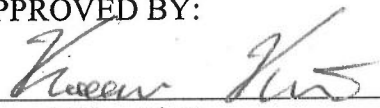


JAPANESE LANGUAGE AND LITERACY OF STUDENTS IN THE U.S.

EXPLORING THE EXPERIENCES AND JAPANESE FOREIGN LANGUAGE AND
LITERACY DEVELOPMENT OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN THE U.S.

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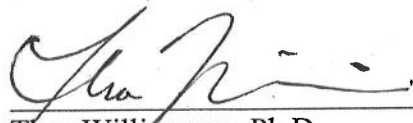
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By

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A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Seidel School of Education

Department of Doctoral Studies in Literacy of Salisbury University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education

November 29, 2022

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いつも応援してくれてありがとう！

Abstract

This qualitative study of a U.S. postsecondary institution's Japanese language program sought to comprehend in detail the ways by which university students develop and experience Japanese language and literacy. Utilizing the lens of Sociocultural Theory, three contexts within the single case study were examined in the form of three differently-leveled Japanese classes in the Japanese program. The participation of twelve focus students allowed for exploration of the research question and sub-question: how do university students studying Japanese as a foreign language in the United States learn and experience Japanese language and literacy, and how do these students' perceptions and interpretations of their Japanese language learning experience contribute to the shaping of their identities? The findings of this study revealed that students underwent a variety of processes while taking a Japanese course: Students relied on experiences with in-class learning through interactions with the instructor and their peers. They used sociocultural resources available to them both inside and outside of class to create opportunities to engage in Japanese learning through multimodal means. Students also brought their own experiences and perceptions in to their learning, with language backgrounds, relationships, and emotion playing a role in their Japanese language and literacy development. This study also illuminated that some students made attempts to integrate aspects of Japanese into their own identity as Japanese language learners. Findings inform instructors of Japanese and other Less Commonly Taught Languages of ways to improve sociocultural language and literacy development.

Keywords: Japanese language and literacy, foreign language teaching, postsecondary education, sociocultural theory, multimodality

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Student engagement in foreign languages at the university level is a complex phenomenon in the United States, where education does not always place value on foreign language (American Councils for International Education, 2017). Even in a period of time where expanding globalization has made international relations increasingly relevant and advances in technology have created near instantaneous communication across the globe, young Americans in postsecondary education are choosing to study foreign languages at a decreasing rate. A report by Looney and Lusin (2018) that collected data from universities and colleges across the United States from the years 2013-2016 revealed a 9.2% drop in student enrollment in classes teaching languages other than English in institutions of higher education across the United States. The report (Looney & Lusin, 2018) further suggests that students in American universities are choosing to spend their credit hours in content classes focused on their major area of study rather than in foreign language classes that increase their linguistic capabilities.

While the only possible cause discussed in Looney and Lusin's (2018) report is decreased funding for foreign language programs nationwide, the authors admit that there may be a number of as of yet unidentified reasons behind this decline. Regardless, the number of students enrolled in university foreign language programs is not increasing. The United States is a nexus of diversity where people from around the world each bring their own unique language, culture, and customs, which adds to the pastiche of this country. However, the multilingual and multicultural aspect does not necessarily extend

to the members of the population that do not come from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (Rumbaut & Massey, 2013). Although the United States does have dual language and foreign language education in its public school systems, enrollment in these programs is not mandatory; rather, the programs are treated as elective classes, and the amount of classes offered and number of enrolled students vary greatly from state to state (American Councils for International Education, 2017). Though some secondary institutions require foreign language studies as prerequisites for graduation (Macdonald et al., 2019), this is not a standardized practice at the national level. Although the statistics from Looney and Lusin's (2018) report show that the overall trend for foreign language study at the postsecondary level is in decline (9.2%), this does not mean that all individual languages also follow a downward trend. In fact, the report also showed that a number of languages actually had an increase in enrollment numbers. During the previously described time period, 2013-2016, Japanese and Korean were the only languages in the top fifteen studied languages to show increases in student numbers; all other major languages showed a decrease in enrolled students (Looney & Lusin, 2018). It is interesting to note that neither of the languages which showed growth were the traditional European Romance languages considered to be popular in the United States, but rather both languages from small but influential countries in East Asia. This could be an indicator of a larger trend in the image of utility for foreign languages in the United States, or simply a mirror of the trends popular among the students enrolled in such classes.

Japanese as a Foreign Language and Literacy in the United States

As shown in the report by Looney and Lusin (2018), an increasing number of university students are choosing to study the Japanese language. Americans experience Japanese popular culture through an increasing variety of modern entertainment types, from console and portable video games, to *manga* (Japanese-style comic books), to Japanese-style animation (*anime*) both dubbed for children and subtitled for adults (Gee, 2003). A study by Fukunaga (2006) states that children exposed to these types of foreign media early in life often continue to build interest through adolescence, and those who remain interested tend to organically gravitate toward sociocultural aspects and language of said media, which is in this case Japanese. Her study further concluded that students do this as a result of wanting to further experience the media in a more authentic or direct way, or that it is the result of an increased interest in the country of origin as an extension of the student's original focus on the media.

Fukunaga (2006) indicates that interest in Japanese popular culture is a factor in why students choose to study Japanese language; therefore, integration of this sociocultural aspect into the classroom allows students to combine their interests with language learning. Postsecondary students of the Japanese language should be able to have access to Japanese language, culture, and literacy items in order to capture their interest, while simultaneously allowing them to improve their language learning. Although there are many ways to connect to Japanese media and entertainment, finding ways to connect to Japanese language and literacy in society outside of the foreign language classroom can be challenging. As previously mentioned, the United States contains a wealth of communities that speak languages other than English (United States

Census Bureau, 2011), but for some languages such as Japanese, these communities are often limited to locations within greater urban areas (Nishikawa, 2002). This in turn limits the exposure that students of the Japanese language have with physical interaction with a living community, especially those students that do not live in an area with access to such a community. Because the United States is such an expansive country with swathes of rural areas, students in these less urbanized areas might need to travel long distances to experience immersion in a Japanese populated area.

This may be problematic for those students who wish to experience Japanese language and literacy in a visceral and authentic way. While there is access to a great deal of material online, and advances in communication technology allow for instantaneous communication with others globally, immersion in a living community is often seen as advantageous, especially considering that it is widely accepted that exposure increases proficiency (Burstall, 1979; Spolsky, 1989). It is especially challenging for postsecondary students studying in areas where there may not be a Japanese community present. Though they are able to access the language multimodally, such as online resources and tools, there might be less opportunities to meet and interact with Japanese-speaking individuals.

Foreign Language Development and Identity

Language and literacy can also play a role in influencing and shaping the identity of foreign language learners as well. Developing a new system of communication is like taking steps into a larger world, and studies (Cho, 2000; Li, 2006; Doerr & Lee, 2010) have shown that multiple languages and literacies have an effect on how language learners perceive themselves and others and how they themselves are perceived. This applies not only to natural bilinguals, but to foreign language learners as well (Morita,

2004; Anwaruddin, 2012). As students learn more about the foreign language's linguistic nuances and sociocognitive aspects, it has a direct effect on the way that they view themselves and the world at large (Kinging, 2004). For students studying language, this may represent a very different shift from their customary way of thinking.

Statement of Problem

Learners who choose to study a foreign language at a postsecondary institution face a number of challenges. Foreign language teaching and foreign language development continue to be undervalued by portions of American society (Flowers, 2020; Pavlenko, 2002; Schmidt, 2000). A possible effect is seen in the decrease of participation in foreign language programs at the postsecondary level (Looney & Lusin, 2018). Young Americans exposed to this ideology may not be able to understand the utility and advantageous nature of studying a foreign language, and may even view it as being un-American (Pavlenko, 2002).

Even with the presence of societal influence, many postsecondary students do choose to learn a foreign language due to interest in cultural aspects; currently, Japanese is one of these focal languages (Looney & Lusin, 2018). It is considered as a Less Commonly Taught Language (LCTL), which Brown (2009) describes as a language that has "limited availability of formal classes dedicated to the teaching and learning of these languages" (p.406). Limited availability of classes means that even students who have interest might not be successful in finding a language program to participate in.

Students who elect to study LCTLs often have less access to the language itself than with major languages. 21st century multimodal literacies like the Internet have made

it easier to find certain types of media more readily than in the past; streaming services on the Internet provide video content in a wide variety of languages, including less studied foreign languages. However, this requires subscription to these services, and although similar video content may be found for free in other locations online, it is not always of high quality and requires more effort on the part of the student.

Post-secondary Japanese language learners can benefit greatly from the amount of multimodal literacies made available to them from Japanese cultural influence on the United States (Fukunaga, 2006), but may not have many opportunities to experience the language in a living community setting, given the scarcity of such environments in this country (Nishikawa, 2002). I wanted to know the effect, if any, this has on students of Japanese language.

This study explored how students develop and learn in the Japanese foreign language classroom. It also examined whether the lack of a physical community that students can feel and experience is a detriment to language learning, or if it is perceived to be so. Furthermore, the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic further affected the ability to interact in physical environments; I also approached this as a factor of student interaction with Japanese. It is important as a Japanese language instructor to understand how students interact with the language outside the classroom, if at all. Also, I wanted to know about student experiences and perceptions of the class itself; how students use and develop their Japanese language and literacy knowledge during the time allotted in class, and their perceptions of certain instructional choices made by myself as the instructor.

In addition to the linguistic and literacy communicative abilities learned and practiced in the Japanese language, I also wanted to examine my students' emerging identities as Japanese language learners, if manifested, and the role that they were beginning to play in the students' everyday lives. As previously mentioned, the study and development of foreign language and literacy skills can have a profound effect on learners' identities, and I wanted to see how this evolves in my university setting. This study also encouraged students to reflect upon themselves and think about how acquiring Japanese language and literacy proficiency has affected their lives so far.

Research Questions

This study examined the following research question; additionally, I investigated the phenomenon of identity, which is presented here as a sub-question.

- How do university students studying Japanese as a foreign language in the United States learn and experience Japanese language and literacy?
 - How do these students' perceptions and interpretations of their Japanese language learning experience contribute to the exploration of their identities as Japanese language learners?

Significance of the Study

This study is significant to the body of research in a number of ways. While there have been multiple studies conducted on the language and literacy development of foreign language learners (Guthrie, 1987; Wing, 1987; Polio & Duff, 1994; Rodgers, 2015) at the university level, there have been fewer studies conducted on those individuals studying Less Commonly Taught Languages (LCTLs). I believe that there are

a number of differences between foreign languages that warranted a closer investigation of the latter.

The most obvious difference is that there is simply less exposure and knowledge of LCTLs on university campuses as opposed to their more popular brethren. Students who study a LCTL at a university may often have only one instructor teaching all students taking that language, limiting access to academic networking and support. They may also have a limited number of classes to choose from, which minimizes the amount of time that they can study the language. Sometimes faculty and advisors on campus may be unaware of the availability of LCTL classes, which can prevent enrollment or continued study of the language.

Students who enroll in a LCTL class may not always be able to learn from an instructor who has the training, knowledge, or ability to teach the language. When there is a demand for a certain language, someone with knowledge of the language may be given control of the class regardless of their ability to teach the class. Sometimes, students may learn the language from an instructor who is a non-native speaker of the language themselves, which has both positive and negative aspects (Hertel & Sunderman, 2009). These factors may lead to a less than ideal learning experience for the students involved. This is not usually a problem associated with major languages because there are often a larger number of experienced or well-qualified individuals available.

These differences between what is available for commonly taught languages versus LCTLs play a role in the ways, frequency, and quality in which students can participate in the foreign language. For Japanese, which in addition to being an LCTL

also has a distinct written system, or orthography, research is extremely important to be able to better understand the ways in which students navigate spoken and written language, and additionally the role that the Japanese logographic system of *kanji* plays in their reading development. It is also necessary to understand the ways by which students are making meaningful connections with Japanese artifacts, given that the location in which they study does not have a Japanese community available.

This study explored the need for information on LCTLs at the university level by examining students' experiences in studying Japanese. Exploring student's experiences, practices, and my own teaching allowed for greater understanding of the needs of and challenges faced by students who hope to learn these lesser studied languages.

Researcher Background

I began my formal Japanese language education in my first semester of my undergraduate studies. After studying for a single semester, I was granted the opportunity to take a trip to Japan. I felt completely overwhelmed soon after arriving in Japan; I clearly remember riding the train from the airport toward Tokyo, and looking out the window as the darkened countryside gave way to a multitude of brightly lit signs and neon fixtures. The rows after rows of kanji were quite vexing, and I found myself for the first time in my memory illiterate. It was an alien and uncomfortable feeling, and one that stuck with me for the duration of my trip.

Upon returning to the United States, I redoubled my efforts to study the Japanese language. I was adamant that I would not return in the same illiterate state as I did the first time. I increased my study and knowledge of kanji, and by the time I returned to

Japan for the second time as an exchange student, I had a much better grasp of written Japanese and did not have the same feelings of discomfort as before.

Dealing with spoken Japanese was also an important part of my learning experience. The next time I returned to Japan, I realized that although I could navigate my surroundings with much more ease, I was now having difficulty with verbal communication. I made efforts to improve my spoken Japanese through talking to people and even myself at times. This helped to build my communicative competence and become a better Japanese language learner.

These experiences were formative for me as a Japanese language learner because I realized the depth of the challenge offered by written Japanese. Furthermore, I noticed the effort necessary to build and maintain spoken language skills. These experiences also informed my pedagogy as a Japanese language instructor; I teach my learned strategies for Japanese language and literacy skills according to what I found useful or effective while learning Japanese. Because as a learner I found motivation and interest in socioculturally relevant Japanese artifacts like games and music, I expose students to a wide variety of written and spoken media in order to give them multiple options for possible focus areas and to help broaden their interest in Japan.

My experiences in learning Japanese language has also had an impact on my identity as an individual. I now view myself as a bilingual and biliterate individual, and spend much of my home life communicating with my family in Japanese. For me, Japanese is an important part of my life. I spent the first four years of my working adult life in Japan, and the culture and society have influenced my opinions and viewpoints

even as I reside in the United States. This continues even now as an instructor of the Japanese language.

I firmly believe that the experience of learning a foreign language can be life-changing. It can give an individual insight into unique human society through the study of spoken and written language, and allows a student to begin to comprehend the ways that people from other countries view the world. It can also spark an interest in a new area, or fan the flames of an already existing interest into a passion for the topic. Finally, learning a foreign language leaves an indelible mark on the individual; no matter how small, that language has become part of the individual's personality, and it is up to that person how much influence it will have on their identity going forward. For me, although I am viewed by others as just a white American male, my identity is much more; I have been improved and tempered through my experiences with Japanese, and now identify as a bilingual, bicultural, biliterate, and globalized individual.

My experiences are relevant to this study because I walked down the same path that many of my students are taking now. I want students to be successful in their Japanese language development, and I continually seek to understand some of the challenges and difficulties that they might face.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are important to clearly define in relation to the topic being researched in this study.

Culture – Grounded in the sociocultural view; the tools, knowledge, values, resources, and products created by a society (Kress, 2010)

Foreign language – A language that an individual learns that is not his or her native language and is used in order to communicate with people from other countries; this contrasts with second language, which is a non-native language used for a special purpose within the country (Richards & Schmidt, 2002).

Funds of Knowledge – A collection of social practices, the experiences shared or learned from others, or even everyday household habits (Moll & Greenberg, 1990); this concept shows that each person has a valuable array of informational knowledge that can be used to one's benefit should the individual be aware of how to do so. This knowledge is most often gleaned from the home and community settings, starting at a young age (Gonzales et al., 2005).

Identity – The concept of an individual that is shaped not only through the individual's sense of self, but also through socioculturally placed discourse with others (Bucholz & Hall, 2005); "A process 'located' in the core of the individual and yet also in the core of his communal culture" (Erikson, 1968, p.22).

Less Commonly Taught Language (LCTL) – a language that has "limited availability of formal classes dedicated to the teaching and learning of these languages" (Brown, 2006, p.406).

Literacy – The ability to construct meaning by transacting with written and multimodal language; is socially and culturally constructed (Goodman et al., 2016).

Multimodal literacies – a study of language where multiple modes of meaning (written language, speech, images, etc.) are combined (Mills & Unsworth, 2017).

Multimodality – using multiple modes in order to construct meaning (Mills & Unsworth, 2017).

Orthography – a conventional written form of a language that consists of spellings and punctuations (Kabuto, 2011).

Postsecondary institution – An institution offering education after the completion of the secondary (high school) level; a college, university offering 2-4-year degrees, or graduate school.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This review addresses the Japanese language and literacy development of postsecondary adult learners. After first detailing the sociocultural view of reading, I cover topics regarding postsecondary readers, as well as foreign language and literacy development for adult learners. I also considered the foreign language instructional component, so this review examines research about language teaching in the postsecondary context. It is also important to consider research on how postsecondary students' foreign language and literacy learning experiences play a role on the formation of their identity. This study examined the different ways in which students interact with the foreign language and how their preconceived notions affect their language and literacy development, so multimodality is discussed. Finally, because the study is focused on students learning Japanese in the postsecondary context, a section about Japanese language and literacy learning is also provided.

This literature review was conducted through searches for relevant material online; I used a combination of my institution's library website and Google in order to seek out appropriate books and articles. I also cross-referenced additional sources from readings as I compiled the material. The literature was categorized into several topics and subtopics.

Sociocultural View of Learning and Literacy

In literacy research, there are a variety of approaches taken to reading. This literature review will examine reading as being primarily a sociocultural process, as language and literacy are socially and culturally constructed (Goodman et al., 2016). This

concept is similar to the sociocultural approach to spoken language propagated by Halliday (1975, 2013); building on the social constructivist theories of Vygotsky (1978), he describes language development as negotiation of meaning with others. Together, they jointly construct language where “meaning is a social and cultural phenomenon and construction of meaning is a social process” (Vygotsky, 1978, p.152). It is through this joint construction, not in isolation, that meaning is created and understood. This idea is echoed by Krashen (2003, 2017) who agrees that receiving comprehensible input, especially through social means, is extremely beneficial in language development.

This concept of sociocultural learning has been applied to literacy development in a number of ways. Rosenblatt (1969) proposed the Transactional Theory of reading, which describes the act of reading as a transactional experience, where the reader’s experiences, knowledge, and beliefs play an important role in their interpretation of the text. In this way, the interpretation of the written text can differ depending on the individual life experiences of the person, which is a reflection on the society and surrounding culture of that person. Smith (2004) describes this as a natural interaction with the world, and describes social knowledge as the connection between the text and the acquired meaning by the reader.

The social aspect of language and literacy can also be seen in the work of Gee (2013), who frames these transactions through the lens of Discourses, which he defines as “ways of combining and coordinating words, deeds, thoughts [...] so as to enact and recognize socially situated identities and activities” (p.145). The transaction is influenced by the type of Discourse under which it falls, which primes the individual’s knowledge and approach to the topic. The types of Discourses possessed and recognized by an

individual are a product of the surrounding social environment, and therefore new ones can be created through language and literacy development (Gee, 2013).

The Social Nature of Reading

When reading materials for class, students can use their knowledge and create collaborative connections with each other to help bolster their literacy understanding and comprehension. A study conducted by Hurst et al. (2013) looked at the effect of interactions of students in three different classes on their literacy learning. By encouraging student collaboration and discussion over the course of the class, student responses showed that they “recognized a strong connection between social interaction in the classroom and their learning [and that] they perceived that interacting with their classmates contributed greatly to their learning in the class” (p. 390). Students who are encouraged to use social collaboration in reading found those activities to be useful and beneficial to their overall learning experience.

This demonstrates the social nature of reading; rather than existing as an activity in isolation, reading and literacy skills are boosted by the interaction with others provided by group activities both inside and outside the class. The study also showed that students felt that they understood concepts more clearly after discussion with others (Hurst et al., 2013). When reading, students can help each other to fill in the blanks and use their individual knowledge collaboratively to improve overall comprehension. Reading and literacy knowledge and strategies, especially in the classroom, should be cultivated through group cooperation if possible.

The social nature of reading is not only limited to collaborative efforts; sometimes, the mere presence of others can promote positivity toward developing reading and literacy skills. Kuzmičová et al. (2018) conducted a number of focus groups with postgraduate readers from multiple backgrounds. They found that although some participants did enjoy reading in areas of solitude such as their home, a number of participants reported that they preferred to read in the company of others, such as in a library or other public study area on campus; some students even like to read with classmates where each person was reading the same thing individually. These students who enjoyed reading in public spaces felt at ease, describing the locations as giving “a comforting sense of company and belonging” (p.75). By reading in close proximity to others, some students received a boost in confidence or increased motivation that allowed them to focus more fully on the task at hand.

This study further solidifies the importance of the social aspect of reading. Even an act such as silent reading can be enhanced by doing it in a social or semi-social fashion (Kuzmičová et al., 2018). This idea can be implemented in classrooms at the postsecondary level, but ultimately it is up to the student to decide when, where and how to read, and whether doing the act of reading with others will be conducive to learning or will be detrimental to their learning experience.

The collaborative aspect of reading is an important facet for development. By cooperating with peers in the same classes or same areas of study, students can improve comprehension of learned material while at the same time experiencing the reading through the social lenses of others. It is this social aspect of reading that can play an

essential role in the development of language, especially for foreign languages being learned in the classroom.

Funds of Knowledge

There are many resources available in the environment for learners, which can include social practices, the experiences shared or learned from others, or even everyday household habits; collectively, these resources are called “Funds of Knowledge” (Moll & Greenberg, 1990). This knowledge is most often gleaned from the home and community settings, starting at a young age (Gonzales et al., 2005).

In practice, the idea of Funds of Knowledge is most often applied by valuing knowledge and lived experiences learned at home and transferring them into useful concepts in a formal teaching and learning environment, such as school (Moll et al., 1992). By using funds of knowledge rather than simply mechanics to learn, a LCTL such as Japanese is more likely to be experienced more richly than just classroom learning by building connections between class material and life experience, which will allow the information to thrive and remain relevant in the learner’s mind.

Prior Knowledge. Previously gained knowledge can affect foreign language learning, especially when reading. An individual interacts with and derives meaning from the text and beyond (Goodman et al., 2016), and can apply this to reading done both in L1 or foreign language, as both processes occur in the same way (Freeman & Freeman, 2004). Hammadou (1991) observed this behavior in foreign language reading by investigating whether familiar topics read in a foreign language improved reading comprehension, and whether that difference changed between novice and intermediate

foreign language learners. Student participants read passages in the foreign language and then retold the contents in their native language. Her study indicated that in fact prior knowledge did not have a strong effect on comprehension in the foreign language, as knowledge of a topic did not predict the linguistic capabilities necessary to comprehend the passage. This conclusion held for both levels of readers in the study; however, the author admitted that more advanced readers may experience a boost from prior knowledge. While prior knowledge of a topic may spark interest, it is still required that students learn the appropriate linguistic structures of the literature.

As students begin to develop their foreign language competency and sociocultural knowledge in the classroom, instructors must take care to create a balance of form with content. This often takes the form of content-based instruction, which is defined by Crandall and Tucker (1990) as “an integrated approach to language instruction drawing topics, texts, and tasks from content or subject matter classes, but focusing on the cognitive, academic language skills required to participate effectively in content instruction” (p.83). In this way, students can interact more with the environment of the language through authentic spoken or written items that are more subject-based in nature. However, although content can be a driving factor in student motivation and continued interest (Fukunaga, 2006), content-based courses may not provide students with enough skill-based development to allow for successful progress (Lyster, 2007).

Foreign Language and Literacy Development

There are multiple theories regarding the development of foreign language and literacy skills; these theories can vary depending on the type of language being taught, the type of students learning, and the learning environment (Kubota, 1998). As with

language and literacy in general, this study approaches foreign language and literacy from a sociocultural perspective, where language and literacy are socially constructed (Vygotsky, 1978; Gee, 2013; Goodman et al., 2016). This construction initially takes place for most individuals during native language development (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006), where children learn language through interaction with family members, peers, and others in the community (Kabuto, 2011). Because of this, when learners begin to develop a foreign language, they no longer have to develop new systems (Mitchell et al., 2013); rather, they can extend their knowledge and have “opportunities to create yet more tools and new ways of meaning, through collaborative L2 activity” (p. 227).

There are three important concepts that can translate from the broader idea to foreign language development. One of these methods is called private speech, where learners create a social dialog by having conversations with themselves (Mitchell et al., 2013); this is socially constructed due to the conversational nature of the speaker’s output. This can be used successfully by foreign language learners to self-correct and internalize new forms while talking to themselves, and to mimic conversation or speaking patterns (Lee, 2008; Ohta, 2001). Another important concept for foreign language learning is the idea of microgenesis, which Lantolf and Thorne (2006) use to describe small incremental amounts of learning that occur through social interactions with others. This especially comes into play in conversations between expert and novice (Ohta, 2001); when experiencing language and literacy socially with a more advanced individual, a learner is able to pick up on small things that can help develop language.

A final concept that can be applied to foreign language development is Activity Theory (Engeström, 1999). Also building off the ideas of Vygotsky (1978), Activity

Theory takes the individual and their goals and contextualizes them within a broader, more collaborative paradigm. This concept is used to examine group efforts in understanding and decoding foreign language by learners in ways that are beneficial for all (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). All of these concepts that are relevant to native language and literacy development can be applied to foreign language and literacy development in order to better understand the processes of the learner.

Japanese Language and Literacy Learning

Japanese is a language used primarily in Japan; it is a Subject-Object-Verb (SOV) ordered language, and has an orthography system that combines native Japanese writing with Chinese characters and the Latin alphabet (Kindaichi, 2010; Shibatani, 1990). This has the advantage of allowing the reader to quickly determine content and function words (Goodman, 2012). However, the differences between Japanese and English mean that it is often viewed as a challenging language to learn for native English speakers, with a large amount of the research focusing on the Japanese writing system and students' interactions with it.

Japanese Orthography. One of the challenging aspects for Japanese language learners is the Japanese orthography, which is composed of four different types of writing: logographic *kanji* (for content and meaning), syllabic *hiragana* and *katakana* (for content and grammar), and alphabetic *Rōmaji* (for writing in the Latin alphabet), which are all used in combination with each other when writing standard Japanese (Yamashita, 2002). These four types of writing require focused learning without overlap; this complexity can make learning written Japanese challenging for learners that come from language backgrounds using only a single written system (Igarishi, 2007). However, in

order to develop proficiency in Japanese language and literacy, understanding these writing systems is a necessity.

Kanji. According to Taylor and Taylor (1995), the most complex of the Japanese writing systems is kanji, or Chinese characters mapped onto Japanese phonetic readings, described below. The kanji are symbols that have been used to write the Chinese language since antiquity, brought to Japan through interaction between the two countries (Taylor & Taylor, 1995). The kanji are used to denote content and meaning; these are often used to represent nouns and verb and adjective stems (Yamashita, 2002). However, due to the number of kanji in the writing system and the complexity of developing and maintaining kanji knowledge, younger learners or foreign language learners may forego using kanji. Using kanji can be further complicated by the fact that each kanji can be read in one of two ways: the “native,” Japanese pronunciation (*kun-yomi*), or the “Chinese” pronunciation (*on-yomi*), which has shifted to fit the Japanese phonetic system (Igarishi, 2007). These ways of reading are not readily apparent and must be learned through exposure or recognition of vocabulary.

