chinese, whereas Yongsoo's was Korean. In contrast to their experiences, Tham attended schools from primary to university in Vietnam, which had no particular ideological motivations as to the reasons for learning languages, and Tham simply followed the curriculum, in which English courses were offered as a mandatory subject but not specifically emphasized. He did not focus on learning English, but he enjoyed learning Japanese in his university days in Vietnam. Then, after starting a university life in Japan, in addition to his further interest in learning Japanese, he also became interested in learning English due to the university's promotion of English. Yuxia's interest in learning English also arose in the same manner. In their cases, while the impetus for learning Japanese came from their longing for Japanese culture, learning English came from the educational philosophy of their Japanese university, which was greatly influenced by dominant trends and discourses regarding English as the global language of communication and as a commodity in itself (Heller & Duchêne,

2012; Del Percio & Flubacher, 2017; Simpson & O'Regan, 2018). In fact, they confessed that they are not as interested in English-speaking cultures as in Japanese ones, but they started to feel that they needed to study English hard. In this respect, it can be argued that they are also subject to Japanese social structures and norms, which emphasize English more than their own language.

Thus, the participants' first foreign language (FFL) as well as their mother tongue were clearly influenced by their schools' beliefs which had been influenced by neoliberal discourses and ideologies and also by parental views about the retention of their national identity, as in the case of Yongsoo's and Yu Shan's fathers. In short, their choice of the FFL did not arise from their own personal desires. Rather they had no choice but to gain it regardless of their personal wishes or preferences.

### **5.3.2 Participants' Spontaneous Interest**

On the one hand, their second and subsequent foreign languages (SFL) were gained as a result of their interest in the language's native culture. All my participants, except for Yongsoo, started to learn Japanese as their SFL. For Yongsoo, on the other hand, English was his SFL. It is worth mentioning here that it is not unusual for Europeans to speak several European languages that share linguistic similarities since several of them are derived from Latin. In addition, the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFRL) promotes plurilingualism involving European languages, whereas it is not common for Asian people to speak several Asian languages as they have little in common, specifically in terms of pronunciation and writing. Moreover, Asian countries, particularly Japan, Korea, and Taiwan tend to encourage "exclusive bilingualism" (Yanase, 2007), according to which official policy is primarily for the acquisition of the national language (e.g., Mandarin or Korean) and English, with any additional local languages and dialectal varieties also tolerated or supported to a greater or lesser extent. Given this situation, my participants

learning Japanese as the SFL necessitated making a great effort to learn the language, particularly in a context where many people, including even Japanese people, do not see Japanese as especially useful outside Japan. As an article in *Japan Today* states (“Why you shouldn’t learn Japanese,” 2013), Japanese is useful only in Japan. In fact, it is the case that some foreigners living in Japan for a long time think that there is no merit in learning Japanese and make no effort to learn it at all.

In contrast, my participants chose to learn Japanese when they were very young because they simply wanted to enjoy Japanese cartoons and animations without the need for translation in order to deepen their understanding of these media, or they had a longing for Japanese advanced science and technology. As most of them started to learn Japanese at an early age, they did not even think about whether or not learning Japanese would lead to niche cultural capital. Even Tham, who started to learn it later, initially ignored his father’s advice to study English for his future career but voluntarily studied Japanese. How could he have considered Japanese niche cultural capital?

This recalls the Korean boom in Japan in the early 2000s, which caused a sensation and became a social phenomenon. People, especially ordinary middle-aged Japanese housewives, became fascinated by Korean pop culture, which even led them to learning Korean and even traveling to Korea. They did this solely because they became huge fans of good-looking Korean actors and singers, even though they had no intention of using Korean for work or to make a living in the future. As another example, I have students from European countries. They study Japanese simply to gain a deeper understanding of the content of cartoons (including cosplay)<sup>5</sup> or modern Japanese culture.

In this way, like these middle-aged Japanese women, and these European students, my participants learn a foreign language other than English for the

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<sup>5</sup> Cosplay, a contraction of the words "costume play," is a hobby in which cartoon or manga fans called "cosplayers" wear costumes and fashion accessories associated with a specific character.



purpose of enjoyment and of feeling a closer connection to its locality. In other words, they learn other languages one after another primarily for entertainment and knowledge-oriented purposes rather than instrumental or utilitarian purposes, which allow them to become plurilingual.

#### **5.4 Summary of the Chapter**

Following *a narrative analysis* (“studies whose data consist of actions, events, and happenings, but whose analysis produces stories” (pp. 5-6), I presented the stories of my participants. More precisely, I provided biographical information about them and recounted their past and current experiences and also focused on answering RQ1: How did Asian students become plurilingual? Their first foreign language (FFL) as well as their mother tongue were clearly influenced by their parents’ and their schools’ beliefs about language, and either they have been influenced by neoliberal discourses and ideologies concerning human capital or parental views about the retention of their own national identity. In short, their choice of FFL did not arise from their own personal desires. Rather they had no choice but to gain it regardless of their personal wishes or preferences.

On the one hand, their second and subsequent foreign languages were gained as a result of their interest in the language’s native culture rather than for instrumental or utilitarian purposes. Therefore, learning a second or subsequent foreign language is not necessarily related to neoliberal discourses about language learning among young Asian students.

However, regarding English, whether it is their first or second foreign language, they consider it human capital in addition to being a global common language connecting people across the globe. Hence, they consider English a commodified language and continue to improve their own English skills. In this way, their attitude toward learning English has been influenced by neoliberal discourses among young Asian students.

## Chapter 6 – Vernacular Cosmopolitans

### 6.1 Introduction

In line with RQs 2, 3, and 4, in this chapter, I examined the participants' narratives. Following Polkinghorne's (1995: 5-6) *analysis of narratives* ("studies whose data consist of narratives or stories but whose analysis produces paradigmatic typologies or categories)," excerpts from the participants' narratives were selected and categorized according to three themes previously identified as part of my working definition of vernacular cosmopolitanism: openness to the world, ethnic rootedness, and a sense of social justice. I coded and reconstructed the narratives under these themes. Each theme is developed and illustrated by excerpts from all three participants' narratives. Each theme is divided into subthemes. However, the emergence of subthemes was not pre-determined. Therefore, subthemes belonging to each theme should be answer keys to the RQ. Under the theme of "openness to other cultures," for instance, I identified two subthemes concerned with "entertainment and knowledge-oriented language learning" and "interaction with the locals." These two subthemes are answers to RQ 2: How do they express openness to other cultures? Each subtheme is developed and illustrated by excerpts from the three participants' narratives, which are more prominent than the other three in that each narrative highlights one of the dimensions of a subtheme. Hence, the structure of this chapter is as follows:

#### **Theme #1 (pre-determined)**

Subtheme #1 (emerging from data; not pre-determined)

Data excerpt

Discussion

Subtheme #2 (emerging from data; not pre-determined)

Data excerpt

Discussion

**Theme #2 (pre-determined)**

Subtheme #1 (emerging from data; not pre-determined)

Data excerpt

Discussion

Subtheme #2 (emerging from data; not pre-determined)

Data excerpt

Discussion

**Theme #3 (pre-determined)**

Subtheme #1 (emerging from data; not pre-determined)

Data excerpt

Discussion

Subtheme #2 (emerging from data; not pre-determined)

Data excerpt

Discussion

**6.2 Openness to Other Cultures**

This section addresses Research Question 2: How do Asian students demonstrate openness to other cultures?

**6.2.1 Entertainment and Knowledge- Oriented Language Learning**

Willingness to learn the language of a host country indicates that you show openness to other cultures since language is a part of culture. All my participants show willingness to learn languages one after another, unlike the choice of their first foreign language (FFL) imposed by their parents and school they attended. Namely, their second and subsequent foreign languages (SFL) were gained as a result of their interest in the language's native culture, not of instrumental purposes.

In Yongsoo's case, his SFL is English. He was satisfied with having Korean and Japanese languages as a third generation of Korean (*zainichi*)<sup>1</sup> when he lived in Fukushima, but meeting many people in Tokyo changed his attitude toward learning English. He remarked:<sup>2</sup>

At school in Tokyo, I had opportunities to encounter many interesting classmates, and I found myself that I really like talking to people. These people inspired me to think that if I could speak English, I would expand my horizons further. Of course, I still have a deep emotional attachment to friends and school back in Fukushima. But as I made a lot of friends after moving to Tokyo, I started to imagine that if I had friends from all over the world, my life might be much more fun and richer. This is exactly when I started to feel like studying in an English-speaking country.

In addition, English songs his older brother always listened to triggered his interest in learning further.

I didn't particularly have a sense of longing for Hollywood celebrities, like female students usually have, and I even didn't think that learning English would be helpful in my future before, like other people believe. However, my older brother always listened to English songs, and I happened to hear these songs. Eventually, I became fascinated with the melodies, and I wanted to know the meaning of the lyrics and to sing them, which ultimately motivated me to study English and then study further in an English-speaking country.

Furthermore, he expressed his desire to study French as follows:

Currently, I am interested in studying in France. It's because I simply want to learn French, and IESEG, the university I'd like to attend is very attractive for learning business. I studied in Canada in my high school days and I had opportunities to visit the USA. Therefore, I'd like to see the non-English-speaking world. I don't know why I am so fascinated by French. It's true that Chinese is spoken in many places, and speaking Chinese might be useful in business, but I never consider whether or not learning French or another language is helpful in my future job. I know some people who study English for

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<sup>1</sup> The term *zainichi* refers to permanent ethnic Korean residents of Japan.

<sup>2</sup> The languages used in my interviews with my participants were Japanese (Yongsoo and Somin), a mix of Japanese and English (Yu Shan, Tham, and Yuxia), and English (Tsou). All excerpts were translated into English or the original English edited by the researcher.

the purpose of only getting a job, and they don't look happy at all. I can't be like them. Although I'm not specifically influenced by French movies or musicians, I just feel like I want to learn French. Maybe this is *akogare* (longing) for French culture from my imagination. I believe in a real sense that mastering a language is required to appreciate its culture.

Apparently, for him learning other languages has little association with working for a transnational company for the moment.

