Imagined community, imagined self: Identity construction in language socialization outside the classroom

Kie Yamamoto

Abstract

This paper investigates the (re)construction of learner identity throughout English learning experience, shedding light on socialization outside the classroom. A research participant who had been regularly using the self-access learning center (SALC) was chosen for this study. Drawing on Lave and Wenger's (1991) Community of Practice and Norton's (2001) imagined community as underpinning theoretical frameworks, this study uses conversational narratives collected from a series of semi-structured interviews throughout one year. The analysis of data reveals the change of her sense of self as well as her positioning in her imagined community. It provides pedagogical insights into the complexity of identity construction through language socialization in multiple communities of practice, highlighting the implication of non-participation, underlying ideological discourse within the research context, and investment in social relationship.

Introduction

In 2015, I joined the Self-Access Learning Centre (SALC) in Kanda University of Studies as a learning advisor. Since then, I have been spending a significant amount of time with students in the space as a part of my duty; while some of them just want to have a casual chat with me in English, others try to build in-depth dialogues with me about the critical incidents in their language learning weekly. These interactions have encouraged me to take a closer look at how they engage in socializing with others as a way of making sense of themselves, rather than merely using their target language. Thus, in this study, I have decided to focus on

a single case study with a Japanese female student in my institution in order to examine how her participation in various communities of English learners has impacted on her sense of self. In this paper, I will first review Lave and Wenger's (1991) Community of Practice theory and Norton's (2001) imagined community as theoretical frameworks. Then, I will describe the research methodology, drawing on narrative positioning analysis originally proposed by Bamberg (2003). Findings from the analysis illustrate the contradictive and dynamic process of identity construction in second language socialization in various social learning contexts, reflecting on her desire to be an active participant in her imagined community.

Theoretical frameworks

This study is grounded in sociocultural perspectives, which view language learning as fundamentally 'social, cultural, and temporal activity' (Morita, 2004, p. 575). Following the 'social turn' (Block, 2003), language learning no longer only entails acquisition of linguistic codes but also incorporates social behavior, motives, and relations (Lamb, 2013). Benson and Cooker (2013, p.1) portray the emergence of the social turn as a result of articulation in the 'adoption and adaptation of research frameworks from social sciences'. Particularly, among those socially oriented theories, Community of Practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998) has become a comprehensible theoretical framework in defining learning, shedding light on the relationship between individual learners and social contexts. In particular, Lave and Wenger (1991) argue that learning entails the process of identity construction through gradual participation in a group of learners who invest in shared practice. This process is defined as 'Legitimate Peripheral Participation', assuming that novice learners gain their competence toward fuller participation in a target community through interaction with more experienced members of the community. Lave and Wenger discuss that peripherality and legitimacy are essential to enable novice learners to make their actual participation possible.

Peripherality entails 'an opening, a way of gaining access to sources for understanding through growing involvement' (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 37). In other words, the form of participation is not always static but rather transformational as learners' positioning within a community may change over time. According to Wenger (1998), it is inevitable for learners to be granted legitimacy in order to follow an inbound learning trajectory. Simultaneously, gaining legitimacy from a peripheral position is not benign as it often is reflected on 'social structures involving power conflict' (Morita, 2004. p.577). In sum, Community of Practice links individuals and social context, highlighting the developmental nature of identity construction through learning.

Lave and Wenger's (1991) Community of Practice has been adopted in various studies in applied linguistics in recent years, especially in the research that investigates a marginalized group in L2 classroom (e,g, Toohey,1998; Kanno, 2003; Morita, 2004). As some applied linguists (e.g. Haneda, 2006; Miyahara, 2015) point out, the learning trajectory that Community of Practice assumes oversimplifies the intricate issues in language learning, such as language ideology, social power, and the multidimensionality of language proficiency; hence, in order to understand L2 learner identity construction, there has been a call for a conceptual framework that addresses the complexity of L2 language learning. Incorporating Wenger's (1998) revised view on the initial Community of Practice framework, Norton (2001) proposes the conceptual framework of 'imagined community' to capture the complexity of language learners' desire to participate in the target language community. In her longitudinal study, she has reported on five immigrant women in Canada to investigate their participation/non-participation in an L2 classroom, shedding light on the discrepancy between the language classroom they physically belong to and the in their own imagined communities. This contrast shows how they are positioned in the target social context

