

**NARRATIVES OF TRANSNATIONAL ADOLESCENT GIRLS:  
IDENTITY CONSTRUCTIONS AND AFFILIATION FORMATIONS**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study explores through narrative analysis two transnational adolescent girls' identities and their places of belonging. By examining their narratives in the formation of three different affiliations [(1) the heritage culture; (2) the heritage language; and (3) the family lifestyle], the study reveals that the two participants display contrasting stances in forming each affiliation. While one of the participants positions herself as someone who embraces her heritage cultures and proudly uses and maintains her heritage languages, the other participant displays her stance differently and less enthusiastically, although she shows respect and interest in her heritage culture and language. The study suggests the environment in which the participants grew up and the degree of their exposure to those heritage cultures and languages played a significant role in influencing their sensemaking.

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**Introduction**

This study uses the narrative analysis method to examine the relationship between languages and identities of bi/multilingual transnational adolescents. More specifically, my research is ultimately about how adolescents form identity and a place of belonging in the world. I found Higgins' (2011) research into female Swahili speakers to be helpful in this regard. In her study, Higgins showed how female Swahili L2 speakers participated in Swahili-speaking *communities of practice* (CoP) (Lave & Wenger, 1991) and created an intercultural *third place* (Kramsch, 1993). Apparently, this space does not connect to any particular geographic or cultural spaces where they have lived, not to Tanzania or to even their own home country. Yet they form their identities in this space. Although Higgins examines a very different set of individuals, both her participants and mine are trying to figure out their own 'place.' By analyzing their narratives this study examines the adolescent participants' sensemaking in relation to their ways of forming different affiliations.

The two participants' backgrounds are also highlighted by their shared experience as so-called *third culture kids* (TCKs). During the 1950s, American sociologists Ruth Hill Useem and her husband began to use the term *third culture* to describe the "lifestyle created, shared, and learned by people who are in the process of relating their societies, or aspects thereof, to each other. The term *third culture kids*, or TCKs, was coined to refer to the children who accompany their parents into another society" (Useem & Cottrell, 1996, p. 22). Greenholtz and Kim (2009) expanded the definition by describing TCKs as children who do not belong to their first or

ancestral culture, nor to the second or host culture, but feel like belonging to all cultures they have experienced, developing a “third culture” of their own.

While the notion of TCK indicates that a shared perspective about where these children belong can be identified, my research seeks to explore whether and how two different TCKs might express who they are in relation to their transnational identities. Therefore, I use narrative analysis to further examine their identities through analyzing their own words during a specific period in their adolescence. Through their narratives, this scholarly paper will demonstrate how these two participants make sense of who they are and how they affiliate with others, cultures, and languages.

### **Methodologies**

One way to understand how the adolescent participants for my research produce sensemaking and why they fit into the world around them in certain ways is to gather the relevant information directly from the participants. Because my study seeks to analyze my participants’ understanding of themselves, others around them, and their experiences in their own words, I believe a narrative analysis of their story as adolescents is a particularly sound method for my study. Before going into the methodological details, I will discuss some of the significant narrative research studies which have contributed to my study by providing both insight and context for considering adolescent sensemaking.

DeFina (2003) is a useful resource demonstrating the value of narrative analysis as it focuses on the narratives of 14 Mexican immigrants living in the United States. Through their narratives the study explores their identity constructions and negotiations. In another narrative study, Lanza (2012) focuses on identity construction through a migrant’s work experience in Norway. As she states, “[n]arratives of the quest for employment are compelling sites for

investigating agency and power, and for studying how the speaker orients herself to both the local interactional discourse at hand and the larger societal discourse” (Lanza, 2012, p. 285). While DeFina (2003) and Lanza (2012) applied narrative analysis to investigate identity construction of immigrant and migrant women in Western society, Higgins (2011) used the approach to explore identity formation of Western women in Tanzania. She showed “how the women positioned themselves and others in their stories, and whether these positionings included subject positions of cultural ‘insider’ and ‘outsider,’ as well as other relevant subject positions involving hybrid, intercultural, or transnational identities” (p. 149). Taken together, these studies offer different vantage points for considering the conceptions of the self and the other within discrete social experiences. Because my study aims to analyze the participants’ own unique understanding of themselves, others around them, and their experiences in their own words, the narrative analysis method is particularly suitable for my study. In particular, it helps me to better understand my participants right at the moment of being adolescents and to assess and ascertain how they form affiliations with people around them and their heritage cultures and languages.

Only a few studies have focused on adolescents’ identity construction in the context of Japan. For example, Kanno’s (2003) longitudinal work examines the development of bilingual and bicultural identities of four Japanese students. She analyzes the experiences of four returnees who lived in North America speaking English during their adolescence and returned to Japan to attend university. Kanno conducted a narrative inquiry, which includes not only interviews but also other correspondence she maintained with the participants during the course of her study. In contrast, my participants are neither full-Japanese nor Japanese returnees. They are half-Japanese who are currently living in Hawai‘i. I also note that my study explores each participant’s adolescent period through one single interview rather than over an extended period.

However, the single interviews yielded considerable and valuable information. By applying the tools of narrative analysis I examine the narrative discourse produced by each participant and include detailed interview transcripts in my study.

While I explore my participants' sensemaking by analyzing their discourses as they provided in one single interview in the transnational context, Kamada (2010) offers a longitudinal study that examines six adolescents' discursive construction of their mixed-ethnicity and identities within the context of Japan. The study, which was conducted over the span of their early adolescence (ages 12-15), "shows how these girls come to celebrate their individual mixed-ethnic cultural capital and how, through this construction, they are able to negotiate their identities positively as they come to terms with their constructed hybrid identities of 'Japaneseness', 'whiteness' and 'halfness/doubleness'" (p. 5). Kamada explains the difference in those contexts for adolescent identity formation: "By attending Japanese schools (both private and state), [her participants] are *not* afforded the protected security available to mixed-ethnic children attending international schools where 'ethnic difference' is the norm" (p. 10). A key difference between Kamada's study and my own is that while Kamada's participants attended regular local Japanese schools, my TCK participants attended international schools. Also, Kamada's participants grew up solely in Japan while my participants grew up in two or more different countries.

Ultimately, my research attempts to build on other researchers' efforts and make a contribution to understanding the topic of transnational adolescent identity. A unique feature of my study is that instead of examining the participants over a longer span, I analyze each participant's narratives taken from one interview in a precise moment of their adolescence. The approach that provides a detailed analysis of their narratives helps to understand how they

position themselves and form affiliations with others around them and with their heritage cultures and languages.

### **Narrative analysis**

In my study, the concept of *evaluation* plays a key role in understanding how the transnational youth I interviewed produce narrative “sensemaking” of themselves. As Labov and Waletzky (1997) defined the concept, *evaluation* of a narrative is “that part of the narrative that reveals the attitudes of the narrator towards the narrative by emphasizing the relative importance of some narrative units as compared to others” (p. 32). Evaluations can be made through various ways. For example, they can be made by lexical intensifiers, repetitions, culturally symbolic actions, or judgment of a third person. Higgins (2011) used *evaluative comments* in the women’s narratives as tools to identify their positionings. Her technique of locating the evaluative stances was influenced by the analytical tools developed by other narrative researchers, particularly Labov and Waletzky (1997).