In Yu Shan's case, despite her parents' language ideology, she chose to study Japanese as she developed a longing for Japanese pop culture, which even led her to study in Japan. K-pop triggered her interest in learning Korean, too. Currently she is not solely enjoying Japanese pop culture but also engaging with a Japanese society to understand its culture and people. She remarked:

If you know a language, you can communicate directly with the local people. Acquiring a language enables you to grasp delicate shades of meaning of the language. This means that acquiring a language enables you to understand its culture not superficially but profoundly. In fact, as I speak Japanese well (if I may say so myself), I can get along with Japanese people and understand how Japanese people really feel about foreigners, especially other Asian people. If I didn't speak Japanese, they wouldn't talk to me. In fact, Japanese are prejudiced toward other Asian people and discriminate against them. In Japan, Japanese people always get together with Japanese people, so I feel that especially in Japan, mastering its language is crucial to participate in a Japanese society, even at school, where all Japanese students learn English. English doesn't work, to say nothing of Chinese.

In addition, because of her motto "think globally, act locally," she tries to be open-minded toward cultural others and follow the rules of a new place. For her, language is one of these rules. Therefore, she is strict about learning language.

Personally, I think that trying to speak with limited or broken language sounds childish. For instance, I deal with many foreigners asking me directions or other questions in broken Japanese at a tourist information center where I'm working part-time because I physically look like the Japanese. I don't think their broken Japanese is cute; rather stupid, to be honest. I don't want anyone to see me like that. In short, I think that people who are living in a different culture should keep the proverb "When in Rome, do as the Romans do" in mind. I don't mind

if I'm identified as a Japanese due to my Japanese fluency. I'm rather happy about it because I can become confident about my Japanese skills.

At the same time, she regards English as a convenient language to obtain worldwide knowledge. She argues that

...in this 21<sup>st</sup> century, when we can obtain almost all information through the Internet, so minimum English ability is essential. It makes a big difference whether or not you know English in terms of the amount of information you can obtain through the Internet because the language used on the Internet is predominantly English.

She believes in herself that she is adept at acquiring language skills faster than other people.

Tham's first foreign language (FFL) is English required by school, and second foreign language (SFL) is Japanese that he personally wanted to learn. Originally his interest in Japanese technology motivated him to learn Japanese, but in a real sense, he remarked the meaning of learning language.

Knowing another language enables you to gain a further understanding of its culture. For example, I think if you are just a traveler to Japan without knowing its language, you might just think "Japanese people are as kind as you've heard!" However, once you know its language profoundly, you can learn about the real Japanese character. They have *honne* (true desires and feelings) and *tatemae* (publicly stated opinions). Of course, other languages also have this kind of convention, but it is said that Japanese often use *tatemae* and ambiguous words to maintain good relationships because they value harmony and avoid making individuals stand out, which prevents them from becoming individual and self-assertive, so there is a big gap between what they say and what they are really thinking. In short, if you don't know a language, you cannot understand its culture in a real sense.

When he was in Vietnam, he had little interest in learning English, but Japanese society has influenced on his attitude toward learning English.

Recently I have wanted to learn English too since I entered this university. I have been required to speak English, but as I didn't study English well in Vietnam and I've now been immersed in a Japanese environment, including school and a part-time job, English doesn't come out of my mouth. My Japanese is better than

my English. However, recently, I often hear “globalization” and “becoming new global leaders” here and there, and many courses I’m taking in this university are conducted in English. This enlightened me about the importance of English ability. At the same time, I have friends from China, Hong Kong, Korea, and Taiwan, and our communication language is Japanese and English mixed. Their English is excellent. These situations made me feel like studying English.

In addition, Japanese people’s attitude toward him also made him change his attitude toward learning English.

Although I still like Japan very much and keep learning Japanese, Japanese people are not so open to other Asians, which is different from my imaginary Japan when I was in Vietnam. Therefore, while thinking about a future workplace, I started to feel like working for a company, whether Japanese one or not, that is open to foreigners, including other Asians. In that case, I imagine English skills are required. When I started to learn Japanese, Japanese advanced technology and traditional culture motivated me to learn, but regarding English, Japanese people encouraged me to study English. Ha ha!

Next year, Tham is planning to take a French class in addition to a Japanese advanced class. The reason for taking a French class is based on his interest in French architecture that remains in Vietnam. He remarked: “Knowing French might be helpful to obtain a better understanding of French architecture”.

## **Discussion**

This section focuses on the participants’ orientation toward language learning. Recent studies in applied linguistics suggest that beliefs that acquisition of a global language such as English will help one access better opportunities in education and the job market can lead many to actively pursue the language, even when the language is one that has not traditionally been treated as compatible with their deeper sense of identity (Heller & Duchêne, 2012). This belief derives from the idea that language competence is treated as an important soft skill that enhances the value of one’s human capital (Urciuoli, 2008). Therefore, “learning a language that is considered to be “valuable” becomes a

rational, productive, even responsible act of investment” (Gao & Park, 2015, p. 80).

This highly instrumental pragmatic view of language learning has prevailed due to the impact of neoliberalism globally (as discussed in Chapter 2). As a result, learners are eager to pursue their own interests and contribute to the global economy with their language skills (Bernstein, Hellmich, Katznelson, Shin, & Vinall, 2015). In particular, English is ideologically linked to modernity and modernization and is supposed to facilitate a type of global citizenship May (2011) calls “cosmopolitanism.”

It is not my intention to categorically deny the fact that generally speaking, English language learners see English as a key to a better life and believe that by learning English they will gain social mobility and greater opportunities. In fact, even most Japanese students learning English in universities believe that achieving a high score on the TOEIC test is advantageous in job hunting, and some companies, including Japanese companies, do not allow their candidates to even apply for their position without a certain TOEIC score. Therefore, students strongly believe that English is important, and they cannot avoid studying it. In this context, whether or not they like English and its cultures does not matter. In response, my aim is to encourage the awareness that some young cosmopolitan students learn foreign languages not only for instrumental or utilitarian purposes but simply because of a longing for these cultures in an era when the dominance of neoliberalism and neoliberal thinking has become ubiquitous around the world (e.g., Mirowski, 2009; Harvey, 2005).

As for English (First foreign language for all, but Yongsoo), whether English is these learners’ first or second foreign language, they have two purposes for learning it. First, they consider English a global common language with which to connect with people across the globe and expand their views. Therefore, they are highly motivated to study it. This is exactly one of the traits of vernacular cosmopolitanism: vernacular cosmopolitans have “the urge to expand their



current horizons of self and cultural identity and a wish to connect with a wider world” (para. 2). Second, as they are also aware that English is the dominant and most commodified global language, they need to improve their English skills as human capital. In this respect, their attitude toward learning English has been influenced by neoliberal discourses, directly or indirectly. However, as learning second and subsequent foreign languages arose from their interest in and longing for those cultures, their proficiency levels in those languages has become almost equal to – or even higher than – that in their proficiency in their first foreign language (FFL) or even their mother tongue. For instance, Yongsoo is confident that his English is his SFL. His English is as competent as his Korean and Japanese, while Tham speaks Japanese, his SFL better than English, his FFL.

Therefore, it can be argued that learning a second or subsequent foreign language is not closely related to neoliberal discourses and ideologies about language learning among young Asian students. Instead, they have confidence in gaining other languages one after another for achieving their dream: to experience the outside world, not for instrumental purpose.

### **6.2.2 Interaction with the locals**

In order to expand the current horizons of self and cultural identity, interaction with the local is indispensable. All my participants actively engage with the local.

While Somin is currently learning Spanish as a third foreign language, she makes further efforts to improve her Japanese so that she can take part in local Japanese communities.

I regularly interact with my classmates by inviting them to my house and introducing Korean food while we are cooking together. Food culture does not refer only to food but also includes the history of the food, practices, and attitudes. I like talking about these things while cooking with them. In addition, I have joined a tennis club in this university not only to boost my endurance and stamina but also to achieve a greater understanding of Japanese people through interactions with members of the club.

In addition, she enjoys Japanese cultural events, such as the *bon* festival<sup>3</sup> and *hanami*.<sup>4</sup> She likes visiting shrines, and whenever she does, she buys *omamori*, which is a good luck charm kept as protection from illness, accidents, and disasters.

I like Japanese cultural events, so I always participate in these events naturally, as if I were Japanese. I immerse myself in Japanese culture. Maybe this is one of my characteristic features, but I always try to experience new things without bias and without favor. So whether there is more convenience or inconvenience in Japan compared to Korea, I don't judge which country is superior or inferior, but always consider these simply as differences, and I accept them, so I am never disappointed. I realized after a year studying abroad in Japan, it's realistically impossible for individuals to have an impact on the political relationship between Japan and Korea. However, I think that a nation consists of a huge group of individuals in the end. Therefore, what I can do is to keep away from political interests and interact with Japanese individuals as a person. Then I believe that as understanding between individuals expands, it could bring about a reconciliation between nations in the end.

On the other hand, she criticizes closed attitudes to other cultures, referring to recent jingoism among young people as follows:

It is good to love your own country, even so I don't want to be a person who always criticizes other countries and cultures. I always try to feel openness toward other people and cultures by learning different languages and cultures, even food. Some Korean people bring Korean seasonings or Korean instant foods when they travel to Western countries, believing that Western food is not to their taste. I don't share the mindset of these people.

For Somin, eating local foods is also one of the interactions with the local society. In Yuxia's case, although she was vigorously opposed to studying in Japan by her colleagues and friends in her village in China, she had critical views

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<sup>3</sup> A three-day Buddhist holiday usually falling on August 13–15. During this time, the spirits of the dead are said to return to their former homes and families. People light lanterns to guide the spirits and perform *bon* dances for their entertainment.

<sup>4</sup> Cherry Blossom Viewing. In spring, when cherry blossoms are in full bloom, people picnic under the trees. Sometimes, the parties last late into the night and can become quite lively.

on their negative rumors about Japan and Japanese people, which spurred her to see Japan with her own eyes and interact with Japanese people. She remarked:

People in my village have only the negative image of the evil Japanese brought to Chinese during the wars. I gradually became doubtful about it. I mean, the war between China and Japan is a fact, but I don't think the Japanese did such tremendously evil things as people in my village have denounced. I learned about Japanese people's politeness from my grandfather and my father, who was also taught by his father. The Chinese might be extremely paranoid and exaggerate. Therefore, I wanted to see Japan with my own eyes. Our history teachers always taught only about how the Japanese did evil things during the war and talked about the Japanese negatively. But I think this is strange because in the Opium War, the British empire did very evil things to the Chinese, but no Chinese persons speak badly of British people. Why do Chinese people stick to the war with Japan? I don't want to be like them. Unfortunately, in China, we can't say we like Japan in public. If you say that, you'll be considered unpatriotic and even killed. One day a history teacher said to her students, "just between you and me in this class," the reason why China lost the war with Japan was not that the Japanese did evil things but that the Chinese ran away. However, what's written in the textbooks is that the Japanese hit below the belt for their win against China, so their victory was not a good one. Well, I don't dislike history, but I want to know a more balanced history. In China, people have long been brainwashed by Mao Tse-Tung's ideology. I wanted to go to a free country, enjoy freedom of speech and thought, and look outside China since I was in fifth grade in my elementary school.