Hiragana. The second type of Japanese writing, hiragana, is a 47-character syllabary that Yamashita (2002) describes as being used not only as a replacement for kanji, but also to express the grammatical features of the Japanese language. Hiragana are used for verb and adjective inflection, as well as certain nouns of Japanese origin and connecting particles; most Japanese writing is written using a mixture of kanji and hiragana (Igarishi, 2007), although written material geared toward young children and language learners is often found written only in hiragana (Ivantosh, 1998). This type of writing was developed from simplifying the kanji, and was created to make writing

Japanese more efficient than using only kanji (Yamashita, 2002). Learners and young children can use hiragana to write in Japanese even without knowledge of the other written methods.

Katakana. The third type of writing, katakana, consists of the same syllabary as hiragana, and was also similarly developed by simplifying kanji for ease of writing, though written in a different style (Igarishi, 2007). Katakana were originally developed as a reading aid for traditional Chinese scripts, which were widely read in Japan by religious followers and intellectuals; in modern times, the function of katakana has become limited, being mostly regulated to foreign loanwords, onomatopoeias, and emphasis (Yamashita, 2002); however, given the propensity of these words in daily life, katakana is nearly as essential for reading Japanese as hiragana and kanji. In practice, the importance of katakana words, while present, is downplayed in most foreign language Japanese teaching materials (Igarishi, 2007), which can make it challenging for learners to get comfortable with katakana.

Rōmaji. The fourth type of Japanese orthography is known as Rōmaji; this is the written form of Japanese using the Latin (or Roman) alphabet, hence the name (Igarishi, 2007). This is often used to transcribe Japanese phonetically (Ivantosch, 1998) for a variety of purposes, including advertising and signage directed toward non-Japanese speakers in Japan. It is taught in Japanese school for these purposes, although it is not commonly used among Japanese to communicate. There were efforts in the early 20th century by groups who wanted to make Japanese more accessible to change written Japanese to only Rōmaji (Igarishi, 2007), but these efforts were unsuccessful. In modern

Japanese writing, Rōmaji use is limited, and is more prevalent among non-native Japanese learners.

The four types of Japanese writing systems work in conjunction with each other to create the written Japanese sentence; native Japanese learn all of these writing systems through formal education and informally through family literacies (Igarishi, 2007). Usually, hiragana is learned first, followed by katakana and Rōmaji. Kanji is learned throughout the post-secondary level. This allows learners to start writing with only hiragana, and add other writing systems as they learn them (Igarishi, 2007).

Figure 1

A Japanese Sentence Using the Various Writing Systems

<i>Hiragana</i>	わがはいはねこである	(I am a cat.)
<i>Katakana</i>	ワガハイハネコデアル	(I am a cat.)
<i>Rōmaji</i>	Wagahai wa neko de aru	(I am a cat.)
<i>With kanji and hiragana</i>	吾輩は猫である	(I am a cat.)

As seen in Figure 1 on the previous page, the same Japanese sentence can be written in four different ways, depending on the writer's choice and audience. However, it would most typically be found in either the first format (hiragana), for a younger audience or for Japanese language learners, or the fourth format (with kanji), for an adult audience. As post-secondary students learn Japanese as a foreign language, it is typical to learn first hiragana, katakana, then kanji, which mirrors the progression of Japanese children and

allows access to the written language immediately while building toward adult reading proficiency (Ivantosch, 1998).

Reading Japanese as a Foreign Language. The complex orthographies of Japanese can have a variety of effects on students learning Japanese as a foreign language. A study by Kondo-Brown (2006) investigated a number of different factors that affected student perception of their Japanese learning development. She found that students who had higher knowledge of kanji and stronger reading ability were more likely to perceive Japanese reading tasks as easy and have more motivation to read in Japanese, while the opposite effect held true for those with lower written language development. In fact, Kondo-Brown (2006) claimed that lack of kanji knowledge or proficiency closely correlated with a student's motivation to read overall, showing the importance of kanji development for student progress in reading Japanese. Additionally, she found that the reading content played a part in student engagement in language development as well. She concluded by suggesting that a focus on kanji development focused on the content, along with relevant text selection to strengthen student engagement, would help students to build Japanese reading ability.

Dewey's (2004) study approached this idea by comparing Japanese reading development among both domestic US students studying Japanese language and students studying Japanese in Japan (study abroad). In his study, he found that students studying Japanese in Japan felt more confident in reading Japanese in a variety of situations; Dewey (2004) posited that this was likely an effect of daily exposure to the language in country, and although students did not report feeling more motivated than those studying domestically, they desired to interact with the society around them.

Japanese reading development also benefited from structured activity in the classroom. A study focusing on the use of extended reading (ER) in the Japanese foreign language classroom found that scaffolded reading activities provided improvement in not only reading skills, but also in student confidence and motivation (de Burgh-Hirabe & Feryok, 2013). As students read more, most of them felt more comfortable in reading and comprehending the Japanese language. By including ER as a class assignment, students were made to interact with texts in Japanese, and the resulting exposure increased their confidence.

The benefits of extended reading can even be gained by beginner Japanese language learners, as detailed in Leung's (2002) study on diary writing. She conducted a self-study by analyzing her diary about reading Japanese texts as a beginning learner. She found that by actively reading, her comprehension of Japanese vocabulary and structures increased, and by the end of the study period, she felt generally more confident in her reading ability than when she began. In order to successfully develop Japanese language and literacy through reading as a beginner, however, it is necessary to have access to materials that are suitable for beginners, because material with too many kanji or unknown vocabulary could have a demotivating effect on the learner (Leung, 2002). Students just starting out in Japanese should engage in written material that is both of interest and at an approachable level.

Foreign Language Learning and Identity

The development of a new language has a profound effect on the individual learning it; not only are they able to communicate with others in a completely different way, but they are often changed at a deeper level. It has been said that learning a new

language also has the effect of gaining a new identity (Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000) due to the fact that as someone is exposed to different culture and worldviews through the knowledge of a new language, the person becomes aware of different possible permutations of self. The great majority of studies on language and identity tend to deal with bilingual individuals who have grown up with heritage languages, where both languages are an intrinsic and inseparable part of identity (Kabuto, 2010; Haneda & Monobe, 2009; Arredondo & Rosado, 2016); however, the effect of language on identity can be found in foreign language students as well.

Individual identity is a concept that researchers have tried to define for decades. The shaping of identity is a constant and complex process that occurs due to external and internal forces (Erikson, 1968), and one that is difficult to clearly define (Mercer, 2011). Erikson (1968) defines identity as being the product of two individual processes both “in the core of the individual and yet also in the core of his communal culture” (p. 22). This locates identity as both an individual aspect and as a product of society’s influence. This idea is echoed by Bucholtz and Hall (2005), who extend this concept to language and literacy. They focus on the individual’s use of language to shape their identity by shifting the perceptions of others through the way they communicate. This can be done regardless of whether the language is a native or foreign language.

Effect on Identity

The development of a foreign language has a definite effect on identity, but studies show that this manifests in many ways. The concept of foreign language identity is expanded upon by Dörnyei (2009), who posits that a foreign language’s effect on learners’ identity stems from the learners’ motivation to integrate in some way to the

community of the language they are learning. This concept is realized through the L2 Motivational Self System, which shows that if proficiency in the language fits into a student's ideal view of self or a supposed view of self, then the student will be more motivated to learn and develop language and literacy skills. Although this system helps to establish criteria to understand what facets of a foreign language might affect identity, it does not take into consideration a learner's current self, which makes this concept challenging to implement or utilize in a classroom setting (Taylor et al., 2013).

Although a simplified system may be useful in trying to define the change in identity due to language and literacy development, it is probable that such development is highly complex and nuanced. Mercer (2011) contends that the dynamic composition of identity means that such development is varied and cannot be clearly defined. This development is explored through a single qualitative case study with a postsecondary student studying foreign language as a non-major. The results of the study showed that a multitude of factors affect the development of identity in foreign language, and that these factors often interact with each other in different and often unpredictable ways. Mercer (2011) ventures that it is "doubtless worth attempting to do as much as possible to encourage learners to develop such a [positive and realistic] self-concept, whilst still remaining mindful of the limits of teachers' influence and the array of other factors that are concurrently affecting a learner's self-concept" (p.168). The interaction of these varied factors results in the construction of a complex and dynamic new identity, and although the instructor cannot directly control that development, they can work toward making sure that the end result is positive and meets achievable expectations of the student.

Complexity in foreign language identity also appears as a result of conflicting ideas connected with the learning of the language and experiencing said language through interaction with media, literature, and native speakers. Kinginger's (2004) study on an individual who studied French as a foreign language before studying and living in French-speaking countries describes a student who had preconceived notions about the French language and identity. She aspired to create an identity for herself in French that matched the romanticized imagery that she had associated with French culture, but found upon immersing herself in the environment that her ideas were not necessarily correct. Although she tried to maintain her constructed identity through forcing herself to speak and write primarily in French, she was constantly challenged by both internal and external forces. Ultimately, her identity did change due to her immersion in French, but rather than shaping her to fit her stereotypical image of the French, she instead found positive change to her motivation and academic skills, and was able to become a more varied individual, albeit not in the way she expected (Kinger, 2004). Identity is affected by many factors, and language plays an important role in shaping it.

Foreign Language Stereotypes

University students who do choose to take a foreign language have to contend with the challenges of learning a different language; this often requires students to reframe their misconceptions or stereotypes regarding foreign language and literacy, as illustrated in a study by Altan (2006). He surveyed 248 postsecondary students about their ideas and beliefs related to learning a foreign language. His results showed that students were generally positive toward the ability to develop a foreign language, with three-fourths of participants agreeing with the idea. However, the majority of the

respondents also indicated belief in the ideas that those gifted in math or science cannot succeed in foreign language, and vice-versa; they also showed support for the idea that natural affinity is necessary to have to successfully learn the language.

The stereotypes described above in Altan's (2006) study are important to consider when thinking about foreign language learning and teaching because they define preconceived notions that teachers may need to address or change through their role as instructor. As the study showed, "the language teacher is likely to be viewed as an 'expert' about language related matter; his or her views whether expressed explicitly in class or implicitly by teaching practice could have a strong influence on the students' own beliefs" (Altan, 2006, p.50-1). Foreign language instructors, native and non-native speakers alike, must be aware of the ideas and practices that they present to students, and especially the way in which these are framed within the course of study, as this might have a drastic impact on the mindset of the students.

Foreign Language Learning Anxiety

Another factor that plays an important role in learning a foreign language and developing identity is anxiety. Specifically, language anxiety has been defined as "the feeling of tension and apprehension specifically associated with second [foreign] language contexts, including speaking, listening, and learning" (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994, p.284). It is generally agreed that foreign language students tend to experience language anxiety at some point during their studies, and that it can be related to all forms of language: speaking, listening, reading, and writing (Horwitz et al., 1986; Saito et al., 2002; Dewaele & Tsui, 2013; Liu, 2016). An example of this is a study by Zhao et al. (2013) which examined anxiety of American students while reading foreign language

texts in Chinese. The data, collected from a mixture of scales, surveys, tests, and written interviews, indicated that students felt written language anxiety when studying Chinese that mirrored overall language anxiety, and that it increased the higher level of class observed. The results also showed that this anxiety affected reading performance as well in assignments and exams.

Furthermore, the effect of foreign language anxiety can be amplified by lack of awareness or dismissal of the problem. A mixed methods study by Trang et al. (2013) was conducted on both university students and instructors to determine their awareness and attitudes toward foreign language anxiety. Using a combination of scaled questionnaires, writings, and interviews, the authors concluded that students were generally aware of foreign language anxiety and considered it to be a serious issue of language learning; however, although the instructors were aware of anxiety issues among students and believed them to be widespread, they did not consider it to be a serious issue. The research suggests that instructors should be mindful of the effects of foreign language anxiety and address it in class in order to mitigate any negative influence it may have on language learning (Trang et al., 2013).

Multimodality and Media in Foreign Language Learning and Teaching

When examining foreign language development, it is important to consider aspects of multimodality, as new types of media play an important role in modern language learning (Godhe & Magnusson, 2017). Multimodality, which was developed from Halliday's (1978) work in social semiotics, considers that texts no longer exist in isolation, but often in combination with other modalities such as visual images, sound, or movement (Pahl & Rowsell, 2012; Baldry & Thibault, 2006). The connections between

these different modalities allow for making meaning that is not possible by simple examining one text only (Lemke, 1992); in fact, the interconnectivity between literacies means that the items must be considered in conjunction with one another in order to discern true meaning (Kress, 2003). Given the rise of electronic and social media, this phenomenon has only been increasing in recent years.

Multimodality can be applied to the foreign language classroom in a number of ways. A study by Sarıçoban and Yürük (2016) examined whether utilizing films in an EFL class improved students' reading comprehension skills. They assessed this by having two classes read a book, but showing one class sections from the film version during the course of study. Post-unit comprehension tests on the reading revealed that students who watched the film scored higher; likewise, surveys collected from student participants showed that they felt more comfortable with usage and meaning of grammatical and vocabulary items from the book after experiencing them used in the film. By giving students multiple instances of target items in the foreign language through varied media types, students are better able to develop their language and literacy skills.

Multimodality has been used in the foreign language classroom not only as a facet of language instruction, but also as a component of the revision and feedback process as well. This is explored by Elola and Oskoz (2016), who used multimodal methods to provide feedback on a number of different essay assignments in a foreign language class. The study analyzed the feedback of the final essay, which was given as both Word comments and as a screencast video; they found that the types of feedback offered differed depending on the delivery method, and that although students completed the necessary revisions regardless of method, they found the video to be more personal, but

also warm in both praise and criticism (Elola & Oskoz, 2016). Using different types of literacies allows instructors to engage students in a different way, providing for a more holistic learning experience.

Multimodality is an important aspect to consider in any class that involves language and literacy. As technology continues to evolve and students become more attuned to new and innovative forms of communication, instructors must be aware of the attraction and impact of these multimodal literacies (Godhe & Magnusson, 2017); this is also important because students have been developing these multimodal literacies even before beginning formal education (Rowse et al., 2013). The fact that these literacies often work in conjunction with one another to inform and build meaning (Kress, 2003) means that it is essential for students to be able to utilize many forms of literacy as they try to comprehend meaning and develop their foreign language skills.

Media Literacies

Students are often attracted to the foreign language they study through an interest in some type of multimodal literacy explored through media (Fukunaga, 2006), which is something that can be used to build focus and a socially grounded topic in the culture of the studied language. Media literacy is where students engage in transaction with media, and understand how a variety of information transmitted through media can be utilized and interpreted (Schwarz, 2005). This is important for foreign language learning because “learners are involved in a meaningful way when they understand how communication works in a foreign language, rather than only performing it” (Neiva-Montano, 2021, p.5). She conducted a study examining L2 English learner participation in oral language activities utilizing radio. She found that interacting with authentic media made students

think critically about what they were hearing and made the learning activity have more meaning, as they connected what they know with what they experienced in the class.

A similar study was conducted by Kung (2016), who examined the effects of news broadcasts on L2 English learners. The author found that conversation about the news in the target language resulted in students adapting speaking patterns from the media when talking about it, yielding more natural language use. This also allowed students to engage in authentic language, rather than simply classroom texts. Student engagement in media is important to encounter real life use of the language and allows for more opportunities to experience a variety of usage.

Conclusion

The literature reviewed for this study indicates that foreign language development can be a complex and dynamic learning process. Students must overcome preconceived notions about foreign language (Altan, 2006) and deal with anxiety issues related to language and literacy development (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994). Instructors must be aware and guide their students through the complexities of foreign language development, and incorporate multimodal, socially grounded material as part of their curriculum. Furthermore, the Japanese language has many unique challenges such as orthography differences, that can be particularly challenging for adult learners. Japanese language instructors in post-secondary settings must acknowledge student perceptions of written language and take steps to improve confidence and motivation in order to further develop their Japanese literacy knowledge and their identities as Japanese language learners.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted using a qualitative research design (Check & Schutt, 2012) in order to gather detailed information about the participants' experiences, perceptions, and interpretations regarding their foreign language and literacy development in Japanese at a university in the United States. As this study focused on the experiences of two groups of students in two single-classroom environments, and one group of students in an independent study classroom environment, I chose to conduct it as a single case study bounded by my Japanese language program and three contexts (courses): three individual Japanese language class sections at different levels, described later in this chapter. Creswell (2007) defines case study as "the study of an issue explored through one or more cases within a bounded system" (p.73), and I used the Japanese language program at this institution as the bounded system in my interpretation. In this way, I was able to examine the shared experiences of, as well as observe and document (Creswell & Poth, 2018), the students in the classes while still retaining the ability to focus on individual narratives when necessary. The three class contexts of the single bounded case study permitted exploration of the students' Japanese development in greater depth and width (Yin, 2003).

Case Study

A case study serves to illustrate a question or problem in a context (Creswell, 2007) where the given situation is bounded by the specific setting of occurrence. Case study is often described as a specific type of methodology or strategy (Creswell, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Yin, 2003) that examines the bounded case through multiple

data sources. A case study can be both qualitative and quantitative (Yin, 2003), though I used a qualitative design for this study. Case studies also permit a deep analysis of a particular issue that can under certain circumstances be generalizable to other situations (Creswell, 2007). I found the case study to be relevant to explore my research questions and appropriate for my topic due to the bounded nature of study through classroom-based contexts.

Theoretical Framework

I conducted this study through the lens of Sociocultural Theory (Goodman et al., 2016), specifically in regards to foreign language learners. Sociocultural Theory in general refers to viewing language and literacy as socially and culturally constructed (Goodman et al., 2016). As previously discussed in the literature review, this theory takes the earlier linguistic theories of Halliday regarding how meaning is constructed by spoken interaction (1975; 2013), and Krashen's ideas of language development through social interaction (2003; 2017), and extends them to the act of reading as well. An individual who reads transacts with the text, and their ideas, perspectives, and experiences play a defining role in their interpretation of that text (Rosenblatt, 1969). This transaction may change depending on how individuals choose to transact with the text to construct meaning of what they have read.

Additionally, the environment of the reading, the topic, and the circumstances of the action can all affect how the reader chooses to approach, interpret, and decode the target (Gee, 2013). These "Discourses" can be varied, and an individual's repertoire can expand given access to new ideas in the surrounding society. Finally, an individual brings his or her knowledge and resources gained throughout their experiences in life and can

apply them to language and learning in additional languages; these “Funds of Knowledge” can be an invaluable part of the learning process (Moll & Greenberg, 1990; Moll et al., 1992). Additionally, through microgenesis this learning can take place incrementally through a variety of interactions (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). All of these socially and culturally based experiences create an individual view toward language and literacy that varies from learner to learner, and can foster literacy and learning experiences.

The Sociocultural Theory is further applied to foreign language learners by Lantolf et al. (2015), who, like the cognitive development concepts devised by Vygotsky (1978), stress the importance of the social environment on the development of the additional language. Specifically, they focus on the importance of imitation and internalization for foreign language and literacy learners. Learners imitate the patterns of native language users, and also internalize the social structures and cultural patterns connected to the language and literacy of the foreign language. This can be done in many ways, including private speech (Mitchell et al., 2013). The relationship between the language learner and the surrounding environment is complex, and must be closely examined when understanding an individual’s development of language and literacy.

This relationship and its complexity for the foreign language learner is explored by Bialystok and Hakuta (1994), who describe it as a combination of several factors: the language being learned, the individual’s brain processes, how we interpret those processes, our identity, and culture. This complexity also played an important role in the framework for this study, because of my examination of the students’ understanding and interpretation of the Japanese language and how it affects their emerging resources of

multilingualism (Ruiz, 1984). In particular, this study looked to Ruiz's (1984) discussion of language as a resource, where learners understand the importance of learning language and literacy, which helps to shape learners' and foreign language educators' attitudes about the language and the society of that language. Furthermore, the development of language and literacy is complex and must be viewed as a continuum during the development process, as all points of learning intersect with each other and cannot be clearly defined during the learning process (Hornberger, 2003). It is important to view developing language and literacy in this way because the interconnectedness of these learning continua means that students utilize them in conjunction with one another, and that use of multiple points of learning improves the possibility of successful language and literacy development.

Positionality

I brought my own experiences and perceptions as a Japanese language learner into this study, and was mindful that it did not lead me to any false conclusions or preconceived notions. Because my experience was at a different institution, and was bolstered by years of studying and living in Japan, it was expected that my ideas are and should be different than those of my students.

I also had to balance my role as an insider, since I was working within my own classroom (Herr & Anderson, 2015). As part of this study, I analyzed aspects of my class and my curriculum while working to maintain impartiality. As the instructor I could change and influence the flow of the class at any given time. My position as a former student of Japanese language and literacy, and as instructor of this class, gave me insight into the possible mindsets of my students as well as the ability to change the class. I must

also acknowledge myself as an outsider to the study as well. Though I share the experience of Japanese language learning, my students' journeys are not my own. Furthermore, as the instructor I am separated from the students' perspectives as well. However, it was important to let the data speak for itself without my influence and biases.

Research Site and Context

Research Site

Participants for this study were recruited from students who have studied or were studying Japanese as a foreign language at a university in the United States, where I taught when this study was conducted. This state university is located in a rural area, per Isserman's (2005) definition as somewhere not urban or metropolitan. In regards to the location, the institution is part of a small city with a population of about 33,000 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018) and is located in a coastal area on the East Coast of the United States. The university sponsors a variety of programs and events to enrich the community.

The university chosen for this study has a comprehensive foreign language (modern languages) department, with a number of majors and minors to choose from. The major languages are Romance languages; however, a smaller number of less commonly taught languages (LCTLs) are offered as well. I created the Japanese language program here in 2013, have been the sole instructor of the program since its conception, and have offered it every semester. The elementary level class (Japanese 001) is offered in the fall semester, and the low-intermediate class (Japanese 002) is offered in the spring

semester. Two additional semesters of study (Japanese 003 and Japanese 004) are occasionally available through independent study only.

Research Contexts

There are three contexts for this study: the Japanese 001 beginner class that I taught in the fall 2020 semester, the Japanese 002 low-intermediate Japanese class which I taught in the spring 2020 semester, and the group of higher-level students enrolled in the Japanese independent study course 004 in spring 2020. No Japanese 003 course was included because it was not conducted during the data collection period. The Japanese 001 class was designed for beginners to the Japanese language, while the Japanese 002 class was designed to continue study of Japanese for students who have completed one semester of the program or its equivalent at another institution. Under normal circumstances, they both meet for 50-minute periods three days a week (Monday, Wednesday, and Friday) in a standard classroom on the university campus (see the attached course syllabi, Appendix D). However, this study was conducted during the COVID-19 worldwide pandemic; as a result, the Japanese 002 class transitioned to online-only one month into the semester (before data collection started), and the 001 class was online the entire semester. Attendance for these classes was mandatory, as they involve synchronous, face-to-face lecture and activities requiring interaction with the instructor and classmates. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all data collection was done remotely through online methods.

The Japanese 001 class works on establishing fundamental knowledge of the Japanese language, including writing systems, basic grammar and sentence structure, and practical application. The Japanese 002 class builds on the material covered in the first

semester, in particular focusing on expanding knowledge of verb forms and being able to construct descriptive sentences. Students in these classes utilize the language through real-world contexts and situations that students might experience with Japanese people or in Japan. The structure of these classes is accomplished in part through the main textbook series, called *Genki* (Banno et al., 2011), which is designed for beginner and high-beginner students of Japanese and is used in both 001 and 002. The text pairs Japanese vocabulary and grammar with real-world situations and has exercises designed around communicative competence. I find the text to be clear and concise, although the situations provided by the text are geared more toward Japanese language learners living in Japan rather than those living overseas.

Both the Japanese 001 and 002 classes also include several projects that foster sociocultural language and literacy development in order to bolster and further expand and develop communicative and cultural competence in Japanese language and literacy. Per the syllabi (Appendix D), the overall goal of the classes is to increase knowledge and confidence in the context of communicative competence; to this end, I used a number of multimodal and textual based activities, since “textual learning functions as a vehicle for communicative language use and cultural inquiry” (Allen, 2017, p. 15). Some of these activities (see Appendix E) included the use of visuals, writings, and video in order to expand student knowledge about Japan and fill in blanks that the textbook does not address. These activities were followed up with assignments such as reflective writings, journaling, and compare and contrast activities that helped students to understand Japanese sociocultural aspects.

The combination of the *Genki* (Banno et al., 2011) textbook in both classes and assignments such as cultural journals allow for a diverse and well-rounded language experience. Through the textbook, students can gain the fundamental knowledge needed to understand and utilize the language, and the assignments allow for application of language skills through encounters with everyday Japanese situations. Students not only become familiar with aspects of Japanese culture and society, but also build their Japanese language and literacy knowledge and skills. Furthermore, using these types of assignments and materials can foster university students' development of intercultural competence (Allen et al., 2019).

The third context is the Japanese 004 independent study course. As previously stated, the Japanese program at this institution is limited to two semesters of typical, in-class instruction. Students who wish to continue their Japanese study after Japanese 001 and 002 may choose to participate in Japanese independent study classes (Japanese 003 and Japanese 004), making for a maximum of four possible semesters of Japanese language study. During this study, the independent study classes met once a week for an hour so that I can provide guidance to the students' studies; this class also used *Genki* (Banno et al., 2011). The group of independent study students in this study contained two students who had taken previous classes with me, and one student who had not but had spent extensive time in Japan. Although this is an independent study, the class follows a syllabus (Appendix D) and I provide structured instruction with more autonomy for exploring student questions.

In all of the classes, I facilitated students' development of their language knowledge with the mind toward interacting with others in that language. Therefore, each

lesson was designed to encourage students to use Japanese with the instructor and each other in some way, which manifested itself usually through spoken interaction in the classroom, and written interaction through classroom notes, class assignments, and homework.

I designed my Japanese classes so that students could experience Japanese language and literacy not only in the sense of a four skills approach, but through the use of multimedia grounding the language in sociocultural aspects of Japan. The multimedia usage provided a way for students to make a connection between their developing Japanese language and literacy and the way in which it is situated in real life. The purpose of this was to give students the opportunity to not only use the language in the classroom setting, but open the door to their exploration of Japanese outside of the classroom.

Participants

For this study, I examined the language and literacy experiences of Japanese language learners across three contexts; participants for the first and second contexts were recruited from my Japanese 002 class in the spring of 2020 and the Japanese 001 class in the fall of 2020. The participants for the third context were recruited from students who were taking the independent study course Japanese 004 in spring of 2020. Because the focus was on participating members of the class, the requirements to join the study were few. Participants were expected to be enrolled in the Japanese 001, 002, or 004 class of the university, and were required to be enrolled during the course of the data collection. Additional optional inclusion criteria for the study included whether the students were interested in learning or improving their Japanese

language and literacy, and whether they were interested in Japanese society and culture as a whole.