I too found that identifying the use of the participant’s evaluative comment is a useful tool to analyze a narrative. It helped me to understand how one participant, Megan, made sense of who she is and who others are. Also, as I listened and read the transcription of participant Saki’s narrative multiple times, I noticed particular words she repeated.

It should be noted that evaluation is also useful in the form of *evaluative indexical*, a term used by Wortham (2000) meaning to “presuppose something about characters’ social positions and position the narrator with respect to those” (p173). Some of the judgmental comments made by Saki or Megan were noteworthy because they were helpful for me to analyze their stance toward their particular affiliation.

Evaluation in narrative analysis also tends to take place through *footing*, although I only introduce one example in this study. *Footing* defined by Goffman (1981) is “the alignment we take up to ourselves and the others present as expressed in the way we manage the production or reception of an utterance” (p. 128).

By identifying each participant’s use of evaluative comments and indexicals, I will analyze and compare their positioning with respect to different affiliations in order to better understand what their narratives reveal about their perceived identity as a transnational adolescent.

## **Participants**

### **Saki**

Saki is a high school junior who moved to Honolulu, Hawai‘i from Hong Kong when she was in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade. She was born in Tokyo and lived there until the age of six and then moved to Hong Kong. Her mother is Japanese whose L1 is Japanese and L2 is English. Her Cantonese is limited. Her father is Hong Kong Chinese whose L1 is Cantonese, L2 is English, and L3 is Japanese. Their family language is Japanese. In Tokyo and Hong Kong, Saki went to international schools at which English was used as the primary medium of instruction. During the interview she identified herself as trilingual in English, Japanese, and Cantonese, but she told me she is most proficient in English because it is the language she learns and uses at school. As a post-interview question, I asked her mother to comment on Saki’s speaking, reading, and writing abilities of all languages with which Saki is familiar by comparing them to her English. She provided me Saki’s self-evaluation. Based on her English speaking and writing/reading being 10, Saki rated her Japanese speaking 8, Japanese writing/reading 6; Cantonese speaking 6, Cantonese writing/reading 5; Mandarin speaking 5, Mandarin writing/reading 5; and Spanish



speaking 3, Spanish writing/reading 4. During the interview I asked her to use either Japanese or English, whichever she feels comfortable with, and I told her I will do the same. She spoke mostly in Japanese, and I thought her Japanese was very natural and felt like I was talking to a regular Japanese teenager in Japan.

## **Megan**

Megan was born in Tokyo in 2000 to a Japanese mother (the researcher) and a Caucasian American father. Although my ethnicity is Japanese, I moved to the United States to study when I was seventeen and eventually immigrated there. In Tokyo, Megan went to *hoikuen* (Japanese daycare) as a baby until the age of three and then switched to an international school. The school also emphasized Japanese language education and native speakers learn the language as *kokugo* (the national language) every day. When she was nine years old, she moved to Honolulu, Hawaii and enrolled in a local school. She attended a Japanese *hoshuuko* (a Japanese Saturday supplemental school) to finish the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade curriculum. At the time of data collection for this study, she was a high school senior and was preparing to go to college in the U.S. Mainland in the fall.

Megan's family has no overt language policy although there seems to be tendencies or patterns. In Japan, when she was still in *hoikuen*, the family spoke more in Japanese at home. When she started going to international school, English gradually started to take over as the family language. However, since most of her friends were bilinguals and many extra-curricular activities and lessons were conducted in Japanese, she was in a well-balanced situation in terms of Japanese and English. When she moved to Honolulu, I decided to speak to Megan in Japanese at home since home was the only place she would be socialized in the language.

## **Data Collection**

Before explaining the details of each participant's interview, I will discuss the general interview and transcription procedures and protocol I adapted for this study. I used iMovie to videotape the interviews and backed up the sessions with iPhone Voice Memo. Although I did not include facial expressions produced by my participants in the data analysis, videotaping the interview sessions was helpful when I transcribed the data as I was able to observe the participant's expressions, mannerisms, and other non-verbal cues as they spoke. Since I wanted to videotape the participant's face, I placed the laptop on the table in front of the participant. My purpose was to record the discourses produced by the participants as accurately as possible. I first listened to each interview a couple of times to familiarize myself to the participants' speech style before I started to transcribe the recordings. It is often hard for me as a L2 English speaker to figure out what is a typical teenagers' speech style. Once I became confident about listening to their language usage and expressions, I began transcribing the entire interviews in word-for-word detail so that I could select the parts of the discourses that are most relevant for my study. I adapted the transcription conventions developed by Gail Jefferson, as described in Atkinson and Heritage (1984).

I interviewed Saki at my house during her spring break of her sophomore year in 2018. Although her mother and I have been friends since the family moved to Hawai'i from Hong Kong in 2015, it was my first time meeting Saki. There was no one else at home, and I tried to conduct the interview in a relaxed atmosphere by offering a cold drink and some cookies. I placed the laptop facing Saki on the large table and sat across from her. The semi-structured interview session took a little over an hour and a half. I composed the interview questions in English. The questions included the topics such as heritage languages, cultures, customs, family lifestyles, friends, and college. I told Saki that she could use either Japanese or English to

answer the interview questions. Also, I explained that except for the time when I read the interview questions I would use either language as it came naturally.

Megan's interview took place one afternoon in January 2019 at my home. For her it was probably the most relaxing place for the interview because it was also her home. We sat next to each other at the kitchen island just like when we have our dinner. Although I used the same set of interview questions I used for Saki, I tried to ask the questions in a regular mother-daughter conversation such as we normally carry on. In this way, I thought I could elicit her natural answers of the sort she would usually give me when I ask random questions during our conversations. I asked the interview questions mostly in English since the questions were written in English, but the rest of our interactions were carried on just like our regular conversation. My part was mostly in Japanese while Megan used mostly English and codeswitched with Japanese occasionally.

My goal for the interviews was to elicit both participants' narratives in a natural way as much as possible. In spite of it being our first meeting, Saki was quite articulate and spontaneous about responding to my questions. As for Megan, since I am her mother, if I took the approach of strictly being a researcher it would have created an awkward atmosphere which may have resulted in stiffness on Megan's part in answering questions.

As noted earlier, the two participants have the shared experience as TCKs. The purpose for exploring the narratives of the participants is to compare their identity construction and affiliation formation. I selected the relevant excerpts from both participant's interview data to analyze in three specific affiliations: (1) affiliations with heritage cultures, (2) affiliations with heritage languages, and (3) affiliations with family lifestyle.

## **Data Analysis**

As I transcribed Saki's data I noticed certain words appear quite often throughout her narrative. They are not just fillers commonly used among teenagers, but are rather particular words she seems to use in this particular narrative. They are **minna** (everyone, all), **chigau** (different), **ironna** (various, many), **hokano** (other), **fureau** (interact), and **nakayoku** (get along, become friendly). For this study, I will focus on **minna** (everyone, all) and **chigau** (different). Unlike Saki, I did not notice any particular words Megan repeatedly used throughout her narrative although there are comments in which she displays her certain stances. Based on Labov and Waletzky's definition of evaluation (1997), these are the parts of the narratives of the two participants that reveal their certain attitudes and I treat them as evaluative comments which are noted in **bold**.