After the several interactions with local Japanese, she found the greatness of Japanese hospitality, giving examples:

I think that what I am seeing in front of me is the truth. For instance, just look at people. In China, if you go to a store to buy something, but they don't have it, the clerk will only say "We don't have it." Then the conversation ends. On the other hand, in Japan, I actually encountered this situation. A clerk said: We are sorry that we don't have it, but we might find it in another shop. We'll look for the shop for you, so please wait a moment." You know, the Chinese are focused on commercialism, so they don't do anything if they know there's no profit for them. Another example is when Japanese people get on a train, they always wait in line, and no one cuts in, whereas the Chinese strive to be first to get on the train, push and shove, so people who want to get off can't. Comparing these daily things, Japanese hospitality and manners are wonderful; the Japanese are civilized.

Yuxia's interactions with Japanese allowed her to expand her views on Japan and Japanese in a real sense.

Tsou got involved in many activities held in a local community. In retrospect, he remarked:

I really enjoyed staying in Yanagawa. I was able to do what I wanted to do at my own pace. In the first year of my arrival, I rode a bike and explored the local area here and there, so I knew all my neighborhood. Then I started to join a volunteer club called Leo Club.<sup>5</sup> In my second year, I knew all of Yanagawa City. From that year on, I devoted myself completely to volunteering. I started to conduct a fund-raising activity twice a year and visiting nursing homes and facilities for the disabled. In my third year, I became a leader of Leo Club. In addition, I also joined a choir for peace, which is offered by UNICEF. They made a video of the choir and it was aired on a local channel. UNICEF also uses this video as one of their activities. Moreover, I was asked to help foreigners visiting Yanagawa using my English. At school, I was assigned to be a coordinator to create a relationship with high schools in Thailand, and I gave a presentation at a conference as a representative of Yanagawa High School. Furthermore, I took part in a local presentation on technology, which is held annually, to which professors from Kyushu University (one of Japan's top national universities) were invited for discussions with the students.

In this way, Tsou merged into local society and enjoyed a new life in a countryside in Japan. Even he was transformed through interaction.

## **Discussion**

In this section, I highlighted the narratives of Somin, Yuxia, and Tsou. They display the willingness and readiness to be discerningly open to and engage with the cultural other (whether near or far) and be transformed through interaction (Appiah, 2006; Delanty, 2009; Hannerz, 1990; Szerszynski & Urry, 2002). In fact, Somin immerses herself in Japanese culture, joining Japanese traditional events

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<sup>5</sup> The Leo Club is placed under the umbrella of Lions Clubs International and provides young people of the world with an opportunity for development and contribution as responsible members of the local, national, and international community. It now consists of an international network of 6,500 clubs in over 140 countries (<http://members.lionsclubs.org/EN/leos/about-leos.php>)

and even a club activity to try to understand the Japanese way of thinking, while she criticizes people who have a closed attitude toward other cultures. Thus, she likes finding differences between cultures without comparing them in terms of an inferior-to-superior relationship.

In a similar fashion, Tsou especially likes interacting with local people around where he lives and engaging in the society, which led him to becoming a Japanese delegate to a conference to play a role as a bridge between a Japanese local high school and high schools in Thailand. Currently he lives and studies in Tokyo, where the environment is completely different from that in the Kyushu countryside, but he finds it interesting in a different way. He enjoys meeting different people who are unique to a large metropolis, both in school and in his part-time workplace, and he likes observing people's behaviors. In this respect, it can be argued that he is flexible and open to change.

Yuxia reports that many Chinese people hold strongly anti-Japan and anti-Japanese sentiments across China, especially in the countryside. She started questioning anti-Japan and anti-Japanese fanaticism among local people and wanted to see Japan with her own eyes. She understands the dark historical past between China and Japan, but she does not want to fixate on the negative image. Ironically, harsh denunciations of Japan and the Japanese among Chinese people led her to develop her interest in Japan, the Japanese language, and the country's culture. Currently, she is satisfied with the fact that she believed in herself and followed her heart even in a situation where all her local friends and neighbors objected to her leaving for Japan. In fact, since she experienced Japanese hospitality at a store and witnessed good manners at the train station, she has had only a positive image of Japan and the Japanese. Like Somin, Yuxia does not like people who maintain a narrow-minded attitude as this exhibit uncritical acceptance of negative ideas and shows that they are blind to their nation's propaganda.

### **6.3 Ethnic Rootedness**

This section addresses Research Question 3: How do Asian students show ethnic rootedness?

#### **6.3.1 Sense of National Identity**

All my participants display ethnic rootedness as well as openness to other cultures.

Yongsoo's sister and brother changed their Korean names to Japanese names in order to assimilate more easily into Japanese society and avoid being discriminated by Japanese, whereas Yongsoo is proud of being of Korean origin, and he retains a sense of strong Korean identity.

If I used a Japanese name, no Japanese would recognize that I am Korean due to my fluent Japanese, and I would not be 'cast biased eyes' by many Japanese. My sister and brother, for example, changed their Korean names to Japanese names in order to assimilate more easily into Japanese society. Although I like Japan and Japanese people very much because I was born and raised in Japan, I never want to assimilate into Japanese society by going so far as to change my Korean name to a Japanese name.

Yu Shan also has a strong Chinese Malaysian identity. Although she does not care about being mistaken for a Japanese because of her fluent Japanese, she does not like being mistaken for a Chinese, her parents' origin, even though her own origin is also Chinese.

I was reading a Chinese novel on my smartphone, and suddenly a man sitting next to me made tsk-tsk sounds, saying: "Chinese." He did it so obviously that I was really shocked and wanted to insist in my mind that I am a Chinese Malaysian, not Chinese from mainland China. I do not want Japanese people to categorize the Chinese as a whole. I know that many Japanese people have a bad image of the mainland Chinese, so I do not want the Japanese to identify me as a mainland Chinese.

Tsou was born in the Dominican Republic because of his father's job and educated in different places. In addition, he speaks English like native speakers

of English, but he has a strong sense of Taiwanese identity. He transferred to a public school in Taiwan from international school as he became aware of his national identity.

Because I felt as a Taiwanese, my Chinese sucks, and I couldn't leave it the way it is, so I asked my mom to transfer me to a public school. I feel an attachment to Taiwan not only because I am Taiwanese but also because my mom lives there. I belong to where my mom is. And when I am asked whether I am Chinese or Taiwanese, I always says without hesitation that I am Taiwanese.

Furthermore, working part-time at Apple encouraged him to think that

If I can, I would like to do something to change Taiwan. Actually, I have read a lot of articles about Taiwanese people living in other countries who have thought of trying to change Taiwan to make Taiwanese people happier. I feel the same way.

## **Discussion**

Werbner (2008) does not see an opposition between cosmopolitanism and nationalism, arguing that "ethnic rootedness does not negate openness to cultural difference" (p. 15). Appiah (1996, 1998) calls this "cosmopolitan patriots" or "rooted cosmopolitanism" and proposes that we should not abandon our special affections and identifications. All my participants display openness to the world, and at the same time they show their strong sense of national identity. However, this does not mean they are jingoistic patriotism. Their patriotism emerges in a way that is linked to cosmopolitanism. For instance, Tsou was influenced by other Taiwanese who work worldwide and contributed to a Taiwan society and wants to do something to make Taiwanese people happier in the future. On the other hand, Yu Shan's patriotism comes from pressure to conform to given social norms and discourses, because she knows that many Japanese people have a negative feeling to Mainland Chinese, so she does not want them to categorize the Chinese as a whole. I will discuss this later.

### 6.3.2 A Wish for Development of Their Homes

Having a wish for development of your home indicates your affections to your home, because without affections, you would never care about your home. In particular, Tham, Somin and Yuxia are concerned about the social issues in their homes and want each country to improve the situation.

Tham criticized the Vietnamese perception of education and emphasized that good education is a foundation for the country.

Of course, I love my country, but recently Vietnam is dangerous, and people get mad at its social system. I think it's fundamentally because Vietnamese perception of education is bad. In fact, in all current educational institutions in Vietnam, students don't engage in classes but do whatever they like, yet teachers don't care about it and let them do this. In this respect, Japanese students take classes much more seriously, and teachers take care of their students with a serious commitment. Personally, I think that people's attitude toward education is important because it eventually leads to the development of the country. Educational institutions with low academic standards don't contribute to the development of the country and ultimately results in crime, though this might be extreme. Since Vietnam is in a dangerous situation right now, I'm very concerned about social issues. Current Vietnam is in enormous debt to Japan, but it looks as if it is flourishing. People feel insecure because no one knows what's going to happen in the future. Even if I go back home now, I couldn't do anything for Vietnam or even for my neighbors. What I can do now is to know other countries, then think about my country. Maybe Japan is a good example for the development of Vietnam.

Similarly, Yuxia also puts emphasis on the importance of good education. She has an awareness of inequality in education in her home, so she wants to contribute to school education in the near future.

My high school is more like a private school although it's categorized as a public school in China. It's because it was founded through investment by a business man from Hong Kong. Thanks to this school, I was able to gain a great deal of knowledge. I'd like to be like this founder, an investor in the future. I want to invest in my elementary and junior high school. Investors may be associated with the negative image that they want to make a fortune, but my idea is not that. I'll collect money from individuals and nations and use the money for the education of the poor and poor countries. I strongly believe that a good education is important, something I understood by myself. I want children in



my village to receive a good education. In my village, education is not yet good, unlike that in cities such as Beijing or Shanghai. People are still poor. I am the only one studying outside my village. In order to invest, I have to be rich first, so I chose the economics department at this university.