contradicts their desires to be acknowledged as legitimate members of the community. Based on the multiple-case study, Norton remarks that second language learners invest in 'a wide range of symbolic and material resources, which will increase their value in the social world' (Norton, 2001, p. 166), which may not be accessible in reality. Instead, Norton argues that language learners aspire to participate in their imagined communities, which allow them to be imagined selves. Rather than situating these learners' desire in a psychological construct (e.g. motivation), Norton advocates the concept of 'investment' to illuminate socially and historically structured meaning of language acquistion. This study also demonstrates how non-participation is understood as a form of negotiating social identities, echoing Wenger's claim: 'We not only produce our identities through the practices we engage in, but we also define ourselves through the practices we do not engage in' (Wenger, 1998, p. 164). The implication of Norton's (2001) study is that language learning is a 'social practice that engages the identity of learners in complex and sometimes contradictory ways' (Norton, 2001, p. 167).

In this study, I intend to capture the emerging nature of language learner identity, grounded in the Community of Practice perspective. More specifically, the change in learner's participation is investigated, shedding light her imagined community described in each interview.

Research Methodology

Narrative inquiry

Narrative inquiry has been used cross-disciplinarily in social science as means to investigate life experiences as 'narrated by those who live them' (Chase, 2011, p.421). In applied linguistics, narrative inquiry has grown into a prominent research approach, especially since

sociolinguists (e.g. William Labov) started illuminating the role of socially-mediated process in language learning. While the research focus used to be predominantly on cognitive aspects of language acquisition, which is often believed to be quantifiable objects throughout observation, what narrative inquirers in the field of applied linguistics aim to unfold are often discursive as well as invisible constructs. As Barkhuizen (2013) notes, narrative and narrative research is difficult to be defined; however, it is agreed among narrative researchers (Barkhuizen, 2013; Chase, 2011; Riessman, 2008) that narrative is built upon the co-construction between a narrator and audience in order to make sense of one's experience. Barkhuizen (2013, p. 4) suggests that the foundation of narrative research comprises 'narrative knowledging', which is defined as 'the meaning making, learning, knowledge construction that takes place during the narrative research activities of (co)constructing narratives, analyzing narratives, reporting the findings, and reading/watching/listening to research reports' (Barkhuizen, 2011, p. 395). Thus, the engagement of each participant (narrator and audience) in the meaning-making process plays a pivotal role in narrative inquiry. Whereas such subjectivity is often problematized in research as opposed to objectivity based on quantifiable data, in narrative inquiry, it becomes interweaved as an essential dimension of research methodology. Barkhuizen, Benson and Chik (2014, p.8) concur that narrative research enables researchers to 'capture the nature and meaning of experiences that are difficult to observe directly and are the best understood from the perspective of those who experience it.'

Albeit that the forms of narrative vary (see Barkhuizen, Benson & Chik 2014), in this study, I have chosen oral interview as a primary method of data collection as my interest was co-constructing the nature of narrative in conversation. According to Barkhuizen (2013), interviews are mainly grouped into two categories: big stories and small stories. While big

stories, which consist of 'multiple interviews and other ethnographic data collected over an extended period of time' (Barkhuizen, 2013, p. 9) are useful for collecting life histories and autobiography, 'small stories' which are 'snippets of often mundane talk in conversation (and sometimes in interviews) which tell of past, imagined, or hypothetical events' (Barkhuizen, 2013, p. 9) allow researchers to analyze 'moment-to-moment identity work' (Rugen, 2013, p. 200) in everyday stories. In a series of interviews, both types of stories have been collected; however, the main focus in data analysis is on the latter, as my research interest is emerging dimensions of learner identity in language learning in different spatiotemporal contexts.

Analytical framework

In this study, narrative positioning analysis (Bamberg, 1997, 2003; Bamberg & Georgakopoulou, 2008) has been adopted. The notion of positioning was originally developed by Davies and Harré (1990) as a discursive practice where individuals position themselves in relation to others in interaction. Positioning analysis, then, attempts to make 'the interactive site of storytelling the empirical ground, where identities come into existence and are interactively displayed' (Bamberg, 2004 cited in Barkhuizen, 2010, p. 284). As my research is grounded in how a research participant (re) constructs her identity through socialization in language learning, I have found positioning analysis useful for its analytical scope. Bamberg (1997) proposes three levels of positioning analysis which enable researchers to investigate the transitional nature of narratives from both local and global perspectives. Positioning level 1 mainly concerns the contents of the story, including the characters described by a narrator, the relationship among them, and the particular context drawn in the narrative. Positioning level 2 takes a closer look at the way the narrator positions him/herself to the audience; therefore, the focus is on the 'particular interactive setting' (Barkhuizen, 2010, p.284) within which the story is being told. Finally, positioning level 3 aims to unfold the construct of selves produced

by narrators themselves, weaving the first two levels of positioning together.