In terms of Wortham's (2000) evaluative indexicals "which presuppose something about characters' social positions and position the narrator" (p. 173), I will examine the narratives of the two transnational girls from this angle and analyze their judgmental comments and observations which are also indicated in **bold**.

## **Findings**

### **Affiliations with Heritage Cultures**

In order to examine their perceived identities through their narratives and to compare the ways they form affiliations, I first tried to elicit stories of their heritage cultures. Their narratives display the contrasts in their perceptions toward their affiliations with their heritage cultures. While Saki's narrative reveals her active participation in the affiliation, Megan takes a more inactive, somewhat guarded attitude toward her heritage culture although she respects it. Narrative analysis suggests attitudes are shaped in large measure by familial circumstances and simple opportunities for exposure to the heritage culture and related events and activities.

## Excerpt 1: Saki's Favorite Holiday - New Year

- 1 S oshogatsu toka **sugoi tanoshii**  
New year such very fun
- 2 **minna** to aerunode  
Everyone with meet
- 3 Chinese new year dake wa **chotto kanashii** (.) kanashiku wa nai kedo  
Chinese new year only T a little sad sad T NEG but
- 4 honkon ni ita toki wa **minna** de yoru toka **minna** dekakete  
Hong Kong at there when T everyone with night such everyone go out
- 5 **kazoku** de omaeri ittari shite  
Family with go to temple
- 6 kocchi ni kite kara moo chichi to haha dake nano de **anmari shinai** de  
here to come since presently father and mother only because not much do NEG
- 7 demo oshogatu wa maitoshi kekko ichiban sukina gyoji de **minna** kazoku de ite  
but new year T every year kind of best like event everyone family with there
- 8 kyonen toka mo obachama ga kocchi kita toki mo  
Last year like also auntie r NOM here come PST time also
- 9 osechi ryori no tsukurikata toka haha to jiji baba to **minna** de narrate  
New year dishes P how to cook like mother and grandpa grandma and everyone by learn
- 10 kodomotachi **minna** de tetsudatte  
Children all by help
- 11 soi u no mo daiji da to omou n de yappari jibun dake  
Such P also important COP COMP think PRT COP after all me only
- 12 hokanohito wa so ka wakanai desu kedo  
Other people T so or know NEG COP though
- 13 jibun wa kazoku toka no jikann ga sugoi taisei n de  
Me T family like P time NOM very important P COP
- 14 K Ja otona ni natte mo yatte iki tai?  
FLR adult become also do keep want
- 15 S hai tte iu ka jibun ga moshi kodomo itara kazoku itara  
yes say or ME NOM if children have family have
- 16 **ironna** koto yaritai to omotte  
Various things want to do COMP think

S *New year is so much fun. I can see everyone. Chinese New Year is a little sad. Well, not sad, but when we were in Hong Kong, we all went out with everyone. We all went to temple with the family. But over here it's just me and my parents so we don't celebrate Chinese New Year so much. But Japanese New Year is my favorite event so every year I get together with all my family. Last year when my auntie was here Mom, grandpa, grandma, and I-- everyone learned how to cook new year dishes. And all kids helped out. To me those things are also important, I*

*think. Maybe it's just me. I don't know about others, but to me the time with my family is so important.*

K *Do you want to keep the traditions when you grow up?*

S *Yes. Well, if I have children or a family I wanna do many things for them.*

New Year is Saki's favorite holiday, and as she describes in line 1, it "*is so much fun (sugoi tanoshii)*". Chinese follow Lunar New Year while the Japanese New Year is celebrated on January 1st. In Saki's home in Hawai'i there are only Saki and her parents. However, the definition of a "family" varies depending on the person. For Saki, a family is a unit which consists of more than just herself and her parents. The unit seems to have a broader meaning to include both maternal and paternal families and is best represented by the Japanese word, **minna** (everyone) (lines 2, 4, 7, 9, and 10) in this part of her narrative.

In Saki's case, the New Year celebration, both Japanese and Chinese are family affairs. Since the Japanese New Year is celebrated on January 1, during the school winter break, she and her parents usually return to Japan to celebrate it with her mother's side of the family, except this year when her mother's family came to Hawai'i to celebrate it there. As for the Chinese New Year (Lunar New Year), Saki and her parents are unable to return to Hong Kong to celebrate it with her father's side of the family because Saki's school is in session. Although Hawai'i has a large Chinese community and the Chinese New Year celebration is a significant one, Saki's family no longer celebrates the Chinese New Year so much (**anmari shinai**) (line 6). It seems that for Saki unless it is celebrated with **minna** (everyone), it is "*a little sad (chotto kanashii)*", and it is not the same as the Japanese New Year which she can celebrate with **minna** (everyone).

### **Excerpt 2: Megan's Celebrations**

- 1 K When you were younger, did your family celebrate or does your family still celebrate Japanese traditional events? Do we do that?
- 2 M I guess to an extent, decorate things (.) like (.) maybe for like oshogatsu {new year} or something but it's not like (.) you know.
- 3
- 4 K Not so much celebration.

5 M Uh-huh. I mean, yeah.

6 K What do you think we do?

6 M Dakara kazari toka tsuke tari {Like I said, just like decorating the house.} Like, in  
7 Japan, of course, oshogatsu {new year} we went to like *jinja* {shrine}. Like we ate  
8 like (.) what do you call it?

9 K Osechi?

10 M Osechi ryori {New year's food}.

11 K So da ne {That's right.}

12 M Stuff like that.

13 K Anmari serebureito tte [kanji {Not much of a celebration.}]

14 M **[We don't really celebrate that much to begin with so.**

15 K Uh-huh. So da ne. {That's right.}

16 K Demo {But}what else? Besides oshogatsu. Hinamatsuri wa? {What about girls  
17 festival?}

18 M Hinamatsuri. Like I mean that's like kazari toka {decorations and suchlike}. Like  
19 that. That's what I mean.

20 K So da ne. {That's right.} Kazari toka soregurai shika anmari yara nai kamo ne. {I  
21 guess we don't do much except decorating the house.}

22 K Okay, ja {then} what do you think about those traditions?

23 M (.7) **Interesting** cultural celebrations that are **unique to Japan.**

24 K Do you think it's important to keep these traditions? At least like decorations?

25 M I mean it's **interesting to continue decorating** and stuff like that. But **I don't  
26 know how realistic or when I'm going forward like college and stuff like actively  
27 participate in those traditions although it would be interesting.** Maybe there is  
28 like events like school-organized events then it's **interesting to participate in but  
29 it's difficult to like actively like celebrate these [things.**

30 K [ Un, un {Uh-huh, Uh-  
31 huh}

32 M On my own

33 K Demo oshogatu toka nanka nantonaku nihon ni kaette mitai [kana? {But don't  
34 you think you might want to go back to Japan for New Year?}

35 M [Yeah, I enjoyed the last  
36 time when we were in Japan. Last winter for oshogatu.

37 K So ka, ja {I see, then} what about any American traditional events? Do we  
38 celebrate them? How do we do?

39 M **I don't think like (.) we are the most celebratory family to begin with** so for  
40 Christmas, of course we open presents and do stuff like that but (.) Yeah. And  
41 the decorations are always nice but (.) Maybe just because we are **a small family.**  
42 **It's so difficult to be so extravagant** cuz things are kind of **wasteful.**