Somin is also concerned about Korean education, but in a different way from Tham and Yuxia. She condemned the fierce competition and elitism of education in Korea and lamented that this reality makes young promising people leave their country. She remarked:

Only elite members, including not only highly gifted children with specific talents but also children whose fathers work for international corporations such as Samsung or LG gathered in my high school. They were an elite within an elite, and they were children whose parents have invested a huge amount of money in their children's education. It's not just because they were rich, but they've been raised as an educated intellectual elite. To live up to their parent's expectations, they studied hard, to such an extent that they damaged their mental and physical health, especially when there were tests. They became nervous and sensitive, so they got into arguments over the sound of even a ballpoint pen at night in the boarding house. I saw a student crying on the stairs and another student vomiting from pressure and stress. When I saw these scenes, I completely lost my motivation to study because it made me dismayed. I entered this high school to enjoy school life, but their enthusiasm for studying ended up ruining their health. Yet even under these circumstances, their parents encouraged their children to study harder. I spent three years observing these sights. I wasn't able to understand these circumstances, and I realized I couldn't act like them.

She herself found it difficult to survive in Korea. She remarked, wishing an improvement of educational system in Korea.

Observing my schoolmates who are burning the candle at both ends, I was overwhelmed by a feeling of despair and completely lost a sense of competition. At the same time, I started to wonder if I, who lost a sense of competition, could survive in Korea. Recently, young Koreans, including myself, have had contradictory feelings. They are proud of being Korean nationals, but they feel hopeless about their future if they continue to live in Korea since it's hard to survive in Korean society under such cut-throat competition. They seek social change and take to the streets to demonstrate, with a sense of national crisis. They believe that there are numerous improvements that should be made in Korea. Young generations are sorely disappointed about their nation and give

up doing anything, including getting married, getting a good job, and having a child, so they are called the “give-up generation” in Korea. They believe that it is very difficult to succeed in Korea, but they hope that with the same amount of effort they are making now in Korea, they might succeed in foreign countries and their lives might be better. Today, the Internet slang term *tal-cho-sŏn* (“getting away from Korea”) is popular among young people. Oh...I wasn’t conscious about this, but talking to you like this now, the despair I experienced in my high school days may have encouraged me to study in Japan, too.

She criticized the current Korean society and argued that social system should be reformed.

I believe that succeeding in a foreign country could be one of the contributions [I could make] to my country. I may have thought I wouldn’t be able to achieve my dream in Korea, but maybe Japan would lead me to achieve my dream. Most young people, including myself, have negative feelings about their own nation, but I am sure they do want to make their country better. At least I feel this way. I realized it’s difficult to change people’s mind from inside, but it will be possible from outside. I mean, my nation will realize in a real sense that reform of the social system, in which only fierce competition is emphasized, often leading to suicide among young people, should be implemented after they noticed that many young people left Korea and succeeded outside of Korea. At the moment, our nation has started to notice, but done nothing yet.

### **Discussion**

In the literature, cosmopolitanism is often associated with elitism, Eurocentrism, and imperialism due to the fact that it was conceived as having its origin in the West and developed through Western modernity, so only the privileged were able to become cosmopolitans. As a result, cosmopolitanism has been regarded as “a surface-level sampler of exotic cultures, a globe-trotting elite (usually a white male), a weightless and free-floating figure without any loyalties or commitments” (Sobré-Denton & Bardhan, 2013, p. 21). In the current globalized era, this elite-oriented cosmopolitanism is sometimes replaced by “members of the jet-setting wealthy Chinese” (Werbner, 2006, p. 11) who do not display cultural openness in their new place of living, and by “members of the new global elite” (Vandrick, 2011) who have always been affluent, privileged, well-traveled students studying in the United States and other Western, English-dominant

countries and think that the world is their home and that they belong everywhere and nowhere.

However, as my participants' narratives demonstrate, they all retain ethnic rootedness by showing a wish for development of their home. Somin and Tsou especially sincerely hope that their own nation will be people-friendly and comfortable to live in, in particular emphasizing minority and women's rights. Likewise, Yuxia also sincerely wishes to provide a good education for the children of her village who cannot receive an adequate education. As her home is on the outskirts of a village, the Chinese government makes no effort to improve the quality of education in this small village, always focusing instead on big cities such as Shanghai and Beijing. Therefore, she wants to provide high-quality education for children in her home village in the future. She fully understands the importance of education.

Although they lament current social and political conditions in their home societies and left their home, where heavy social injustice, fierce competition severe enough to cause mental damage, discrimination against the weak and minorities, ultra-nationalistic views of history, and gender inequalities linger, they want their nation to become a better place to live in and ultimately want to contribute to their home society in a direct or indirect manner in the future. They feel an attachment to their home and belong to it at the bottom of their hearts. If they did not feel any affection for their home, they would be indifferent to their nation's fate.

#### **6.4. Strong Sense of Social Justice**

This section addresses Research Question 4: How do Asian students reveal a sense of social justice?

#### 6.4.1 Being Against Racial Discrimination While Being Discriminated Against, yet Conforming to Japanese Norms

My participants have been more or less in the face of racism. All the more for the experiences of encountering racial discrimination, they strongly object to it.

When Yongsoo went to Korean school, he encountered racial discrimination. He remarked:

I had the experience of being looked at with a pair of colored glasses by Japanese media when North Korea conducted a nuclear test, and Kim Jong Il died. As soon as I went through the campus gate where Japanese mass media were waiting for students and school staff to come out, I was asked to comment on the test or Kim's death day after day, clearly with discriminatory eyes. I wanted to say I am not North Korean. Since I have been discriminated against like this and often felt unpleasant, and I know exactly how people who are discriminated feel, I never ever discriminate other people. Never!

Yongsoo objects to the dictatorship under the Kim regime of North Korea, but at the same time, he laments the fact that both North and South Korea used to be one nation and ethnically the same people, but now the divided nations and shows his compassion for people in North Korea.

In addition, returning to Japan reminded Yongsoo of his identity in Japan as *zainichi Korean*.

It was when Welcome Week for freshmen took place. I was interested in a club activity and I was just going to take a look at to see how it is, but I had to introduce myself in front of the members and other freshmen. I started to say, "Nice to meet you. My name is Chong Yongsoo." Then, suddenly someone said, "Are you Korean? You speak Japanese very well," so I said, "Yes, I'm Korean, but I was born and grew up in Japan. From elementary to junior high school, I went to Korean school, so I speak Korean, too." Then immediately I heard someone behind whispering with a discriminatory tone of voice "Oh, he is *zainichi Korean*. He is from a Korean school." I was angry in my mind, but I tried not to display my anger. I am ambivalent feelings about Japan. While I like Japan, where I was born and grew up, from the bottom of my heart, I am disappointed with the fact that some Japanese, including young people, feel animosity toward *zainichi* Koreans.

He does not want to hide his Korean identity, but he tries to conform to a Japanese convention in which refraining from self-assertiveness is required.

Although I found myself liking the direct way of saying when I was in Canada, I realized I couldn't do the same way as I did in Canada in Japan, where "keep your head down" is a good way, and on top of that, I use my Korean name to show my Korean identity, but this sometimes may lead to trouble. Currently I am losing my confidence in expressing myself and taking a leadership role. Therefore, these days, even when I encounter conflicting opinions, I don't articulate my ideas but shut myself up and just keep a distance from the opponent. Recently I get the feeling that I would be less discriminated against in other countries than in Japan and might get along with in a society where cultural diversity is embraced. In Canada, I found that there are many immigrants, so I felt liberated from the prejudices of the Japanese. I want a Japanese society to embrace racial diversity which allows me to act like myself.

In addition, he felt that submerging himself only in Japanese and Korean societies result in taking a narrow view of the world.

Whenever my Japanese coworkers at a part-time workplace café see Chinese customers coming in, they immediately say: "Here are noisy Chinese again! They have bad manners." I wanted to say that all Chinese are not necessarily rude or impudent. I learned this in Canada because I met many nice and well-behaved Chinese. If I hadn't studied in Canada, I might have felt the same way as my coworkers, so I want to see the outside world. Japanese young people should expand their current view of the world. They have been brainwashed by mass media that seem to emphasize the bad images of China.

Although he likes Japan and its people, he disagrees with their racial discrimination against *zainichi* and Chinese.

Yu Shan does not like Japanese narrow-mindedness toward other Asians, so she thinks Japan is a good place to visit for sightseeing, but to live. She lamented racial discrimination in Japan.

Of course, I encountered several forms of discrimination at my workplaces. First, at a casual Japanese restaurant. As I was always washing dishes because it was endless, the boss suddenly threw cooking ingredients and yelled at me "Since you can't speak Japanese well [my Japanese was not proper for customers back then], we hired you as kitchen staff [in this restaurant, kitchen staff are only

men]. Don't just keep washing dishes at such a busy time! Stir-fry vegetables! Make it snappy! You are a woman, but it doesn't matter. You should do it!!" Since then, I couldn't stand it anymore and quit the job. Another event happened in a different part-time place, which is an amusement park. I was having OJT (on-the-job training) at the information center inside the theme park. While my trainer went away for a few minutes, an incident occurred. An old man came up to me, saying that he wanted a stamp for his parking ticket, which is one of the services for the customers who come to the theme park. They can get a few hours of free parking with the stamp. However, I misunderstood him and gave him the wrong information. He then got very angry and looked at my name tag written "Yu Shan" and shouted at me: "Go back to China if you don't understand such easy Japanese! We don't need foreigners like you!!" I didn't know what to do and kept apologizing, but I was really frustrated inside my heart and panicked, so no words came out from my mouth. I felt sad that there is still overt racial discrimination like this in Japan despite the fact that Japan is one of the developed countries and has attracted foreigners.

Even more recently, Yu Shan was shown a discriminatory attitude by a Japanese person at her current part-time work place, a tourist information center in a major station in Tokyo.

A customer came up and asked me randomly about a leaflet about a famous spot, and I treated him politely as a customer, as always. He wasn't harsh to me until finally he said: "Are you a foreigner (*gaijin*)?" I said "Yes, I am." And then he said: "Hmm, no wonder you have an accent." And walked away. I wasn't frustrated, but I felt unhappy about it. I know that we foreigners cannot speak with perfect Japanese intonation no matter how much we try, but I don't like the way he called *gaijin*. We can use this term to joke around with Japanese people, but not in the way he talked to me. I think it was very rude. Again, Japan is a developing country in this respect.

Although she did not articulate the word, anti-discrimination, her narratives above are enough evidences that she is against racial discrimination.

Tham found it difficult to have a close relationship with Japanese classmates and he is always alone in the class.