Previous narrative research (e.g. Barkhuizen, 2010; Rugen, 2013) drawing on narrative positioning analysis mainly focuses on conversational narratives. Thus, from each interview, I have selected the excerpts that involve recurring themes as well as characters who appear to be crucial members of her imagined communities over time.

Research participant

Sakura (pseudonym) majors in English at KUIS. She started her study there in 2015. Prior to college, she had studied in a small private combined elementary, junior high, and high school. Growing up in Japan, she enjoyed learning English at an English conversation school early in her life as her mother encouraged her to do so. My first encounter in Sakura was back in 2015. She stopped by the Learning Help Desk where students can ask questions without an appointment in the SALC. She seemed shy but I recall she was genuinely willing to improve her writing skill because her teacher pointed out the lack of her skill. Since then, we started having conversations in the SALC. She sometimes asked me to join her for lunch at the lounge area, known as 'Yellow Sofa', so that we could talk about not only about English learning, but also personal interests such as British culture or fashion.

The researcher-the researched

In narrative inquiry, a thorough description of the researcher-the researched relationship is crucial in building trustworthiness of the study. In this study, the multifaceted positionality I hold has contributed to the design of the research methodology. First, my professional role as a learning advisor enabled me to build a non-threatening relationship with her as I was neither in charge of giving her instruction or a grade on her performance in class. Indeed, she never

calls me 'Kie Sensei' but 'Kie san'. Simultaneously, when asking her to participate in this research project, I clarified my position as a researcher who is willing to grasp the role of socially-situated learning in second language acquisition. This clarification has allowed me to show her my research interest in her as a person, rather than objectifiable dimension of her linguistic improvement. More importantly, my own background as a Japanese learner of English has helped me delve into Sakura's perspective, who shares the first language. In the previous studies, Morita (2004) and Miyahara (2015) describe their relationship with their research participants who share similar background (e.g. Education, language learning experience) as 'Senpai(senior)-Kohai(junior)'. They highlight the value of the proximity generated by this informal and friendly relationship, which became a prominent aspect in co-constructing narratives with their research participants. Hence, my multifaceted positionality has been considered as a crucial dimension especially in data collection as well as data analysis.

Data collection

Three interviews were conducted in the SALC and an off-campus place from July 2015 to September 2017. All the interviews were transcribed and translated into English by myself.

Data Analysis

This section presents the analysis of the conversational narratives based on the three selected excerpts. With a brief description of each interview, I describe how the change of her imagined self as well as imagined community has emerged, following three steps of narrative positioning analysis. Although other researchers (Bamberg, 2003; Barkhuizen, 2010; Rugen, 2013) follow three analytical levels respectively, I attempt to take more holistic approach to the analytical framework as Riessman (2008, p. 12) suggests the sequential and structural

features of each story are 'hallmarks of narratives' and rigorous categorization may lead to the loss of the essence.

August 2016

The initial interview was held at the end of the first semester in 2016. It covered a range of topics including her autobiographical information, the reason why she decided to study at KUIS, her introspective view on her ongoing language learning, and her future plan. We first started our interview in English, but after about fifteen minutes, she switched her language to Japanese.

Participants:K-Kie; S-Sakura

Excerpt 1

1. K: What did you think about learning English in the SALC?
2. S: When I started studying at KUIS, I had believed anyone could go to the SALC,
3. but by taking English classes, my confidence started getting shrunk.
4. I started hating myself because I couldn't push myself to go there while I wanted to do so. I felt I was not entitled to be there.
5. K: I see…so what made you feel differently?
6. S: It's because Emily (her teacher: pseudonym) helped me a lot.
7. Without her, I would have ended up not coming to the SALC.
8. I also had a friend who studies English really hard, and she encouraged me to go with her.
9. K: That's great!

10. When I came to the SALC, I found there were students who were not so fluent in English,

11. and teachers and senior students were very friendly.