I chose to use purposeful sampling for selecting participants; this choice was made in order to gather the most information possible with a limited number of participants (Patton, 2002). I was able to recruit a total of twelve participants across the three classes: five participants in the Japanese 002 class, four participants in the Japanese 001 class, and three participants in Japanese 004. Students were selected from all three classes in order to understand participant language and literacy development in each of the different contexts, and are described in Table 1.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

<i>Participant</i>	<i>Class</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Race</i>	<i>Class Status</i>	<i>Major</i>	<i>Age Range</i>	<i>Japanese Lang. Study?</i>
<i>Brian</i>	Japanese 001	Male	White	Senior	Biology	20s	No
<i>Jason</i>	Japanese 001	Male	Asian	Senior	Computer Science	20s	Yes
<i>Liv</i>	Japanese 001	Female	White	Junior	Environmental Studies	20s	No
<i>Thomas</i>	Japanese 001	Male	White	Junior	Chemistry/Computer Science	20s	No
<i>Ava</i>	Japanese 002	Female	White	Junior	Math	20s	Yes
<i>Emma</i>	Japanese 002	Female	White	Senior	Early Childhood Education	20s	Yes
<i>Liam</i>	Japanese 002	Male	White	Senior	Music	20s	Yes
<i>Olivia</i>	Japanese 002	Female	White	Sophomore	Art	20s	Yes

<i>Participant</i>	<i>Class</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Race</i>	<i>Class Status</i>	<i>Major</i>	<i>Age Range</i>	<i>Japanese Lang. Study?</i>
<i>Sophia</i>	Japanese 002	Female	White	Senior	Education	20s	Yes
<i>Charlotte</i>	Japanese 004	Female	White	Senior	IDIS	60s	Yes
<i>Isabella</i>	Japanese 004	Female	White	Senior	Dance/Management	20s	Yes
<i>William</i>	Japanese 004	Male	White	Senior	Psychology	20s	Yes

Japanese 001 Participants. The following four students from the Japanese 001 class in fall 2020 participated in this study.

Brian. Brian was a white male student, in his 20s, a senior, and a biology major during the study. He was learning Japanese formally for the first time in this class. As a Jewish-American, Brian had self-taught knowledge of Hebrew, both spoken and written, although it was mostly limited to formal use rather than conversational. He had also studied Spanish in secondary school. He had been very interested in Japanese pop culture since he was a young child, and was an avid consumer of both anime and *manga* (Japanese comics).

Jason. Jason was a South Asian male student. As a senior in his 20s, he majored in computer science. He first learned Japanese formally in middle school as an elective class, but did not continue after that. Jason had studied Spanish before in elementary and high school, and worked in the restaurant industry, so he had working use of Spanish for communication. His interests in Japan also came from anime, and he enjoyed making plastic models. He had been to Japan once.

Liv. Liv was a white female student in her 20s, and was a junior in the Environmental Studies department. She was learning Japanese formally for the first time. She had previously studied Spanish and French in secondary school, but was proficient in neither language. Her sister was also studying Japanese in preparation to study abroad; Liv had never visited Japan. She took the class because of her interest in Japanese culture and because her boyfriend was also taking the class.

Thomas. Thomas was a white male student who was in his 20s and a junior double majoring in chemistry and computer science during the study. This was his first time to formally study Japanese. He had learned Spanish in high school, but did not have much interest in learning the language. He took the Japanese class to combine his love of anime while earning Gen Ed credits. He had never visited Japan.

Japanese 002 Participants. The following five university students in the Japanese 002 class taught in spring of 2020 volunteered to participate in this study. All students had taken my Japanese 001 class the previous semester.

Ava. Ava was a white female student, and was a junior in her 20s majoring in math during the data collection. This was her second semester of formal Japanese. She had previously studied both French and Russian for a few semesters in secondary school, but had limited ability to communicate in either language. She did not really watch anime, but was an avid reader of manga. Ava was also very interested in Japanese cuisine.

Emma. Emma was a white female student. She was a senior in her 20s at the time of the study. She was also in her second semester of Japanese. She had taken both

Spanish and Russian classes previously in high school, but had forgotten most of both of them. Emma liked both anime and Japanese music. She was an early childhood education major.

Liam. Liam was a white male student. This was his second semester of Japanese as well. He has studied Spanish in high school, but did not try to really learn it. He was a senior in his 20s, and his major in university was music, with a specialization in East Asian Studies. His interest in Japan came from anime, games, and music. Although Japan and Japanese language was his main interest, he planned to study Korean after finishing this class.

Olivia. Olivia was a white female student. She was studying Japanese in her second semester also. She spent time consuming Japanese media such as anime and dramas. Olivia was bilingual; she is a native speaker of both English and Norwegian. She was a sophomore in her 20s and an art major.

Sophia. Sophia was a white female student. Like the others, she was in her second semester of formal Japanese study. Olivia studied German for a number of years; she had visited the country and spoke it well. Her main interest in Japanese came from games and music. She was a senior in her 20s and an education major.

Japanese 004 Participants. The final three participants were enrolled in the Japanese independent study class in spring of 2020. This class had the most variation in Japanese language experience out of the three contexts.

Charlotte. Charlotte is a white female student. The Japanese 004 class was her first time studying with me, but she had studied Japanese formally in the past during her

university years. She was an older, non-traditional student in her 60s who took this class specifically to brush up on Japanese. Charlotte spent a number of years working in Japan in the late 1970s. She had also studied German, French, and Spanish. She was a senior majoring in Interdisciplinary Studies.

Isabella. Isabella was a white female student in her 20s. This was her fourth semester studying Japanese with me. She had previously studied Spanish, and had limited proficiency. She enjoyed Japanese manga, music, and dramas. Isabella was also very interested in Japanese dance. She was a senior in the Honors College, and was double majoring in dance and management.

William. William was a white male student in his 20s, and a senior studying psychology. He had studied with me for three semesters: Japanese 002, and the independent study classes 003 and 004. He had studied Spanish, Latin, and French. He previously studied Japanese at another university prior to coming here. He was interested in Japanese anime, manga, and novels. He had visited Japan before as a tourist.

Data Collection

The data collection for this study (see Table 2) consisted of seven types of data: observations of the Japanese 001 and 002 virtual classrooms, a group interview involving multiple participants in the Japanese 001 class, individual interviews with participants, cultural journals, reflections, artifacts, and analytic memos. Collecting multiple types of data sources allowed for triangulation of the different views and experiences (Hesse-Biber, 2016) that students experienced while taking Japanese courses. Furthermore, by collecting data in different ways and in different environments, I was able to better

understand and examine about how students' views and experiences affect their practices inside and outside the classroom, and how those practices influenced their perceptions and identities as Japanese language learners.

Table 2*Summary of Data Sources*

Data Source	Japanese 001 – 4 Participants	Japanese 002 – 5 Participants	Japanese 004 – 3 Participants	Rationale of Data Source
Individual Interviews	8 interview sessions total	7 interview sessions total	3 interview sessions total	Allowed for one-on-one collection of information pertaining to the experiences of the individual student
Group Interview	1 interview session total			Encouraged students to collaboratively reflect on their language development
Cultural Journals	47 entries total	60 entries total	15 entries total (1 student)	Provided an in-depth picture of students' Japanese language and cultural experiences inside and out of the classroom
Reflection Writings	18 submissions total			Showed students connecting current development to previous knowledge Captured interactions between instructor and students, and how language was introduced in classroom
Classroom Observations	11 Class Periods	9 Class Periods		Defined the parameters of Japanese language and literacy learning in the class
Artifacts	Syllabi (3) Lesson plans (8) Photos in cultural journal			

Data Source	Japanese 001 – 4 Participants	Japanese 002 – 5 Participants	Japanese 004 – 3 Participants	Rationale of Data Source
Research Memos	Collection of memos during data analysis			Allowed for better connection making during the process

Classroom Observations

One type of data that I collected in this study was recorded observations of classroom activities, and behaviors and interactions of the students and I during class; this was done to understand how students are socially and culturally constructing language and literacy (Goodman et al., 2016). I recorded the observations over the course of the semester for the duration of the classes, and collected a total of nine Japanese 002 classes and eleven Japanese 001 classes; this was accomplished through the use of recording via Zoom and a classroom protocol (Appendix C), and the digital file and accompanying protocols were coded using the software NVivo as a video transcription file. No observations were gathered for the Japanese 004 class.

The focus of these observations was on how students interact with each other and the instructor by using both the target language (Japanese) and English, how I facilitated Japanese language and literacy learning, and the role that this played in the development of their foreign language, literacy, and identity. The observations were important in understanding how students use their Discourses (Gee, 2015) and Funds of Knowledge (Moll and Greenberg, 1990) in order to further develop their understanding of Japanese.

Interviews

I facilitated individual interviews with eleven of the twelve participants in all three contexts over the course of the semester. Seven students completed one near the beginning of the semester and one at the end of the semester, four students completed one interview but declined to complete a second follow-up interview, and one student declined to participate in interviews. I conducted interviews as semi-structured (see Appendix A) in order to allow for some flexibility, and to allow for additional questioning when topics needed to be further explored (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Seidman, 2006). I conducted the interviews in order to gain a greater understanding of the participants' experiences, ideas, and knowledge of Japanese language and literacy. The interview questions also explored whether learning Japanese as a foreign language has had an effect on students' identities and perceptions as an individual. Each interview was approximately 45-60 minutes in length, and was conducted via Zoom due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

I also conducted a single group interview with three participants from the Japanese 001 class. More group interviews were planned, but I was unable to conduct them due to participants' inability to participate. This group interview took the form of a before class discussion, where all students were invited to participate. I planned the content of the group interview lessons to be different depending on the session, but they were condensed into one. The group interview session (Appendix B) focused on the students' connections to Japanese language and literacy in their daily lives, the role of Japanese sociocultural elements and students' purpose in continuing Japanese studies, and the connections to Japanese language and literacy that they formed during the past

months of study and the influence that it has had on their identity and their daily lives. It lasted approximately 40 minutes.

The group interview was important because given that language and literacy is a social and cultural phenomenon, the types of information and responses given differed in a larger social setting compared to private, individual interviews. Students' connection with each other are important, and the combined experiences and backgrounds of different students led to different themes and areas of exploration.

Cultural Journals

I collected a journal in all three classes where students were expected to keep and record their weekly interactions with anything Japanese, as a class assignment. Over the course of twelve required entries, students discussed anything they watched, read, or saw; it included items such as making Japanese food, talking to Japanese individuals, or playing Japanese games. Students were able to write entries in Japanese or English. Collection of the journals allowed me to gain insight into the ways in which students utilized Japanese practices and how the students interacted with the Japanese language outside of the classroom. Students submitted the journal through the Canvas online platform on scheduled days for ease of data collection and analysis. I required this for all three class contexts; however, a number of students did not submit all of their work even though it was a graded part of class.

Reflection Writings

A second type of writing that I collected in the Japanese 001 class only was reflection writing, which was done through five separate entries for each student

throughout the semester. This data source was different from the cultural journal because the topics of the journal were free for the student to decide, while I selected the focal topics of the reflection writings. Over the semester, I asked students to reflect upon a number of video-based assignments. They had to learn about the Japanese writing system, Japanese folktales, Japanese pop music, information on a location in Japan, and watch a Japanese drama. Together, these five reflections expanded on students' language and literacy development by making meaningful and authentic connections.

Artifacts

There were a number of artifacts collected over the course of the semester from the classroom. These included the syllabi for the three classes (Appendix D), photos included by some students in their cultural journals, lesson plans during the semester (Appendix E), and the layout of the Canvas online learning platform used for Japanese 001 only. Additional artifacts were planned to be collected, but this was unable to be implemented due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Taken as a whole, the artifacts listed above helped me to understand the types of literacies students encountered and the social environments in which they existed (Pahl & Rowsell, 2012). I was able to use the artifact data along with the cultural journals, reflections, and interview data to create an understanding of how these students perceived the language as they developed it, and how they began developing their identities as Japanese language learners.

Research Memos

I made memos while teaching classes and conducting this study that allowed me to describe my thoughts, ideas, and observations during the class time. This gave additional perspective on student development of language during the classes.

Timeline of Research Activity

I began collecting data for this research in March of 2020, after receiving IRB approval from my institution. All data for Japanese 002 and Japanese 004 classes was collected through online methods through the end of the semester, May of 2020. I asked for an IRB extension during the summer in order to add an additional context to the study (Japanese 001) and collect more data to make sure that my study had enough collected information. I began collecting the second round of data, also online, in August of 2020. My data collection concluded in December of 2020, and I worked on analyzing data from the beginning of 2021 until August of 2021.

Data Analysis

I organized the collected data, transcribed it, and entered it into the Nvivo software; then, I began my analysis by holistically examining the Japanese language program and all three class contexts for shared thematic elements. I accomplished this qualitatively by looking for and organizing data into themes regarding the practices, experiences, and perceptions of university students' Japanese language and literacy development. I conducted analysis of the material in an inductive manner following Seidman (2006); meaning I approached the "transcripts with an open attitude, seeking what emerges as important and of interest from the text" (p. 132). I let the data lead me toward the conclusions rather than trying to reconstruct my own experiences. This was

accomplished through a combination of hand coding and digital coding. The data coding for this study consisted of multiple cycles of coding (Saldaña, 2013). The first cycle used structural coding and descriptive coding (eclectic coding). Structural coding is designed for studies that involve “multiple participants, standardized or semi-structured data-gathering protocols, hypothesis testing, or exploratory investigations to gather topics lists or indexes of major categories or themes” (Saldaña, 2013, p. 95). This study fit, as it had multiple participants and sought to index major themes; additionally, structural coding is especially suitable for interview data, and allowed me to categorize topics easily while keeping my research question about identities, experiences, and practices in mind.

The second method of my first cycle coding was descriptive coding, which uses words or short phrases to encapsulate the ideas behind a phrase or utterance (Saldaña, 2013). This was useful for this study because the study sought to answer questions about not only concepts but also the perceptions and experiences of learners as they develop their skills and incorporate Japanese into who they are. Descriptive coding puts the actions into categories that show the students’ types of experiences or learning, and the areas in which they do or do not experience shift in identity.

After applying the first cycle of coding, I applied a second cycle of coding of the entire data set using pattern coding, which Saldaña (2013) describes as being appropriate when seeking to uncover the overarching themes in data, or to understand relationship patterns and processes. This represented a good fit for this project because my aim was to understand the main ideas behind students’ Japanese language and literacy development, perceptions, and identity. Analysis through pattern coding helped me to codify the

specific ways by which students' Japanese language and literacy development was occurring.

I analyzed the data once more for a third cycle of coding, which used axial coding. I chose to use axial coding in order to reorganize data, remove redundancies, and again work toward themes. It uses a code from first cycle coding as a kind of "axis" around which other relevant codes are collected (Saldaña, 2013). I found this useful when building my themes. Finding the common threads between the data sources allowed for a deeper understanding of each theme as they emerged. Additionally, I utilized codeweaving between coding cycles in order to integrate key terms and phrases into the codes (Saldaña, 2013).

Trustworthiness and Validity

I designed this study to be trustworthy and valid through the use of a single case study with multiple contexts with multiple participants and varied data sources (Hesse-Biber, 2016). Although I looked at participants in a specific setting, I included the use of three separate contexts in order to gather a wider variety of information on students who are at different points in their Japanese language and literacy development. Within the contexts, I interviewed the participants in both individual and group settings in order to gain understanding about how social interaction can influence the data provided by the students. Furthermore, the multiple data types I collected allowed me to triangulate the data (Hesse-Biber, 2016) in order to make stronger and more valid conclusions.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

This chapter discusses findings from university students taking Japanese language courses at a university on the East Coast of the United States, in three separate class contexts. I examined how these students developed Japanese language and literacy through the building of developmental processes during in-class learning and out of class experiences. I categorized my findings into three themes: building developmental processes of Japanese language and literacy through in-class learning, the sociocultural influence on Japanese language and literacy development, and negotiations of perceptions and interpretations of identity as Japanese language learners.

Building Developmental Processes of Japanese Language and Literacy Through In-class Learning

Learning Processes of Japanese Language and Literacy Development

As an instructor of a Less Commonly Taught Language (LCTL), I am aware of the fact that my class is often the first point of contact for students to encounter the Japanese language. Although students encounter Japanese outside the course in many different contexts, the classroom remains the main source of information for the pedagogical development of Japanese language and literacy.

The three Japanese classes that I taught (001, 002, and 004) were all based on a four-skills (speaking, listening, reading, writing) approach, as outlined in the class syllabi (see Appendix D). All three courses have a number of student learning outcomes (SLOs)

that students are expected to attain by the end of the course. For example, in Japanese 001, three of the five SLOs are as follows:

1. Read and write in basic Japanese; this includes the hiragana and katakana syllabaries, along with 43 kanji characters.
2. Use and respond to basic greetings, self-introductions, and “small talk” in the Japanese language such as feelings, day of week/weather, and describing activities/events.
3. Comprehend and produce basic Japanese grammar and structure including order, polite-form verb conjugation (present, negative, past, past negative), adjectives, and particle/postposition use.

In the classroom, I used a variety of pedagogical strategies to support students’ Japanese language and literacy knowledge; they then took this information and, combined with their own knowledge, worked to develop their Japanese language and literacy.

Japanese Language Learning Processes

This study informed me of the many ways in which students used the knowledge and information provided for them in the classroom environment to improve and further develop their Japanese language and literacy. Students approached their language and literacy development using a variety of methods that depended on their own experiences. These learning strategies and unique individual Funds of Knowledge (Moll & Greenberg, 1990) played a significant role in the way in which students studied Japanese. Students utilized their Funds of Knowledge in conjunction with what I facilitated and encouraged in the classroom to engage in individualized Japanese learning experiences.

Previous Language Learning Experience Connections. All focal students who were enrolled in my Japanese classes had studied a foreign language previously. For these students, this affected their approach to developing Japanese language and literacy. Sophia in Japanese 002 had studied German in high school before taking Japanese. She found that “it helps know what kind of study methods you need in order to correctly remember and utilize the language,” and that in her previous German study she “would have certain prompts or we would do certain things, and through doing that for the three years in school... [I] learned what methods work really well for me, and which ones don’t.” Here, her prior language learning experiences played a role in her Japanese study, because she was able to use methods for language learning that suited her without wasting time with ineffective strategies. For example, she would spontaneously translate thoughts into Japanese, or try to use the language while acknowledging that mistakes would be made, but that those mistakes would result in learning. Additionally, it showed that Sophia was willing to take risks to build Japanese development. This previously developed mindset encouraged her to more comfortably learn Japanese.

In the advanced independent course Japanese 004, Charlotte was returning to her Japanese studies after decades away from it. She too, approached her study by returning to methods that she found effective in the past. This meant that she “had gotten all books out, put them all back on the shelf, taking them out from where they were, and put them all on the shelf and started looking at the books again and listening to the tapes again in the car.” As Charlotte had studied Japanese in the late 1970’s, she reverted to the study methods that were effective for her such as audio tapes and old textbooks, even though

study methods have been updated since then. Throughout the semester she continued to utilize these more analog methods of study, which seemed to work for her.

L1 Funds of Knowledge. Another aspect of the students' prior language knowledge was their use of L1 Funds of Knowledge; taking knowledge learned in the environment and home and using it in the formal learning environment in school (Moll et al., 1992). In all three classes, students used their social knowledge and experiences in order to help them develop connections by revisiting Japanese media that they had consumed in the past without Japanese language ability, and by experiencing it with the Japanese literacy that they had developed. William in Japanese 004 described reading texts such as books, including manga, in Japanese that he had previously read in English, so he already knew that he would be interested in the text, and knew the topic of the text. He felt that this better allowed him to understand unfamiliar words and grammar by knowing the corresponding English text. Ava in Japanese 002 did something similar; as a manga reader, she reread Japanese chapters of the series that she had already read in English, such as the series Black Butler. William and Ava used their prior knowledge of the text in order to prime themselves for reading and further comprehension. This allowed them to approach the Japanese text while already knowing the content, so that they could place their focus on the various aspects of the language itself.

Another example of students using Funds of Knowledge involved an assignment for Japanese 002. Students learned relative clauses that could be used to describe individuals, and participated in a game where they would write five sentences in Japanese describing an individual. After listening to the sentences, other students would

be asked to name the individual. During the game, most students chose to introduce a character from Japanese anime or games, including Link from Legend of Zelda, Pikachu, Kirby, and Hello Kitty. I noticed a higher degree of participation and recognition from the students than I experienced during other activities. This indicated to me that students were using knowledge of their interests in order to better interpret the input that they were receiving during the game, which seemed to be an effective use of students' Funds of Knowledge.

Vocabulary Processing and Development. For all focal students in the three classes, vocabulary processing played a key role in their language and literacy development. In order to help build students' incremental knowledge of vocabulary (Nagy & Scott, 2013), I shared several strategies such as flash cards and study applications in the classroom, and encouraged their use in a meaningful context throughout the semester, so students incorporated that into their Japanese study. Although in the class I helped students understand the social aspect of vocabulary development, the study revealed two vocabulary learning strategies: flash card usage and repetition, which they were able to use contextually with their studies. Almost all students relied on flash cards as a component of their Japanese studies. This was especially important for students in Japanese 001 who had to begin the semester by learning the kana portions of the Japanese writing system. Brian and Thomas both created flashcards for developing their understanding of the hiragana and katakana, and Jason (who had studied Japanese previously) used them for vocabulary. This trend continued in the 002 and 004 classes as well, though the focus tended to differ. Ava and Sophia in Japanese 002 created decks separated by parts of speech: a deck for adjectives, and a deck for verbs. In the 004 class,

Isabella relied heavily on flash cards, which she used in conjunction with writing. She described the procedure for studying kanji vocabulary words using flash cards:

I'll make the card, and then on the back I put all of the different ways I can write in hiragana, and then I'll circle the ones that are bolded, and then I'll write all the different examples [the book] gives. And then I'll go through them, and I'll first look at them and try to figure out the definition by looking at the kanji, and then I'll switch it and turn it around. And every time I see the definition, I have to write it in hiragana and then kanji. All the time, I keep doing it till I actually get it right, so it's a long process, but I feel like it's helping me learn the kanji better.

Isabella did not simply look at the flash cards as a sort of visual aid; rather, she used them as part of an active learning process that requires writing and processing of the word in several different ways. As she stated, this process took longer than simply reviewing the kanji at a surface level; it was a lengthy study activity but was more effective according to her.

Students who used flash cards were separated into those who preferred physical cards versus those who preferred digital-based applications. Ava in Japanese 002 and William in Japanese 004 were two students who preferred to use apps and Internet-based computer technology in their strategies to develop flash cards to learn Japanese words and phrases. They both used Anki, an application for PC and mobile that lets users create their own flash card decks. It also offers access to a library of premade decks created by other users. Ava utilized this function in order to download vocabulary decks specific to the units in the *Genki* (Banno et al., 2011) textbooks, while William focused on

downloading kanji card sets. Additionally, William also took advantage of Quizlet, a similar program which allows for a more interactive flash card experience. Ava and William used these app and computer technologies to improve upon traditional flash cards, supporting their development of their Japanese vocabulary to a greater degree.

Repeated Use of Vocabulary. The second component of vocabulary knowledge development employed by students was repetition of vocabulary in meaningful contexts. In the classroom, I encouraged this as a part of their Japanese language development through strategies for developing vocabulary knowledge, such as labeling items or repeating words or phrases. However, many students developed vocabulary knowledge and grammatical concepts by simply writing them many times. Thomas in Japanese 001, Sophia in Japanese 002, and all three students in Japanese 004 specifically mentioned this as part of their study methodology. Students like Liam in Japanese 002 also constantly reused certain vocabulary items in their self-study time. He summed the process up this way:

When we learn a new, something new, and when we learn something new in the class, I... In texting my friends, I try to implement it as much as possible, as often as possible, so then I can really drill it in and see how it works in conversation, as opposed to just knowing a set phrase for it. So, I'll just work with it as much as possible to really memorize it and see how it works and see my response from it, or see what response I get from it.

This shows how Liam used repeated use of words to expand his incremental and multidimensional knowledge (Nagy & Scott, 2013) of a new vocabulary item or

grammatical aspects. He used the word and phrase the way it is used in the class, but then expanded to use it in writing in ways that he thinks it might be used as well. He used it in real communication with others to develop his comprehension of the language component. By using it and observing the response from the other person, he was able to make sense of the language. In this manner, he was able to not only develop new vocabulary and phrases through meaningful repeated use with others, but also created a better understanding of nuances through trial and error with Japanese speakers in a relevant context, showing that his learning is socially constructed.

Sophia in 002 also developed Japanese language through repeated use in an innovative way. She referenced using her written vocabulary entries to create a dictionary of sorts. Instead of using the textbook dictionary, she said that hers will let her know that “I know where this is, plus I’ve written it how many times now, so it kind of helps remember when I write things down multiple times.” The expanded dictionary assisted her in keeping track of her memorization and comprehension pattern for individual items, and how to use them. Rather than simply writing new words and phrases over and over again, the students chose to integrate memorization strategies into larger study methods. Some of these strategies meshed with ones that they learned in class, but others created their own learning strategies. Although I shared a number of reference dictionaries with the classes, Sophia’s idea to create her own dictionary was inspired by her previous language study in other language classes in the past.

Translation From Japanese to English. Another type of applied learning strategy was through translations from Japanese to English. This was done most often by students in the Japanese 001 class, due to their limited knowledge of Japanese. However,

for Japanese there was an even larger component to the translation aspect, due to students' unfamiliarity with the orthography. In class I encouraged students to focus on familiar words to create strong connections with the Japanese kana, but students added their own translation methods as well. Liv in Japanese 001 would go through the hiragana sentences and write the alphabet above each kana in order to transliterate to Rōmaji; then she would begin the process of changing the Japanese into English. This process was echoed by Thomas, who would translate into English as well, but would do so in his head rather than write it down. As beginners, Liv and Thomas used this process to attempt to make meaning of texts, and interact with them.

Once students have moved into the Japanese 002 class, they generally were able to look at and be able to read the kana of the Japanese orthography without too much difficulty, so the types of translation strategies shifted to focus more on comprehension rather than character recognition. Emma, Ava, Liam, and Sophia described these strategies in interviews; when writing in Japanese, both Emma and Ava thought about what they want to say or write in English first, and then translated that into Japanese. Emma even re-translated back into English after that to check that her translation was accurate. Liam translated into English as well, but also made use of several translation apps to check the accuracy of his translation. Sophia also utilized translation to learn, but for a different reason. She compared her translation with other translations (e.g., textbook or websites) to try to understand why some things are translated the same or differently. The students discussed above relied on their knowledge and familiarity with their L1 as a resource (Cook, 2001; Ruiz, 1984) in order to judge the accuracy of their sentence creation in Japanese.