People in Tokyo, including my classmates and coworkers, are so cold that I can't make any Japanese friends here. They are superficially nice, but they seem to avoid having a close relationship with me, and sometimes I even feel discriminated against. For example, the other day, one of my classmates discussed a topic deeply with me and talked a lot with a smile in the class, but

once leaving the classroom, he suddenly changed his attitude toward me. When I ran into him in a different place on campus, I was going to say “hello,” but he glanced at me, pretended not to see me and ignored me. I was shocked by this incident. But in the next class, he acted as if nothing had happened and talked to me with a smile again. In Vietnam, this kind of thing never happens. Once you talk in a friendly way with others anywhere, people always talk no matter where you are, and vice versa. Vietnamese relationships are very clear-cut. I have no idea what Japanese people really think because they don't say anything. Did I say something that offended him? I want Japanese people to be more open to other Asians in a real sense, otherwise Japan is not globalized yet.

He had similar experiences to this incident in his part-time job place, too. He is overwhelmed by a sense of alienation, but he attributes his unsuccessful relationship with Japanese to his lack of Japanese skills, and still tries to adapt to Japanese society.

Japanese co-workers at my part-time workplace (Japanese traditional pub) do not try to talk to me even during a break. They are always together to talk about something funny. I often hear them laughing loudly. At first, they kindly talked to me, but once they found it difficult to make a smooth conversation with me, they gave up talking to me. In addition, one day the manager yelled at me because the number of ice cube I put in a glass was wrong. I did not know about this rule (Vietnamese are easy-going, so no one cares about it), but he said he had told me before. Then, I realized that my Japanese is not good enough for me to achieve a close relationship with them. But if asked, I participate in drinking parties with them after work to build a trusting relationship although I'm really worried about money, ha ha. I think that now Japan has decided to accept workers from overseas to make up for the labor shortage, so Japanese people should be more open to foreigners and abolish racial discrimination.

## **Discussion**

In particular, Yongsoo, Yu Shan and Tham articulated that Japanese people are prejudiced against other Asians, including Korean residents in Japan. Yongsoo was born and grew up in a rural part of in Japan, so he feels a strong attachment to Japan. Even so, he feels that Japanese people have a narrow-minded view of Korean residents, and believes that other countries would accept him just the way he is, no matter his nationality. He expects that compared to Japan, more heterogeneous countries would allow him to show his identity as an ethnic

Korean more openly. Moreover, although he found himself in Canada and now likes to express his opinions directly when encountering opposing viewpoints, he is hesitant to do so in Japan in order to keep the harmony that is so valued in Japan.

Yu Shan and Tham used to think well of Japanese people in their imaginary world before they came to Japan. However, they now realize that Japanese people, including their classmates and coworkers in their part-time workplace, smile on the surface but seem to avoid getting along with other Asians. They stressed that even in university classes, it is difficult for them to have good relationships with their Japanese classmates without fluent Japanese. Even with a good command of Japanese, it is still difficult for them to have heart-to-heart discussions and to understand what Japanese people really think. The more they become familiar with Japanese customs and manners, the more they are disappointed at exclusive and discriminatory Japanese attitudes. However, they try to put up with heartless attitude expressed by some heartless Japanese and to abide by Japanese social rules.

In fact, they confess to having ambivalent feelings. As Tham mentioned, he eventually became accustomed to Japanese narrow-mindedness and does not care anymore about it. He even thinks that his lack of Japanese proficiency impedes him from making close Japanese friends. However, in order to build a better relationship with them, he participates in drinking parties after work although he concerns about financial matters. It seems he still sticks to the positive image of the Japanese that has been spread in Vietnam. In the case of Yu Shan, she also admitted that although she does not like Japanese jingoism and exclusiveness, she does not mind being identified as a Japanese due to her fluent Japanese, while she does not like being identified as mainland Chinese, whom many Japanese people dislike and criticize. Past experiences of being discriminated against by some Japanese due to a lack of Japanese fluency may make her feel this way more strongly.



Through these bitter experiences, they are against racial discrimination and even suggest that Japan should abolish it because Japan is aiming for a globalized society and accepting workers from overseas.

Although they have experienced prejudice from Japanese people and suffered from discrimination, all of them have a strong sense of wanting to be seamlessly woven into Japanese society. They even try to follow the language ideology advocated by their university, in which learning English is emphasized. As Aboulafia (2010) argues, “A cosmopolitan may be someone who has developed a deep respect for the (...) worth of different cultures” (p. 2), their act matches this.

Yet, at the same time, it also can be argued that social power, structure, discourse or ideologies in Japanese society causes them to conform to Japanese norms. This aspect will be discussed more in detail in Chapter 7.

#### **6.4.2 Compassion and Empathy for Others with Intelligence**

All my participants demonstrate empathy toward others. Yongsoo expresses compassion for People in North Korea, and Yu Shan and Tham do for Fukushima people who lost their beloved family members due to the 2011 Japan earthquake and tsunami. This section highlights the narratives of Somin, Yuxia and Tsou.

Somin is studying women’s and minority rights. As she came to understand these rights, she started to have critical views of media that create programs targeting only majority groups and ignore minorities, including disabled people. Therefore, she argues that media programs should be produced in a more balanced manner, and she wants to be a media producer to solve this problem.

Currently, I am studying the human rights of women and minorities. When I was a second-year high school student, I read books, newspaper columns, and articles about feminism and a minority called LGBT.<sup>6</sup> I took part in events dealing with these topics and joined a demonstration to protest against the neglect of women’s and minority rights. The circumstances of women and

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<sup>6</sup> LBGT is the abbreviation of Lesbian, Bisexual, Gay, and Transgender.

minorities differ depending on the country. Both Korea and Japan might be in a similar situation, but in Western countries, I assume the human rights of women and minorities must be better understood and protected. I would like to know about differences in how they are treated in their country. After learning about them in depth, I want to be a media producer aiming not only at regular people but also at these groups. After starting to learn about them, I changed my attitude to the media and started to watch the media critically.

Somin can understand and agrees with the voices of feminists and minorities who are still generally considered strange and a nuisance in Korea. She thinks that this is due to the media and questions biased news coverage.

In Yuxia's case, not only did she do well in school, she also did volunteer work at a nursing home. She visited the home during the summer in her high school days, and her work was simply to listen and talk to lonely elderly people. She remarked:

I felt compassion for them. Their children promised frequent visits when they made their parents enter a nursing home. But they don't come to visit. They came only once. These elderly people actually want to live with their children, but their children left home for cities, so I just felt like doing something if there's anything I can do for them. I enjoyed listening to their stories because they were more like a living dictionary. I learned a lot of things from them. And on top of that, I actually wanted to know exactly how they feel about living in a nursing home because I want to live with my grandmother after I get married in return for my grandfather's kindness, but I didn't know how my grandmother feels about living with me. My grandfather died when I was in fifth grade in elementary school, so I wasn't able to repay him for teaching me a lot of things. Therefore, I want to repay his wife instead, and it was good that I was able to listen to their real feelings in person and find out how elderly people feel living in a nursing home. Furthermore, my talk cheered them up, so I was very satisfied.

She expressed her compassion for the lonely elderly.

Tsou is currently working part-time at an Apple store, which values not only his language skills but also his communication skills. He tried applying to this company without any expectation he would be hired, only because he likes Apple products. More importantly, he likes Apple's philosophy, which encourages employees to help local communities through the Apple Global Volunteer Program. He also showed his interest in volunteering.

I am currently interested in being a volunteer. Thanks to Apple, I'll have opportunities to volunteer through Apple. I'm still young, so it's difficult to volunteer by myself. Even if I want to do something, I don't know what to do. But Apple empowers their employees to receive training to help organize charities events in their local communities so that employees can find activities where they can volunteer their time for their communities. I had a negative image that workers in Apple are elite, but when I got hired and started to talk to them, I realized that their backgrounds are not elite, and that their experiences or unique characters are valued. Therefore, belonging to Apple helps me to grow as a person.

Recently he conducted research on gender equality and work and life balance in Taiwan, and found that there are still many obstacles for women to gain a feeling of equality.

In Taiwan as in other Asian countries, people naturally cherish a custom. They are afraid to change. We should abandon the conventional view that men are to earn a living outside and women are to do housework. Although the social system is undergoing change a bit, this stereotypical view still lingers in Taiwan.

Tsou has observed this kind of mood in Taiwanese society since he was little, and he believes that his parents' relationship is also based on this social system. He developed his empathy for women through his mother.

Furthermore, he recently took a university course called Company Social Responsibility (CSR), through which he started to think about what it means to be kind and charitable to others, especially the deprived, who are distant cultural others. He argues that:

In many cases, people simply donate money out of pity for the poor, believing that their money helps alleviate starvation, but when I watched a DVD in class featuring the lives of African people, I realized that they are less starving than we think and actually make their own money by doing business. They just lead an ordinary life and enjoy a good quality of life focusing on happiness and desire. Therefore, I started to think that we think they are poor, but they don't think they are poor. Donating money is not a bad thing and sometimes that's the best we can do, but we should realize that rather than just donating money, we need to make the additional effort to understand their real situations and find out what they really need.

When he joined the Leo Club in his high school days, he mainly conducted a fundraising activity for disaster victims, the disabled, the elderly, and children who need support to grow. He also carried out a fund drive for the charity on Japanese 24-Hour Television. However, after entering university and working for Apple, he started considering what effective donations are.

## **Discussion**

As Nussbaum (1997, 2003) stresses, for humans to be cosmopolitans, imagination and compassion should be cultivated. However, compassion is not mere emotion but emotion with reason. Multiculturalism is required in order to arouse imagination and a feeling of compassion. This indicates that understanding the cultures and values of people who belong to different classes, races, nationalities, and gender from our own may contribute to the elimination of the prejudices many people feel due to these differences. As a result, a feeling of compassion is generated. Moreover, for Nussbaum, compassion should be extended not only to people outside our boundaries but also to those who are in different conditions from ours, even within the same boundaries. She calls this “moral cosmopolitanism.”