12. Then, I realized I would be allowed to be here.

13. Since then, I started feeling relaxed when coming to the SALC.

14. K: Sounds like things changed a lot in the second semester!

15. Yes, I had Emily, I started getting to know more teachers and students,

16. so I started feeling easier coming to the SALC.

17. I am a type of person who needs courage to talk with new people.

18. Since I started coming to the SALC, I became more active making new friends.

19. this space is a place to make actions by being active,

20. so I can see myself becoming an active person. I feel my perspective getting wider too.

Excerpt 1 shows how she positioned herself in her imagined community in her first year. While she considered herself as an illegitimate member of her imagined community in the SALC primarily due to the lack of her English skill, after her teacher encouraged Sakura to come along with her, she has legitimized her participation by describing other members as 'not so fluent' as imagined and 'friendly' (Line 10-11) in the community. She also explains how she has started viewing the community of learners in the SALC, annotating the change within herself (Line 17-18). In this dialogue, she positions herself as a learner who has changed through participation to the community supported by other members, including her teacher. Her definitive description of the SALC (Line 18) implies she wants to be acknowledged as an active learner by me, who engages in communicating with students within the space. Simultaneously, she is convincing herself that she is gaining membership

within her imagined community (Line 20).

Excerpt 2

21. K: It's interesting that you frequently mention about "perspective".

22. Do you often feel your perspective is narrow?

23. S: Right now, I go to a facility where has an English-only policy, but it is not real.

24. If it is maximum, I am still here. (showing the level by using a gesture).

25. Without going abroad, I wouldn't be able to know many things.

26. K: Hmm, interesting! So we (advisors) are not real (chuckle)?

27. Well, the SALC is like a safe zone. Teachers speak slowly with easy words in English,

28. but my teacher, Professor. David (pseudonym) speaks real English.

29. He speaks so fast(chuckle)! I had no idea what he was talking about.

30. Then I realized teachers and Kie-san were being too nice to me.

31. K: Can you imagine yourself studying abroad?

32. What would the image be different from who you are?

33. S: I think I have a wider perspective.

34. If I really go, I should study more. Like I should talk to more people

35. or try things that can only be done in Japan.

This conversation occurred toward the end of the interview. I was curious about the word 'perspective' (視野), which she often referred to in her narrative. While she has described the SALC as 'a place to make actions by being active' (Line 18) by reflecting on her first year, this excerpt rather shows a contradictory view. Her illustration of where she is positioned, using a gesture to show her own placement, strongly implies that she does not seem to

envise herself in the SALC, which is 'not real' (Line 23). While she appears to appreciate the friendly and supportive members in the community in the SALC, reflecting on a Japanese history course taught by a professor without an English teaching background, she describes the 'reality', which is far different from 'a safe zone' (Line 27) in the SALC. This can be interpreted to mean that she no longer positions herself as a novice English learner who needs help in the community of learners; rather, she has started imagining herself having a wider perspective (Line 33) in the imagined community of learners abroad. By directly telling me, who is 'too kind' to her this distinction, she seems to show her aspiration to move beyond the English-learner friendly space to become an English speaker. Another important change in her positioning I should note is that her investment in English learning seems to stem from her willingness to broaden her perspective rather than improving her English skill. This is contrastive to what she referred as criteria to be a legitimate member of the community in the SALC in the beginning of her study at KUIS.

This interview illustrates the dynamics as well as complexity of her identity construction. Her retrospective view on her first year sheds light on her imagined community and imagined self which were derived from her aspiration to learn English prior to college. At the same time, her description of the SALC as 'not a real community' draws attention to the ambivalence between her imagined communities in her first year and second year; while she expressed her satisfaction to actively participate in the SALC, she also felt being helpless because other members supported her by speaking slowly and simplifying their language, which wouldn't have happened in her imagined community. At that point, it seems evident that she no longer imagined herself in the community of Japanese English learners in the bubble of EFL pedagogy. Rather, her experience as a peripheral member of the community even seems to have triggered her desire to join a different community in which she would be equally

positioned as a fully legitimate member.

October 2016

The second interview was held late October in 2016. As it had been about three month since we had the initial interview, my interest in this conversation was how she had continued learning English in the community of learners in the SALC. In this interview, she chose to speak in Japanese. The length of the interview was approximately 30 minutes.