43 K Ha-a, ha-a, ha-a {Uh-huh, Uh-huh, Uh-huh.} We usually go out to eat.

44 M Yeah, so.

While Saki seems to attach a special importance to forming an affiliation with the Japanese and Chinese heritage and traditional events, Megan's narrative does not reveal the similar values in the same way. Although Megan views Japanese celebrations such as New Year and Girls Festivals as "[i]nteresting cultural celebrations that are **unique to Japan.**" (line 24), she is not sure how "**realistic**" it is to maintain those traditions as she gets older. Decorating the house for Japanese and American celebrations is one thing I have been doing for the family in terms of heritage and cultural maintenance, and I was certain that my efforts have made some kind of cultural impact on Megan. However, Megan reacted with lots of doubt and uncertainty. By using the evaluative comments of "**I guess**" and "**maybe**" in line 3, she avoided taking a firm stance. Although she shows interest in continuing 'my' family tradition by saying, "[I]t's **interesting to continue decorating** and stuff like that" (line 27) and mentions the time she "**enjoyed**" Japanese New Year celebration in Japan and eating the New Year food (lines 37-38), she does not think it is "**realistic**" to envision herself actively participating "in those traditions although it would be interesting" (line 28).

Megan's stance is positive toward Japanese cultural events and traditions. However, she avoids the use of spontaneous phrases which present herself as the subject such as "I like decorating the house for the Japanese New Year or Girls Festival and want to continue those traditions." Instead, she shows her stance by using an evaluative comment, "**interesting**" (lines 25, 27, 29, and 30). This may indicate her position toward the affiliation with heritage culture in which she respects the value of it while she is distancing herself from it by avoiding making comments which spontaneously involve or commit herself.

Another way of analyzing her position toward this affiliation is to examine the evaluative indexicals in her certain comments. Her separation from this affiliation can be seen in the



comments describing her family as being not a celebratory family (lines 16 and 41). She explains the reason that her family is not “the most celebratory family” (line 41) is because they “are a **small family**”, and it “is **so difficult** to be **so extravagant** cuz things are kind of **wasteful**” (lines 43 and 44). Unlike Saki and her extended family that includes **minna** (everyone), Megan’s family have holiday meals in restaurants (line 45). Megan seems to observe things and make judgements in more practical ways. Having “a **small family**”, she believes that cooking “**extravagant**” holiday meals at home does not make sense because such “things are kind of **wasteful**”.

She also makes remarks that indicate her relatively inactive role in celebrating traditional events. They can be found in the comments such as “**I don’t know how realistic or when I’m going forward like college and stuff like actively participate in those traditions although it would be interesting**” and “**it’s difficult to like actively like celebrate these things**” (lines 27-31). As she mentions, she may be interested in participating in traditional events, but it is unlikely that she will initiate organizing such events.

Perhaps the fundamental difference between Megan and Saki may be the way they perceive the “family unit”. While Saki’s family unit seems to include both maternal and paternal families, Megan’s, in these narratives, only includes her immediate family members, her mother and father. Saki’s family consists of what she describes with the Japanese word **minna** (everyone). She values the affiliation with her heritage cultural events in which she can participate with **minna**. On the other hand, Megan, who grew up in a small family, lacked opportunities to “celebrate” heritage cultural events as a family. While Megan shows her respect toward her heritage tradition and culture as “**interesting**” events, she does not seem to form an affiliation with them as she does not “actively participate” in them.

## Affiliations with Heritage Languages

In order to understand the participants' sensemaking, I have analyzed their narratives from the perspective of their heritage cultural affiliations. In this section I will examine their affiliations with the heritage languages by pointing out the differences between the two participants. Also, in this section I will note the characteristics that are similar to those shown by each participant in the formation of the heritage affiliation as evidenced in the previous section will be noted.

In the next few excerpts, I will show how the participants' language ideology influences their formation of affiliations.

### Excerpt 3: Japanese and Saki

- 1 S nihongo wa yappari ie de tsukattari chicchai toki kara tukatte oya to hanasu toki  
Japanese T alter all home at use small time since use parents with speak when
- 2 ni tsukau no de yappari motto natural tte iu ka jibun ga zenzen nante iu ka **enryo**  
at use PRT COM after all more natural say or I NOM completely FLR say hesitation
- 3 **mo nai** sugoi iya **kakko tsukete nai** shi zenbu **kanzen ni** jibun nihongo shaberu toki ga  
also NEG very FLR be cool NEG PRT all completely I Japanese speak when NOM
- S *Japanese is the language I use at home since I was little. It's the language I use when I talk to my parents so it's more natural with no hesitation. I don't have to try to be cool or anything and I'm completely myself when I'm speaking in Japanese.*

In the above excerpt in lines 2-3, Saki says when she is speaking in Japanese, she has no hesitation (**enryo mo nai**), no need to look cool (**kakko tsukete nai**), and can be completely herself (**kanzen ni jibun**).

The following excerpt also supports the above stance:

### Excerpt 4: Japanese and Saki

- 1 S yappari **ie de tsukau no dakara** ie dato honto ni mo **zenzen nannimo boundary**  
after all home at use P because home in fact completely nothing boundary
- 2 **ga nai** no de yappari kazoku to tsukau gengo dashi

- NOM NEG PART COP after all family with use language
- 3 K Ja ie kara dechatta toki ni doo naru to omou? Jibun ga once you are out of home  
FLR home from out time at how be think yourself NOM
- 4 nihongo tsukau bamen ga sukunaku nacchatta toki ni  
Japanese use scene NOM little become time at
- 5 S iya demo so[rekoso  
well but that
- 6 K [hitorigoto de iu toka  
Talk to oneself by say such
- 7 S K ((laugh))
- 8 S chotto kowai  
little scary
- S *Well, Japanese is the language I use at home and at home there is absolutely no boundary because after all it's the language I use with my family.*
- K *Then, what do you think will happen when you leave home? Once you are out of the house and when you have very little chance of using Japanese. What do you think will happen to you?*
- S *Well, but that [will*
- K *[You may start talking to yourself?*
- S K ((laugh))
- S *That's a little scary.*
- 9 S iya demo ano sorekoso half no ko toka to (.) sono ko to nihongo shaberu to  
FLR but FLR that half P kid such with that kid with Japanese speak if
- 10 yappa nanka ie ni iru kanji ga sun no (.) ie ni iru kanji tte iu ka nanka (.) a:  
after all FLR home at there feel NOM have PRT home at stay feel say or FLR FLR
- 11 mo:chotto sono hito to chikai (.) kanji ga suru no (.) chugokugo demo onnaji  
a little that person with close feel NOM have P Chinese also same
- 12 na n desu kedo (.) de: u: n ma seikaku ga kawarutte iu yori nihongo wa ie to koo  
PRT COP but then uh FLR character NOM change say rather Japanese T home with this
- 13 iu connection ga aru n de soo iu kanji ga shite homely na kanji ga suru tte (.)  
say connection T have PRT so call feel NOM homely P feeling NOM do
- 14 betsu ni eigo shabetta kara tte jibun ga kawaru tte iu yori wa so iu kanji  
whatever English speak because I NOM understand say rather T so say feel
- S *When I'm talking to a half Japanese friend in Japanese, I feel like I'm at home. Um, it's not exactly like feeling at home, but well, I feel closer to that person though. Yeah, so instead of going through personality changes Japanese is the language having a connection to home. That's the kind of feeling and homely kind of feeling. So it's not like I change because I speak English. It's not like that.*