In the same manner, citing Adam Smith, Appiah (2006) claims that cosmopolitans feel empathy for strangers and have an informed moral sense. That is, they should feel empathy for strangers not based on the fact that they “are moved by their suffering” but in response to “reason, principle, conscience, the inhabitant of the breast” (p. 174). In short, what is needed “is the exercise of reason, not just explosions of feeling” (p. 170). Appiah argues that we should understand the economic, cultural, and political complexities of the lives of distant others through empathy and intelligence. From this viewpoint, he defines cosmopolitanism as “intelligence and curiosity as well as engagement” (p. 168). In this study, empathy means what Calloway-Thomas (2010) defines as “the ability imaginatively to enter into and participate in the world of the cultural

Other cognitively, affectively, and behaviorally” (p. 8). She particularly emphasizes the significance of empathy:

Empathy helps us to understand people whose values, views, and behavior are different from our own. Feeling sorrow for individuals who lose their homes in a hurricane, grieving for children affected by cholera in India, feeling joy over a high school drama team winning a national contest, and cheering when the villain in a motion picture is wounded are among the ways that we express empathy. A feeling of pleasure or distress, then, is not limited to those closest to us. It extends to strangers, animals, and fictional characters in our favorite novel. (p. 7)

She argues for precisely the same approach as Nussbaum’s. Furthermore, she suggests “imagining the feelings of others” (p. 9), which allows us to understand others better.

Somin feels empathy and compassion toward minorities and the weak, and she is becoming a human rights activist. She was enlightened in this regard in her high school days by a newspaper article, and thus became interested in these issues. Then she started to read about these issues and finally participated in a demonstration to protect their rights because she found that minorities and the weak have been treated unfairly and imagined how they must have felt in various situations in Korea, where many people still feel prejudiced toward them. This took place while she was in the depths of despair due to living in a fiercely competitive academic society. She continuously deepens her knowledge in university and wants to become a media producer and human-rights activist who is sympathetic to people, including minorities and the weak.

Similar to Somin, Yuxia also shows compassion to the weak, especially elderly people. Perhaps this is because she spent most of the time with her grandparents when she was little and observed her grandmother who was taken care of by Yuxia’s mother at home. Thus, she was able to imagine how lonely elderly people can be if they have no one to talk to, so she visited a nursing home to listen and talk to them as a volunteer. She enjoyed talking to them as she learned many things from them. She also freely visited a senior center to play

games with them when time permitted.

In Tsou's case, his relationship with his mother may have led him to think about women's rights. Through his experience with his mother, he realized that conventional Taiwanese people's ideas hinder the entrance of women into the workforce and that employment opportunities are significantly lower for women than for men, so he imagined how difficult it still is for women to work as men's equals in Taiwan. As a result, he strongly wants to change people's stereotyped ideas by doing something different from traditional business practices, and he is now looking for a chance by taking a course in Business Leadership in university. In addition, he is willing to engage in volunteer work due to the influence of the international school he attended. In fact, he joined an international volunteer club in his high school days, and he is currently planning to join a volunteer activity called the Apple Global Volunteer Program initiated by Apple, his part-time workplace. It is worth noting here that Apple is a transnational company, so working for Apple (even as a part-timer) is inconsistent with the concept of "vernacular," but what I have wanted to focus is on how my participants think and act. Working for a major or transnational company is not a criterion for whether one is or is not a vernacular cosmopolitan. Tsou's interest is the volunteer program initiated by Apple.

In parallel, Tsou also understands that being kind to the deprived requires an intelligent form of empathy and compassion. He argues that we should understand their situations and make an effort to think about what they really want us to do rather than simply donating money. This is exactly the "kindness to strangers" of the cosmopolitan view, as Appiah (2006) advocates. Their narratives are consistent with Appadurai's (2011) definition of vernacular cosmopolitanism:

...[V]ernacular cosmopolitanism also resists the boundaries of class, neighborhood, and mother tongue....This is a variety of cosmopolitanism that begins close to home and the familiar but is imbued with a politics of hope that

requires the stretching of the boundaries of the everyday in a variety of political directions. (para.1)

### **6.5 Summary of the Chapter**

In this chapter, a paradigmatic approach was adopted to analyze the data sources, with narratives being analyzed paradigmatically to “produce taxonomies and categories out of the common elements across the database” (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 5; see also Erickson, 2004; Smeyers & Verhesschen, 2001). As a result, under the theme of “openness to other cultures,” I built up the subthemes of “Entertainment and Knowledge-Oriented Language Learning” and “Interaction with the Locals.” These subthemes are interpreted in terms of openness to other cultures (RQ2), with my participants demonstrating both aspects (see 6.2). Likewise, in terms of ethnic rootedness (RQ3), they showed a sense of national identity and a wish for helping with the development of their home country (see 6.3). Lastly, in terms of a sense of social justice (RQ4), they revealed that they are against racial discrimination because of being discriminated against, yet conforming to Japanese norms and compassion and empathy for others with intelligence (see 6.4). This shows that these elements (subthemes) construct these vernacular cosmopolitans’ agency.

## **Chapter 7 – New Vernacular Cosmopolitanism**

### **7.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter showed that all my participants exhibit elements of vernacular cosmopolitanism. Namely, they are open to other cultures and display ethnic rootedness and a sense of social justice. At the same time, I found elements that are typically found in young Asian people today and that do not conform to a postcolonial understanding of vernacular cosmopolitanism but rather to neoliberal cosmopolitanism. Moreover, I found a missing element in the notion of vernacular cosmopolitanism. This chapter will shed light on these elements, with important findings having implications for critical pedagogy.

### **7.2 Young Asian Students Today**

#### **7.2.1 Neoliberal Attitudes Toward Learning English**

Whether English is my participants' first or second foreign language, they have two purposes for learning it. First, they consider English a global common language with which to connect with people across the globe and expand their horizons. Therefore, they are highly motivated to study it. This is precisely one of the traits of vernacular cosmopolitanism: vernacular cosmopolitans have "the urge to expand their current horizons of self and cultural identity and a wish to connect with a wider world" (Appadurai, 2011, para. 2) At the same time, they are also aware that if they have high English skills, they will be in demand in the job market, so they consider English a soft skill that enhances their human capital and is in effect a commodified language. In this respect, they are categorized as dominant "global cosmopolitans" or "normative cosmopolitans," and as such are criticized by Appadurai (2001), Bhabha (1994), and Werbner (2008) for fitting into neoliberal discourses as the notion of vernacular cosmopolitanism negates neoliberal globalization.



### **7.2.2 Study-Abroad Experiences**

Unlike vernacular cosmopolitans from “the world’s poorest populations” who are “more or less independent of advanced education and privileged access to the means of travel, leisure and informed self-cultivation” (Appadurai, 2011, para. 2), young Asian students today possess cultivated knowledge (including languages) of the world beyond their immediate horizons. Despite all the facts that all my participants are concerned about the financial burden of studying in Japan because they receive little financial support from their parents at home, and even if some students receive financial support from their parents who work hard and make major sacrifices for their son’s or daughter’s tuition by cutting their own living costs, this is often not sufficient, so they rely on scholarships from both the Japanese government or their university while earning money from part-time jobs, they are well-educated and able to study in Japan. That is, they can study in Japan not only because they have cultivated knowledge including language skills but also because they seem to have a social and financial status of their parents high enough to send their children to Japanese university. In short, cultivated knowledge including language skills is without doubt a gatekeeper, but at the same time, their parents’ social and financial status might be gatekeeping factors as well.

### **7.3 Filling Gaps in the Literature and a Critical Perspective on Vernacular Cosmopolitanism**

The main purpose of this research was to explore plurilingual Asian students in a Japanese context by focusing on how they have lived on an everyday basis and constructed their agency, and whether or not they replicate the cosmopolitans who are often negatively addressed in much recent applied linguistics literature. This is to contest – and provide a correction to – the idea that cosmopolitans are necessarily members of an international rootless elite and to try to distinguish global/neoliberal cosmopolitanism from vernacular cosmopolitanism. Thus far,

only global/neoliberal cosmopolitanism has been highlighted in the literature and this has been critiqued as if all international students having plurilingual skills and crossing boundaries, especially from non-Western countries, are members of “the new global and cultural elite” (Vandrick, 2011, p. 160). These individuals apparently display the paucity of openness to other cultures and no interest in equality or social justice. In effect, they do indeed exist, but they are contested by the intercultural thoughts and actions of vernacular cosmopolitans like the participants of this study. In conclusion, in much of the applied linguistics literature, cosmopolitanism from postcolonial /critical perspective is missing. This is due largely to a current preoccupation with neoliberalism.

However, at the same time, I found there is something missing in the notion of vernacular cosmopolitanism which I used as a main theoretical framework in this study. As discussed in the previous chapter, the participants’ narratives show that the participants feel exposed to racial discrimination by Japanese, and they are under pressure to conform to given social power, structures, norms, discourses and ideologies in order to enter real Japanese society. Individuals are subjected to them, and individual subjectivity is constructed through them, and then agency – the ability and will of an actor to act in a given environment, more precisely, “the ability to be willing to be open to others and the world and the ability to engage in cosmopolitan action” (Sobré-Denton and Bardhan (2013, p. 68) – is exercised. I have found that the notion of vernacular cosmopolitanism is too focused on agency because it emphasizes “ability” and “will” to work from “ground-up efforts for addressing disparities and top-down social injustices and oppressions at local, translocal and worldwide levels” (p. 69). It does not take account of individual subjectivity arising from social power, structure, discourses and ideologies. There is a clear explanation of the relationship between agency and subjectivity by Allen (2002) as follows:

Subjectivity is a precondition for agency, after all, one cannot have the ability or capacity to act without having the ability or capacity to deliberate, that is, without being a thinking subject. (p. 135)

It can be interpreted that if social power, structure, discourse or ideologies is a condition for the possibility of subjectivity, then it will follow that each of them would be a condition for the possibility of agency as well. Although Foucault (1982) does not carefully use the distinction between subjectivity and agency (he uses the two terms almost interchangeably), he indicates that he might accept this interpretation.

The exercise of power can produce as much acceptances as may be wished for...It is a total structure of actions brought to bear upon possible actions; it incites, it induces, it seduces, it makes easier or more difficult; in the extreme it constrains or forbids absolutely; it is nevertheless always a way of acting upon and acting subject or acting subjects by virtue of their acting or being capable of action. (p. 789)

Given this perspective, the participants ways of thinking and acting, without doubt, apply to the notion of vernacular cosmopolitans, but they do not have as much agency as Werbner and postcolonial scholars suggest. We need to focus more on how those in non-dominant individuals creatively and resourcefully exercise agency. Thus, it can be said that the notion of vernacular cosmopolitanism focuses less on social power, structure, discourses and ideologies.