Excerpt 3

1. K: So, what have you been up to these days?
2. S: I have been focusing on TOEFL because I must have the score ready by December.
3. I stopped hanging out with my friends and started using the library a lot.
4. K: Oh library?
5. S: I am the type of person who gets encouraged by others who work harder.
6. In the SALC, of course I can enjoy chatting but the SALC doesn't have (such atmosphere).
7. In the library, I see many students studying hard. So…

Excerpt 4

8. K: How are you spending time in the SALC these days?
9. I don't see you often at the Yellow Sofa?
10. S: Yeah I haven't been there recently, not because I don't want to,
11. but I really need to study for TOEFL. I must do it now.
12. And well, actually, since this semester, I started taking Korean.
13. So I made some Korean friends on campus.

14. It is really fun communicating with them.

15. May be I will try to go to the SALC next week.

Excerpt 5

16. K:How do you feel about improvement in English these days?

17. S: I can say something, but then there are always more things I have wanted to say…

18. I guess my listening skill has been improving, which even makes me irritated.

19. Honestly, I want to have more foreign friends. These days I just study for TOEFL.

20. You know, I recently became a friend with Korean students.

21. It's really fun learning Korean language. They are not English speakers

22. but to me, learning new words and new cultures are always fun.

23. Although I go to the SALC, I only chat with Japanese friends in English.

24. We use same words and know same language.

While in the initial interview Sakura attributed her growth to the interaction with other members of the community in the SALC, her investment in the community does not appear to be a central theme in this session. Instead, her strong motivation to gain a higher TOEFL score is mentioned multiple times (Line 2, 11, and 19) in order to study abroad as a school exchange student. She explains how she isolates herself from her friends and the community in the SALC because she wants to be pushed by other learners who study hard (Line 5). At the same time, new characters are depicted as 'new friends' in her narrative. In Line 12 and 20, she shows her excitement and enjoyment about learning her second foreign language and making new friends from Korea (Line 13-14, 20). When telling me the story, she adds a clarification; 'I know they are not English speakers' (Line 21). This clarification can be interpreted in several ways. On the one hand, she justifies her choice of not going to the

SALC to me who primarily invests in the English speaking community, so that she distinguishes her willingness to learn Korean from her motivation to speak English. On the other hand, it illuminates her willingness to learn the new foreign language and culture, which seemed to confirm her investment to language learning. In this interview, her positioning as an active member of the SALC community is hardly described; while she shows her intention to go there (Line 15), she eventually expresses how she feels about chatting with her Japanese friends in English in the SALC. This appears to be linked to what she has viewed the SALC as a 'safe zone'.

In the rest of that semester, she concentrated on her study abroad application. We had a weekly meeting as she requested for advising, which was primarily about writing up a personal statement for the study abroad program in the States. Compared to her participation in the community of learners within the SALC, she did not appear to be an active through the entire semester. Although I had a chance to see her every week, our dialogue did not involve other students or teachers; rather she seemed to highly value individual advising concerning her struggle to compose the reason why she would like to go abroad.

April 2017

While I tried to reach her several times to ask her about her spring break as well as ongoing language learning, I did not see her in the SALC frequently. When I bumped into her in the SALC, she asked me if I could help her learn how to write an essay in English. She attended one advising session to receive some advice in early May; however, I did not hear from her after that. Considering how busy she could be, I decided not to ask her to participate in the interview that semester.

September 2017

This interview was held two days before she left for the United States. The length of the interview was approximately 90 minutes, which was the longest of the three interviews. As we had a session in a café for her convenience, it appeared to become a fairly casual interview. The main topic covered in this interview was her language classroom experience with a group of Latin American students in Canada over the spring break. In this interview, she chose to speak in Japanese.

Excerpt 6

1. K: Wow, so everyone in your class from Latin America! That must have been a really exciting experience.

2. S: Honestly I was intimidated…They invited me to after-school activities every day.

3. I appreciated their kindness, but it was overwhelming to be open-minded and talkative all the time.

4. One day, they said "you are so Japanese"! The word shocked me.

5. K: Oh no…but I know what you mean. I have had the same experience (chuckle).

6. Yes, I am Japanese but is it wrong to be Japanese?

7. I know I am not so active...at that time, I was really depressed.

8. I kept staying in my shell. I started getting annoyed by myself being Japanese.

Excerpt 7

9. S: I started losing the reason why I was here. I was like 'this is not right'.

10. I thought 'I must do something about it'. So I decided to stop worrying about how they would feel,

11. and started saying whatever I wanted to say.

12. I stopped worrying about my mistakes too.

13. Then, the situation completely changed!

14. I realized they are genuinely friendly and respected my culture.

15. Another important thing I realized was that all of them are proud of their own background and

16. never hesitate talking about it.