In lines 1-2, she adds that because Japanese is the language she uses at home (**ie de tsukau no dakara**) there is absolutely no boundary (**zenzen nannimo boundary ga nai**), thus indicating the importance between the languages she uses and the context in which she uses the

languages. Also, Saki made interesting evaluative comments about the relationship between her interlocutor and the shared language (lines 10-11). Specifically, when she speaks to a Japanese or a Chinese speaker using the respective language, she feels like she is at home (**ie ni iru kanji**) and feels closer to that person (**sono hito to chikai (.) kanji**). Her use of the *reference* (word choice) of **ie** (home) to express the closeness to the person is noteworthy.

The above narratives are examples of Saki's sensemaking through the formation of an affiliation with her heritage languages. Speaking her heritage languages gives her comfort and intimacy with the interlocutors. Moreover, her Japanese and Chinese heritage background plays a significant role in her sensemaking in terms of her language uses and ideology. In the following few excerpts I will show Megan's language perspective.

#### **Excerpt 5: Japanese and Megan**

- 1 M To an extent like Japanese people are very like **polite** because they do this and  
2 because they are easy to get along with because of this but **they don't like to**  
3 **share their opinions** for you to be like **afraid of being controversial or like**  
4 **being disagreeable (.)** but like because of that they are hard to have discussions I  
5 guess.  
6 K Uh-huh  
7 M So  
8 K When did you notice that?  
9 M It just like (.) When you were talking the other day by saying that sore wa chotto  
10 it's like (.) those (.) that's like (.) that's like a small example how **literally rooted**  
11 **in their language to be like not having an opinion or like be (.) reserved about**  
12 **sharing their opinion.**

In the above excerpt, Megan talks about her perception toward Japanese people and connects those traits to the unique linguistic characteristics she finds. Then, in the following two excerpts, Megan points out some examples of the Japanese linguistic characteristics.

#### **Excerpt 6: Japanese and Megan**

- 1 M You know **the soft-spoken thing** that I've talked about. **That's not me** (.) so like  
 2 (.) even if they interacted with me they wouldn't be like °ah nihon jin, nihon jin  
 3 ppoi ne° {°oh, Japanese, You're very Japanese°}. Like they wouldn't like say that.  
 4 Like just by my behavior haha desho? {right?} So (.) yeah.

Megan, who says that “**the soft-spoken thing**” is not her character (line 1), then tries to explain what she really means by that in the following excerpt.

### Excerpt 7: Japanese and Megan

- 1 M It's like...It's not that is not the kind of person I am but nihon go de shaberu to {if I  
 2 speak in Japanese} it's hard to communicate that because **I don't have the skill**  
 3 **set to do that. So it's not like ei go de shaberu to {if I speak in English} I'm like**  
 4 **aggressive and then nihon go de shaberu to {if I speak in Japanese} I'm like soft**  
 5 **spoken. It's not like that.**  
 6 K Demo hora nihon go dato sa, “so desu ne” toka so iu kanji no da kedo watashi  
 7 wa so iu hito ja nai shi tte so itte ta ja nai? {But, well, if it's in Japanese, it's like as  
 8 if one would say, “that's right” but you said you are not that type. Didn't you  
 9 say that?}  
 10 M I mean like (.) I guess there is still like you can still like speak Japanese in the way  
 11 that is like (.) **It's not like every single person is like (.) soft-spoken in Japanese.**  
 12 **I'm just saying there is something that is like (.) rooted in the language that is**  
 13 **not in American language but it's not like if you are like a CEO of like a company**  
 14 **and if you're talking “sore wa chotto” {“well, that is a bit...”} it's not like so iu**  
 15 **shaberu kata wa shinai {doesn't talk like that} like they just make a choice not to**  
 16 **speak in that way (.)**. Right?  
 17 K Umm

While Saki seems to form a personal affiliation with her heritage languages, I did not find Megan forming a particular personal affiliation with Japanese or English in any part of her narratives. Saki indicated that speaking to a heritage language speaker provides her intimacy with the languages as well as with that speaker, which implies that she is forming affiliation with her heritage languages. On the other hand, Megan's narratives do not display clear evidence that speaking either English or Japanese provides her any emotional comfort or intimacy. Instead, she takes rather a guarded stance in forming a particular affiliation with either language by

saying that: “**So it’s not like ei go de shaberu to {if I speak in English} I’m like aggressive and then nihon go de shaberu to {if I speak in Japanese} I’m like soft spoken. It’s not like that**” (lines 3-5). Then, she adds that the soft-spoken characteristics of Japanese people are rooted in the language (lines 11-13) but not every single Japanese is “**soft-spoken**” in Japan (line 11). It is a style choice of a speaker.

This absence of Megan’s affiliation with her heritage languages may be a link to her language ideology. In Excerpt 5, Megan talks about the differences in manner, behavior, and communication styles she has noticed or experienced about Japan and Japanese. She observes Japanese people as being characteristically **polite** but at the same time **reserved**. “[T]hey don’t like to share their opinions” and are “**afraid of being controversial or like being disagreeable**” (lines 3 and 4). Because of these characteristics she thinks it is hard for them to have discussions. Then, she goes on to explain further and said in lines 10 through 11: “When you were talking the other day by saying that sore wa chotto it’s like (.) those (.) that’s like (.) that’s like a small example how **literally rooted in their language to be like not having an opinion or like be (.) reserved about sharing their opinion.**” It can be said that according to Megan’s language ideology Japanese people choose words to mitigate controversial or disagreeable situations which makes it appear as if they have no opinions or prefer not to share their opinions. In Megan’s opinion this is a conscious choice by Japanese.

Being indirect is another characteristic of the Japanese language that Megan points out in Excerpt 7. Sore wa chotto {Well, that is a bit ....} (line 14) is a common phrase Japanese often use to mitigate a direct expression. In lines 14 and 15 Megan, as an *animator*, uses it and says that company CEOs will not talk in such an indirect manner. They “**make a choice not to speak in that way**” (line 16).

It is apparent that Megan does not affiliate herself with the generalization of either the “soft-spoken” Japanese women or more “aggressive” American women. She says, “**So it’s not like ei go de shaberu to {if I speak in English} I’m like aggressive and then nihon go de shaberu to {if I speak in Japanese} I’m like soft spoken. It’s not like that**” (lines 3-5). The fact that she uses Japanese to say “if I speak in English/Japanese (**ei go/ nihon go de shaberu to**)” here may be an indication of emphasizing this point.