By further extension, Foucault (1980) takes power relations to be an always present and a structural feature of human societies. Following Foucault, I take the position that power is not simply something that can be physically possessed but a relation which is constantly being negotiated between discourses and the subjects constituted by discourses. Furthermore, power does not operate only at the macro level of powerful institutions such as the legal system, the education system, or the social welfare system, but also at the micro level of every social

encounters between ordinary people.

Finally, the findings of this research reveal the need for further studies of concrete cosmopolitan pedagogy in the Japanese context. In addition to being a researcher, I am also – and perhaps more importantly – a teacher advocating internationalization in teacher training. As mentioned in the Introduction, the number of students from foreign countries has been dramatically increasing. Therefore, exploring the issue of how cosmopolitanism can be taught as a subject in a Japanese context can contribute to stimulating both further research and university-level reforms in this global era.

#### **7.4 Research Questions**

I have addressed the research questions in detail in the previous chapters (5 and 6). For the purposes of this concluding chapter I present a brief resumé of my main findings in respect of these.

1. How did Asian students become plurilingual?
2. How do they demonstrate openness to other cultures?
3. How do they show ethnic rootedness?
4. How do they reveal a sense of social justice?

As regard RQ1 (see 5.3), their first foreign language (FFL) as well as their mother tongue were clearly influenced by their parents' and their schools' beliefs about language, and either they have been influenced by neoliberal discourses and ideologies concerning human capital or parental views about the retention of their own national identity. In short, their choice of FFL did not arise from their own personal desires. Rather they had no choice but to gain it regardless of their personal wishes or preferences.

On the one hand, their second and subsequent foreign languages were gained as a result of their interest in the language's native culture rather than for instrumental or utilitarian purposes. Therefore, learning a second or subsequent

foreign language is not necessarily related to neoliberal discourses about language learning among young Asian students.

However, regarding English, whether it is their first or second foreign language, they consider it human capital in addition to being a global common language connecting people across the globe. Hence, they consider English a commodified language and continue to improve their own English skills. In this way, their attitude toward learning English has been influenced by neoliberal discourses among young Asian students.

As for RQ2 (See 6.2), Asian students demonstrated their openness to other cultures in such a way that they learn languages one after another as they simply want to enjoy and know those cultures. In addition, they are willing to interact with the local people and get involved in their society using its language. Considering RQ 3 (See 6.3), They showed ethnic rootedness in such a way that they explicitly showed a sense of national identity and a wish for helping with the development of their home country. In regard to RQ 4 (see 6.4), they revealed a sense of social justice in such a way that they are against racial discrimination because of being discriminated against, yet conforming to Japanese norms and compassion and empathy for others with intelligence. This shows that these elements (subthemes) construct these vernacular cosmopolitans' agency.

## **7.5 Limitations of the Study**

The narrative approach enabled me to examine in depth the life experiences of a small number of Asian students attending a Japanese university and to identify how they live their lives on a daily basis rather than simply theorizing cosmopolitanism as an abstract ideal. Using the notion of vernacular cosmopolitanism as a theoretical framework, I reconstructed and analyzed my participants' narratives. The findings not only elucidate the underexplored area of non-Western, non-elite cosmopolitanism in an Asian context in the era of neoliberalism but also contribute to shedding light on a critical aspect of the

notion of vernacular cosmopolitanism and promoting cosmopolitan pedagogy for future cosmopolitans (see 7.3. and 7.4 below). However, as with all research, a number of shortcomings need pointing out.

One of the main concerns is the focus on the characteristics of a particular group of Asian students. These individuals form a highly intelligent cohort, who all attend a Japanese university that is particularly challenging to get into. Therefore, my participants do not represent a general population of Asian students studying in Japan. I will therefore refrain from making generalization to all Asian students in higher education in Japan.

A second shortcoming is the nature of the interviews. The purpose of interviews in this research was to engage individuals in conversations about their experiences as Asian students, talking both directly and indirectly about their school lives, social class, language experiences, relationships with family members, and volunteer activities as well as their future plans. In permitting a deep understanding of my interviewees' experiences and of how they position themselves in relation to these experiences, these interviews qualify as in-depth research. However, it would be oversimplifying to argue that just because a researcher can elicit in-depth stories about interviewees' lives means that these interviewees reveal the inner workings of their mind (Block, 2006). That is, the interviewer can never take it for granted that the interviews are clean information transfers through which interviewers can grasp the inner thoughts of interviewees.

Furthermore, as Block notes, since all accounts of life experiences are told in the present, interviewees may exaggerate their stories with the intention of being viewed in particular ways by others, influencing about how they wish to position themselves now rather than what really happened in the past. This is because interview talk is regarded as what Weedon (1997) (following the work of Foucault, 1981) calls "discursive fields." She defines discursive field as "competing ways of giving meaning to the world and of organizing social

institutions and processes” (p. 34). That is, any conversational interaction produced by a participant is the expression of a subject position which is linked to a particular discursive field, in which it cannot be stated that there is no power relation between participants and interviewer. These participants are my former students, and although we no longer have a relationship in terms of grading, they remain students while I am always their teacher.

Thirdly, I need to note a translation issue, namely the question of validity that focuses on “correct” interpretations. That is, “correct” transfer of meaning is the central concern. Many participants used Japanese when interviewed. Although proficiency in both languages enabled me to function in each interview, this does not guarantee that the final text is closer to the “truth” as I myself am situated in many ways in relation to the language I am working with.

### **7.6 Implications for Critical Pedagogy**

Based on the findings of my study, I would like to suggest a critical pedagogy not only from the notion of vernacular cosmopolitanism but also from a critical perspective on vernacular cosmopolitanism. In short, I support a pedagogy from a postcolonial perspective that aims to instill in students the values of openness to other cultures, ethnic rootedness, and a sense of social justice as well as a critical pedagogy that pays more attention to asymmetrical power relations and inequality. To this end, I advocate Guilherme’s (2002) critical pedagogy [hereafter CP], in which the notion of ethics is emphasized. From this perspective, the ethical aim is to protect universal human rights and pay attention to particular stories located in specific contexts. Guilherme stresses a strong link between CP and ethics, quoting Giroux (1992):

Ethics must be seen as a central concern of critical pedagogy. This suggests that educators should attempt to understand more fully how different discourses offer students diverse ethical referents for structuring their relationship to the wider society. But it also suggests that educators should go beyond the

postmodern notion of understanding how student experiences are shaped within different ethical discourses...Thus ethics is taken up as a struggle against inequality and as a discourse for expanding basic human rights. (cited in Guilherme, 2002, p. 19)

In terms of ethics, the main concerns of CP are “human suffering, dignity, and emancipation” (p. 19). Guilherme therefore argues that within this framework, CP is closely connected to “multicultural democratic citizenship education” and “has to do with individual improvement, social solidarity, and public responsibility (p. 19). This outlook appears to apply to vernacular cosmopolitan pedagogy since its aim is to challenge traditional notions of assimilationist citizenship and to criticize elitism and ethical non-engagement.

As Guilherme further explains,

[CP] is viewed as crossing disciplinary boundaries and the hierarchical division between high and popular culture. Moreover, difference is an ever-present notion that accounts for the heterogeneity of cultural production and that problematizes the relationship between cultural production and reproduction in our societies[, which] are growing ever more ethnically diverse and, hopefully, more politically aware. (pp. 18-19)

In brief, CP questions dominant cultural patterns and seeks to uncover the reasons that lead to individuals being blindly and uncritically accepting.

In the context of Japanese university settings, the main focus has been on dominant cultural patterns, specifically the cultures of the English-speaking world. As regards language, English language competencies are emphasized and English courses are required while other languages are optional or even eliminated from the curriculum. As regards study abroad programs, there are many more choices for English-speaking countries than for other countries. Finally, as regards the cultivation of global human resources, almost all Japanese universities tend to see this aim as the development of English abilities. That is, they do not regard it as a deepening of cultural knowledge and understanding. In practice, most people blindly and uncritically accept this status quo.



Therefore, they hardly have opportunities to know other cultures except those of English-speaking countries unless they have a personal interest in specific countries. In this circumstance, how could Japanese students express openness to other cultures (non-English speaking countries) without biased eyes? Discrimination and disengagement of universal human rights stem from ignorance, which also at the same time is ignorant of themselves. As a result of that, they become oriented toward jingoism, which leads to racial discrimination against people of other cultures and apathy of inequality and human rights.

Nevertheless, Japanese universities, especially chosen as Global University Project by MEXT (see p. 10), have invited students from the countries where Japanese students show little interest in and knowledge about them.

Given this situation, we as educators should encourage students to address human rights issues and facilitate the development of a concern about social justice in their communities first, and then at national and global level, rather than only emphasizing English language competencies. For this purpose, the notion of vernacular cosmopolitanism should be taught as the object of instruction. As a second step, we should create a learning experience in which students can discuss human rights issues at local and global levels and thus engage in critical self-reflection. In this way, we may make a contribution to creating vernacular cosmopolitans for the future.

In line with Guilherme, I also embrace McLaren's (2010) revolutionary critical pedagogy. McLaren explores a broad range of social, political, economic, and cultural issues on the basis of Marxist humanism. He points out the incompatibility of capitalism and democracy and criticizes neoliberal social and economic policies, which eventually lead to growing class polarization and inequality. In his view, revolutionary critical pedagogy

attempts to create the conditions of pedagogical possibility that enables students to see how, through the exercise of power, the dominant structures of class rule protect their

practices from being publicly scrutinized as they appropriate resources to serve the interests of the few at the expense of the many. (p. 5)

McLaren argues that revolutionary critical pedagogy strives for the abolition of capital as a social relation. Moreover, comparing this approach with “a pedagogy of desire,” which does not emancipate students from economic oppression or emotional distress but is designed to free teachers, he advocates “a pedagogy of critique” is aimed at freedom. According to him, a pedagogy of critique is

a mode of social knowing that enquires into what is not said, into the silences and the suppressed or the missing in order to un-conceal operations of economic and political power underlying the concrete details and representations of our lives. (p. 10)

In other words, a pedagogy of critique is a site of collectivity, need, and emancipation. By extension, McLaren concludes that a pedagogy of critique is grounded in revolutionary love, recognizing that “love can only exist between free and equal people who have the same ideals and commitment to serving the poor and the oppressed” (p. 10). With this sentiment, I present this thesis as my own contribution to the pedagogic development of that revolutionary love.