17. Their attitudes towards their own culture made me rethink

18. how I consider myself being Japanese… Now, I am really happy to be Japanese.

Excerpt 6 and 7 clearly depict her struggle in negotiating and restructuring her cultural identity. Being in a minority classroom, she starts questioning her own sense of self as Japanese (Line 6). When she was told 'You are so Japanese!' (Line 4) she associates the word with a negative connotation, which emotionally affected her to a great extent (Line 7). However, encouraged by her Japanese friend, she decides to act differently to change the situation (Line 9-12). Later, she realizes her misinterpretation (Line 14) of the word 'you are so Japanese' (Line 4). This evidently demonstrates that her agentic action has enables her to envision herself in the community of learners, who respect their own/other culture, following her aspiration to have a wider perspective.

When the conversation turned to her ongoing language learning, she started talking about KAEDE lounge, where the majority of study abroad students stay as a learning space.

Excerpt 8

19. S: I started joining KAEDE mate program since this semester, so I made a lot of friends there.

20. My buddy (language partner) is Korean; because his Japanese is still not enough,

21. we try to communicate in English.

22. Honestly, I prefer going there to the SALC

23. because I can interact with students in KAEDE as friends.

24. These days, I don't find going to the SALC interesting.

25. Although I go to the yellow sofa, all I do is to chat with Japanese friends.

From Excerpt 8, it appears to be evident that the SALC is no longer where Sakura positions her as a member of community. In the initial interview in 2016, she described other Japanese students in the SALC as motivated and friendly learners who empowered her to be active. On the other hand, Line 25 echoes what she described about her friends the second interview. At this point, she has little investment in the community in which she previously considered herself a member. Moreover, her specification of 'as friends' (Line 23) signals that she positions study abroad students as her social friends rather than a language exchange partners in the KAEDE lounge. This implies how building social relationships has become her primary investment and how she imagines herself as a person who speaks English in communicating with her friends from different cultural background.

In this interview, I was co-constructing the narrative with her as an experienced Japanese learner of English. While I was not aware of my positioning during the interview, the transcription of the interview shows how I encouraged her to talk by showing my empathy of 'I was there too'. In regular advising sessions, this approach is a tricky strategy as my subjectivity could hinder a learner's reflection. However, as this interview was held in a fairly casual setting, unconsciously I allowed myself to present as an experienced learner who shares similar experience with her. Thus, her positioning of me appears to be also different from the first two interviews.

Discussions

Through the three interviews, albeit there are various contexts illustrated in her story, the central tenet of her narrative appears to be the transformation of her sense of self within the communities of learners from other sociocultural backgrounds. Through the positioning analysis, I present three crucial findings in this section.

First, her identity as a novice English learner was reformulated into an active English in her imagined community, supported by other community members. Originally, she had imagined herself becoming a member of an English-only space in the SALC as her imagined community while she had been unable to position herself within the circle. It is evident that her English teacher played a significant role in activating her legitimacy and supporting her to gain fuller membership. Moreover, the positive learning atmosphere within the community became the subject of her investment to sustain her aspiration to socialize in the group as an active learner. As clearly shown in the survey conducted by the SALC (2016), the implication of the English-only policy has raised a controversial issue in encouraging students to participate in the communities in the learning space. Because a shared investment in the community is speaking English, as Sakura mentioned in the initial interview, students with lower confidence in English proficiency may feel intimidated by the existing community of practice which consists of English speakers. In this sense, the creation of a non-threatening atmosphere must be considered in the process of developing the learning community. More specifically, her case supports what Murray, Fujishima, and Uzuka (2014, p. 95) suggests: 'educators in the self-access learning space will need to monitor the practices that develop and the discourses which surround them, adjusting existing practices and initiating new ones when necessary and where possible.' Because the language proficiency is potentially interpreted as part of a network of power relations (c.f. Morita, 2004; Barkhuizen, 2010), the

role of English teachers in a social learning space needs to be carefully discussed.