In the independent study Japanese 004, Charlotte took a very different approach to translation. She translated the sentences, and looked for a pattern in the language:

I do both, sometimes I'll take the sentence and I'll just put the English words right underneath the Japanese so that I can see the pattern. Oh, this comes here, so I can see the pattern and I can start to rationalize the differences so that they don't feel awkward to me, so... Well, does the time element go before the intensity element or does it matter... should I talk about the other thing now, or do I wait until I finish this predicate phrase and then talk about... I get kind of jumbled up there, and so then it becomes oh, I better make a short sentence, or maybe I can tie these two together, but oh, I left out the time. Should I put that in the beginning? I get a little flustered that way.

This description gave a window into Charlotte's language processing and literacy development. She viewed the Japanese language like pieces which need to be arranged in a specific order, which helped to develop her understanding of Japanese syntax. This method of navigating the text helped Charlotte to understand the similarities and differences of Japanese grammar and also allowed her to make sense of the text being examined. Although the process was a bit difficult, Charlotte was able to continue to develop her Japanese language knowledge through her comprehension of syntactic elements and how they work in relation to each other.

Isabella used translation much like Emma and Ava in the Japanese 002 classes; while she had absorbed and could use a number of vocabulary items, there were many words that she felt the need to translate before being able to comprehend the text. She

also admitted translating to Rōmaji at times as well, especially when examining recipes and songs. William, who has had a longer period of consistent self-study than his classmates, had moved away from translation as much as possible. He used translation often when first learning Japanese, but he started focusing on learning the Japanese without English translation, and falling back on translating to English only when necessary. William described this in relation to reading manga; he would read the Japanese first, then cross-check with the Japanese text to see if the two were the same. All focal students described translation as a useful strategy for learning Japanese.

Utilizing Japanese Language Features and Supported Literacy Development

The Japanese language, orthographically and grammatically speaking (Yamashita, 2002), is very different from languages that most of the focal students were previously exposed to. As a LCTL there is less likelihood that students have taken classes in Japanese (Brown, 2006), and for many students the class is the first time experiencing Japanese language. Students in Japanese 004 like William, however, have come into the class having experienced Japanese classroom instruction at another institution. Regardless of linguistic and sociocultural background, the focal students' exposure to Japanese came primarily through the class environment, and it was through interacting with Japanese class assignments, discussions, and lectures that fostered student language and literacy development.

In order to meet the previously described Student Learning Outcomes, students are required to develop a number of strategies to understand and continue to build their Japanese language proficiency. Students are required to first work to comprehend the fundamentals of the Japanese orthographies in order to move on. Students approach and

understand Japanese orthography in a variety of ways, which in turn influences their Japanese literacy development. Additionally, it is these language features, in conjunction with their own Funds of Knowledge, that support students to better develop Japanese language proficiencies.

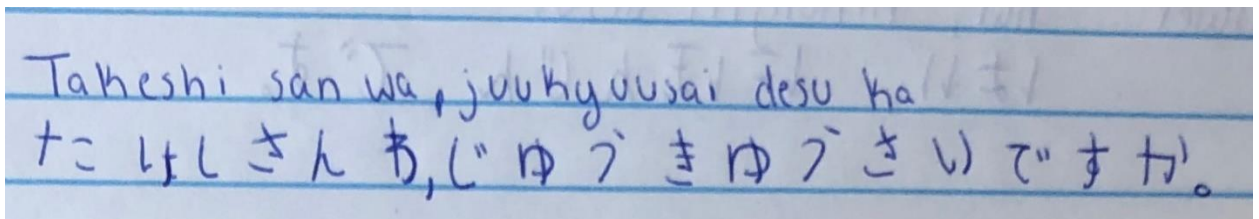
Learning the Four Orthographies of Japanese

When entering my Japanese 001 class for the first session, students are immediately introduced to the Japanese writing system, which uses two syllabaries in combination with the kanji logographic system and Latin alphabet (Yamashita, 2002). While some students come into the various classes with knowledge of the writing system, other students see and navigate this system for the first time.

Usage of Rōmaji. The first type of orthography utilized in class is Rōmaji, as described in Chapter 2. Figure 2 below illustrates how Liv used Rōmaji to read hiragana during the early stages of her study.

Figure 2

An Example of Rōmaji Written Above Hiragana by Liv



Translation. Is Takeshi nineteen years old?

In my class, Rōmaji is only used alongside hiragana as a pronunciation guide for the first few months while students adapt to hiragana and katakana, and its use is discouraged as much as possible after the first two months of Japanese 001. This is done so that students have a period of adjustment while learning to recognize the pronunciation and writing of each kana. I wrote on the board using Rōmaji and kana for the first month, and assigned students to submit homework with Rōmaji given that the kana was there as well. The focal students for this study had a variety of perceptions and experiences about the use of Rōmaji. For example, students who had studied Japanese the longest, such as William, found it harder to read Japanese that was written completely in Rōmaji; he said that he is “not used to seeing the words spelled in Romanized letters or Roman alphabet.” Isabella in 004 was more adamantly against the use, saying “Oh gosh, no. Oh, hiragana? Or kanji, but not Rōmaji, I don’t, I can’t do that.” Thomas in Japanese 001 had quite a different opinion, stating that he “would prefer if Rōmaji was universally used, because it’s easier.” Although he noted that using only Rōmaji would make learning Japanese less difficult, he conceded that “that’s probably not the point.” This shows how student views and experiences about Rōmaji change as their study of Japanese increases, and how kana become more naturally associated with reading Japanese.

Kana (Hiragana and Katakana). Although some Japanese language learning classes use Japanese written in Rōmaji for beginners, my Japanese 001 class begins with a focus on building written Japanese literacy early through establishing familiarity with hiragana and katakana alongside Rōmaji. Students learning Japanese in all three contexts made efforts to develop their written Japanese literacy knowledge first by understanding

the orthography itself, and then by applying it to Japanese reading and writing in a number of ways.

When learning a language with a non-alphabetic writing system for the first time, Japanese can seem daunting. Liam, who was learning Japanese for the first time, was intimidated by the amount of hiragana and katakana in Japanese. He thought that he would never be able to learn all of them at the beginning of class, but by the end of the first semester he, and other student participants, found that recognition was created through interaction with the kana characters in my class and the course assignments. As we used the kana writing systems in every class, Liam became accustomed to seeing them and hearing the associated sounds in a meaningful context.

The unfamiliar nature of the kana elicited a variety of responses from students. Liv and Thomas, for example, described hiragana as weird or confusing upon encountering its curved lines and loops, and expressed minor frustration with the number of characters that bear similarities, specifically mentioning the hiragana for *ne* (ね), *re* (れ), and *wa* (わ). However, I worked with students in class on how to make sense of hiragana by providing mnemonics or visual references, and students were then able to write them more easily.

Figure 3

Hiragana ne, re, and wa; Written by Liv



ne

re

wa

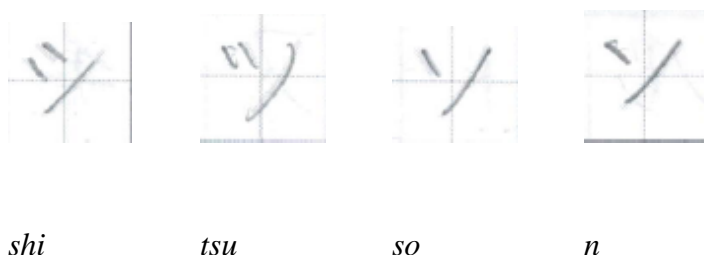
In Liv's example in Figure 3, the three hiragana start off written the same way, with only a slight variation at the end of the final stroke; these similarities were confusing for her. Conversely, Ava in Japanese 002 found ease in learning to write them due to their compartmental nature; she described hiragana as "very easy to see because everything's... in a little box," which for her clearly delineated their differences. This compartmentalization was in part driven by my course, where I made students use a workbook to practice writing the hiragana in square-shaped boxes to create more balanced characters. In the interviews, all students except Isabella felt that in general the most comfortable of the Japanese writing systems with the exception of Rōmaji was hiragana; the students stated that it was due to the fact that an extended period of class time was devoted to the development of this writing skill and knowledge.

Sophia, Brian, Liv, and Jason indicated that katakana was difficult to develop and understand. Sophia, a Japanese 002 student, described katakana as something that "baffles [her]" When encountering a katakana character that she hasn't fully grasped yet, she said "it's like looking at something new again, and I just stare at it," but indicated that this fades with frequency of appearance. Brian, among other students, commented that

katakana with similar shapes made recognition challenging. Brian focused on the shape as the source of difficulty, and noted that the “sharper, more precise lines” made them harder for him to write. In class, we focused on those that were most similar in order to improve writing development, seen in Brian’s example below in Figure 4.

Figure 4

Katakana Written by Brian in the Katakana Workbook (shi, tsu, so, and n)



Brian wrote four katakana that are often confused due to their similarity; they are composed of diagonal lines that only differ by the angle and the written direction of the stroke. The workbook that he wrote them in provided instruction in the conventional writing method.

Conversely, Liv did not place blame on the shape and structure of the katakana orthography; rather, she found that the difficulty seemed to stem from less interaction with the katakana themselves. Liz reported that she “feel[s] like katakana is so much harder... because I’ve only been focusing on hiragana, so then it’s... When you get to katakana, I’m like, oh, I don’t know.” In Japanese 001 we spend comparatively less time on studying katakana; after the initial assignment in Japanese 001, katakana is relegated to vocabulary items in each chapter. Students across the three courses expressed that the lack of katakana vocabulary words used in class was a detriment to katakana

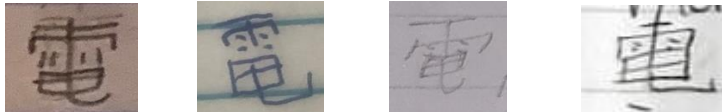
development, or that they only strongly remembered katakana appearing in common vocabulary words. Jason also placed emphasis on the fact that there was less time in class devoted to learning katakana than hiragana, with Jason saying that “hiragana is more comfortable because of just exposure.” The combination of these two factors made students in all three class contexts express more confidence in their abilities to read, write, and recognize hiragana over katakana, with the exception of Isabella in Japanese 004. She said “basically katakana is easier than hiragana. The only reason I remember hiragana better is because I learned it first. Katakana have less lines, they’re sharper and its easier than all these swirls.” Her perception made her an outlier among the focal students. When asked about a preference when reading, all focal students indicated that they preferred to read Japanese written in hiragana over katakana, due to the fact that they were able to differentiate between the characters more easily and had more familiarity with hiragana.

Kanji. The kanji are introduced through class assignments starting in the middle of Japanese 001, and appear in every unit covered in subsequent classes. Students had a variety of reactions to kanji when first encountering them in the class; Liv described them as “terrifying,” while Liam called them “the most interesting part of learning Japanese.” Students learned and were required to write kanji that connected to vocabulary and concepts in each chapter, for example the kanji for “electricity” being introduced when learning about trains (which in Japanese is written as “electric car”). This example, shown in Figure 5 on the following page, is significant because it is a complex kanji; that is, it is made of two components that can be separate kanji on their own. It also shows

how students developed connections between written language and sociocultural concepts expressed within the orthographies.

Figure 5

The Kanji 'den' (Electricity) Written by 002 Students Liam, Olivia, Emma, and Sophia



However, regardless of initial impressions, students like Brian and Olivia devoted themselves to understanding how kanji are built and what they represent. Brian made connections between the hiragana and katakana that he had learned, and found similar components in some kanji, while Sophia worked on building her kanji knowledge through the understanding of radicals (smaller components of the kanji, illustrated in Figure 5) and learning how to use a kanji dictionary, both described in her journals. Olivia found that practicing activities in the textbook such as connecting kanji with meaning and reading text with kanji in it were useful to understanding and improving kanji retention. Despite Brian, Sophia, and Olivia's discussion of the intimidating nature of kanji, these examples demonstrate how they developed kanji knowledge that would improve their Japanese reading and writing.

Developing Reading and Writing in Japanese

Once students are able to utilize the orthography to a suitable level, they can begin to read authentic language in hiragana. As previously mentioned, although Rōmaji as an orthography does exist, it is not used by Japanese native speakers outside of signage

or material specifically geared toward non-Japanese speakers. This means, and what my Japanese 001 class instruction on hiragana at the beginning of the semester indicates, is that students are required to learn hiragana. I evaluated this development through assignments such as workbooks and hiragana and katakana quizzes. As students begin to learn Japanese orthography, they start to focus on written Japanese as it appears to them.

Students first built up their development of Japanese reading and writing through class material. Thomas and Ava focused on using their textbook, class notes, and homework for Japanese reading and writing development. They did this by doing assignments from the text and workbooks, reviewing their class notes and using them as study aids, and re-reading activities in the text covered in class. Sophia usually spent approximately half an hour each day reading text from the homework. At first, the transition from Rōmaji to hiragana was slow for students who were just beginning to learn Japanese; Sophia stated:

I was still kind of pairing the sound with the symbol, but now it's... I have to pair the sound of the symbol before I can read it, instead of just looking at the symbol and knowing it, like if I look at *watashi* [I], I can look at the hiragana and say, Oh yeah, I know what that is just by looking at it, but if I see them, the Rōmaji, like I first think of what it looks like in hiragana, and then it's like, Oh yeah, but I still pair *watashi* with I, but there's a little step that just a fraction of a second.

Instead of a direct 1:1 correlation, Sophia had to go from Rōmaji, to hiragana, to the English meaning in her processes. She had already identified the hiragana that make *watashi*, so when encountering it as Rōmaji, she had to connect the Rōmaji with the

hiragana first, in order to make the vocabulary connection. This was unavoidable as students who had previously relied on Rōmaji alone were now required to use kana in the classroom setting.

However, as students progressed in their hiragana and katakana development, the reliance on Rōmaji gradually went away. This was reinforced by the disappearance of Rōmaji from class material (textbook, blackboard writing). In addition, as kanji was introduced into the written repertoire in Japanese 001, focal students in that class expressed building comprehension of how hiragana, katakana, and kanji work in conjunction with one another in order to make parsing Japanese sentences more efficient. Ava, when discussing reading Japanese, noted that

If I'm reading just a string of hiragana then I have to forcefully think of like, okay, this is a particle, this is the noun particle adjective, whatever. Whereas with the kanji it breaks it up a little bit, so it's clear that that's where the start is, that's where the...like with *tabemasu*, it's very easy to see that *ta* is where the start is, and I don't really need to read as much, I don't really need to focus as much on the rest of the word because I know that that is going to somehow relate to eating

The example above shows that Ava has built a connection with the semantic meaning of the Kanji and is using it to speed up her recognition and comprehension of the word. This concept carries over to upper-level students as well; William also showed a preference for sentences including kanji over those without. Our exchange went as follows:

William: I prefer if kanji was in there, but definitely hiragana.

Sean: Okay, so it'll be easiest for you to read it if it was the traditional hiragana mixed with kanji.

William: Yeah, 'cause I find it difficult to figure out where certain words when one is just hiragana, and when grammar parts come in...

As long as the students felt comfortable with the kanji in the writing, they indicated that hiragana sentences with kanji made parsing and recognition of parts of speech much easier for them. However, when unfamiliar kanji were present, they felt that reading instantly became more challenging.

Learning Japanese Grammar in Reading. In addition to reading the written language, some students struggled to become comfortable with Japanese grammar. In all three classes, I spent considerable time going over the grammar and structure of Japanese sentences in order to solidify concepts such as word order that are vastly different from English. Liv, a 002 student, would often confuse the sentence structure of Japanese with Spanish, which she had previously studied. Her longtime connection with learning Spanish made it challenging to absorb the new grammatical differences of Japanese, which she described as “backward.” Other students like Ava and Isabella tended to have more issues with the conjugation of Japanese verbs, particularly changing the grammatical form using one of three verb types. This struggle with the difficulty arose not only from the actual conjugation process, but also from the politeness levels associated with verb conjugation, and conversion between the two. Ava explained challenges:

like knowing which verb ends short, versus *-te*, versus the long form, versus the dictionary form, with what *to omoimasu...* those kinds of things, I need to study more into which tense of the verb- not tense, which form I should be using with each different phrase that we learned.

For Isabella, a 004 student, figuring out how to convert between these forms was “not always evident...very frustrating to try to figure out.” This shows that the unfamiliar nature of Japanese grammar continued to affect students beyond their initial experiences with the language.

Developing Listening and Speaking in Japanese

As all students in my Japanese classes were building their Japanese reading and writing skills and knowledge, they were concurrently learning how to orally communicate in Japanese. This section examines how students took the pedagogical strategies discussed earlier and applied them to their learning. In the early classes, students tended to take an additive approach to building listening skills. For Brian and Jason, both in the 001 class, this meant things like repeating the sentences and phrases learned in class on their own at home, or trying to identify the language being used in an audio workbook assignment. Jason recalled:

Listening, that I definitely feel more of a beginner there because there's a lot of vocabulary, I don't know if I can pick up sentence structures pretty well. A noun, and then they'll say something *wa*, and then they'll finish with some kind of ending, so I can pick up the sentence structure pretty well, but definitely lacking into vocabulary.

Brian added, “I usually have to re-listen to phrases like with the *Genki* workbook on units that we have to do... I usually have to go over singular parts five times just to understand some things sometimes, because it flows very quickly.” Although they encounter blanks when coming across yet unlearned vocabulary or structures, they make note of the grammatical features and vocabulary that they do know. Liv also echoed their sentiments, described using the workbook audio to learn the sound of Japanese numbers. She described:

Doing the practice book that was due on Friday also gave me really good practice with translating words and listening to numbers. Some of the numbers that I have trouble distinguishing, especially when referring to time, is いちじ (*ichiji*/one o'clock), にじ (*niji*/two o'clock), しちじ (*shichiji*/seven o'clock), and じゅういちじ (*juuichiji*/ eleven o'clock). All of these words sound so similar to each other and when listening to the audio of the workbook they just blend together.

Liv's utilization of the audio allowed her to work on developing her aural recognition of Japanese phonology and distinguish between similar sounds.

Liam in Japanese 002 had a similar method; he noted that “sometimes even if I didn't understand the words I would just write what I hear. It would often end up as just です(*desu*/"be"), たい (*tai*/want), and other endings to words like す(*su*) for example.”

Taken alone, these three grammatical features do not have enough information to decipher meaning; however, Liam used his knowledge of the language to identify those features that he had recognized, and picked them out. Olivia did the same with a video

she watched; she wrote down words that she understood. In this way students built a bridge between their reading and writing skills, and their listening skills.

Building speaking proficiencies was challenging for students given the limitations of the online class, and the restricted access to speaking partners due to COVID-19. Many students, even those that were not new to Japanese, took the time to focus on understanding and pronouncing the sounds of Japanese. Isabella, a 002 student, focused on sounds that do not appear in English, such as the consonant /r/. She mentioned that “where they have a lot of the... *ra*, *re*, *ru*, I get tongue tied sometimes, that's the most frustrating part, when I'm reading it and I know what it's supposed to say in my mind... but it's not coming out.” The unfamiliar sound is challenging to produce, so she tried to improve it. William, another Japanese 002 student, was more concerned about “intonation” (actually pitch-accent), since he was confident that Japanese wasn't “hard to pronounce.” He said that the sounds in general were easy to produce, but creating the proper pitch in pairs such as *HAshi* (chopsticks) and *haSHI* (bridge) was not. By focusing on aspects of the phonological system of Japanese, especially those different from English, the students were able to create a strong foundation in pronunciation before building toward speaking longer phrases and sentences.

Speaking Japanese Phrases. Ava, Jason, and Liam found different methods to actually develop and speak Japanese. For some students like Ava, their main source of Japanese speaking was in the classroom. She found it comfortable to speak with classmates in a controlled environment bounded by the structures and vocabulary learned in class. She was able to use the language she had learned in class with others, but did not have to worry about issues such as unfamiliar vocabulary or unknown grammar

appearing in the conversation. For others, the privacy of their own living space was an important factor in being comfortable in oral production. Jason, a 001 student, explained:

When I practice at home by myself, I feel pretty comfortable, I guess it's also just being an introvert and not liking to put myself out there, if you will, in front of the class, I might be a little less confident in my abilities, even if when, I'm on my own... I feel like I can say it. Say it fine.

Jason practiced by himself without the use of a speaking partner, but that was his preference because he could produce spoken Japanese without worrying about the judgment of others. This use of private speech (Mitchell et al., 2013) allowed him to create social dialog while practicing alone.

Conversely, Liam in Japanese 002 was able to build meaningful connections with others even outside of class and worked on building speaking skills that way. During his time studying in my Japanese class, he was able to make an online friend with a Japanese person through a suggestion given in my class about online resources. They would set aside time to speak in only Japanese without switching to English, which he described as the “random *nihongo* (Japanese) challenge, she just says that and then it has to be completely Japanese. I can't speak English, only she can speak English, it's pretty fun, but it's just a way to keep me active with it.” Other times, Liam would focus on practicing the words and phrases that he had learned in class at that time. He admitted that it was “a little difficult to do because of my lack of vocabulary. After a while it becomes a lot easier to do... I had a cheat because since her English is pretty solid, I was able to ask what she means.” Liam did not want to use his partner's English ability as a crutch, but

the constant exposure to speaking practice allowed him to convert his vocabulary knowledge into actual communicative skill. He kept trying to use the material that I had introduced in class to communicate until it felt natural. Unlike Ava, who preferred to speak in a controlled environment, Liam developed his Japanese through authentic interaction with other native speakers. Students who participated in the study were able to take their knowledge of Japanese developed in class and apply that knowledge to their Japanese speaking interactions, both alone and with others; both strategies indicated socioculturally engaging and meaningful learning.

Throughout all Japanese language classes, students used language features to build their Japanese proficiencies. Students encountered and interacted with the four different orthographic systems through class assignments and study, which along with their development of speaking, reading, and writing, allowed them to further their knowledge of Japanese language and literacy. By combining these learning experiences with the lecture and assignments, students also developed Japanese through the teaching strategies and learning processes implemented in the class.

Sociocultural Influence on Japanese Language and Literacy Development

As the instructor for the three Japanese language courses examined in this study, I developed and facilitated a number of activities designed to lead students toward developing Japanese language and literacy through social interactions.

Japanese Language and Literacy Through Individualized Activities and Interests

I wanted to make sure that students would have as many opportunities as possible to engage with Japanese language and literacy, since interacting with the

language socially was important and necessary to their development. As course time for Japanese 001 and 002 was limited to one hour, three times a week, and Japanese 004 to one hour a week, the face to face interaction time that I had with students was not enough for students to develop to the best of their abilities. For this reason, I developed and implemented the cultural journal assignment, which encouraged students to explore their interests and motivations behind taking Japanese class.

Exploring Japanese Language and Literacy Through Cultural Journal Entries

Students chose to use their cultural journal entries to learn more about Japanese society (Pahl & Rowsell, 2010), which in turn encouraged them to build their Japanese language and literacy competency. Students were able to develop these processes in a variety of ways and approaches.

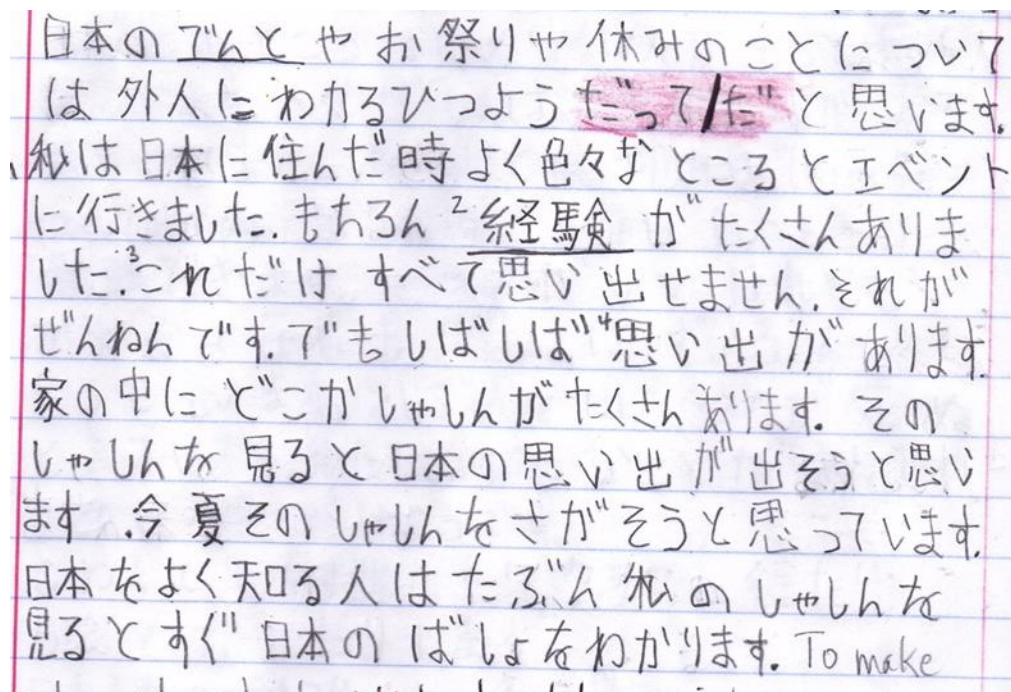
Personal Experiences and Connections. Jason, in Japanese 001, used some of his cultural journal entries to describe his authentic interactions and explorations of Japanese society. One such entry described his dive into Japanese religion. He recalled:

While visiting Japan I went to quite a few temples and discovered many shrines while exploring various cities. A quick Google search brought me to Inside Japanese Tours' web page on religion. Japan predominantly has a mix of Shintoism and Buddhism... An interesting piece of information from the website was, "In essence, Shintoism is the spirituality of this world and this life, whereas Buddhism is concerned with the soul and the afterlife."

Jason used his prior travel experience in Japan as a starting point for deeper understanding of Japanese religion, and supported his interest with quick online research:

he used Google to find additional information on a topic he had experienced in the past. In the journal, he highlights the connection that he made with the content. In his journal writing, Jason also listed some vocabulary that he associated with his researched topic, as shown here: “かみ(*kami*) god(s) いけばな(*ikebana*) flower arranging (reflection of Shinto’s connection with nature) とりい(*torii*) Shinto shrine archway/gate えま(*ema*) wooden board found at temples on which prayers are written.” Jason made connections with a topic he was interested in, and learned vocabulary associated with new Japanese sociocultural concepts.

In the independent study Japanese 004, Charlotte used a journal entry to reflect upon her time living in Japan a few decades ago. In the entry, she described memories of Japanese society through looking at old photographs of her time in Japan. She experienced many events and went many places, but did not really remember them unless she looked at the pictures. In order to improve her memories, she planned to search for more pictures of her time in Japan to jog her memory. Here, she was making a connection with Japanese not through exploration of something new, but through reconnecting with her past experiences in Japan, such as attending festivals. And unlike students in the lower levels, she wrote her reflections in Japanese, with only occasional words and phrases in English. This fostered her Japanese literacy through narrative writing, and practicing the grammar structures, vocabulary, and kanji learned in class.