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# Appendix

## Information sheets

**Title of study:** Vernacular Cosmopolitanism in the Context of Neoliberalism:  
The Case of Plurilingual Asian Students in Japanese Higher  
Education

**Investigators:** Tomoka Sato (\*\*\*\*\*me.com)  
Language Center Room #6320

### Purpose

This is a research study. The purpose of this research is to investigate Asian study-abroad students in Japanese higher education in order to understand and interpret the experiences and dilemmas of Asian students in Japan in light of various sociopolitical and other contextual factors.

### Procedure

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to take part in an hour-long one-on-one interview in order to narrate your life history, including language learning experiences and dilemmas as an Asian student in Japan. In addition, you might be asked to join a group-focused interview. If need be, I will ask you for additional interviews to confirm the contents of the previous interview.

### Rights

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary, and you have the right to refuse to participate, or withdraw at any time. During the interview, you can refuse to answer any of the questions.

### Confidentiality

To ensure the confidentiality of the data, you and your institute will be assigned pseudonyms. These names will be used in my notes and data analysis.

### Compensation and benefits for participants

To thank you for your participation in the study, I will offer you gift certificates, such as Starbucks, bookstores, or music stores, worth about 2000 yen for each hour of your time in the study. Incentive will be given at the first interview meeting and not postponed until the end of the study.

### Contact information about the study

If you are willing to participate in this study, contact Tomoka Sato by email \*\*\*\*\*@me.com If you have any questions about this study, you may contact Tomoka Sato.

## Consent Form

I have read the consent form and recognize that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time during the course of the study without consequence. I understand that any information resulting from this study will be strictly confidential. I realize that I may ask for further information about this study if I wish to do so at any time.

I have received a copy of this consent form for my own records. I agree to participate in this study.

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Participant Signature

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Date

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Print Name of Participant



## Reflective Statement

I have learned a lot of things in the process of working on thesis. First, I have changed my focus from a micro to a macro perspective. Specifically, as my MA major was in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), my focus was mainly on practice as an English teacher rather than on its theory. Therefore, the main study was how to teach effectively English to Japanese students. However, after starting to work on this thesis, my research focus was directed to the impact of political economy on multiculturalism, bi/multilingualism, and the acquisition and use of languages, specifically how neoliberalism, inequality, and social class impact upon the acquisition and use of languages. Therefore, this study required me to understand interdisciplinary knowledge including sociology, political economy, intercultural communication and anthropology in addition to applied linguistics. Based on my supervisors' suggestions I began to read related books and scholarly papers. At first, it was not easy for me to understand this academic content due to specialized vocabulary, but repeated reading gradually enabled me to deal with it. Finally, I have confidence that I have gained a firm understanding of these academic issues. As a result, I became intensely aware of epistemology while I was working on the thesis.

One of the specific subjects I have gained through literature and talks with my supervisor is about neoliberalism. I was not properly aware of this term before. However, once I started to understand and know it, I came to realize how much neoliberal ideology impacted not only on political economic thought but also on educational disciplines including language education and learning. I studied neoliberalism from the beginnings of its history. I explored "classical liberalism" dating back to the time of Adam Smith and David Ricardo, who preached the virtues of the free market (*Laissez Faire*), followed by Keynes's macroeconomics and Hayek's and Friedman's neoliberal economics. This was then applied in the 1980s and 1990s by various government administrations in the United Kingdom and the United States, such as those of Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan, and later in a socially-modified form by Bill Clinton and Tony Blair.

Then I learned about the impact of neoliberalism on language and its education and learning, and that many applied linguistics scholars had criticized

neoliberal modes of thinking about language, naming it the “commodification of language.” Given that language is commodified, employers are not alone in making use of it. Rather, those who possess it can take advantage of their linguistic possession as human capital. From an employer’s viewpoint, the language education industry has become a highly profitable market and is being increasingly commercialized to meet the needs of the free market. Language education is viewed and treated from a neoliberal perspective. Moreover, second and foreign language education has not only been influenced by neoliberalism but has also contributed to reproducing many of its discourses. The impact of neoliberalism on second and foreign education is observable at many levels.

Seen from the perspective that language is both a commodity and profitable, a linguistic hierarchy arises. English is invested with greater power, value and influence. Some scholars take the positive view that English can play a positive role in promoting social mobility and economic justice globally, while other scholars have criticized the dominance of English, calling it “linguistic imperialism.” Instead, they have proposed a worldwide linguistic diversity, promoting multilingualism, pluralism, and foreign language learning.

However, the linguistic diversity, encouraged mainly by the European Union, has been criticized by some applied linguistics scholars for the overlap with neoliberalism in that multilingualism and plurilingualism are promoted for economic and political reasons and for speakers of majority languages, not for immigrants, which creates “elite cosmopolitanism.” Furthermore, linguistic injustice driven by linguistic diversity in terms of economic inequality, cultural domination, and political participation is pointed out. Namely, they have pointed out that only economically privileged and ethnically dominant students can handle plurilingualism and become mobile plurilingual elites. These privileged students have been criticized as being elitist and rootless cosmopolitans, with no linguistic identity, but only acquiring linguistic competencies for the service of economic growth and personal advancement. As a result, plurilingual subjects tend to be identified with neoliberal subjects in that both types try to fit the needs of global capitalism, and becoming plurilingual

through privileged learning is generally linked to notions of cosmopolitanism, and the goals of becoming cosmopolitan are very much seen as a privileged-class aspiration. In this way, I have learned about neoliberalism in terms of political economy and applied linguistics.

Another understanding that I have gained through the literature is the notion of cosmopolitanism. It stems from the field of intercultural communication. I was unfamiliar with it previously. My supervisor guided me to this field. I needed to understand it from scratch. Therefore, I began with tracing the trajectories of cosmopolitanism for intercultural communication ranging from classical cosmopolitanism, European Enlightenment age cosmopolitanism to postcolonial cosmopolitanism, through which the notion of cosmopolitanism has varied. The Eurocentric imperialist view of Kant, for instance, who advocated a cosmopolitan law in which every human has fundamental rights. However, Kant did not embrace the equality of races due to the dominant racial taxonomies concerning the human species which prevailed at the time. He was convinced that Europe should be on top in the cosmopolitan world order, so his version of cosmopolitanism was limited to those within the white European nations who in his view were elite enough to attain global citizenship status. Therefore, cosmopolitanism in the European Enlightenment age was politically-oriented and associated with elite and privileged individuals. The elite and privileged individual image of cosmopolitanism still lingers among current applied linguistics scholars. These individuals are called global cosmopolitans or students of the new global elite with a neoliberal connotation. However, in current debates, cosmopolitanism is positioned as a moral and postcolonial imperative, and the focus is on how people actually live cosmopolitan lives on an everyday basis. This postcolonial cosmopolitanism is called vernacular cosmopolitanism which combines the contradictory notion of global enlightenment with local specificity, represents a non-elite and non-Western cosmopolitanism, and advocates for a cosmopolitanism-from-below approach that directly incorporates Appiah's rooted cosmopolitanism while criticizing top-down Kantian approaches. I have therefore gained knowledge of three-isms: neoliberalism, plurilingualism and cosmopolitanism.

As for methodology, as my focus was on how Asian students studying in a Japanese university actually live cosmopolitan lives on an everyday basis and construct their cosmopolitan agency, I adopted a qualitative approach, which relies primarily on the use of interviews, specifically life-stories. A major challenge of this approach is not how to elicit data but how to decide what to do with the data elicited. I used Polkinghorne's (1995) two types of approaches: "narrative analysis" and "analysis of narratives" (pp.5-6). In order to answer the research question 1, I used the former approach. That is, I turned participants' narratives into stories. Then, to answer research questions 2, 3, and 4, I used the latter approach. That is, I categorized the participants narratives into themes. I used thematic analysis and categorized participants narratives into three themes. These three themes were pre-determined from my working definition of vernacular cosmopolitanism based on established theory in the literature. The process, involving repeated reading of the data and several rounds of analysis, in which I moved back and forth between the data and its coded and categorized forms in order to refine themes and theoretical relationships, was a challenging task. This experience reminded me of what Riessman (2008) stresses: the thematic approach is neither intuitive nor straightforward but methodical and painstaking, it enables the researcher to pay attention to macro contexts as she tries to make connections between the life depicted in personal narratives and larger social structures and power relations, hidden inequalities, and historical contingencies.

The narrative approach enabled me to examine in depth the life experiences of a small number of Asian students attending a Japanese university and to identify how they live their lives on a daily basis rather than simply theorizing cosmopolitanism as an abstract ideal and construct cosmopolitan agency. Drawing on the notions of vernacular cosmopolitanism as a theoretical framework, I reconstructed and analyzed my participants' narratives. The findings elucidate the underexplored area of non-Western, non-elite cosmopolitanism in an Asian context in the era of neoliberalism. That is, the neoliberal cosmopolitanism is contested by intercultural thoughts and actions of vernacular cosmopolitans. More specifically, the participants of this study have an openness to other cultures and learn other languages to engage with local people who speak those languages, whereas they cherish their own country. In addition, they have a sense of social justice. At the same time, however, the findings also reveal that the notion of vernacular cosmopolitanism focuses too

much on agency, the ability to be willing to be open to others and the world and the ability to engage in cosmopolitan action, while it neglects structural pressures, power relations, ideologies and discourses that construct subjectivity. Based on the findings, the thesis concludes with an exploration of the relationship between power, agency and subjectivity which draws upon Allen (2002) and Foucault (1982) in order to point to a critical perspective on the notion of vernacular cosmopolitanism as a way forward. I had hardly paid attention to these aspects when I started this research. However, after analyzing the data, I came to realize these aspects.

In response to a critical perspective on vernacular cosmopolitanism, and thanks to my supervisor's suggestion, I realized the need for further studies of concrete cosmopolitan pedagogy in the Japanese context. It is because being researcher, I am also – and perhaps more importantly – a teacher advocating internationalization in teacher training. For this purpose, I also explored Guilherme's (2002) critical pedagogy and McLaren's (2010) "revolutionary critical pedagogy," which argues for the emancipation of students from economic oppression or emotional distress. As I did not know about them at all, but thanks to my supervisors' teaching, I gained new knowledge about critical pedagogy, too. Through the process of thesis, I have gained a great deal of knowledge. I am very happy about expanding my view as a researcher as well as a teacher.