Secondly, her identity as Japanese became a crucial dimension of her imagined self throughout participation in the communities of learners from other cultural groups. Her self-image as 'being Japanese' in the third interview illustrates how she associated her cultural identity with a negative image (e.g. 'I hated being Japanese'). Although she did not specify what she disliked about her 'Japaneseness', this connotation seems to resonate with the preconception against Asian students who tend to remain silent in classroom. Morita (2002, p.150), citing Goldstein, Schecter, and Pon (2000), argues that these stereotypes include 'a lack of agency, intellectual deficit, passivity, or lack of engagement', which partly derive from the promotion of a Western model of learning in the discourse of Kokusaika (internationalization) (Kubota, 1998). However, by interacting with Latin American students who talk positively about their own cultures, she was empowered to validate her own cultural identity and position herself as a person who accepts cultural diversity, including her own background. It is noteworthy that the membership of the community is not defined by a specific culture but by a shared value; that is, the appreciation of cultural diversity, including their own.

Finally, the longitudinal qualitative interviews indicate that her investment in her language learning was shifted from the attainment of English proficiency to building social relationships. Teaching English in Japan, I often encounter students who are longing to make 'foreign friends'. Their reasoning tends to simply rest on their willingness to use spoken English. In her case, she also imagined herself becoming more fluent by talking actively in English with other English speakers in her first year. However, in the third interview, she validated her reasoning for opting to spend time in KAEDE lounge by highlighting her

friendship with Korean students rather than the mere use of English speaking skill. Norton (2001, p. 166) suggests that an investment in the target language is 'an investment in a learner's own identity, an identity which is constantly changing across time and space'. The friendship Sakura seeks can be referred as 'affective investment' (Norton, 2001, p. 166), which involves emotional breakdown, excitement, or comfort. Through participation in multiple communities of practice, her aspiration to understand other cultural groups and build social relationship seemed to become a significant reason to continue language learning.

As Norton (2001, p. 167) also states, language learning entails 'social practice that engages the identities of learners in complex and sometimes contradictory ways'. Prior to this study, my prediction about the transformation of her participation in the learning community in the SALC was widely different from the findings presented above. Since she appeared to be actively interacting with other learners and teachers including me in the SALC, initially, I was interested in how her imagined self as an active English learner would become strengthened through socialization within the community. By contrast, she started investing in another imagined community, which led to non-participation in the SALC. The findings of this study demonstrate how socialization in language learning is built upon 'an evolving, continuously renewed set of relations' (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p. 49).

Reflection

When finishing the final interview, she told me that she had wanted to apologize for not visiting me in the SALC. Needless say, my immediate reaction was 'You don't need to be sorry at all'! She continued, 'I was the one who asked you to help me with writing English, but I did not go. I felt as if I had betrayed you because you always helped me.' Given the fact that helping students is my routine work as a learning advisor, I had never anticipated how

she would have felt in that way. At the same time, her words also enabled me to realize that I was positioned as a member in the community she used to invest in. If I am honest with myself, her absence in the community in the SALC gave me a thought that she might have had lost her interest in learning English. The findings in this study encourage me to reflect on how I, as an educator understand learners' socialization in language learning. In the research setting, the SALC is commonly acknowledged as a social learning space for English learners, defined by a 'learning community' (SALC, n. d.) However, considering a learner as 'the whole person acting in the world' (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p. 49), while she was not participating in the learning community which is designed for English learners, Sakura's participation in other communities became her aspiration to keep pursuing who she wanted to be throughout language learning. What I can observe in the SALC is only a single dimension of the multiple communities she belongs to. Moreover, how I understand her participation strongly attributes to my positionality. I do not intend to make a generalized implication here based on this single-case study; nevertheless, in constructing language learning as socially situated practice, inclusion of Lave and Wenger's 'whole person' approach as well as consideration of subjectivity in a specific context are inevitable when understanding the intricate process of emerging language learner identity. Within EFL contexts such as the research setting in this study, learners of English are often unquestionably positioned/positioning themselves as non-native English speakers. Viewing the construction of identity as a 'nexus of multimembership' (Wenger, 1998), it is crucial for educators to accept and appreciate this multiplicity that each learner holds as a means of pedagogical support. Simultaneously, acknowledging the positionality each educator brings into a learner's community of practice may lead constructive discussions on shaping the role of pedagogical support to promote learning in language socialization.

Further research

This research has primarily rested on a series of oral interviews; therefore, multiple data collection (e.g. class observation, weekly journal entry) might allow me to understand a learner's narrative multidimensionally. Simultaneously, research on a multiple-case study would give further insight onto the underlying social as well as ideological issues across learners. Furthermore, while this study has rested on a Poststructuralist notion of identity, recent studies shed light on the role of emotion (e.g. Pavlenko, 2013; Miyahara, 2015). As the narrative analysis in this study reveals various affective dimensions emerging in language socialization, it would be intriguing to view from another angle on how learner emotion is intertwined into the construction of language learner identity.