Figure 6*Charlotte's Journal Entry*


日本の工とやお祭りや休みのことについて
 は外人にわかるひつようたって/た"と思います。
 私は日本に住んだ時よく色々なところとイベント
 に行きました。もちろん²経験が"たくさんありま
 した。これだけすべて思い出せません。それが
 ぜんねんです。7"もしばしば"思い出が"あります。
 家の中にどこかしらんが"たくさんあります。その
 しらんを見ると日本の思い出が"出そうと思
 います。今夏そのしらんをさが"そうと思っています。
 日本をよく知る人はたぶん私のしらんを
 見るとすぐ"日本のば"しをわかります。To make

Note. A section of Charlotte's journal entry about holidays she experienced in Japan.

Translation of the text is as follows: "I think it's necessary for foreigners to understand about Japanese traditions, festivals, and holidays. When I lived in Japan, I often went to a variety of places and events. Of course, I had many experiences. I can't remember everything. That is unfortunate. But I often remember. I have a lot of pictures somewhere in my house. I think if I see the pictures I will remember my memories of Japan. Now I plan to look for those pictures this summer. People who know about Japan will be able to look at the pictures and recognize the places in Japan."

In the same entry (see Figure 6), Charlotte also referenced events and festivals like *Obon Matsuri* (Festival of Ancestors in August), which led her to connections as she

began to remember about certain places that she had lived, like in Tokyo, and events in her past, such as the mentioned festivals. In addition to her use of pictures to remember her experiences with Japanese culture, her conversation with me about the Japanese festival of *Obon* also served to build those connections as well, all of which she wrote in Japanese in her journal.

Exploring Japanese Culture through Video Blogs. Thomas in Japanese 001 wrote a number of journal entries that focused on explanations of Japanese culture through YouTube video blogs like the channel Abroad in Japan (Broad, 2020), published by a foreigner living in Japan who explains various sociocultural aspects of Japanese life. Through this experience, Thomas was able to develop his understanding of Japanese society through his development of Japanese language and literacy. For example, here he discussed his understanding of the nuance of Japanese words:

There is much to learn from this video with the first being the idea that often in informal, a single word is used to express larger meaning in conversation whereas in English we do not often use just single words. Some examples from the video are うそ (*uso*/lie) meaning “No way!” in an almost jestful [sic] way. なつかしい (*natsukashii*/nostalgic) is another interesting word used to describe a feeling of nostalgia or more literally saying “That takes me back!” Many of these words used alone translated often are, in English, accompanied by other words to get the desired meaning across correctly. In Japanese, there is not a need for these extra strings attached.

Here, Thomas shared his encounter with informal language and reflects upon his interaction with the video in the following ways. The entry showed his development of new vocabulary items, and Thomas made connections with the closest English equivalents. Sometimes his interpretations were slightly off; for instance, in the passage he described the word うそ (*uso/lie*) as being “No way!” rather than its literal meaning. He then expressed his understanding that one-to-one connections are not only sometimes impossible but undesirable as well. He concluded his discussion on this topic by stating, “Some words may be deemed too informal for use in every situation but knowing these words will allow you to pick up on key parts of a lot of different conversations.” Here, he showed that his experience with the video helped him to develop awareness of expressions, idioms, and formal and informal register in Japanese, and also how he was becoming aware of the utility that this vocabulary knowledge would give him in interacting with others. In my written comment response to the journal, I acknowledged the idea that the words used in the video were indeed common and important to informal speech comprehension.

Another series that Thomas described was Paolo from TOKYO (de Guzman, 2020), a Youtuber who walks viewers through typical habits of different Japanese lifestyles (e.g., student or housewife). In one such video, Thomas watched the daily life of a Japanese office worker. He focused on learning expressions while making sociocultural comparisons between Japan and the US; he notes that

Paolo talked about one of the strangest things yet, めいしこうかん

(*meishikoukan*/business card exchange). Which is the initial exchange of business

cards, where you bow and exchange business cards and treat them with great care and value, taking special care not to put them away until the meeting is over with.

This is definitely not something that typically happens in the US.

Thomas made the comparison and wrote down the corresponding vocabulary and expressions in his journal. He continued by listing other work-related and other vocabulary: “クールビズ (*kuuru bizu*)[summer business casual], ママチャリ (*mama chari*)[women’s bicycle], and サラリーマン (*sarariiman*)[male office worker].”

Through interaction with Paolo’s video regarding Japanese office working habits, Thomas gained insight into Japanese customs, and learned corresponding vocabulary and expressions, which he then continuously added to his journal entry. These encounters with Japanese daily experiences, though lived vicariously through the vloggers, allowed him to make meaningful connections with the language and literacy learned in class. I confirmed the validity of the video’s content in my reply so that Thomas could feel confident in the linguistic and social connections that he had made.

Liam in Japanese 002 explored Japanese language and literacy through YouTube as well, but focused on linguistic aspects of slang, and politeness in some entries. In one entry he reflected upon a video by Dogen (O’Donnell, 2020), who he describes as “teaches Japanese through comedy skits he puts together, involv[ing] something with culture... Of course, this is typically comedy seen through someone’s eyes like me, who has not been to Japan so I am really blind to what he is describing.” Liam’s entry focused on a video about how use the idiom “go away” in Japanese; he listed the three ways he learned in the video, in order of politeness: “It starts with 大嫌い

(*daikirai*/I hate you), then it goes to どっか行け (*dokkaike*/Get out of here), then finally the polite kind of ありがとうね (*arigatoune*/Thank you). They are in stages of most polite to least.” This entry described Liam’s musings on Japanese culture, but also the associated idioms as well. The video used humor to show that in Japanese, being polite can sometimes show more emotion than stronger associated phrases. He continued his entry by asking a question to me, “Since there really are not curse words, is being polite and saying something like ‘thanks’ more harsh (sic) than saying like ‘get lost?’” In my written comment, I focused on the severity of the strong imperative “*ike*” so that Liam could fully ground its pragmatic implication. But I then took the opportunity to expand Liam’s question in class to have a short discussion on the differences in cursing in Japanese as compared to English. In this way, one student’s inquiries led to a larger lesson for everyone on different Japanese registers and the associated vocabulary that can be used in different social situations; this incorporated nicely into lessons that I had recently taught about the informal (short) form of Japanese, so that students could see the relevance of the pattern in relation to social situations. Liam’s experience watching these videos led to deeper understanding of the social nuances contained in Japanese grammar, and his discussion with me in the written comment above led to a benefit for the whole class.

Transacting with Japanese Multimodal Popular Media Literacies. A large amount of student cultural journal entries revolved around some type of pop media. This was expected given the influence and impact of Japanese pop culture and media on American youth. Some students, such as Brian, tended to focus on a particular type of media; in his case, anime and manga, while others such as Liv jumped around between a

variety of media, such as anime, music, and manga. These differences allowed students to explore Japanese language and literacy in ways unique and varied, but attuned to the material best suited to their own personal interests in Japanese pop culture.

Manga. Brian, in his journal entries, focused mainly on developing his Japanese language and literacy skills and knowledge through watching anime and reading manga. In manga, he often took the opportunity to focus on topics addressing how language knowledge affects sociocultural comprehension: for example, he described how his Japanese language and literacy development and “understanding of hiragana has allowed me to actually understand certain jokes, like Jelly Jiggler’s love of ズ(nu) and his hate for what he calls the ‘imperfect’ め (me) for not having the circle at the end of the second stroke.” Here, Brian discussed the personality traits of a character from the manga series Bobobo-bo Bo-bobo. In it, he referred to the comprehension of a language related joke, that now made sense upon learning the related hiragana; that is, the two characters look similar except for the lack of the loop at the end, making it seem unfinished. He continued to discuss language in this way; in another entry he wrote:

One Piece in particular has been interesting because the current Wanokuni arc uses a lot of clever wordplay in the character names such as とこ (Toko) being the name of a geisha which then alters her name to 男 or おとこ (*otoko*/man). The addition of the お (o) to とこ (toko) makes it go from her name to being called a man, which the character makes a joke of and laughs constantly at, which was a cute moment and pretty smart wordplay.

This showed Brian's awareness of his own literacy development in that he understood how the name change made sense in the language, and the thought and humor behind the name change. He was also aware of the benefits that his classroom learning of hiragana and vocabulary has provided in not only comprehension of the language, but allowing him to better comprehend the sociocultural content of Japanese humor in the anime.

Brian was not the only student who benefited from Japanese studies directly while consuming Japanese manga. Ava, a Japanese 002 student, enjoyed reading a variety of Japanese manga, such as Fullmetal Alchemist. When discussing this, she commented on a realization that she had made, noting that:

While I was reading, I saw that there were two characters that showed up only occasionally. Liza and Riza. As I started this manga before I took Japanese 001, I was confused why they looked exactly the same. I now realize that in Hiragana, they are exactly the same name: りざ (Riza).

Ava realized that what she thought was the name of two separate characters was actually a translation discrepancy due to the ambiguity of the l/r usage in Japanese; namely, that the Japanese sound is neither /r/ nor /l/, and is often transliterated as either R or L, depending on the author. She came to this realization only after she became aware of hiragana in the class and applying it to her interaction with the written word in manga.

Video Games. Using video games as a medium to interact with Japanese language and literacy was also a popular topic in cultural journal entries. Thomas in 001 described his interactions with *Sekiro: Shadows Die Twice* (FromSoftware, 2019), an

action RPG by a Japanese company. He described several facets of the game, detailing for example that:

In-game Sekiro faces many different types of enemies from samurai lords to giant headless apes but many of them are based off of おに (oni) and よかい (yokai) which are Japanese demons and ghosts. Specifically, one boss named えんさのおに (ensa no oni) or ‘Demon of Hatred’ is very clearly created with inspiration from Japanese mythology.

Thomas used the characters encountered in the game as inspiration for vocabulary learning. Through his interactions playing the game, not only did he make connections to Japanese folklore but he developed the appropriate words to discuss them in Japanese as well, as seen in the example above. However, except for this game, Thomas did not play any other games in Japanese.

Sophia in Japanese 002 also chose to use a game to practice her Japanese and develop her Japanese knowledge; she chose to replay a game called *Angels of Death* (Sanada, 2015) that she had played before in English. This time, she decided to play through it in Japanese. In her journal, she described beginning the game, and wrote “[I] immediately noticed that it was much easier to read text. I did not understand all of what was said, but I was able to pick up a couple words or phrases in almost every speech bubble.” Sophia’s knowledge of the Japanese writing system allowed her to enjoy detecting words in the game, using her knowledge from class and previous knowledge from the game to pick up on language. She also noted specific language use:

Even though the game used a lot of katakana words (which I am not great with, but can still read), it also used about half of the kanji we have learned in class so far. I noted the use of kanji such as ‘今 (*ima*/now)’, ‘行 (*i*/go)’, ‘中 (*naka*/inside)’, and ‘母(*haha*/mother)’ among many others. I also noticed that the use of the ます (*masu*/present polite) forms and て (*te*) forms, in addition to short form in later dialogue between characters (mainly noted in use of う ん [un/informal no] and う ん [un/informal yes])

Sophia pointed out the number of katakana words in the game; interestingly, during interviews she mentioned that she felt the katakana “is a little bit detrimental for understanding Japanese words, since they’re more loanwords.” At this point in her language development, she seemed to indicate that for her, katakana loanwords such as デパート (*depaato*/department store) are less authentic Japanese words. She also made connections between the grammatical forms that she learned during class time and the text that appears on the screen. She referenced specific lessons such as *te*-form (a verb conjugation used for commands, permission, etc.), short form (used for casual speech and embedded clauses), and the kanji learned and discussed in class. The interaction with video games reinforced the learning during class and helped language and literacy development by situating the material in realia which gave insight into how language shifts in various social situations.

Music. Another type of multimodality commonly discussed in journal entries was Japanese music. Some songs presented in my class focused on a particular genre of music; for example, students explored rock through Japanese bands such as X Japan.

Other songs were topical in nature, such as the song *Futon no naka kara detakunai* (I don't want to get out of the futon) by Uchikubi Gokumon Doukokuai, which was used to talk about the change to cold weather in Japanese 001. Students also described their interactions with music on their own outside of the scope of music used in class. Seven focal students across all three classes expressed their interest in music to varying degrees in their writing: Emma said that she listened to Japanese music "all the time," while Sophia listened "like almost all day long." Isabella stated that "sometimes I listen to it when I'm doing homework. If just another activity like cleaning up in my house, then I am definitely singing to the song." Conversely, Ava and Charlotte made it clear that they do not listen to Japanese music.

Students' reasons for listening to Japanese music varied. William described that he was "...not sure too entirely how much of how helpful it is to learn Japanese, 'cause I'm more interested in how the music feels than trying to understand what's being said," but Sophia said that "most of the music I listen to is in Japanese, part of that is just because the music I like in Japanese is also a bit more happy, I'm really not supposed to listen to depressing music." These two students focused on the feeling and content of the songs when choosing to listen to it; however, unlike William, listening to music played an active role in Sophia's Japanese language and literacy development, as described through her journal entries.

Sophia used a number of weekly entries to focus on translation the lyrics of certain songs, as seen in the table from her cultural journal below. She used the journal to chronicle thought processes while translating and ask questions at the same time.

Table 3

Sophia's Lyrics Table From Cultural Journal #8

Kanji or Hiragana	Literal Translation	Common English Translation	Questions/Comments
大天才 (この大天才)	(Great)(Sky) (Genius)	Great-gen-ius	What is the purpose of 天 in this sentence?
???Kanji??? (マゾヒスト)	Mazohisuto	Masochism	Why does the written version use kanji, when マゾヒスト is said? *Kanji in Picture 1
ココロもカラダも 全部浸つ(て) 頂戴	(Everything) (Immerse) (receiving/ reception)	The heart, the body, everything, immerse them please	Due to weird font I was not sure if て was supposed to be there

Note. Lyrics from the song *Doctor=Funk Beat* (nyanyannya, 2015).

Table 3 shows how Sophia understood and processed Japanese as she parsed the sentences. She went from Japanese, to meaning, to English. This described the process; for example, finding the meanings of the three kanji in Row 1 of the table, then creating the English equivalent. In the last column, she also created a dialog with me as the instructor; I replied to these questions during grading, which often resulted in a follow-up discussion after class. Instead of simply trying to figure things out on her own, she relied on her instructor to supply feedback and help strengthen her understanding and comprehension of the Japanese lyrics, which I readily did.

Liam in Japanese 002 also took the time to focus on the lyrics to Japanese songs, but without the same amount of intricacy as his classmate. Rather, he used technology to supplement his understanding:

Usually, I'll just use Apple Music. I love how Apple Music has the Japanese lyrics with the songs now, and it scrolls through with it, so I know exactly where I am then. So, I'll try to sing along or read along with it.

He remained an active participant as he read the lyrics while listening, and in a later journal entry described “I’ve been actually writing out translations or my own translations, I won’t look up what it does actually translate to.” This differed from Sophia, who also wrote her own translations, but sought other translations to check her own. Liam also diverged from Sophia in that he did not ask me questions through the journal, but rather developed his comprehension and understanding of music lyrics through discussion with his Japanese girlfriend, recalling that he “asked my girlfriend for music recommendations and showing me something, then I’ll try to write out what I think is being said. That was pretty fun.” Here, Liam not only experienced Japanese language and literacy through the music, but through his interactions with his girlfriend as well. In both the cases of Sophia and Liam, they experienced Japanese music through both the song itself, and through interactions with others.

Anime. Another popular form of visual media for my students to engage in was anime. Nine of the focal students for this study mentioned some form of interaction with anime during their Japanese studies; this includes all participants in Japanese 001 and all in 002 except for Ava. Charlotte and Isabella in 004 did not directly mention anime in

any way. Students were very vocal about their interest in the medium; Brian stated that he watches a lot every week, Thomas watched once or twice a week when possible, Emma two to three times a week, and Sophia simply said, “I watch a lot of anime.” The students came into the class already familiar with anime. For Brian, it was a definitive part of his life:

A lot of my childhood growing up, I was watching anime because my family didn't wanna pay for the local cable companies say about like an international cable box, so I was growing up watching Lupin the third, space battleship Yamato, detective Conan and all that stuff, Digimon, I was a bigger fan of, Digimon, and I was a huge one for the longest time, I still kind of am like I have.

Sentiments such as this give some insight into the role that Japanese language and literacy played in student’s lives prior to enrolling in my class. Brian had a predefined relationship with Japanese, and took the class in order to further develop that relationship. This provided motivation for improving Japanese language and literacy.

Liam also used his prior knowledge and experience with anime to further his Japanese development. He drew upon the anime with which he was familiar, explaining:

I watch them with subtitles, but the ones that I've been really watching, I've been ones I've already seen, so it's like... I kinda don't need to look at the screen 'cause I know what's happening, but I don't know exactly what they're saying, so it's kind of like I'll be on my phone or something and I'll hear it, what are you talking about... And then I'll have to look.

Here, Liam used his Japanese ability to revisit previously viewed works of great familiarity. In this way he used his Funds of Knowledge in order to develop his language and literacy skills. Furthermore, he not only utilized his Japanese knowledge but also relied on English in order to read the subtitles and equate it with the spoken Japanese.

Although most students who wrote about anime did not go into detail about their language development with it and simply mentioned that they had watched a certain show, Emma wrote an entry where she was trying to make sense of what she heard using what she had developed by that time. She wrote:

I was watching My Hero Academia, there was a portion where the character, All Might, said “*kore*,” and the translation and the subtitles said, “eat this,” and I kinda cracked me up a little bit because I didn't realize how much Japanese relies on context. Instead of when I heard that, I was like, wait, that just means “this.” It doesn't mean “eat this,” it's just “this” ... And I kinda had to pause for a second and re-watch that scene a few times to understand where we got “eat this” from, but it was interesting trying to work my way through episodes that I've already seen.

This gives detail into her process of connecting what she heard in the anime to the lessons that she had learned in class. This entry was written after we had studied special vocabulary (here, there, and over there) and she was using the English subtitles to help reconcile what she was hearing with what was actually being said; another example of native language use as a resource. Furthermore, Emma showed that she understood the importance of context in Japanese language use, which is a socially constructed concept

and follows different rules than English. She was able to observe the social context of the language in the episode and used that to help her understand the meaning of the phrase described in the entry.

Navigating Japanese Language and Literacy Through Social Media.

Another type of media commonly referred to in cultural journal entries by students was online social media. Students such as Jason in Japanese 001 used Instagram to follow Japanese individuals related to his hobbies, and liked, read posts, and even commented occasionally. He reported in an interview that “the conversations via Instagram posts are still happening little by little, but I feel like it’s mostly me using Google translate right now due to my limited knowledge.” As a Japanese 001 student, he felt that his developing Japanese was not enough for him to comprehend without computer translation; furthermore, the standard polite Japanese of the classroom and textbook is a different register than that of online social media posts on Instagram, as Japanese language varies syntactically by social context, so textbook written Japanese and social media Japanese present very differently. This served as a further challenge for Jason, who said that he had the opportunity to interact with a few of the Japanese individuals, and was able to communicate in simple, written Japanese, though he did not provide an example of this communication with others.

Olivia in 002 also explored Japanese language through Instagram; in her entry, she explained about how she encountered Japanese:

My friend Joseph can speak Japanese and usually captions his Instagram posts in Japanese, so I went through them and I translated all of them. Most of them just talked about his family and friends and places he has been.

This activity motivated her to work on translating Japanese back to English and realizing the common topics and patterns of her friend's posts. Vocabulary, phrases and expressions, and grammar related to talking about and describing family were covered extensively in class sessions.

Liam, also in Japanese 002, used social media as a way to interact with Japanese people. During the semester, he downloaded an app called HelloTalk in order to meet Japanese, noting that he has “been talking to a lot of Japanese people and have gotten some cool information.” After making the connection to this social media, he spent several journal entries reflecting on it; some things he talked about with others on the app include how he “learned about using the verb 勉強する (*benkyousuru*/to study) and 学ぶ (*manabu*/to learn). I was so curious because both of the kanji are to learn or study,” and also how he used the app to support material learned in class with a female friend:

Specifically, this week we talked about what I am doing in class for homework.

She would ask me some questions like, ‘What do you think of this?’ I would give answers using ~と思います (~*to omoimasu*/I think~) and she would tell me if it works or not. Some Japanese that I learned though was a phrase ~なっています (~*natte imasu*/ Has become~). I was typing to her in Japanese saying that by the time I visit her (hopefully summer depending on the virus) I will have good

Japanese. I said this, 夏に僕は日本語上手です (*natsu ni boku wa nihongo jouzu desu*/ In summer I will be good Japanese) ...she corrected me and now I know haha, 夏までには日本語が上手になっています (*natsu made niwa nihongo ga jouzu ni natte imasu*/ By summer, my Japanese will have become good). So, I learned that that means I will become good at Japanese by summer.

Liam made great use of social media by interacting and socializing with native Japanese speakers, asking questions, and getting answers about challenging aspects such as verb conjugation in his Japanese language and literacy development. He was able to make connections to specific structures such as 〜と思います (*~ to omoimasu*/ I think~) covered in class and implement them in his discussion with others. Furthermore, he demonstrated his willingness to reach out and build connections outside of the classroom and develop his Japanese proficiency cooperatively with others.

Art. Liv was an artist using 3D materials like clay, fabric, and glass, and spent much of her time building connections between her art and her developing Japanese. She talked about using Japanese themes such as animals and nature in her art, saying:

Definitely, I've really incorporated it within my pottery, I made a koi fish mug...I'm looking up the traditional way they draw things, and especially the way they portray the ocean. I made a sake mug last night, or a sake jar, trying to make little tea cups too.

She followed this up with an accompanying entry in her cultural journal:

For one of my drawing projects, I have been drawing designs onto pots. Some of the designs that I decided to draw [are] The Great Wave Off of Kanagawa, 神奈川沖浪裏, and that of koi fishes 鯉.

Here, Liv incorporated her knowledge of kanji by first typing the name of the art and fish in English, and following it with the Japanese equivalent, written in kanji. She then applied this knowledge to her artwork for her art class, showing how she took what she had learned in class and extended it to other areas of her social community.

As she began to develop her Japanese language knowledge in her content area, she created opportunities to use Japanese language in her pottery, mentioning first that she inscribed pots with hiragana and later clearly stating that she “made a few pots where I have carved わたしは、あなたを愛しています (*watashi wa, anata wo aishite imasu*/ I love you), or ありがとう (*arigatou*/ Thank you).” Here, her interest transitioned from Japan-related imagery to the use of orthography learned in the classroom. During class sessions, I encouraged students to find their own effective methods to learning the written language in ways that make sense to them, and relate to their interests. Liv created an intersection between her passion for art and Japanese by writing the common sentiments “I love you” and “Thank you” to her boyfriend on her pots. This connection between art and Japanese language development was echoed by Sophia briefly, where she explained that she does “a lot of Shrinky Dinks, so I like to write in Kanji in Japanese on those.” In her case, one of her free time activities is making Shrinky Dinks, a kind of art where you write something and then bake it to make it smaller. Sophia applied her interest in Kanji

characters to her art creation; this allowed her to practice and develop important Japanese literacy elements while enjoying her hobby.

Jason in Japanese 001 also worked on practicing his Japanese through interactions with his hobby, creating plastic models. He began his hobby long before the class, telling me that he “had actually started when I was maybe 10 years old or so, and I took Japanese in middle school around that time, and I probably still couldn't read a lot of the instructions starting off,” but that after visiting Japan he got back into studying the language. He further described that he was able to read and sound out words in hiragana, but he did not know the associated vocabulary; this is what he planned to focus on when starting the class. After enrolling in my Japanese 001 class and being reintroduced to Japanese, Jason decided to use his developing Japanese literacy to understand the directions in his hobby, though he lamented that “it's unfortunate, so it's English and Japanese kind of side by side, so it's like, okay, I'll try to just read this part, but you can't help seeing what it says.” He indicated that in this case, his native language created interference, as he wanted to read the Japanese without having the English translation within easy reach. The development of Jason's Japanese language and literacy offered him the possibility to rely less on English and more on the original Japanese text of the instruction booklet.

Cooking. Another activity that was very popular among students while writing in their journals was cooking Japanese food. A number of students in all three class contexts (Jason, Liv, and Thomas in 001; Ava, Emma, Olivia, and Sophia in 002; and Isabella and William in 004) expressed interest in learning about, experimenting with, and making their own Japanese food. Jason, who is a professional chef, said that he

always enjoyed Japanese cooking and talked about some of the things he liked to make, such as ramen and curry rice. His journal entry described one such event:

This week I cooked カレライス (*kareeraisu*/curry rice) with beef. The recipe I followed was from a Japanese home cook. It turned out well but I'd probably try a different recipe next time. This one called for grated りんご (*ringo*/apple), which was new for me, and I learned that is why the Vermont brand has an apple on the box.

In this passage, he talked about the knowledge he acquired (relating to Vermont Curry, a brand of Japanese curry incorporating apple and honey), and also made connections to Japanese language and literacy, expressed here by Jason writing vocabulary items related to the topic in Japanese amid the English passage. The trend of writing key Japanese vocabulary in food-related journal items was repeated by other students: from Liv ("I made a trip in order to get the すしごはん (*sushi gohan*), the rice vinegar, spicy mayo sauce, yum yum sauce, わさび (*wasabi*), tuna"), to Ava ("there are two types of sweet red bean paste: つぶあん (*tsubuan*) and こしあん (*koshian*)"), to Sophia ("After using a paper towel to roll and shape the オムライス (*omuraisu*), I then accented it with ketchup"). By writing out the important words that they were encountering in Japanese rather than in English, students familiarized themselves with culinary vocabulary useful to their cooking studies.

Both Sophia and Ava (both also from Japanese 002) took this a step further and documented their cooking experiments through their journal entries. Sophia made a

number of Japanese dishes, including onigiri (rice balls) and omurice (egg-wrapped rice) using justonecookbook.com (Chen, 2020), an English recipe site written by a Japanese-American woman. She talked about the difficulties in finding some ingredients, and provided pictures in her journal along with the text. For example, she wrote:

Step Three: While the top was still runny, I quickly added the fried rice and pulled the edges of the egg to the sides of the rice. I then let it cook a little longer to allow the egg to stay in place.

Figure 7

Journal Entry Picture of Omurice



Note. The picture that accompanied Sophia's omurice journal entry.

Sophia used visual media (see Figure 7) to enhance her journal entry and compared her creation to the one that she viewed on the website.

Ava also created a number of food items (mostly baked goods), but unlike Sophia, she primarily used recipes in Japanese. When discussing her methods for cooking, she recalled that she read:

the [Japanese] recipe as a whole... typically for the ingredients list, I try to look at that in English, so that I don't make any mistakes, but the recipes as a whole, 'cause I can typically understand the instructions and everything.

She used both her English language knowledge and developing Japanese literacy related to simple cooking instructions in order to understand everything needed to make the food item. While she had initial difficulty reading and comprehending the Japanese recipes, stating that “those things that I didn't understand were like ‘to need’ or ‘to sauté,’” she felt that she had made connections between English and Japanese cooking vocabulary through the repetition of making various recipes. Ava explained in a journal entry:

I can recognize some of the kanji that are being used, so I can't really name any right now, but if I'm able to see a kanji for a certain ingredient or a certain action ‘mix’ or ‘knead’ or that kind of thing, that I'm able to recognize that and realize what I'm supposed to do.