In Line 11, she adds, “**It’s not like every single person is like (.) soft-spoken in Japanese**”. Rather, it seems that she thinks each speaker makes his or her own choice of speech style within one language depending on who s/he is or the occasion. In Excerpt 6, Megan mentions that the “**soft-spoken thing**” is not her (line 1). However, later in Excerpt 7 she explains that she does not mean that she is not a “soft-spoken” Japanese person, but rather she does not “**have the skill set to**” make language style choices in Japanese. Nonetheless, I noticed she uses more Japanese in Excerpts 3 through 7. It seems that she strategically uses Japanese to make her point, and in order to do so she is unconsciously making her language choices.

In the following excerpts I examine the participants’ narratives to explore the relationship between language maintenance and their heritage backgrounds and show that each participant makes similar sensemaking as they did in the language ideology section. While Saki connects her language maintenance to her heritage background, Megan views her language maintenance as owing more to her own individual reasons and choices.

### **Excerpt 8: Saki’s Language Maintenance**

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | S | Chugokugo toka Nihongo sorekoso osshatteta language ga jibun no identity ja nai kedo<br>Chinese such Japanese you said language NOM my identity NEG but |
| 2 |   | Nihongo toka chugokugo wasure chau to sokono culture mo <b>hotoita</b><br>Japanese such Chinese forget that will be culture also neglect                |

- 3           (.) anmari keep shitenai no de  
 (.) not much keep do+NEG PRT COP
- 4           yappari sono itoko de Texas no ko wa hanbun jibunn ga chugokujin nan desu kedo  
 After all that cousin Texas in kid T half him NOM Chinese PRT COP but
- 5           honkon kita toki kazoku ga minna shabette te yappa haire nai (.)  
 Hong Kong come+PST time family NOeveryone talk after all join+NEG
- 6           soko to issho ni hanase nai (.)  
 there with together talk+PST
- 7           sore wa hazukashiku wa nai n desu kedo  
 That T shameful T NEG PRT COP but
- 8           yappari nanka jibun no culture toshite nanka yappari ikenai (.)  
 After all FLR own P culture as FLR after all right+NEG
- 9           nanka jibunn moshi chugokujin dato shitara yappari **pride motte** sore naratte  
 FLR self if Chinese if after all pride have that learn
- 10          **isshokenmei** yattaho ga ii to omotte (.) ma: nihongo mo chugokugo mo  
 the best efforts make NOM good think FLR Japanese also Chinese also
- S          *Chinese and Japanese, or as you mentioned, language is my identity. If I forget Japanese or Chinese, that will be like I'm neglecting my cultures. It's like I'm no longer keeping them. My cousin in Texas, he is half Chinese, but when he came to Hong Kong, he couldn't join the conversation when we were all talking. He couldn't join us. That's not shameful, but well, as your own culture, after all, that's not right. If you are a Chinese, you should learn the language with pride, and I think you should make your best efforts to do it. Both Japanese and Chinese.*

Before we started talking about her languages we were talking about what she was interested in studying in college. During this conversation I told her what I was studying and mentioned a little bit about language and identity. She says forgetting Japanese or Chinese is the same as neglecting those cultures which she embraces. Referring to her half Chinese cousin who did not learn Chinese, while she says it is not shameful (**hazukashiku wa nai**) in line 7, she uses evaluative indexicals in line 8 and expresses her stance towards her cousin who did not learn Chinese by saying that “yappari **ikenai** (after all, that’s not right)” and “**pride motte** sore naratte (he should learn it with pride)” in line 9. As she did in the previous Excerpts, Saki makes an important connection between her heritage background and her language maintenance.

### Excerpt 9: Megan’s Language Maintenance



- 1 K Ja {well}let's talk about your languages. What is your (.) watashi tachi {our} (.) aa  
2 so da {oh, yeah} family language wa nan de sho ka ne? {what is it?}
- 3 M English
- 4 K Watashi wa nihon go desu kedo {But mine is Japanese.}  
(.3)
- 5 K Sore de (.) ano Megu chan ga (.) wa (.) etto (.) do (.) ano (.) nihon go (.) daigaku ni  
6 itta ra do nacchau (.) to omou? Ima ima demo hotondo shabera nai n da kara  
{Then, well, you, well, Japanese, well, when you go to college, what will happen  
7 to your Japanese? Even now, now you hardly speak it.}
- 8
- 9 M Hopefully, I can like study Japanese
- 10 K Hopefully tte sore it's up to you ja nai? Toru ka tora nai ka, dare ka tomodachi  
11 toka tsukutte shaberu ka do ka. {Hopefully – isn't it up to you? Whether or not  
12 you take it or not or you speak it by making (Japanese) friends.}
- 13 M **I mean realistically I'm probably not gonna do that, actively, like seek out like a**  
14 **friend who I can speak Japanese with. But I probably study Japanese cuz (.)**  
15 **yeah.**
- 16 K Demo mo toranaku temo ii kamo shirenai n desho? foreign language [wa  
17 {But you may not have to take a foreign language any more, right?}
- 18 M [I don't  
19 know
- 20 M Demo {But} like **jibun no tame ni {for myself}** like I think I wanna take it

Although her mother uses Japanese when she talks to Megan, English is used by Megan most of the time. The father's Japanese is limited and in Megan's view her family language is definitely English (lines 1-4). She uses evaluative indexicals in lines 13 and 14 to express her stance towards approaching a casual conversation partner. **Realistically** speaking, Megan says she will not **actively** seek out a Japanese friend with whom she can practice Japanese (lines 13 and 14). In another part of the interview when she was asked about making friends and whether or not she makes the initial approach, she answered, "No." Thus, it is not realistic for her to actively seek out some Japanese people to be friends to practice the language. Nonetheless, she follows by saying, "**But I probably study Japanese cuz (.) yeah**" (lines 14 and 15). This may indicate that she prefers acquiring a language in a more formal setting versus a casual setting.

The biggest difference I found in the narratives of the two participants is the way of identifying themselves in the use of their heritage languages. Saki who has a Japanese mother and a Chinese father places a high value on maintaining her heritage cultures and languages and making a connection between the languages and cultures (Excerpt 8, lines 2 and 3). For her, it is the right thing to maintain the heritage languages (Excerpt 8, lines 9 and 10). In other words, she affiliates with the Japanese and Chinese languages and cultures.

Turning the analysis to Megan, although she has no problem carrying on the daily conversations in Japanese with her mother, she mostly uses English or translanguages with some Japanese words/phrases. As her language use is her own individual choice, it seems that her interest in studying Japanese is also for her own individual benefit. In lines 14 and 15, she says, **“But I probably study Japanese cuz (.) yeah”**, but did not go further to explain the reason. Later, in line 20, she says, “Demo {But} like **jibun no tame ni {for myself}** like I think I wanna take it.” After line 20, there was a long pause of over 40 seconds. I then asked her to confirm if she wants to study Japanese instead of Spanish which she took in high school, and her answer was Japanese. I found nothing in Megan’s narrative which suggests her forming affiliations with Japanese because it is her heritage language and being driven by a sort of unspoken cultural attachment or even obligation. Instead, the purpose of maintaining the language is more owing to her individual reasons and choices.

### **Affiliation with Family Lifestyle**

So far, I have examined the affiliations of Saki and Megan from the perspectives of their heritage cultures and languages. In the following excerpts, I will analyze the participants’ respective stance toward the differences they have noticed in their lifestyle compared to the

lifestyles of other families such as their friends' family or typical American families they see on TV or movies.

