

Social Influences in the Acquisition and Maintenance of Spoken Japanese as a Heritage Language¹

Shibata Setsue
California State University, Fullerton
e-mail:sshibata@fullerton.edu

and

Koshiyama Yasuko
Pepperdine University, Malibu, CA
ykoshiyama@hotmail.com

This study examines the relationships between oral Japanese proficiency levels and six life and social factors for second-generation Japanese-Americans who speak Japanese as a heritage language (JHL): 1) language use at home, 2) experience in attending Japanese language school, 3) association with Japanese-speaking relatives, 4) frequency of visits to Japan during childhood, 5) activities in local Japanese communities, and 6) cultivation of interest in Japan through various media. 30 JHL speakers were given ACTFL Japanese Oral Proficiency Interviews (OPI) as well as personal interviews to explore the above social factors. The results suggest that there are significant relationships between oral Japanese proficiency levels and four of these factors: language use at home (both choice of language used by parents to child and of child to parents), Japanese language school attendance, association with Japanese-speaking relatives, and cultivation of interest in Japan. No significant relationship was found between the subjects' OPI rating and the other two factors, i.e., frequency of visits to Japan and activities in Japanese communities. These results suggest the importance of parental support and encouragement to use Japanese, as well as exposure to the language outside of the home.

継承言語としての日本語口頭能力の習得及び保持とその社会的要因との関係

柴田節枝

カリフォルニア州立大学フラトン

越山泰子

ペパーダイン大学

本研究は、日本語を継承言語とする日系アメリカ人（2世）の口頭（表現）能力に、成長過程におけるどのような社会的要因が関係しているのかを調査したものである。日系人の定義は多いが、本研究では日本語を母語とする両親もしくは片親のもとで、アメリカで育った場合に限るとする。30名の被験者に ACTFL の日本語 OPI (Oral Proficiency Interviews) と、英語による言語背景に関するインタビューを行なった。社会的要因として、成長過程における家庭での言語使用状況（親から子へ、子から親へ）、日本語学校に通った経験及び年数、日本語を話す親戚の有無、訪日回数、日本語メディア（本、ビデオなど）との接触の有無、日系人コミュニティーへの参加を取り上げ、これらの各要因と被験者の日本語口頭能力との関係を調べた。結果として、成長後の日系人の日本語口頭能力は、家庭における言語使用状況、日本語学校に通った年数、日本語を話す親戚の有無、日本語メディアとの接触の有無といった4つの要因との間に有意性が認められた。しかし、訪日の回数、日系人コミュニティーへの参加の有無との間には有意性は成立しなかった。本研究は、継承言語としての日本語口頭能力の習得や保持には、言語習得期における親の強い関心や援助だけでなく、日本語学校、親戚やメディアといった家庭以外での日本語との接触のあり方に関心を持つことも必要であることを示唆している。

INTRODUCTION

During the 1980's, many Japanese who came to the United States for business, to study, or to seek opportunities for success, remained and raised their children in the U.S. Many of these Japanese immigrants are as interested in maintaining their heritage in the U.S. by teaching their children their language and culture as they are concerned with educating and preparing their children for future success in American society. Noro (1997) states five major reasons for recent Japanese immigrants in Canada to want their children to learn Japanese: better communication with their children, maintenance of the parents' dignity, fostering pride in their Japanese ethnicity, communication with relatives in Japan, and the creation of better job opportunities in the future (p. 72).

Despite the fact that most children of recent Japanese immigrants in the U.S. are exposed to the Japanese language as they grow up, their levels of oral Japanese proficiency as adults seem to vary

extensively. While some attain high levels of oral proficiency in both Japanese and English, others speak Japanese only well enough for basic conversation, and still others gain very little Japanese proficiency, even though all were born and raised in the U.S. (Kondo, 1998; Nakajima, 1998). Unlike children who grow up in Japan and are exposed to enough Japanese for full acquisition, these heritage language speakers are placed in varying linguistic environments for the acquisition of Japanese. These differ both qualitatively and quantitatively in terms of home language use, school experiences, and life experiences in general. This raises a question: what kinds of factors are related to these variations in oral Japanese proficiency?