These vocabulary items are words that we did not discuss in class, but that she became familiar with through searching for recipes and looking up kanji that she chose to explore as part of the cultural journal assignment. Like Sophia, Ava decided to include pictures as part of her journal assignment (Figure 8):

This week, I made どら焼き (*dorayaki*/pancake sweet) filled with custard cream and 餡子 (*anko*/red bean paste)

Figure 8

Journal Entry Picture of Dorayaki (Pancake Sweet)



Note: The picture that accompanied Ava's journal entry on Dorayaki.

Both Sophia and Ava used pictures in order to enrich their descriptions of their work with the final product. Cooking foods from Japanese recipes motivated students to experience firsthand a number of Japanese ingredients, and through interacting with Japanese cooking websites that required translation of vocabulary and phrases, they experienced authentic written Japanese materials in a way that resulted in language learning.

Throughout the semester in Japanese 002, students expressed great interest in Japanese cooking in their journals and in class discussions, so I expanded upon this interest in one of the last days of class. Using the remote class format of Zoom and two cameras, I demonstrated a cooking lesson for students using my home kitchen. Before the demonstration class, I talked about the dish (*gyūdon*, beef bowl) and described the necessary ingredients, allowing students time to get their own if they wanted to participate by cooking at home. Then I cooked the dish during the live class, explaining relevant vocabulary and Japanese culinary content along the way. Students were able to

listen to me use Japanese language to describe the actions being seen; by doing this, students were not only reading the actions of a recipe, but also seeing it and following along in real time. By providing this lesson, I was able to foster interest in Japanese cooking, and create a social atmosphere where students could collaborate virtually with each other as they participated in the activity at varying levels.

Japanese Language and Literacy Through Social Interactions in the Local Community

Language and literacy are developed through interactions with others and the society in which the learners inhabit (Goodman et al., 2016). I created a large component of that social interaction as the facilitator of the classroom. Even during the pandemic, students were surrounded by others through the online classroom environment: classmates, family, and friends who all played a role in my students' Japanese language and literacy development. The focal students explained some of the many ways that others influenced their language learning progress.

Interacting with Classmates, Friends and Family

As explained in Chapter 3, although the COVID-19 pandemic made making friendships challenging, both classes were able to form some kind of camaraderie. Liv was optimistic about setting up communications with classmates, telling me that she “even asked a couple of kids for their phone numbers at the end of breakout room, so sometimes I’ll text them about it, and hopefully I can set up like a study meeting with a couple of them,” which she was able to do successfully later in the semester. She said later that she was more comfortable with her classmates, and that they were willing to help her with her questions regarding Japanese, and that she had a good relationship with

her peers. Liv expressed that working together with her peers gave her comfort and support even when they were working through difficult language challenges together. This affected Liv by allowing her to connect her Japanese language learning processes to a social system that she could use to strengthen her understanding of Japanese.

Other students from 001 maintained contact with each other through the use of Discord, a communication app where users can create chat spaces to share with others. At the beginning of the semester, a student set up a chat space for the Japanese 001 class. Brian, Jason, and Liv all mentioned interacting with each other through the space, though with varying levels of interactivity; Brian and Jason described themselves as “lurkers,” watching the conversation but seldom participating. During class discussion about the Discord chat, these students described it mostly as a space to ask each other questions about assignments, when homework was due, and pointed Japanese language and literacy-based questions. Liv found the chat to be helpful; she was able to get help with assignments from other students in the class.

In Japanese 004, William and Charlotte maintained communication in a traditional way; they chose to keep in touch outside of class via phone call. They had both expressed their interest in working on listening comprehension and forming spoken sentences in Japanese; phone calls gave them the opportunity to work on those skills collaboratively in an environment unhampered by other distractions. In reflecting upon the calls, Charlotte said:

I learned a lot in those two-hour telephone conversations we were having... It was a real nice natural pace, and we never felt rushed or harried by the other, and it

was really great, it was very comfortable, I really appreciated his doing that with me.”

In class, William also commented that the phone conversations had helped his development of spoken Japanese by providing him the opportunity to speak to another person in Japanese at length, so the collaboration between students seemed to be beneficial for both Charlotte and William.

Friends Outside the Classroom. Acquaintances outside the classroom also proved to be a source of sociocultural interaction for developing Japanese language and literacy. Liv interacted frequently with her boyfriend, who was also enrolled in my Japanese 001 class. Due to their common interest and knowledge of Japanese, Liv often used Japanese with him to develop both of their abilities. She outlined one example in a journal entry with:

My boyfriend and I traveled to the さんかく (*sangaku*/ mountain range) in Virginia where we hiked around a total of 9 miles and camped for a night. During this time, we practiced our placement sayings of ‘これ’ (*kore*/ this) and ‘それ’ (*sore*/ that) because I was having a difficult time distinguishing them.

The couple used the Japanese vocabulary covered in class in a real-life situation, and Liv relied on her boyfriend to help her make sure that she was using them correctly. Liv indicated that this reinforcement helped her to differentiate between these words for “here” and “there.” This interaction was not just limited to speaking; they “also are trying to text each other in Japanese as much as we can for practice, so we also send each other a lot of ありがとう (*arigatou*/ thank you).” Liv was able to work on developing her

hiragana, katakana, and kanji knowledge as well by using Japanese writing for text messages.

Olivia also shared her experiences with friends. She talked about using technology such as cell phones and FaceTime to keep in touch with her best friend, and that:

We like to send posts and texts to each other in Japanese. She helps correct my mistakes...[she] has been helping me with kanji to help me prepare for the next kanji quiz. She has been randomly quizzing me through Facetime when we do study buddy study sessions.

This was a friend of Olivia's prior to taking Japanese who helped her practice using her Japanese. Her friend also helped Olivia through reinforcing learned material in both oral and written forms through kanji quizzing and writing of texts.

Brian also had friends with whom he could socialize in Japanese. He told me that his "roommate apparently had taken Japanese for quite a while, so every now and then I'll sort of exchange conversations with her in Japanese to sort of check myself that I'm doing things correctly or if something sounds right," and later added that he would try to use Japanese words or phrases with her to see if she would understand him or not. As with Liv, Brian's interactions were with a foreign language learner, albeit someone with more proficiency. Here, he used her knowledge in order to check his own development by testing out material he learned in class while communicating with her. Brian expressed interest in interacting with native Japanese speakers as well, but was unfortunately unable

to meet any native Japanese-speaking individuals in-person or online during the time period that this study was conducted.

Conversely, Liam not only interacted with his Japanese friends in Japan online as described in a previous section, but also had the opportunity to make friends with Japanese university students on our campus. This was a rarity among students in this study, due to the small number of Japanese attending the university. Liam said that he and his Japanese friend “hang out quite often, and since I am studying Japanese she of course is my number one resource for cultural questions and language questions.” He was able to work together with his native Japanese speaker friend to bolster his own Japanese development by relying on her to answer his Japanese questions. However, he conceded that it was challenging because she did not know what he had already learned, but she still tried to structure her language so that he could understand. The limitations of what they had learned is something that other students commented on as well, and Liam voiced some of that frustration here. For Liam, though, it was positive because “I do this very often... it is very fun whenever we do it, especially because she has a good sense of humor and can make jokes. I wish there were more Japanese speaking people on campus to talk with.” For him, it was enjoyable to interact with native speakers, and he thought it would be beneficial if there were more.

Liv, who spent time practicing Japanese with classmates and her boyfriend, was also able to practice her developing Japanese with family as well. She explained that her sister had been doing self-study in Japanese for a few years, and that she “knows more, so rather I’ll just say it in person or I’ll bring her over and be like, help with the homework real quick? Her pronunciation is a little rough though, or at least, from the way you

pronounce it.” Her sister was able to provide some interaction for spoken Japanese, as Liv and her sister were able to have short conversations in Japanese with each other. Unfortunately, this did not extend to written Japanese, as Liv said her sister “doesn't physically practice [Japanese writing]; she can sort of read it, but she doesn't practice hiragana or katakana.” Through the interviews and cultural journal entries described above, Liv described a language support system for herself, comprised of not only myself as her instructor, but of classmates, her boyfriend, and her sister.

Sharing Japanese Language Knowledge With Others. Students who took my Japanese class often found themselves in the role of Japanese teacher, as many of them had friends who were interested in learning Japanese language and literacy, but had no Japanese background. Liam described at length his journey of teaching his friend Japanese. He informally taught his friend through a combination of in-person teaching and texting; he started simply by teaching him hiragana first, noting that “he actually has pretty good memory, so it has been pretty easy for him.” Liam continued by outlining an example of how he taught his friend the mini-Japanese lessons:

I try to text him a lot using Japanese phrases and words that he may understand based off of anime he has seen. I am also trying to get him used to seeing it in general, even though he cannot understand it, he can look at it and become used to the way it looks. A good exercise is I will type a word like ありがとうございます (arigato gozaimasu/ thank you) and see if he can replicate it using the Japanese 9 key keyboard on his phone. It has been pretty successful in terms of him memorizing his kana.

Liam placed value on the literacy of Japanese orthography, following the same pattern of my class by having his friend learn the hiragana first. He also used the strategy of introducing familiar words and phrases, which is what I emphasized in class as well. Liam clarified this himself as well, saying “actually I am just going by the *Genki* book sort of in terms of their vocabulary and conversational aspects.” He concluded his thoughts on teaching by stating “it has definitely been fun doing this, and I actually look forward to it each time he wants to. This seems like it will be beneficial to me in case I actually get to do independent study in the fall semester.” Liam seemed to find that teaching Japanese to others had a positive impact on his own understanding of Japanese by reflecting on what he has learned that is most useful, and then sharing that with his friend.

Other students had multiple requests from friends and family for Japanese translation due to their interest in the culture. Emma shared some of her experiences, describing that friends requested her to read Japanese material such as posters. She described this, saying that the friends “usually shove things in my face like, can you read this, can you read this?” These experiences show that Emma and her friends enjoyed experiencing Japanese together as they were all big anime fans, but since Emma was enrolled in class, she had been appointed as the liaison between the group and Japanese society. Sophia’s experiences echoed Emma’s, saying that “people will give me something, they’re like, what does this mean? It’s like, I’m not an expert, man, this is gonna take a bit.” These students expressed mild frustration at being the “go-to” for Japanese language translation, but it served as an expression of their developing Japanese

language abilities as they were able to use their knowledge to help translate and share information in Japanese with their friends.

Isabella also shared her experiences teaching friends and family her knowledge of Japanese language and literacy. She recalled:

Since I'm the one taking a class, sometimes my brother will give me a phrase, or I heard this, what does it mean or he'll show me a post and I'll like translate it, sometimes I don't know, sometimes I do, so I'll help him translate together. And then I have some friends... they have Japanese on their shirts and I helped them translate it and they're like oh... then I saw some shirts, it's probably supposed to say something but it doesn't.

Isabella described two different Japanese literacy activities: in the first one, she served as a translator for her brother, taking spoken or written Japanese and changing it into English so that he could understand. Her brother seemed to have some knowledge of Japanese as well, since they translated it together. In the second literacy activity Isabella was translating Japanese text on shirts into English for the benefit of her friends. She also showed awareness that some shirts with "Japanese text" in the United States do not actually have comprehensible meaning, but are simply a combination of random Japanese characters. These interactions provided her valuable experiences for situating her Japanese knowledge in her social context.

Experiencing Japanese Through Cultural Events and Local Community

An important part of learning another language is participating in social spaces connected to the language and social aspects (Goodman et al., 2016). Liv expressed great

interest in participating in different types of Japanese events, saying “oh totally, I think that would be so cool” in response to a question about future event possibilities. She even proposed creating some events for the class around her hobbies, like crocheting or pottery.

Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there were few opportunities for students to participate in events. Ava noted that “we had plans and everything to go to the Cherry Blossom stuff, but you know... virus,” and that she found Japanese festivals and cultural events like the Cherry Blossom Festival to be interesting because she had the chance to interact with Japanese language and society. Even though the drive to participate was there, Ava was unable to do so due to the event’s cancellation. Sophia also expressed her dismay at not being able to attend anime conventions or concerts, explaining “I had tickets to go to Miku Expo with my sister, and...they were like, we're just cancelling it. Like heck... 'cause they speak in Japanese in between the songs... I was looking forward to that.” She had also planned on attending another event that I shared in class two weeks prior to the shift to online learning that was also unfortunately cancelled.

Local Community-based Involvement. Interestingly enough, Brian was able to attend a class-based event that I had created in a previous year. It turned out that he had tagged along with a friend who was taking my Japanese class at that time. Although circumstances meant that I was unable to conduct events for students during the pandemic, Brian was able to experience the event, which he shared in the group interview; “a student in your class who knew me and brought me along when you [went] to Newark to go to Ramen Kumamoto and Round 1 for bowling and stuff like that for the arcade there. I got to tag along.” Brian recalled learning words and phrases during the

trip, which I provided as we went to the various locations. His positive memory of the experience was one part of what drove him to take my Japanese class, and his sharing of the event and location with other classmates got them interested in the trip as well.

Negotiation of Language Perceptions and Interpretations of Identity as Japanese Language Learners

The university students in this study came to the classroom with diverse life experiences. Their views toward language and language learning became part of their experience in their classroom as they developed their Japanese language and literacy. Student knowledge played a role in their approach to Japanese learning and additionally expanded their identities as individuals through sociocultural aspects that they could make a part of themselves.

Perceptions About Japanese Language Learning and Environment

The students taking the Japanese courses I taught not only came into to class with their own backgrounds about Japanese language, but also with their own ideas and perceptions about language use and literacy development, Japanese or otherwise. I explored these perceptions and their ideas toward formal language education. Gathering information about these ideas was important because of the effect on the students' individual approaches to developing their Japanese over the course of their classes with me, as well as how they viewed their progress over time.

Understanding Japanese Language Learners' Interpretations of Formal Language Education

I asked participating students about formal foreign language learning in the United States in order to understand more about their general outlook toward language. As expected, focal students viewed language learning as a positive experience. In fact, Emma and William believed that learning a foreign language should be necessary in schools, even if competency is not achieved; Emma said, “absolutely a 100, 100%. It's basically a necessity. I don't care what language you take, but you need to know at least some other language or be knowledgeable of some other language,” while William agreed “I definitely think it should be required in American schools. And the earlier the better... first grade or earlier in kindergarten or pre-school.” William and Emma expressed the importance of foreign language development to themselves and that they found it something necessary for students to learn as part of standard education.

Advantages of Foreign Language Learning. Students reported on the advantages of learning a foreign language like Japanese and gave a variety of reasons why foreign language knowledge is beneficial. Emma, Isabella, and William focused on how foreign language studies can affect job prospects, with Emma noting that “there's tons of bonuses, you can put it on your resume, you can get more jobs, better job offers,” and Brian, Isabella and William focusing on the marketability factor: that knowing multiple languages often makes a prospective candidate more attractive to employers. Brian, who wanted a job in marine biology, said that Japanese would be beneficial due to Japan's connection with that sector. William hoped for a job in Japanese translation, so Japanese studies were essential. Students were also quick to recognize the importance of

the communicative aspect built by developing foreign language skills. Seven focal students across all three classes mentioned this in some regard; Brian, Ava, and Liam simply mentioned in passing that it is fun and interesting to communicate in another language with many people, including Japanese people, but others seemed to focus on the benefits that knowledge and communication with others can bring. Emma in Japanese 002 reflected on how language learning affected others around her:

I have seen and met so many students during my internships that are very closed-minded when it comes to learning another language or another person's culture, and I feel that hinders them so much when it comes to learning and making friends and just opening themselves up to other people, but if they have that language or that knowledge of the language and culture, it just helps them learn, it helps them become more social, it helps make more friends and helps them just connect with other people, and it's imperative that they have that.

She described awareness of the issue due to her interactions with others, and personally believed that not only is learning a foreign language beneficial, but also that it is an essential aspect of a well-rounded and socially adept individual. I encouraged students to explore talking with others, and expressed to students how my own perspectives had broadened through language development.

Negative Views Toward Foreign Language Learning. Other students had slightly negative views: Brian thought that foreign language learning was necessary, but lamented the choices available in many schools; for him, the choice was only Spanish or French. Liam agreed that foreign language learning was important and should be “pushed,” but did not go so far as to suggest that it become mandatory. Only Brian and

Liam expressed opinions that could be considered as negative toward the use of a foreign language; Brian expressed that maybe the processing of a foreign language might cause the flow of conversation to slow and render communication difficult, while Charlotte noted that finding a way to benefit financially or otherwise from the development of a foreign language might be challenging. However, these few points of contention were the only ones that appeared in discussions about students' belief in the beneficial nature of learning an additional language. Jason summed up the general thought as follows: "In fact, I think it's a disadvantage if you don't know any foreign languages," while Sophia said specifically referring to Japanese that it was worthwhile.

Student perceptions indicated that the worth of foreign language learning was an important part of student identity, but no one indicated that this perception had necessarily shifted due to their Japanese language development. In these cases, it seemed to be an opinion decided prior to taking my class. However, as instructor I continued to extol the benefits of foreign language development in hopes of improving student outlook towards their language studies.

Student Perceptions of Language Experiences and Influences on Identity

As I mentioned earlier, the students came from a variety of backgrounds and study experiences which had an effect on their approach to studying and learning Japanese. Among the students, Brian, Jason, William, and Charlotte came into my classes with varying degrees of formal and informal Japanese language study. This section focuses on how students described their experiences and how those perceptions affected their identity.

Brian first came into contact with Japanese at an early age. His love of Japanese was born out of trying to make sense of un-subtitled Japanese anime brought to him in his youth; he reminisced:

When I was about between the ages of five and eight years old, we had a family friend. His father worked at a warehouse for a VHS distribution, so we used to get sample VHS of anime, but they wouldn't be subbed at all because they'd be going through the primary alpha phases for them, so me and my friends when we were very young we'd get a Japanese English dictionary and painstakingly go through and try and subtitle anime, so I had the very bare bones, basic understanding of Japanese.

This exposure at a very early age built the initial motivation for Brian to begin studying Japanese. He was motivated to understand the content of the videos that he was viewing, and even at this time he was developing strategies for comprehending Japanese language and text, and making use of resources in order to understand information. These strategies and interests translated into the classroom as part of his Japanese development. Additionally, Japanese anime had been well established as a part of Brian's identity prior to joining my class, but participating in the class encouraged him to continue to develop this aspect of his identity as an "anime otaku," or someone who is strongly interested in their hobby. He was able to apply his sociocultural knowledge of Japanese gained in class in order to amplify his identity as a Japanese language learner by making linguistic and sociocultural connections from anime to language.

Jason began learning Japanese formally in middle school when he was 10 or 11 years old, in magnet school, and took Japanese for three years, but was unable to continue afterwards. This directly affected his motivation in Japanese 001, stating:

There's always that desire, disappointment, that I wasn't able to learn Japanese in any higher education than middle school. When I was learning in middle school, they had a program for foreign language learners to stay with the host family for a few weeks in the country of the language that they were learning, but 9/11. It happened while I was in school when they shut down all of those programs, so I [went] on to Japan in 2015 as kind of a bucket list for not being able to go when I was younger, and I had learned some conversational Japanese though Rosetta Stone, and I just found it hard to be self-taught and I need a structure to learn, so having the opportunity to do that at university I needed to do that.

Jason yearned for more formal learning experiences in order to improve his comprehension and proficiency of Japanese, which my class was able to give him. His unique experience of missing out on a program to Japan, and then forging his own path there, served as the background for his time studying in Japanese 001. Jason had these lived experiences available for reflection during his studies in my class; his identity as a previous visitor to Japan served as the impetus for his study in my class.

Like Jason, William also had previous Japanese language experience, a combination of self-study and classes at another university that spanned five years. He described his interest in learning:

Originally, I was a big fan of anime... and then I decided to take a class my first year of college, I thought it was a fun to learn at first. Yeah, I mean, it still is fun, but it's definitely gotten, it's harder than it was. In the beginning, I just learned katakana and hiragana. But yeah, it's, that I started learning because of... I guess Japanese media pretty much.

William described his gateway to Japanese as his interest in Japanese media; specifically, anime. What was once just an exciting extension of a hobby had now become something challenging for William as he continued his studies. Furthermore, he shared that he wished to use his Japanese knowledge to pass the Japanese Language Proficiency Test (JLPT), a measurement of skill for foreign learners of Japanese. He also aspired to be a translator in Japanese, so the Japanese 004 independent study class would help him on the path to that career; this demonstrates that William wanted to develop his identity as an individual proficient enough in Japanese to use it as his job. Through taking the class, he was able to move closer to this goal.

Charlotte in Japanese 004 also recalled the extent to which Japanese had been in her life. As an older, non-traditional student, she had many experiences with Japanese. During childhood, she had the opportunity to be around Japanese language and culture, and that exposure increased upon getting a job in California, and later in Japan. From an early period in her life, she recalled her identity as a Japanese language learner being shaped by Japan-related material such as American films about Japan:

When I was a little girl, there was the movie with Tokyo Rose... I think I told you that's where the soldier boy falls in love with the Japanese girl and they can't

come back, they kill each other, whatever something... *Sayonara*, one of those movies. And so, I always remember feeling like, Oh, she... That's a really strong love and dedication.

Her initial interest appeared with these American-Japanese themed romance films, where she became interested in the perceived affection between the American and Japanese characters. This interest would expand along with the general public with what Charlotte described as the “Japanese craze in the late 70s with the sushi and the sake and this and that,” and later translate into her career as a model in Japan for several years. After her return to the United States, her connection with Japanese began to dwindle over time, though she still wished to maintain and strengthen her connection to Japan and Japanese language. Charlotte was very excited to find that my university offered Japanese, and therefore decided to enroll in my class.

Charlotte was the only student in this study who had experienced living and working in Japan, so she had an immersive connection to Japanese language and literacy, and to Japanese society. As she had spent time in Japan, the society had influenced her identity in certain ways; for example, she felt more comfortable with the ways that strangers treat each other in Japan more than in America. This class was an opportunity to express those facets of her identity, and share them with her classmates.

The remaining focal students had not had Japanese learning experience prior to taking my classes, formal or informal, but some students like Liam had been waiting for the opportunity to learn Japanese due to their interactions with Japanese media, and jumped at the opportunity to take the class, while other students like Liv and Sophia

seemed to view it as a natural extension of their interests. Liam, Liv, and Sophia, while interested in Japanese language and media, did not express that this interest translated into a connection with their identity. Regardless of the period of time studying Japanese prior to taking my class, the students were all motivated by their interests to develop their Japanese ability in my courses.

Home Language Learning Experiences

While not all students had experience with learning Japanese language, all students had the opportunity to learn a language other than English in their lives. For two students, Brian and Olivia, this was due to the nature of their home environment. Both students had families that spoke a language other than English in the home; for Brian, Hebrew, and for Olivia, Norwegian. In her cultural journal, Olivia referred to being bilingual in Norwegian but did not elaborate. In Brian's case, his Hebrew knowledge was connected to his faith, specifically through self-learning related to rabbinical studies. Outside of the religious environment, Brian described using Hebrew occasionally with his father, but mostly used it in relation to learning passages and verses from his religious text, sharing that "We are continually brought up to recite prayers and stuff like that." These experiences in the home environment provided Brian and Olivia familiarity with bicultural and bilingual contexts, which they were able to use to strengthen their Japanese language development. Olivia, who had experience speaking Norwegian with family, understood the importance of using language for communication, and applied this to her Japanese studies by taking the initiative to talk with others in class and at restaurants. Brian, who was connected to his home language through faith, could not claim the same type of connection in Japanese, but, like Hebrew, fastidiously made Japanese a part of his

daily life through interactions with media such as anime. These two students had an established dual language identity prior to studying Japanese.

Formal Foreign Language Learning Experiences

All other focal students except Brian and Olivia explained about their experiences learning a foreign language during junior high and high school. Some students had studied multiple languages in different classes, while other students had only studied one other language prior to Japanese.

Spanish. Most students chose to take Spanish as their first foreign language. Isabella studied Spanish in high school for four years; she found it to be easier than Japanese, but she explained:

[It's] only 'cause I had it every other day. So that's the only reason, 'cause I had more frequency of it and I had longer class periods, we had ninety minutes of Spanish every other day, not even including homework.

Here, Isabella asserts that her Spanish language development was due to the amount of class she was engaged in, comparing it to the much smaller amount of the Japanese 004 independent study, which only had class for one hour per week. However, even though she used Spanish in her job nearly every day, Isabella found it easier to read Spanish than listen to and speak the Spanish language. Engaging in Spanish after finishing the class helped her maintain her connection to the language.

Jason studied Spanish in school like Isabella, but due to his job experiences, the Spanish language became a large part of his life experience:

In elementary and high school, I was formally taught Spanish. I don't remember a whole lot of it, but I also worked in the restaurant industry for about 10 years, and so I worked with a lot of Spanish-speaking individuals, so I picked up a lot of slang.

The only connections that he made between his Spanish experience and Japanese learning was that Japanese was harder to learn than Spanish, due to writing and grammar differences. Liv, who also studied Spanish, agreed with Jason that Spanish was easier than Japanese, but in her opinion “just because I've been so exposed to Spanish where I see it's almost like the easiest language.” She contrasted this with French, which she said is harder than Japanese. Liam agreed with Liv and Brian’s opinion as well, stating that the difficulty of Japanese was simply because “it's so foreign.” These comments all seemed to indicate that the familiarity of Spanish made it seem like an easier language to develop than Japanese.

Not all students of the Spanish language agreed with their classmates.

Thomas, whose only experience with another language was with Spanish, asserted that Japanese was easier than Spanish. He explained his reasoning as:

The sentence structure to me, makes more sense. And at least in our [Japanese] class, it seems like less of a focus on vocabulary and more conversational parts to it. That's the part that's important to me and it's been easy to learn as the conversational aspect of it. And plus, you can use one word to describe a feeling or something like that. In English and other languages, you have to have a whole sentence to say like a feeling.

In his explanation, Thomas not only described information related to the languages themselves but also the method of learning in the language classroom. He enjoyed the brevity offered by some Japanese words that explain lengthy concepts in other languages, but more importantly, the structure of my class focused on the areas of the language that Thomas wanted to develop the most. For him, the development in the classroom played a role in determining the difficulty of a language.

Other Languages. While there were three focal students who studied Spanish, other students studied different languages from various language groups. Students who had experiences studying languages other than Spanish had varying opinions about the difficulty of Japanese. William studied Spanish, but had additionally studied Latin and French as well. And while he admitted that speaking Latin was difficult because of the lack of conversational opportunities, he noted that Japanese was the most challenging language to learn of the three. However, Ava, who had studied French and Russian previously, compared Japanese favorably with the two languages, saying that:

It [Japanese] is easier because one of my main difficulties with things like French is that with French, there's so many different ways, there's so many different ways to spell something versus how you say it. The sound, /a/ can be spelled E-T, A-I, E-R, I-S, there's so many different ways that you can spell that. But in Japanese, it's very easy to tell what is being, what is being said. Because each, every syllable is pronounced equally, and it's all very spaced out.