### Excerpt 10: Saki's Cousin in Texas

- 1 S So my auntie is my Dad's sister and she married a person from Texas.  
2 K A white American.  
2 S Yeah, and they live in Dallas, Texas and I used to go there when I was younger.  
3 She is (.) my auntie (.) she comes back. But she is a little **different** from  
4 **everyone** else in our family.  
5 K How?  
6 S My Dad (.) he like really tries to hold on to his culture (.) so wants me to learn  
7 Chinese. He wants me to me to do all that Chinese festivals, activities and go  
8 visit my family but she didn't do that for my cousin (.) so my cousin didn't wanna  
9 learn Chinese and she said that's ok, it's fine. So he doesn't speak at all. And she  
10 is ok with that. And even she starts to forget sometime and the way she acts <a  
11 little bit **different** from **everybody** else> I don't know (.) Maybe because she  
12 lived in the US longer but (.) I don't know something is <chotto **chigau** ((a  
13 little **different**)) >  
14 K Can you describe a little bit more, how?  
15 S It's like um (.) She is working (.) **a lot**. So when she gets home she doesn't cook  
16 for her family. Like my uncle he **just** drinks beer and eats chips for dinner and  
17 my cousin he **just** goes and eats his own thing or orders pizza. She doesn't do  
18 that either. It's fine but she is really busy (.) but and maybe it's cuz like my Mom  
19 is she doesn't like she isn't like full time working but also that and (.) just food  
20 culture and like (.) I think she's (.) My Dad says she's been different since they  
21 were kids so everyone would be like they wouldn't like much like Western stuff  
22 but she would always watch Western movies, eating ice cream toku ((such)) (.)  
23 Yeah she'd been interested in that kind of stuff. Yeah (.) My Dad's the opposite.  
24 Not opposite but he likes to, tries to (.) like embrace traditional cultures.  
25 K I see. I see  
26 S So that's **different**.

In the above excerpt Saki tells a story of her aunt, her father's sister who is “a little **different** from **everyone** else in her family.” Except for a few words in Japanese, she tells this part of the narrative in English. Although she says “[i]t's fine but she is really busy” (line 18), her use of evaluative indexicals in lines 15-18 may show that in her view, her aunt who works **a lot** and does not cook for her family is quite different from her Japanese mother. In fact, the

frequent use of the word “**different**” (four times) and “**chigau**” (once) to describe her aunt may indicate how she “others” her aunt from her family. Also, another use of evaluative indexical in lines 16 and 17 about her uncle having **just** beer and chips and her cousin ordering pizza for himself suggests she is making judgement about the kind of people who eat unhealthy food for dinner. In line 20, she uses reported speech of her father describing her aunt when she was young to emphasize her aunt being different from her father who “tries to...embrace traditional cultures.” On line 24 she first said, “My Dad’s opposite.” Then, she denies it by saying, “Not opposite.” However, the rest of her narrative indicates her father and aunt are in fact, quite opposite.

It seems that her aunt who does not cook for her family and her father who embraces his traditional cultures – the two polar opposites -- are reflected on Saki’s sensemaking. Up to this point, Saki’s narrative has indicated that she values the participation in her parents’ traditional and cultural events. She “others” those who do not share the same values, and perhaps has difficulty accepting the thinking and behavior reflected in her aunt’s family.

The next excerpt reflects Megan’s stance toward the difference she notices in her lifestyle.

### **Excerpt 11: My Family Dinner**

- 1 M A lot of my friends don’t eat dinner with their family.  
 2 K Hu:n. do yatte? do shite? hitori de taberu no? {Uh-huh. How? Why? Do they eat alone?}  
 3 M Yeah, or like. (.) I’m not exactly sure but.  
 4 K Famiri to issho [ja naku {Not together with the family.}  
 5 M [It’s not like let’s sit down at the [table and eat dinner.  
 6 K [aa so na n da {Is that so?}  
 7 M It will be like on a couch like or if they are doing homework or like eating in their  
 8 room or (.) yeah.  
 9 K Sore tte Amerika no famiri wa minna so nano ka na? {Are all American families  
 10 like that?}

- 11 M I have no idea.
- 12 K Nanto naku Amerika no famiri tte mubi toka de minna issho ni teburu de taberu  
13 tte kanji dakedo. Tte iu ka nihon wa so dayo ne. {I have an image or see on  
14 movies American families eat together at a table. Or that's how people do in  
Japan, right?}
- 15 M Un {Yeah}
- 16 K Uchi wa daitai so dake do. Dinner wa issho ni eat together. {We mostly eat  
17 together. Eat dinner together.}
- 18 M Uh-huh
- 19 K Ja Meg chan no o tomodachi wa kekko hitori na n da. I mean [jibun de na n da.  
{Well, your friends eat alone. I mean eat by themselves.}
- 20 M [I'm not sure.
- 21 M I'm only like thinking of a few people. I just don't know what other people do.
- 22 K Demo ne sono kotae watashi ga intabyu shita hito minna so itte ta. Minna dyina  
23 issho ni tabenai tte, tomodachi. Sore nanka omoshiroi ne. {Well but your answer  
24 is just like the answers of other people I interviewed. They all said their friends  
25 don't eat dinner with their family. Isn't it interesting.}
- 26 K Sore ni tsuite do omou? Meg chan. Dyina issho ni taberu hito tachi to issho ni  
27 tabe nai hito tachi. {What do you think about that, Meg? The people who eat  
28 dinner together and the ones who don't.}
- 29 M I mean **it's probably nice to eat dinner as a family** but **I don't know that it says**  
30 **much about like how close a family is.** Like I know families that don't eat  
31 together because like (.) just (.) I just just (.) I guess **because people come home**  
32 **at different times or like whatever and they're still like close family.**
- 33 K Ja jibun wa ookiku natta ra do shitai? {Well, when you grow up, what do you  
34 want to do?} What do you think when you grow up? Do you want to eat  
35 together as a family?
- 36 M **Probably. That will be nice (.) If it's possible.**

It is interesting that while both participants notice the same difference about the way they eat dinner as a family, their respective stances towards the difference is quite opposite. Earlier in Saki's narrative about her auntie's family, she made a clear distinction between her family and her aunt's through the use of her evaluative indexicals. Her narrative shows that she and her parents are not like her aunt's and she made judgmental comments about the way her aunt's family eats dinner.

On the other hand, while Megan shows a positive view toward having dinner as a family, her stance toward not having dinner as a family is not necessarily negative. About having dinner

together, she says, “[I]t’s **probably nice to eat dinner as a family**”(line 29). When asked about the exact question of wanting to have dinner as a family when she grows up, her answer was, “ **Probably. That will be nice (.) If it’s possible.**” (line 36). She did not give a firm answer such as, “I will definitely have dinner together as a family.” While her stance toward “having dinner together as a family” is positive, she does not believe the act alone can be the scale to measure how close a family is. In fact, her comments such as, “**I don’t know that it says much about like how close a family is**” and “I guess **because people come home at different times or like whatever and they’re still like close family**” support this evaluation. Therefore, if Megan were to observe Saki’s aunt’s family in Texas, she may find there is nothing wrong with the way they eat, and in fact, it could be one dinner scene at Megan’s future household.