This study aims to investigate the life and social factors in place during childhood that correlate with the acquisition and maintenance of adult oral proficiency in Japanese as a heritage language (JHL). By statistically analyzing data from 30 JHL speakers, it examines the relationships between oral Japanese proficiency levels and six life and social factors: 1) language use at home, 2) experience in attending Japanese language school, 3) association with Japanese-speaking relatives, 4) frequency of visits to Japan during childhood, 5) activities in local Japanese communities, and 6) cultivation of interest in Japan through various media.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The term "heritage language" has not been formally defined, but the concept is well described by Krashen (1998), who states that "a heritage language is one not spoken by the dominant culture, but is spoken in the family or associated with the heritage culture" (p. 3). The term "heritage language learner" refers to someone who has had exposure to a non-native language outside the formal education system, mostly at home (Draper and Hicks, 2000).

Historically speaking, although the United States is a country originally created by immigrants, bilingualism and the ability to speak languages other than English have often been undervalued. Some believed that bilingualism caused academic deficiency, emotional instability and confusion that decreased an individual's chances for success in society (Jespersen [1922] as cited in Nakajima, 1998, p. 192; Skutnabb-Kangas, 1999, p. 43; Krashen, 1998, p. 5). It was even believed that bilingualism might result in divisiveness and political unrest within a country (Krashen, 1998, p. 5).

However, results from many recent studies refute these theories. It was found that the development of a heritage language was positively related to the attainment of proficiency in the language of the dominant group (English in most of the cases) and overall academic success (Aizawa, 1998; Fernandez and Nielsen, 1986; Garcia-Vazquez, Vazquez, Lopez and Ward, 1999; Nakajima, 1988; Nielsen and Lerner, 1986; Hakuta and Diaz, 1985; Oketani, 1997; Ono, 1989). Fluency in a heritage language was also positively related to concept formation (Peal and Lambert, 1962; Liedtke and Nelson, 1968), to creativity (Torrance, Wu, Gowan and Aliotti, 1970), to non-verbal cognitive abilities (Hakuta and Diaz, 1985), and to psychological well-being, i.e., self-esteem, more ambitious plans for the future, and self-confidence (Huang, 1995; Garcia, 1985). These findings have given some encouragement to current trends in the U.S. to make efforts to maintain heritage languages. In recent years, there is also a greater

recognition of the value of heritage language speakers as language resources of the nation. For, as Krashen (1998) states, "Development of the heritage language is not harmful for nations, and may have important trade advantages" (p. 7).

The maintenance of a heritage language is dependent upon a combination of factors. In their macroscopic model of the determinants of additive and subtractive bilingualism, Landry and Allard (1991, 1992) divided these factors into three levels: sociological, socio-psychological and psychological. On the sociological level, the maintenance of a heritage language is affected by the relative power (i.e., political, economic, cultural, etc.) of the majority and minority ethnolinguistic groups in a community. On the socio-psychological level, individual linguistic contacts in the social context (i.e., family, school and other community institutions) come into play. At this level, it is theorized that the quantity and quality of the individual's network of linguistic contacts (INLC) affects the type of bilingualism (receptive or productive). Linguistic experiences accumulated within the INLC may enhance the individual's psychological disposition to use the language. At the psychological level, two components, the aptitude/competence component (i.e., ability to learn and use the language) and the belief or cognitive-affective disposition component (i.e., willingness to learn and use the language) are considered to be the determinants of the type of bilingualism displayed by the individual (Landry and Allard, 1991, p. 206). One way to analyze the INLC is to look at different types of opportunities for linguistic contact, for example, interpersonal contacts, schooling or educational support, and contact through the media (Landry and Allard, 1992, p. 227).