This comment showed Ava's awareness of the direct way in which Japanese is mostly pronounced the same way that it is written compared with the orthography of written

French. For her, the writing system was a deciding factor in determining the difficulty of a language.

Sophia also agreed that Japanese was easier to develop than German, which she learned throughout secondary school. She described speaking in both languages:

It's a little bit easier to have conversations with people too because it's easier to, once you know how to say it in Japanese, I feel like it's easier to say it. Because in German you're sitting there trying to make the correct sounds, and along with the kind of sounding angry because you're making very hard noises.

Sophia's focus differed from Ava's in that Sophia was more focused on the aspects of speaking and vocalizing the two languages. She found the pronunciation of Japanese to be easier than German, and therefore allowed her more time during speaking to focus on sentence construction. Charlotte, who also had experience studying German, felt that she had a "natural affinity" for it, but chose to mainly focus on Japanese overall, due to her life experiences and feeling that her speaking and comprehension were generally best in that language.

Liam also made connections between his Japanese learning and studying Korean, which occurred in the semester after his Japanese studies. In a follow-up interview that took place after his studies in my class, he shared insight into the connections that he was making:

I was really interested in Korean at the beginning, and then I was like... I just like Japanese a lot more, so I'm gonna start doing it... instead of relating the Korean words to English words, I would actually relate them to Japanese... *ilyoil* (Korean word

for Sunday) is *nichiyoubi*, day-week-day, it's the same kind of thing. There's so many, I guess they're not really loan words, but they kind of are. They just relate, pronounced the same kind of thing.

He explained how his interest in Korean after studying Japanese ended up feeding into increased motivation to study Japanese more. He used his awareness of similarities between Japanese and Korean vocabulary items to strengthen development in both languages. This was interesting considering that neither language was his native language, and that rather than English, Liam was making connections between second and third languages, a phenomenon seen in Molnár (2008). He was aware of the similarities between loanwords in both languages, and used this to his advantage. Students who had previously studied a foreign language had already experienced the effect of learning a foreign language on their identity to varying degrees through exposure to different viewpoints and cultures (Pavlenko and Lantolf, 2000). By doing this, students seemed to develop similar extensions in Japanese, albeit to a basic degree.

Developing Thoughts on Personal Japanese Language and Literacy Improvement

I not only wanted to understand students' general perceptions toward foreign language and literacy development, but also their perceptions related specifically to Japanese. Students expressed a variety of reactions to learning the language, especially at the beginning of their learning experience. Liv in Japanese 001 shared an intriguing viewpoint:

At first, I thought it was almost like taboo. I thought my family was gonna be very, like oh, why are you learning that, why not Spanish or something that's

more like we interact with a daily basis. So, I was like, okay, this is something new. It's something completely new, so I just wanted to expand my horizon a little bit more.

Liv's description of the way her choice to learn Japanese was viewed by others showed how her approach to the language was colored by their response. She described her decision as "taboo" due to the fact that her family viewed it as foreign compared to other, more commonly studied languages like Spanish. In another part of the interview, she described being worried that her coworkers would see her Japanese homework and judge her due to it being a "conservative" area. This perception came through in other responses, especially regarding Japanese literacy: she made numerous references to Japanese written language being "scary," "unfamiliar," and "different," and compared the difficulty in reading and writing unfavorably to Spanish, which she had previously studied. Although this initial perception of Japanese language was largely negative, through constant exposure these feelings seemed to abate. During her study she made steady progress in Japanese, and described feelings of improvement and development throughout the semester. By the end of the semester she stated that she no longer viewed Japanese in this way.

Liv was not the only student who described interactions with friends and family that did not view her Japanese studies favorably. Isabella in Japanese 004 said that people in her community, including her family, friends, and classmates, would deride her or put her down for studying Japanese, and she responded:

I don't understand that. It's like it's the same thing as me learning Spanish. I know people, like somebody who's learned Russian, they're like, "Oh my gosh, you're so cool." And I'm like, I'm learning Japanese. And they're like, "Oh," and I'm like, "Yeah." I think it's really great, but they think it's hard, 'cause, well, of the syllabary. So, 'cause they think it's hard they're like, "Oh, they're nerdy, they're learning Japanese." I can't do that.

Isabella's interactions with others showed the distinctions made by those around her; namely, that some languages were valued as cool or interesting, like Russian, while Japanese was viewed as difficult and "nerdy." Her friends specifically referenced the Japanese syllabary as a point of difficulty for learning the language. When asked to elaborate, Isabella shared that "they were like, all the letters look the same. I don't understand." For her friends, the "foreignness" of the Japanese written language equaled a wall in terms of difficulty, but this did not seem to affect Isabella's positive view toward Japanese; she mentioned that Japanese is "really great," so it seemed to have the opposite effect. The fact that her friends viewed it as difficult made Japanese that much more appealing to Isabella. She concluded her description by saying "I don't regret doing it, I really like learning it, and I don't regret learning Japanese." This showed that she embraced the self-described nerdiness of Japanese as being representative of who she is, and was happy to expand her identity as a Japanese language learner.

Perceived Difficulty in Learning

William in 004 described mixed feelings to his approach to Japanese. When asked to describe his perception of Japanese language in general, he replied that "it's certainly... I don't know if the word difficult is right, but it's intensive, it's a lot of

studying and work has to go into it,” and that he “thought it was fun to learn at first. Yeah, I mean, it still is fun, but it's definitely gotten a... It's harder than it was... in the beginning.” He explained about the enjoyment he received from learning Japanese at the beginning of his learning journey, but focused on the time-consuming nature of learning the language.

William focused on a number of different aspects of the language as being the source of the challenge, but tended to single out the difficulty of physically reading the language as being the biggest hurdle to overcome, along with grammar and listening comprehension. He felt that his skill in reading Japanese, especially kanji, continued to improve over the course of the semester, although he struggled to figure out the proper readings:

Reading some kanji and how it changes depending on what it's connected with, either if it's *on-yomi* (Chinese reading) or *kun-yomi* (Japanese reading), and if it gets *rendaku*'d (sonorization). Yeah, that's, that's annoying to deal with because I'll be going through flash cards and quizzing myself, and then I'm like, oh, I know this, and then I'm like, oh well, I'm slightly off, and that would mean probably something completely different if I ever said it to somebody.

William revealed his uncertainty when dealing with Japanese literacy; the multiple possible readings of the kanji characters slowed down his literacy development, and additionally decreased his self-confidence. Although he felt that he was making progress, William struggled to feel satisfied with his reading development. These perceptions revealed that he was still approaching Japanese through the identity of a language learner,

as indicated by his focus on a number of different grammatical aspects that he talked about from a structural standpoint. This seems to show that any developing identity as a Japanese learner was still emerging in its beginning stages.

Encouraging Reactions to Developing Japanese Language and Identity

Of course, not all student reactions contained elements of difficulty; rather, many students expressed encouraging reactions to learning Japanese language and literacy. These responses showed that students were looking forward to developing a Japanese L2 identity. Both Ava in Japanese 002 and Thomas in 001 described it as “interesting,” with Thomas further describing it as “more efficient than English.” He then shared about his progress in Japanese over the course of the semester, which he described as going well, but less rigorous than he had hoped. He stressed that this as a problem of time, rather than the effect of the class. He also noted things that he was able to understand more; for example, speech or writing during watching anime. Ava described Japanese as an easy language to learn, compared to others that she had been exposed to. She said that Japanese words and sounds were written as syllables and the mostly 1:1 regular writing of Japanese words were what made it easy.

Brian was also very satisfied in his improvement over the course of the semester, which he described as making “massive strides in being able to read and write and [communicate] conversationally.” He felt that his greatest improvement came in reading, due to exposure in-class and through textbook activities, but it was his lack of focused study before taking my class that caused this to occur:

Originally dealing with Japanese, it wasn't really in a written sense, more just orally and then trying to find words in life, so I hadn't had a proper taught lesson on how to read or write anything. So I basically went from zero to 100, whereas a lot of the other stuff, like I knew of how it sounded, I knew how the intonation was, I knew I've been able to hear certain words, and I think we'd also mentioned that I'd started a third party Japanese teaching program that taught audibly, so I was already getting more of a hearing thing, so that's the thing that had the greatest room to grow.

Brian felt comfortable with the spoken language aspect of Japanese, but did not have a great deal of exposure to the written form. The class, assignments, and his hobbies afforded him the opportunity to explore Japanese reading and writing in a formal learning environment, which gave him the impetus to further develop it. Brian felt that the classroom practices and lessons had given him reason to further his literacy skills in Japanese, which he then applied to his interests. This application to interests indicated that Brian was aware of the role that Japanese could play in his identity, and showed that he had begun developing his identity as a Japanese language learner by establishing himself as a speaker, reader, and writer of Japanese. Due to his hobbies, he had previously only been a listener; the class experiences fostered his Japanese identity to become more well-rounded.

Sophia viewed her progress in Japanese in a positive way, and described a future scenario where her Japanese identity would include more autonomy:

I feel like at the cessation of this semester, I'm gonna be at a place where I have the ability and skills and enough knowledge to be able to explore the language on my own and continue learning.

Sophia had been noting her own progress and could detect a clear differentiation between where she started and where she was during the time of the interview. She felt that her skills had developed enough through the classroom environment that she would be able to take the next steps herself and continue learning even after cessation of the class. This self-determination shows that Sophia was willing to foster her Japanese language and identity as a Japanese language learner further.

Student Aspirations

These acknowledgements of positive Japanese language and literacy development were important for student motivation and building identity, due in no small part to the fact that students had a number of different aspirations and goals for their Japanese learning. For students like Ava, the goal was focused on a single aspect: she wanted to be able to read recipes and watch cooking videos in Japanese, with the possibility of taking a cooking class in the future. Isabella and Emma, from 004 and 002 respectively, both agreed that they wanted to use Japanese in order to be able to navigate Japan when they were able to go there on a future trip or vacation. Emma wanted to be able to specifically read Japanese directions and maps, while Isabella described things a bit more generally, saying:

My main goal is to be able to go to Japan and not be completely confused by everything going on around me. That's the end goal, being able to read enough

kanji that I can figure out how to go places and not be like, what's going on? So, it...that is my end goal.

Although Isabella aspired to be able to get around, she viewed the comprehension of kanji as a barrier to be overcome in order to fully understand what is going on in situations. However, the rest of the students seemed to focus on achieving a semblance of being able to communicate with Japanese language speakers. For these students, being able to use the language effectively to share information with others was the end goal. This goal was introduced in the syllabi for all of my Japanese courses, with the statement “focus will be on communicative competence – being able to use the language as a communication tool” being included as part of the summary of the course written at the beginning of the syllabus. Jason and Thomas both described their aspiration to achieve this goal; Jason wanted to be able to conduct “basic conversation” in Japanese while abroad or meeting someone in the United States. Thomas was more descriptive in what he wanted to achieve:

I think being proficient in that and not be like... I think if someone has to speak slow to me, that's fine, that would be that... and then being able to listen to conversations and pick out the meaning of what they said.

He maintained that, like Jason, the most important thing is being able to communicate with others, regardless of the level or ability. Students were unclear about whether this perception was influenced by the focus on communicative competence in my classroom, but they both did not hesitate to speak and communicate in Japanese during class

sessions. It is clear that they were willing to engage in the use of Japanese for communication.

Brian, Sophia, and Liam had high aspirations for their Japanese language and literacy development. Brian shared the possibility attending graduate school in Japan, so he wished to continue his Japanese studies after the class ended in order to work toward that goal. Sophia mentioned that while “mastery would be great,” it was unlikely to happen due to a busy schedule and upcoming dramatic changes to her life. Liam also had similar aspirations, and revealed that his plan was to go all the way, saying:

The master goal is to just be completely fluent, but I'd say a goal within the next three or four years would be to be able to go a whole day and just speak Japanese and just read it and just type or just feel engrossed in it, and not have to worry about English. Especially if I were based in Japan working, I'd like to be able to have a whole day of competently speaking and reading and listening.

His explanation showed a number of things: first, that complete fluency was his goal, and that it encompassed both oral and written production of the language. Additionally, Liam wanted to be able to be immersed in the language without any issues. Furthermore, this conversation revealed his additional aspiration of using Japanese in order to work in Japan. Part of his aspiring identity as a Japanese language learner was to work and live as an individual in Japanese society.

William in 004 was another student who had high aspirations for his Japanese ability. He planned to continue his Japanese language learning in order to pass the N1 (highest) level of the Japanese Language Proficiency Test (JLPT), which recognizes and

offers certificates to individuals who complete the exam. The JLPT certificate can be used to demonstrate Japanese language ability for a number of different purposes, including gaining employment in Japan. This was also part of William's plan, which he described as:

I would like to do translation in the future, I think that would be enjoyable for me. I'd get to work with something like I am passionate about that would benefit other people and maybe drive their interest. And I think N1 proficiency is kind of mandatory, if I want to be good and relatively quick about it, I could translate stuff now, but it's not going to be a quick speed or a good quality, but working for some translation company, would that be for books or anime or manga, the news or TV or something.

As he would like to work in translation of both spoken and written material, both oral and written Japanese development were very important during William's course of study. He framed his study through the lens of the JLPT, which meant that his focus was well-rounded compared to other students, who were mostly interested in conversation and speaking. He also revealed the importance of this qualification to him; by describing the certificate as "mandatory," he created a measurable goal that he could work toward in his future studies. This JLPT language qualification could be considered as something that he wanted to have as part of his identity as a Japanese language learner: a definable measurement of Japanese proficiency.

Developing Emotions and Identity with Japanese Language and Literacy Learning

As students began and continued their Japanese studies, they described a variety of feelings through their interactions. Many of these were in relation to the class itself: the mechanics of learning the language, opinions toward the assignments, or behavior in the class. The experiences inside and outside of the classroom also played a small role in influencing student identities as they learned about and, in some cases, absorbed aspects of Japanese social culture.

Complex Emotions Toward Japanese Language Learning and Development

As students experienced the Japanese language through the class, they described a number of different feelings in their interviews and writings. One of the most prevalent emotions was that of excitement. Isabella and Emma were delighted to be able to start learning in order to better understand anime, and Ava wanted to do the same with manga. Liam described Japanese class as “just a lot of fun,” while Sophia said that “[she] simply enjoys it.” William stated that Japanese is “definitely not simple, but enjoyable,” showing that even though the language posed challenges for the learners, students were able to enjoy the experience of developing their Japanese abilities. Furthermore, this enjoyment motivated them to deepen their developing identities as Japanese language learners by connecting it to their identity as consumers of Japanese media.

Some students like Sophia also spoke about a particular aspect of the language that caused excitement and enjoyment. For her, learning new sounds and associated meanings brought her great joy:

I really enjoyed [Japanese] because it was so completely different, so it's like I get to compare sounds to assemble again, so it's really like being a child and learning to speak again, and then with German, I remember learning it. It's so easy to learn because it's like, what is the word for cat, its *katza*... It's so close. But with Japanese, it's like, okay, what's the word for cat, it's *neko*, it doesn't sound the same. It doesn't look the same when you write it, it's so completely different, it's so different that it's cool. But my favorite is like, I listen to, you know how the sound for cats *nyaa*, think about it, it's like, that kind of does sound like a cat sometimes, so it's making those little differences too that I really like.

Sophia felt that the differences of Japanese vocabulary and English vocabulary made learning “cool.” This feeling also continued with writing, due to dissimilarities with English.

For other students like Liam, Charlotte, and Emma, the main source of excitement came from writing. Emma described the feeling of being able to read something written in Japanese and understand it as “cool,” while Charlotte was a bit more descriptive in her process:

Before I put something on a nice piece of paper, I'll check it and I'm right, I've got it, and that's really...Oh man, that's great. And sometimes I'm really close. And that's great...and I thought oh, this feels really good. I like this, and now those feelings came back and I kinda got excited about it.

Charlotte, who had lived in Japan and had been immersed in Japanese more than three decades ago, recalled her delight at her Japanese proficiency coming back to her. She was

excited to check her answers and see that she was making progress in rebuilding her reading and writing proficiencies. Liam also took great delight in developing his Japanese language and literacy, saying that learning and developing kanji knowledge was one of his favorite parts of studying. Although he admitted that kanji was challenging, it brought him excitement as his recognition increased over the course of the semester.

Building Confidence. Studying Japanese also fostered confidence. Brian talked about how his confidence had increased over the course of the semester, and that after studying for a semester, he felt comfortable enough to start talking with someone in Japanese that he did not know. Emma did not have as much confidence as Brian, but shared moments that contributed to her self-assurance in Japanese:

It's pretty hard, but it is rewarding when you ask, when you ask a question in Japanese, and I understand what you're saying, it's a really good feeling overall just to be able to get another language, especially when it's so difficult.

In this case, she felt confident in her abilities during in-class interactions with me when I asked questions in the class. Being able to understand and respond to my questions in class about daily topics or the language point of the day helped to push Emma's development along. Sophie agreed with Emma, and shared that she felt more confident in being able to ask questions, but less positive about being able to understand the response. Charlotte talked about how although she was a less confident individual by nature, she had devised a system to help boost her confidence:

I try to give myself some little pats on the back and encouragement along the way, 'cause otherwise I can be maybe overly critical of myself and my writing style,

and I don't think that's necessary. I think that's just a personal characteristic that I have, but I don't think it's necessary.

She acknowledged the challenge of learning Japanese, and was aware of her own flaws, but made sure to keep this in mind as she studied. Charlotte was not the only student who did this; Ava also admitted to “underplaying her own strengths,” but this awareness allowed students to avoid putting themselves down and helped them create a positive mindset to create confidence in their Japanese development. This revealed Ava’s development of identity as a Japanese language learner, because gaining confidence allowed students to begin thinking of themselves as Japanese language using individuals.

Dealing With Frustration. Although students experienced positive emotions while studying Japanese, there were also episodes involving negative feelings. The most common feeling that learners described was frustration. First, some feelings of frustration served as motivation for returning to the Japanese classroom: Jason, who had previously studied Japanese in middle school, enrolled in my class in order to overcome the disappointment that he felt in being unable to complete his studies in high school. For him, my class served as a way for him to overcome the frustration of that past situation. Charlotte also expressed frustration over time lost that could have been spent developing Japanese, saying:

I'm very frustrated with... I'm not gonna beat myself up, but I think of all those years and days I lost, I could have been studying something, but my life was such that it just had to take a back seat, so now I try not to let that frustration

overwhelm me, and I just sit down and knuckle down and thank God for all the words I know, and then just add those ones as I go along as much as I can.

She maintained steady interest in building her language skill, but was unable to continue due to other necessities; again, my class helped to alleviate the distress of the past.

However, for Charlotte frustrations in the past did not disappear, but changed upon entering the class. She, like other classmates, did struggle with aspects of Japanese, and expressed frustration during the semester. One area that was vexing for Charlotte was the writing; she shared that kanji “got in the way” of the flow of her reading, and that one kanji character could be read several different ways depending on context were challenging as well:

Sometimes it's frustrating when you've been learning to say something one way, one way, one way, and then all of a sudden you're reading along and here's this whole other way. And you say, how could they do that to me?

A point of contention arose for her with the multiple readings of kanji, which she described almost as some kind of betrayal. She felt that the changes in reading interrupted her flow of comprehension as she had to reach for a dictionary in order to search for the correct reading. Brian and Jason both echoed Charlotte's learning experience of the issues surrounding multiple readings of kanji; Brian, although frustrated by the readings, guessed that it would just take time to get used to, while Jason's frustration lay with not only the readings, but also the process to look up the kanji and encountering multiple versions. He said that seeing different versions of the kanji was demotivating, especially when not knowing even one version. I attempted to alleviate this in the class by

encouraging students to choose to focus on those readings that they encountered most commonly.

Isabella and William in Japanese 004 also expressed frustration in speaking Japanese; not because of the challenge, but because of the lack of opportunity. They shared that although they enjoyed the speaking time during their limited class, and attempted to speak with each other outside of the class, they were not successful in finding others to speak Japanese with. I encouraged the use of apps and online solutions for this, but they were relatively unsuccessful during the pandemic. Liv was also frustrated in speaking Japanese, but for a different reason: she compared herself to other classmates that she felt were more advanced than herself. She explained:

Exactly, [classmate 1] is very quick with learning things, and I'm very slow when learning things, so my frustration is just trying to keep up with everybody.

There're a few students that definitely, like they know what they're talking about, it's [classmate 2] and [classmate 3]. No, yeah, but they're very experienced and I eventually wanna get up to them.

As a beginner to Japanese, Liv compared herself to classmates who had studied Japanese previously. These students were the most visible due to them asking questions in class, or providing examples when I prompted students, so she fixated on them as the standard when in fact they were not. Although this was frustrating for her, her peers also served as motivation for her to improve. For the students described in this section, there was desire to further solidify their identity as Japanese language learners, but the barriers described here seemed to challenge them from progressing as much as they wished to.

Cultivating Identity as Japanese Language Learners

Throughout student explorations of their perceptions of Japanese language and literacy, there were small indications of how students were starting to construct their identities as Japanese language learners. Charlotte, who had a longer relationship with the language than other students and had actually lived in Japan, was working toward an identity by immersing herself in the language through her surroundings and by interacting with classmates in Japanese. Brian and Thomas tied their language identity to their preexisting identity as anime enthusiasts, among other hobbies. Given the limited amount of study time for the students, and the level of Japanese knowledge of students at the time of this data collection, there was little concrete evidence of any student establishing a solid Japanese identity. However, perceptions showed a desire to create a Japanese language speaker identity, and appeared to be something that could develop at a later stage of study.

Summary of Findings

The findings in this study revealed a great deal about the experiences of my students as they built their Japanese language and literacy over the course of the semester. First and foremost was the influence of my class and class content on student studies. As an LCTL being taught in an area without local access to a Japanese community, the primary source of Japanese information came through the class. I created access to linguistic and literacy knowledge through lectures, assignments, and group activities. Students were able to gain Japanese knowledge by transacting with myself and with class materials, and utilized resources provided by the class to further their

understanding of Japanese orthography, vocabulary, and grammar. This was then used to interact with others in the class environment.

Students also constructed their Japanese knowledge outside the classroom through a variety of socioculturally relevant and meaningful events and activities. Guided by the cultural journal assignment, students transacted with a variety of multimedia based on their individual interests in Japanese. These interests, ranging from anime, to art, to cooking, were explored multimodally, with students relying on their knowledge of spoken and written Japanese in order to understand content. Although limited in scope due to circumstances, students interacted with others outside the class, both in-person and online; this negotiation of meaning helped to further Japanese knowledge.

Finally, students experienced Japanese through their perceptions and feelings as their experiences influenced their foreign language identity. Students came into my classroom from a variety of backgrounds that established how they approached their Japanese study. Some developed quickly, while others struggled to overcome the differences between Japanese and English. At the same time, students experienced subtle changes in their ideas about language: some worked toward a decided goal, while others developed their identities more organically. While not necessarily dramatic in scope, learning Japanese played a part in each student's life.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

This qualitative case study was designed to examine the ways in which students studying Japanese as a foreign language at a university in the United States develop and experience Japanese language and literacy, and aimed to determine whether their developing Japanese language had an effect on their identities. I examined three different classes of students in this study at different levels of language development; they were bound by their participation in my Japanese language program at the university.

Through my interactions with students, I was able to better understand how my students developed their knowledge of Japanese in my classroom. They shared with me the challenges of learning a language that differed greatly than their own, and the processes that they underwent developing language in my classroom, with others, and their environment. I was also able to view the importance of multimodality to their language development as students presented the varied connections they were building to Japanese.

The university students examined in this study relied on their experiences with in-class learning for the majority of their Japanese development, through their interactions with myself as the instructor, and their peers in the classroom; these interactions were both designed as pedagogical components in my class and also spontaneous interactions with others. Students also used the sociocultural resources available to them in order to create opportunities to engage in Japanese language learning. They explored written and spoken Japanese through multimodal means: text, video, art, social media, use of various apps, etc. They also communicated with others, native and non-native speakers alike.

Students also brought their own experiences and perceptions into their learning. Language backgrounds, relationships, and emotion all played a role in their language development. And while students were overall too early in their Japanese studies to form an extensive Japanese language identity, there were signs that some students were trying to integrate linguistic and cultural aspects of Japanese into how they viewed themselves.

In this chapter, I revisit the significance of this study, and describe two specific areas where my study provided insight into the importance of multimodal cultural connections and the necessity of orthography development for learning Japanese. I then discuss the implications of the study and some suggestions for future research.

Revisiting the Significance of the Study

In Chapter 1, I outlined the significance of this study; namely, that there is a lack of studies that focus on university students studying Less Commonly Taught Languages (LCTLs), and that students who study these languages often face challenges from a variety of sources. Students often have limited access to resources and experiences compared to more popular languages, and have less opportunities to interact with language users due to a lack of speakers; additionally, the non-alphabetic aspect of some languages can prove challenging for students to adapt to. My study examined how university students perceived their Japanese language learning, and focused on the strategies they used in order to develop their language and literacy skills and knowledge over the course of the semester. It also examined the effect university students' perceptions had on identity. These findings provided valuable insight into pedagogical implications that may be beneficial to student foreign language development, especially LCTLs that do not use the Latin alphabet.

Importance of Multimodal Sociocultural Connections to Student Foreign Language and Literacy Development

In my study, university students experienced the Japanese language through interaction with myself as instructor, multimodal resources and class materials, and their classmates. However, this learning environment extended beyond the classroom, into the students' activities and daily lives. The cultural journal activities encouraged students to document and reflect upon their encounters with Japanese language outside class, and due to its necessity as a graded assignment, prodded students to do more while stimulating their metacognitive awareness.

Sociocultural Motivation. Through this study, I was able to understand the role of Japanese sociocultural aspects as motivating factors for students, and I could see that their burgeoning Japanese knowledge increased their understanding and appreciation of the material. Students' learning often took place with other individuals both inside and outside of the classroom, showing how students took full use of their environment to maximize learning.

For students studying LCTLs, finding and maintaining a connection to an anchoring point in the language's broader sociocultural context is important, as it can foster the students' ability to connect what they are learning in class to its real-life application in the environment. Given the lack of Japanese-related locations and events in the region where my study took place, compounded with the fact that data collection took place during the COVID-19 pandemic, I expected students to struggle with making connections between in-class learning and broader sociocultural contexts. However, I was proven wrong by students' descriptions of their interactions with Japanese language and

literacy through a variety of mediums, and was able to learn more about their methods of learning. Outside of class, students relied primarily on the Internet to provide access to their classmates, Japanese language materials, and other Japanese-speaking individuals.

The ways by which students interacted with Japanese are significant because these results show that learners of Japanese and other LCTLs utilize their environment in order to make up for the lack of physical interaction with non-native speakers. In the case of Japanese, there is ready access to a large variety of media due to Japanese pop culture prevalence throughout the United States (Gee, 2003; Fukunaga, 2006). The students in my study had been exposed to Japanese media throughout their childhood and were able to use their prior knowledge of it in order to integrate it into their classroom studies and maximize their learning. Furthermore, they used their digital literacy skills and knowledge to seek out additional information online. Due to the flexible structure of the cultural journal assignment, students were free to choose the things they were most interested in, which allowed them to create a path to increase motivation.