References

Bamberg, M., 1997. Positioning between structure and performance. *Journal of Narrative and Life History*, 7 (1-4), pp.335-342.

Bamberg, M., 2003. Positioning with Davie Hogan – Stories, Tellings, and Identities. In: C. Daiute and C. Lightfoot., eds. *Narrative analysis: Studying the development of individuals in society.* London: Sage, pp.135-157.

Bamberg, M., and Georgakopoulou, A., 2008. Small stories as a new perspective in narrative and identity analysis. *Text & Talk*, 28, pp.377-396.

Barkhuizen, G. P., 2010. An extended positioning analysis of a pre-service teacher's better life small story. *Applied Linguistics*, 31 (2), pp.282-300.

Barkhuizen, G.P., 2011. Narrative Knowledging in TESOL. *TESOL Quarterly,* 45(3), pp.391-414.

Barkhuizen, G. P., ed., 2013. *Narrative research in applied linguistics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Barkhuizen, G., Benson, P., and Chik, A., 2014. *Narrative inquiry in language teaching and learning research.* New York: Routledge.

Benson, P., and Cooker, L., 2013. *The applied linguistic individual.* Sheffield: Equinox Publishing.

Block, D., 2003. *The social turn in second language acquisition.* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Chase, S. E., 2011. Narrative inquiry: Still a field in the making. In: N. K., Denzin., and Y. S. Lincoln., eds. *The handbook of qualitative research.* 4th ed., Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, pp.421-434.

Davies, B., and Harré, R., 1990. Positioning: The discursive production of selves. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour,* 20, pp.43-63.

Haneda, M., 2006. Classrooms as communities of practice: A re-evaluation. *TESOL Quarterly*, 40 (4), pp.807-817.

Kanno, Y., 2003. *Negotiating bilingual and bicultural identities: Japanese returnees betwixt two worlds*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Kubota, R., 1998. Ideologies of English in Japan. *World Englishes*, 17 (3), pp.295-306.

Lamb, M., 2013. The struggle to belong: Individual language learners and teachers in Situated Learning Theory. In: P. Benson., and L. Cooker., eds. *The applied linguistic individual: Autonomy, agency and identity*. Sheffield: Equinox Publishing, pp.32-45.

Lave, J., & Wenger, E., 1991. *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Miyahara, M., 2015. *Emerging self-identities and emotions in foreign language learning: A narrative oriented approach*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.

Morita, N., 2002. *Negotiating participation in second language academic communities: A study of identity, agency, and transformation.* Thesis (Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)). University of British Columbia.

Morita, N., 2004. Negotiating participation and identity in second language academic communities. *Tesol Quarterly*, 38(4), pp.573-603.

Murray, G., Fujishima, N., and Uzuka, M., 2014. The semiotics of place: Autonomy and space. In: G. Murray., ed. Social dimensions of learner autonomy in language learning. pp. 81-99. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.

Norton, B., 2001. Non-participation, imagined communities, and the language classroom. In: M. Breen., ed. *Learner contributions to language learning: New directions in research*. Harlow: Pearson Education, pp.156-171.

Pavlenko, A., 2013. The affective turn in SLA: From 'affective factors' to 'language desire' and 'commodification of affect'. In: D. Gabryś-Barker., and J. Bielska., eds. *The affective dimension in second language acquisition*. pp.3-28. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.

Riessman, C. K., 2008. *Narrative methods for the human sciences*. Los Angeles: Sage Publications.

Rugen, B., 2013. Language learner, language teacher: negotiating identity positions in conversational narratives. In: G. Barkhuizen., ed. *Narrative research in applied linguistics.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.199-217.

Self-Access Learning Center., 2016. SALC survey results (4): The Conversation Lounge (yellow sofas). Available at: https://salcnews.wordpress.com/2016/12/ [Accessed: 08 November 2017].

Self-Access Learning Center. n.d. About the SALC. Available at: http://kuis8.com/info/ [Accessed: 08 November 2017].

Toohey, K., 1998. Breaking them up; taking them away: Constructing ESL students in grade one. *TESOL Quarterly*, 32, pp.61-84.

Wenger, E. 1998. *Community of practice: Learning, meaning, and identity.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.