The above narratives reveal the two participants’ stances toward family dinners. Saki forms a strong affiliation with it and this matches with the stance she displays earlier toward heritage cultural celebrations which she enjoys engaging with “**minna** (everyone)” as well as her heritage languages use and maintenance. On the contrary, Megan’s stance is not as strong because she believes a family dinner cannot be used to measure the intimacy of a family, but it is still a lifestyle she hopes to continue as she grows older if the situation allows.

### **Conclusion**

In this study I examined the narratives of two transnational bi/multilingual adolescent girls to explore their sensemaking from three perspectives: The affiliation with the heritage cultures, the affiliation with the heritage languages, and the affiliation with the family lifestyle. Having Japanese mothers and with their upbringings as so-called *Third Culture Kids* their backgrounds appear to be similar on first examination. However, by reading their narratives closely and analyzing them by employing the tools of evaluative comments and indexicals, I

learned that the two participants demonstrate notably different stances in forming the three respective affiliations.

First of all, regarding the affiliation with the heritage cultures, Saki embraces and attaches a high value to this affiliation. The keyword for Saki is **minna** (everyone), and it is important for her to participate in the affiliation with everyone in her family. This family unit includes both maternal and paternal families. In contrast, although Megan's narrative displays her respectful stance toward heritage cultures, she avoids taking a firm stance and making spontaneous comments that make her take proactive roles. Thus, I found her forming no noteworthy personal affiliation with the heritage culture.

With regard to the second affiliation of the heritage languages, the narratives of the two transnational girls show interesting contrasts. Saki's narrative shows her sensemaking by forming an affiliation with her heritage languages which give her comfort and intimacy. On the other hand, Megan does not affiliate strongly with her heritage language or view herself as fitting in with the generalization of either the "soft-spoken" Japanese women or more "aggressive" American women. Instead, she thinks the "reserved" character of the Japanese is rooted in the language but each speaker makes his or her own choice of the speech style within one language depending on who s/he is and the specific occasion.

The major difference I found between the two participants in terms of the heritage languages is the way they use and maintain them. Saki highly values the maintenance of her heritage cultures as well as the languages and at the same time she connects the languages and cultures to her heritage background. As a Chinese-Japanese, she believes it is the right thing to maintain both Chinese and Japanese languages. Also, her narrative displays her strong affiliations with the Japanese and Chinese languages as well as cultures. However, for Megan,

her language use is her own individual choice. Her interest in studying Japanese is also for her own individual benefit rather than a conscious effort to maintain a connection with her Japanese cultural background. There seems to be little if any correlation between her language use/maintenance and her heritage language, and thus, she is not forming a strong affiliation with the heritage language.

Finally, in terms of the affiliation of the family lifestyle, although the two transnational girls notice that the way they eat dinner is different from their friends' families, or in Saki's case from her Aunt's family in Texas, there is a huge gap between their stances toward the difference. In her narrative Saki forms a strong affiliation with her family lifestyle. This stance matches with her stance toward traditional celebrations in which she participates with "**minna** (everyone)". In contrast, Megan does not display such a strong stance toward a family dinner because to her it cannot be the scale to measure the family intimacy, although it is a lifestyle she hopes to continue into her adulthood if the situation allows.

Why do the two participants have such different perspectives? I suspect one key factor is the "environment" in which they have grown up. In Hawai'i where English is the dominant language, Saki speaks Japanese with her parents at home. When she visits her extended family in Hong Kong, she speaks Cantonese. It is natural for her to feel intimate with the languages she speaks with her parents at home as well as with her extended family members. By speaking her heritage languages she makes sense of who she is, as it directly correlates to her environment and the people she deals with at a given moment. On the contrary, in Megan's family her father is a native English speaker and English is the lingua franca at home in Hawai'i where English is the dominant language. She is making sense of who she is by speaking mostly in English in the English-dominant environment, both inside and outside the house.



Also, the degree of their exposures to the traditional customs and cultures may have influenced their perspectives. Saki, who has a large family with Japanese and Chinese extended family members, grew up accustomed to regularly participating in cultural events, and the practice has become part of her identity. In contrast, Megan who admittedly grew up in a small family lacked opportunities to participate in Japanese cultural celebrations with the reinforcement provided by family members and relatives also joining in. While Japanese traditions are “interesting” events for Megan, they play little role in her sensemaking.

As Kanno (2003) and Kamada (2010) also explore bilingual/bicultural adolescents, it is noteworthy to point out the significant findings of their studies. Kanno’s longitudinal study (2003) examines adolescents’ sensemaking and their relationship to bilingualism and biculturalism as they moved into young adulthood. Ultimately, her participants who tended to favor one language and one culture over the other as adolescents gradually “came to appreciate their hybrid identities” (p. vii). In another longitudinal study, Kamada (2010) examines hybrid adolescent girls growing up in Japan and finds that “[w]hile to a large extent they take their Japaneseness as unremarkable and ordinary, it is their mixed-ethnicity, with the privileges it affords them, which they celebrate as valuable and special” (p. 179).

The findings I have presented here in my study are the results of a cross-sectional narrative study adapting single interviews of my adolescent participants. The benefit of the longitudinal approach Kanno (2003) and Kamada (2010) took is that it allowed them to investigate their participants over a long period and to witness their participants’ development to appreciate their hybrid identities. Despite this particular difference between Kanno and Kamada’s studies and my own, I believe a cross-sectional narrative study based on single interviews is equally valuable in analyzing identity construction. Thus, I believe I have

contributed to the broader understanding of transnational adolescents' sensemaking through the detailed examination of each word produced by my participants by adapting evaluation tools.

I might even speculate on what a longitudinal approach might reveal regarding Saki and Megan, who are still in the transitional period from adolescence to adulthood. I suspect Saki, who already appreciates the affiliations with her heritage cultures and languages, will grow to be an even more active participant in those affiliations. Regarding Megan, being her mother I can see how much she has grown in one year. She views herself more as a typical American college student who is minoring in Japanese and is interested in Japanese history, politics, and economy. Perhaps this will lead to deeper affiliations.

As a final note, even though the participants display contrasting sensemaking in regards to their affiliation formations as they are going through a transitional period of adolescence to adulthood, I remain curious what their narratives will reveal in forming different affiliations and as they reach adulthood.

## Appendix: Glossing and Transcription Conventions

Glossing	Transcription (adapted from Atkinson & Heritage (1984))
ACC accusative ( <i>o</i> )	<b>talk</b> evaluative language
COMP complementizer	<u>talk</u> emphasis
COND conditional	(XXX) unclear utterance
COP copula	(( )) commentary
DAT dative ( <i>ni</i> )	[ ] overlapping onset
FLR filler	= latched utterance
GEN genitive ( <i>no</i> )	. ending intonation
HDG hedge	? raising intonation
HT Honorific Title	! animated tones
NEG negation, negative	< > decreased in tempo
NMLZ nominalizer/nominalization	> < increased in tempo
NOM nominative ( <i>ga</i> )	° ° reduced volume
PL plural	, continuing intonation
PRS present	: extended
PROG progressive	(.) pause
PST past	{ } English translation
PRT/P particle	
TOP/T Topic Marker ( <i>wa</i> )	
Q question particle/marker	

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