Sociocultural Connections. Students utilized their own sociocultural connections to strengthen their Japanese development, indicating that students relied not only on just media, but also interpersonal relationships. This showed me that my students' interpersonal interactions allowed for learning through microgenesis (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006), which helped students to incrementally increase their understanding of the language. It was important for me to understand that students were developing their Japanese language and literacy through others even during a pandemic.

The diverse connections that students made with other individuals reiterates the importance of developing language and literacy skills and knowledge through interactions with others. As language and identity are socially and culturally constructed (Goodman et al., 2016), building connections with others is of paramount importance. Students incorporated their relationships into patterns of learning behavior; for example, in my study Isabella practiced using Japanese with her sister who was learning the language independently, while Liam tried out new Japanese structures with an online friend. By constructing meaning through social processes (Vygotsky, 1978), students were able to further solidify their understanding of Japanese, and I was left wanting to find out how these social connections could be better integrated into the class.

Japanese Orthography as an Important Component of Literacy Development

My study closely examined the learning processes that students took in order to develop their understanding of Japanese orthographies and build their Japanese literacy knowledge. The methods used by students here can be useful when considering how to teach non-Latin alphabetic orthography in an LCTL classroom.

Students use of technology such as social media and the Internet through apps and online services revealed the significance of media literacies and multimodal texts in learning an LCTL like Japanese. Other students utilized similar learning techniques through a combination of songs and lyrics, again showing that students found it useful to use multimodal features to develop written Japanese. It was impactful for me to see how far students reached outside the classroom to build connections, and the diverse methods by which they chose to explore.

Students' focus on the four types of Japanese orthography made up a significant amount of study time. Since the Japanese 001 class began with learning hiragana then katakana, and the Japanese 002 and 004 classes continued to build literacy through kanji, this was understandable. Developing Japanese literacy required focused effort, yielding results similar to other studies on Japanese reading (Kondo-Brown, 2006; Leung, 2002). This is significant in that I and other instructors like me must focus on this aspect of language learning due to student challenges with reading and writing the four orthographies.

Implications of the Study

This study indicated that students in my Japanese language classes relied on a variety of means in addition to classroom instruction itself in order to further their Japanese language and literacy development. These included a variety of sociocultural connections created from interacting with material in the environment, and from individuals that contributed to their understanding of Japanese. Through student data, I also found that a large focus for students at all levels was on Japanese orthography, which mirrored other studies (de Burgh-Hirabe & Feryok, 2013; Kondo-Brown, 2006; Leung, 2002) that stressed the importance of building Japanese literacy skills in the classroom. These results all hold significant implications for foreign language learners, university language instructors, and LCTL language programs.

Impact on Foreign Language Learners

This study explored the benefits to incorporating students' self-interests into foreign language learning behaviors and teaching. My students exhibited a number of benefits from exploring Japanese on their own terms, such as expanded vocabulary,

increased motivation, and integrated language and cultural knowledge; in addition to this, some students exhibited minute shifts that indicated emerging identities as Japanese language learners. In the case of Japanese language and literacy development, because many students have prior connections to Japanese pop culture (Fukunaga, 2006), they and their classes should utilize their personal interests in order to have ready-made sociocultural connections to the language. This can include social media, anime, music, or exploring academic interests in the target language. By choosing something that they have familiarity with, students can readily understand the context of the item or text (Gee, 2013), and should be able to use that knowledge in helping them to comprehend meaning.

Students can also benefit from focusing extensively on orthography of non-alphabetic languages. The students in my study expressed difficulty with Japanese orthography, even in the fourth semester of learning (Japanese 004). As previous studies (Igarishi, 2007; Ivantosch, 1998) have also shown, the development of written Japanese is a process that is challenging for most, due to the multiple types of writing involved.

Student awareness and development of the language's orthography is necessary in order to maintain smooth development of literacy knowledge over the course of a class. In my class, students were acutely aware of the challenges of Japanese writing, and took efforts to overcome their challenges through using technology such as study sites and apps. They also relied on their classmates and outside learners for support, affirming that language and literacy is socially constructed (Goodman et al., 2016). Students studying Japanese, and other LCTLs with non-alphabetic orthography, should rely on technology and their peers in order to strengthen their understanding of the written language; by

seeing and using the language *in situ* they can comprehend it and continue to develop it smoothly.

For me and other instructors teaching LCTLs with different orthographies, the findings showed that reinforced learning strategies and explanations are useful to many students. Additional supplemental materials may also be necessary for some students to develop the written language productively. Helping students create ways to interact with the written language in the environment is also an important element for supporting students' orthography development. Additionally, these interactions with written language may also support students' foreign language identity development.

Ramifications for University LCTL Instructors and Language Programs

This study also informs instructors of Japanese and other LCTLs in postsecondary education of a number of practices that can be beneficial to their students both inside and outside the classroom. For LCTL learners, interaction with the language is not always easy due to location, environmental factors, and non-native instructors (Hertel & Sunderman, 2009); therefore, it is important to not only interact with the students in the class, but also to serve as a source of information and empowerment for students to go out and find ways to experience the language in a sociocultural manner. As the instructor, I worked on this through targeted language instruction in the classroom, ample opportunities for students to interact with one another, and by providing guidance to students about finding Japanese connections outside of the classroom. For those students who do have previous interests in Japanese pop culture, this guidance may be less necessary, but for others gaining knowledge about how to interact with the language

outside of class can be invaluable. This process allowed for me to continually shift and adapt my methods as students informed me of what worked best for them.

Instructors teaching Japanese or other LCTL classes should not only provide opportunities for students to interact with others and with multimodal materials in the environment, but also scaffold them into the classwork. I examined this through use of the cultural journal, which required students to interact with Japanese outside of class; this was supplemented in class by a number of suggested interactions through my commentary or other focused reflection assignments. This can encourage students to seek out language and text situated in the environment, rather than just the classroom. The study revealed that the cultural journal also provided a space for negotiation of meaning (Vygotsky, 1978) between the student and instructor through the comment system; as collaboration with others can increase comprehension (Hurst et al., 2013), it is important to have this additional line of communication.

As this study examined three separate class contexts within a single Japanese language program, I found additional implications for Japanese or LCTL classes at the program level. First, maintaining the cultural journal experience over the student's entire time taking Japanese allows for the instructor to monitor progress and development of interaction with Japanese language and literacy. It also continues to leave an open channel of communication between the instructor and student; in my study, many students took advantage of this in order to ask focused questions regarding the out-of-class materials they had chosen to use for their cultural journal assignment. As the student progresses through the language program, this journal becomes a way for the student to personalize their learning experience.

In addition to the cultural journals, my Japanese language program utilized multimodal texts (audio/visual/written) and reflection-based assignments. Postsecondary LCTL programs can incorporate these types of materials in order to foster collaborative language learning (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006), which is especially important when there is not a strong presence of the language in the local environment. In these cases, the program should strive to not only introduce language sources that students can turn to, but also foster and monitor the ability of students to do so independently.

Recommendations for Further Research

Completing this study has allowed me to better understand how my students perceived and developed their Japanese language knowledge and identity in three different class settings. Through my data, I gained valuable insight into the processes they used, and the challenges they experienced during the class, especially living in an environment without a local Japanese community and during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the findings have also guided me toward several aspects that should be explored further in order to fully understand the effect of instructor-based content on student learning in the LCTL classroom.

Cultural Journals in Other LCTLs

My study focused on Japanese, but I would like to see the effect of the cultural journal on other LCTL classes. Educators may choose to scaffold the cultural journal assignment slightly in order for students to experience more aspects of the foreign language and literacy. Because many students perceived written Japanese to be challenging, I would like to see the effect of a more structured reading component on the cultural journal, and whether that would affect student perceptions of, and difficulty of,

developing Japanese orthography knowledge; this could be applied to any LCTL with a non-alphabetic orthography. This expansion would be beneficial to me and other educators who choose to use a cultural journal; students will have to interact more with foreign language text, and that exposure may help alleviate some of the difficulties associated with the written form of these languages.

The cultural journal can also be explored as a collaborative activity. Much research (Holschuh & Paulson, 2013; Hurst et al., 2013; Kuzmičová et al., 2018) has been done on the benefits of social reading, so in addition to a reading component in the cultural journal, educators could make some entries a group effort. By asking students to choose texts such as lyrics, short stories, or articles (depending on level), they would be able to better understand how group reading affects students' ability to read and understand texts. In my study, I found the cultural journal to be a valuable tool; both as the instructor, in order to monitor progress and understand student interest, and also as a reflection and communication device for students. I think that by modifying and implementing the cultural journal, educators can help students address some of the challenges they experience as LCTL learners.

Effect of Required Interaction with Japanese University Students

My study took place during the COVID-19 pandemic, which made interaction with most in-person Japanese content challenging, with a few exceptions. Some students bypassed this issue by reaching out to Japanese speakers online, but others lacked the knowledge or initiative to do so. In order to address this in the classroom, and to facilitate face-to-face Japanese language development, I would like to explore the effect of required class interaction with Japanese university students at a partner university in

Japan. The pandemic gave birth to an increase in online-based teaching technologies which I believe could be beneficial to students studying Japanese or other LCTLs in postsecondary institutions.

The interaction would be an assignment in the form of an extracurricular online meeting with students studying English in Japan. Through further qualitative research, I want to investigate if long-distance connections with native Japanese speakers are meaningful to students' language and literacy development, and identity as Japanese language learners. The data collected in my study indicated that students wanted to interact with Japanese individuals, so providing this kind of interaction would allow me to establish those connections. If possible, I would like to see the effect of this type of activity on other LCTL classes as well.

Impact of Teacher-led Activities Outside of Class

Another topic for further research is the effect of an addition to my class content; it would be extracurricular activities created and facilitated by myself as the instructor. This was not possible during the COVID-19 pandemic, but would be possible with lifted restrictions. This activity could take the form of excursions or activities encompassing Japanese language or literacy content; for example, a trip to a Japanese vegetable farm with conversation and written handouts in Japanese, or a restaurant event with menu reading and ordering practice. This would allow students to negotiate meaning with others and use Japanese in a real-life setting.

Further research on this topic would allow me to understand more about the value of sociocultural interactions outside the class on student Japanese language, literacy, and

identity development. Although these interactions may not include native speakers, I would have the ability to scaffold the content of the event and add activities that I deem appropriate for the students' level. Students would be able to interact with myself as the instructor, each other, and any other individuals who can use Japanese. Since this study's data collection took place entirely during the COVID-19 pandemic, my students did not have many opportunities to experience Japanese in a larger, community-based setting with face-to-face interactions. I would like to know how the results of this study might have changed if students were extended these opportunities.

Final Thoughts

I decided on this study in order to understand more about the thought processes, Japanese language and literacy development, and identity of the students in my classes. Because I was once an American student learning Japanese at a postsecondary institution as they were, I assumed that they were experiencing Japanese language and literacy development in much the same way that I had. But communication and technology has changed a lot since I was a beginner student in 2001, and the results of my study informed me that my students were perceiving and experiencing Japanese in new and exciting ways. Not only did they build new Japanese information from interacting with me in the classroom, but they were establishing links between each other and learning together, important especially during the pandemic. Furthermore, they used their access to technology in order to build literacy through multimodal means; text, audio, and visuals helped students to better experience the language as situated in a variety of sociocultural contexts. These activities additionally helped to place students on the path to developing an identity as a Japanese language learner.

By closely examining the data and listening to the voices of my students, I was able to glimpse the complexity of my own teaching, as well as students' learning process. Having completed my classroom studies of Japanese more than 15 years ago, I realized that in many ways I had forgotten what being a student of Japanese was like. The stories of my students reminded me the importance of the sociocultural connection to the language, the struggles of unfamiliar orthography, and the subtle development of a new, Japanese language identity. As I begin the next semester of Japanese teaching, I will integrate additional sociocultural activities with expanded collaboration into the course content, and encourage students to build connections with myself, each other, and beyond. Hopefully, by the end of their Japanese classes, they will have begun to develop language knowledge and experience that will influence them for a lifetime journey of learning.

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Appendix A

Student semi-structured individual interview questions

Hello, and thank you again for your participation in this interview. I will be asking you some questions about your Japanese language and literacy and how you view language personally. I will also be asking about how language affects your relationships with your family members. This interview will be recorded. Please feel free to ask me to stop recording at any time, if you need to take a break, or if you want to finish the interview. Do you have any questions? All right, let's begin.

Perceptions

1. What do you think about studying the Japanese language?
 - a. Why did you start studying Japanese?
 - b. Is it a difficult language to learn? Why or why not?
 - c. Is it more challenging than other languages you've studied? Why or why not?
2. Describe your language skills in Japanese.
 - a. How are you starting to learn Japanese?
 - b. Do you want to improve these skills? How?
3. How much time do you spend speaking, reading, or writing Japanese?
 - a. When do you use Japanese, and in what situations?
4. What are the benefits or opportunities, if any, to knowing foreign languages? The disadvantages?

5. Do you think foreign language study should be required in American schools?

Why or why not?

6. How do you feel about living in a mostly monolingual community without many Japanese speakers?

Activities

7. What are your personal literacy habits in Japanese? (Ex. How often do you read, what do you read, what language do you read in, do you use Japanese online resources, etc.)
8. Who do you use Japanese with? (Ex. Teacher, classmates, friends, etc.)
9. What methods do you use to retain Japanese knowledge learned in class?
10. What ways do you use your native language to help with developing Japanese skills?
11. What kinds of activities do you do to improve your Japanese abilities?
12. How does your location affect the type of Japanese language activities that you participate in?
13. Do you use technology like the Internet or other online resources to support your Japanese development? If so, how?
14. Do you use art or music to improve your Japanese development? If so, how?
15. Are there community resources available to learn Japanese?

Challenges

16. What kind of language resources would you like, but are unavailable?
17. What frustrations have you experienced while learning Japanese?
18. Have you had any language challenges in speaking, reading, or writing? Explain.

Aspirations/Identity

19. What kind of Japanese language use would you like to achieve? Why?
20. In what ways do you feel learning Japanese has changed who you are?
21. Have there been aspects of Japanese culture that you have adopted?
22. What do you see as the role of Japanese for yourself in the future?
23. Do you feel that learning Japanese has made you a more internationalized individual? Why or why not?
24. Do you think that more Americans should learn Japanese or another foreign language? Why or why not?

Interview #2 Questions

1. Have you been continuing your studies in Japanese since our last meeting?
 - a. If so, how?
 - b. If not, why?
2. Do you feel your Japanese skill has improved since our last meeting? Why or why not?
3. How has your Japanese literacy changed since last time?
4. What are you doing these days to interact with Japanese language and culture?
5. Please describe any Japan-related activity over the summer break.
6. Do you feel that the COVID-19 outbreak affected your Japanese studies during last semester?
7. Do you think you would have learned more Japanese in a physical classroom?
8. Please describe your perspectives on learning Japanese in a remote classroom.
9. How can you continue to improve your Japanese skills given the pandemic situation?

Appendix B

Student semi-structured group interview questions

Hello, and thank you for your participation in this group interview. This time I will be asking you together some questions about how you consider and use Japanese language with each other, what your interests with Japan are, and about your studies. This interview will be recorded. Please feel free to ask me to stop recording at any time, if you need to take a break, or if you want to finish the interview. Do you have any questions? All right, let's begin.

Perceptions

1. What started your interest in Japanese?
2. How much time do you spend using Japanese with each other in class? Out of class?
3. Do you think working with classmates improves your Japanese? Why or why not?
4. Do you think it would be better to learn Japanese with native speakers? Why or why not?
5. What do you think about your language skill in Japanese?

Activities

6. How do you engage with Japanese language outside the classroom?
7. Have you ever traveled out of town to do something related to Japanese language/culture? Why or why not?
8. Do you use the Internet for Japanese-related activities? If so, how?
9. What do you do in the home to improve Japanese language skill?
10. What would you like to be able to do in Japanese? (Ex. Games, movies, etc.)

Social connections

11. Do you use Japanese with anyone besides classmates? Who?
12. Would you like to be able to speak to Japanese people in Japanese?
13. What are some other ways you would like to use Japanese language to communicate?
14. Do you use social media in Japanese? If so, how?
15. Do you use social media for Japanese-related culture? If so, how?
16. Do you have friends who have visited Japan? Have you?
17. What would you like to see at this university that is Japan-related?
18. What has been the easiest thing about learning Japanese? The hardest thing?
19. What can make Japanese reading/writing easier?
20. What can make Japanese reading/writing more accessible?
21. What do you think about Japanese language compared to English? Other foreign languages?
22. Do you feel the class' cultural component was useful in exposing you to Japanese culture? What more would have been useful?
23. Have you interacted with each other outside of class? Do you feel this would have been different in a traditional classroom environment?
24. Under normal (non-pandemic) circumstances, would you have participated in class study groups? Extracurricular Japanese activities? Off-campus trips?
25. Do you feel like you were limited in any way by taking this class here?
26. Was there anything that I/the class could have done better to support your Japanese language learning?

Appendix C

Classroom Observation Protocol

Observation #:

Date/time of class:

Participating students:

Account of Activity:

Notable interactions/uses of language or literacy:

Comments:

Researcher Notes/Reflections:

Appendix D**Japanese Syllabi****JAPN 001****Elementary Japanese I**

Meeting Time: MWF

Meeting Place: Remote (via Zoom)

Fall 2020

Description of Course Content:

This course is designed to familiarize students with the Japanese language. Students will learn to speak, listen to, read, and write Japanese at a basic level. Focus will be on communicative competence – being able to use the language as a communication tool. Cultural insight into Japanese life will be provided through a variety of media sources.

Course Objectives/Student Learning Outcomes:

After successfully completing this course, students should be able to:

1. Read and write in basic Japanese; this includes the hiragana and katakana syllabaries, along with 43 kanji characters
2. Use and respond to basic greetings, self-introductions, and “small talk” in the Japanese language such as feelings, day of week/weather, and describing activities/events
3. Comprehend and produce basic Japanese grammar and structure including order, polite-form verb conjugation (present, negative, past, past negative), adjectives, and particle/postposition use
4. Construct and participate in daily social conversations, including making plans, purchasing goods/money, and spatial recognition of objects and places
5. Understand a variety of Japanese social conventions and cultural trends through use of Japanese media such as video, music, and internet

Responsibilities of the Instructor:

I am available for consultation through Zoom during my office hours (TTH 12 - 2 pm) or email me for an appointment time. I will do my best to respond to your questions in a timely manner. I will respond to e-mails within 48 hours Monday through Friday and on Monday if e-mailed over the weekend (5 pm Friday – 9 am Monday).

It is my intention to return graded assignments to you within three weeks of the stated assignment due date. I will let you know ahead of time if this is not possible. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have a question related to this course.

Textbooks:

Having the textbooks is a necessity for this course. The books are available online. The references are as follows:

Banno, E., Ikeda, Y., Ohno, Y., Shinagawa, C., & Tokashiki, K. (2011). *Genki: an integrated course in elementary Japanese I*. (2nd ed.). Tokyo: The Japan Times.

ISBN: 978-4789014403 **Make sure it is the 2nd edition!**

Banno, E., Ikeda, Y., Ohno, Y., Shinagawa, C., & Tokashiki, K. (2011). *Genki: an integrated course in elementary Japanese Workbook I*. (2nd ed.). Tokyo: Japan Times.

ISBN: 978-4789014410 **Make sure it is the 2nd edition!**

Kawarazaki, M. (2007). *Nihongo kana nyūmon eigoban*. (3rd ed.). Tokyo: Bonjinsha.

ISBN: 978-4893580313

Grading and Course Requirements:

Your course grade will be determined in the following manner:

Class Participation	...25%
Homework and Quizzes	...25%
Projects	...20%
Final Exam	...30%

Grading is as follows:

100% - 90%	...A
89% - 80%	...B
79% - 70%	...C
69% - 60%	...D
59% and below	...F

Class Participation:

Students are expected to attend class via Zoom meetings; these meetings are not optional. Students are also expected to participate in online classroom/Canvas discussion and activities. Paying attention during Zoom meetings is of utmost importance. Non-attendance or partial attendance of online lectures will result in lowering of this grade.

Homework and Quizzes:

Homework will be assigned on a regular basis. Students are expected to complete homework assignments by the specified time noted by the instructor or on Canvas. **Late assignments will be accepted, but penalized.** Please check Canvas daily for assignment updates.

Projects:

This course will require the completion of several projects throughout the semester. This will require the submission of workbook assignments, reflections, and a cultural journal that will be recorded throughout the semester.

Final Exam:

This exam will be given **Thursday, December 17th, from 1:30 – 4:00pm** during finals week, and will test how well students have learned the material. This exam may not be rescheduled or retaken.

JAPN 002

Elementary Japanese II

Meeting Time: MWF

Meeting Place:

Spring 2020

Description of Course Content:

This course continues to build on the foundation created in Japanese I. Students will improve the ability to speak, listen to, read, and write Japanese at a high beginner level. Focus will be on communicative competence – being able to use the language as a communication tool. Cultural insight into Japanese life will be provided through a variety of media sources, including film and short writings.

Course Objectives/Student Learning Outcomes:

After successfully completing this course, students should be able to:

1. Have mastery of *hiragana*, *katakana*, and some *kanji* characters
2. Comfortably use and respond to basic greetings, self-introductions, and “small talk” in the Japanese language
3. Incorporate Japanese grammar and structure, especially *te*- and short verb forms, into use
4. Construct and participate in daily social conversations, including comparisons and wants/needs
5. Understand a variety of Japanese social conventions and cultural trends

Textbook:

Having the textbook is a necessity for this course. The book, for those without it, is available online. The reference is as follows:

Banno, E., Ikeda, Y., Ohno, Y., Shinagawa, C., & Tokashiki, K. (2011). *Genki: an integrated course in elementary Japanese I*. (2nd ed.). Tokyo: The Japan Times.

ISBN: 978-4789014403 **Make sure it is the 2nd edition!**

Banno, E., Ikeda, Y., Ohno, Y., Shinagawa, C., & Tokashiki, K. (2011). *Genki: an integrated course in elementary Japanese Workbook I*. (2nd ed.). Tokyo: The Japan Times.

ISBN: 978-4789014410 **Make sure it is the 2nd edition!**

Grading and Course Requirements:

Your course grade will be determined in the following manner:

Class Participation	...25%
Homework and Quizzes	...25%
Projects	...20%
Final Exam	...30%

Grading is as follows:

100% - 90%	...A
89% - 80%	...B
79% - 70%	...C
69% - 60%	...D
59% and below	...F

Class Participation:

Students are not only expected to attend class, but are also expected to participate in classroom discussion and activities. Paying attention in class is of utmost importance.

Non-attendance or partial attendance will result in lowering of this grade. ***Missing more than six classes will result in a grade of "F" for the semester.***

Homework and Quizzes:

Homework will be assigned on a regular basis. Students are expected to complete homework assignments before the next class period, unless specified. **Late assignments will be accepted with a 50% penalty.** Quizzes may also be given randomly throughout the semester.

Projects:

This course will require the completion of several projects throughout the semester.

These will take the form of the text workbook, the cultural journal, and several reflections on Japanese film and literature.

Final Exam:

This exam will be given **Thursday, May 14th from 1:30 – 4:00pm** during finals week, and will test how well students have learned the material. This exam may not be rescheduled or retaken.

JAPN 004**Intermediate Language Study II - Japanese IV**

Meeting Place: TBA

Spring 2020

Description of Course Content:

This course continues to build on the foundation created in beginner Japanese. Students will improve the ability to speak, listen to, read, and write Japanese at an intermediate level. Focus will be on communicative competence – being able to use the language as a communication tool. Cultural insight into Japanese life will be provided through a variety of media sources, including film and short writings.

Course Objectives/Student Learning Outcomes:

After successfully completing this course, students should be able to:

1. Use all Japanese writing systems, including *kanji* characters, to write for multiple situations
2. Comfortably use and respond to more complex conversations, descriptions, and “small talk” in the Japanese language
3. Incorporate intermediate Japanese grammar and structure, especially polite and complex verbs, into use
4. Construct and participate in daily social conversations in online contexts
5. Understand a variety of Japanese social conventions and cultural trends

Textbook:

Having the textbook is a necessity for this course. The book, for those without it, is available online. The reference is as follows:

Banno, E., Ikeda, Y., Ohno, Y., Shinagawa, C., & Tokashiki, K. (2011). *Genki: an integrated course in elementary Japanese II*. (2nd ed.). Tokyo: The Japan Times.

ISBN: 978-4789014434 **Make sure it is the 2nd edition!**

Grading and Course Requirements:

Your course grade will be determined in the following manner:

Class Participation	...20%
Homework and Quizzes	...30%
Projects	...30%
Final Exam	...20%

Grading is as follows:

100% - 90%	...A
89% - 80%	...B
79% - 70%	...C
69% - 60%	...D

59% and below

...F

Class Participation:

Students are not only expected to attend class, but are also expected to participate in classroom discussion and activities. Paying attention in class is of utmost importance. Non-attendance or partial attendance will result in lowering of this grade.

Homework and Quizzes:

Homework will be assigned on a regular basis. Students are expected to complete homework assignments before the next class period, unless specified. **Late assignments will be accepted with a 50% penalty.** Quizzes may also be given randomly throughout the semester.

Projects:

This course will require the completion of several projects throughout the semester. These may take the form of reading analyses, short writings of a cultural nature, or recordings.

Final Exam:

This exam will be given during finals week, and will test how well students have learned the material. This exam may not be rescheduled or retaken.

Appendix E

Sample Unit-Based Supplemental Curriculum Chart

Week	Activities	Literacy events	Pedagogy
4	Exploration of Japanese music and music genres (J-pop, J-rock, enka, traditional)	Listen to music (mp3, Youtube), watch music video (Youtube), lyrics sheet, reflection activity, observing real instrument, cultural journal entry	Cultural learning through song, using cloze activities for listening/writing, using Funds of Knowledge to compare/contrast Eng/Japanese songs
5	Learning about and interpreting Japanese traditional folktales and mythological stories	Reading a short story in Japanese and English, discussion of folktale tropes, watching animated film <i>Tale of Princess Kaguya</i> , cultural journal entry	Translating text from J->E, reflection of movie, building cultural knowledge of archetypes and characters, connect with grammar from textbook
6	Japanese Cherry Blossom culture	Videos of events (Youtube), pictures of “Blossom forecast,” related music, article on current issues, cultural journal entry	Use Funds of Knowledge to connect Japanese events with events in DC, encourage participating in DC event, compare US seasonal events
7	Features of Japan (nature, man-made, points of interest)	Discussion of various pictures, view short travel video, listen to short presentation by Japanese students, cultural journal entry	Students research and create short presentation on area of Japan, sharing learned knowledge with others, interact with Japanese native speakers
8	Literature of Japan	Introduction of literature themes of Japan, famous authors, viewing of literature-based film, cultural journal entry	Students share the book that they have been reading, submit written book report, expand knowledge of Japanese writing and literacy