Interpersonal contacts usually occur in the family milieu. Draper and Hicks (2000) emphasize the importance of parental support in the maintenance of heritage languages, stating that, "without strong parental support, there was little motivation on the part of the children to seek additional skills in the home language" (p. 25). Many studies have shown a positive relationship between the language used by parents at home and the development of their children's bilingualism in various language-combination contexts, such as Chinese and English (Li, 1999; Tong, 1996; Yao as cited in Tong, 1996), French and English (Swain and Lapkin, 1991); Spanish and English (Evans, 1996; Schecter, Sharken-Taboada, and Bayley, 1996), Swedish and English (Cunningham-Andersson and Andersson, 1999), Italian and German (Taeschner [1983] as cited in Nakajima, 1998), and French and German (Bain and Yu, 1980).

In the Japanese and English context, Noguchi (1999) examined how the language used in the home by English-speaking parents living in Japan related to their children's English reading and writing proficiency. She found that parents' use of English at home was positively related to higher achievement by their children in acquisition of English literacy skills. Nakajima (1988) found in her Canadian study that there was a significant relationship between parents' use of the Japanese language at home and their children's competence in both speaking and writing Japanese. Kondo (1998) compared bilingual and semi-bilingual *shin-nisei* (the second generation of recent immigrants) college students in Hawaii and found that the bilingual students had much more extensive informal contacts in Japanese and used the language more than the semi-bilinguals, who exhibit quantitative and qualitative deficiencies in both languages when compared to monolinguals. It has also been suggested that parental language input influences the child's language use in Japanese-English bilingual language acquisition (Haskell, 1998).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The current study explores the kinds of life and social factors in the context of the socio-psychological level of the INLC (individual's network of linguistic contacts) in Landry and Allard's macroscopic model that correlate with the acquisition and maintenance of Japanese by JHL speakers. The research questions were formulated as follows:

1. What is the relationship between language use at home during childhood and Japanese language proficiency levels among adult JHL speakers?
2. How is the combination of language use at home and Japanese language school attendance during childhood related to the Japanese language proficiency levels of adult JHL speakers?
3. What is the relationship between the Japanese language proficiency levels of adult JHL speakers and other childhood life and social factors such as association with Japanese-speaking relatives, frequency of visits to Japan during childhood, activities in local Japanese communities, and interest in Japan through various media?

METHODOLOGY

Subjects

The subjects of this study were 30 JHL speakers, 12 males and 18 females, who were located via the researchers' personal contacts through church, cultural organizations, neighbors, school and acquaintances. They were all born in the U.S., with the exception of one subject who came to the U.S. before he was 6 months old, and were raised by at least one parent who speaks Japanese as a native language. Of the 30 subjects, 15 were raised by two native Japanese-speaking parents, and 15 had only one native Japanese-speaking parent. All claimed English as their first language. The subjects were all 18 years old or older, with an average age of 22.7 years at the time of data collection. They were all either college students or college graduates. All subjects were located in the Los Angeles area and participated in this study voluntarily.

Out of the 30 subjects, 19 (63%) had attended Japanese language schools in the community for at least one year in the past, with the average length of attendance being 5.5 years.² Their average oral proficiency in Japanese was 5.33, which corresponds to Intermediate-High in the ACTFL OPI Guidelines (see Appendix A for OPI ratings scale).

Data Collection and Analysis

Two types of interviews were conducted to collect data for this study: the ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interviews (OPI) in Japanese and background interviews in English. The OPI measures the subjects' oral Japanese proficiency level. Following that, a semi-structured interview with a set of prepared questions in English (Appendix B) was conducted to gather data on the subjects' demographics, family background, other life and social environments, language use, and Japanese language schooling until the age of fifteen. Both interviews were conducted by the same researcher and taped with the interviewees' consent. The tapes were kept in the interviewer's office for initial assessment, in which the OPI ratings

were coded on a scale of 1 (Novice-Mid) to 9 (Superior), as shown in Appendix A. Upon completion of the interviews, all OPI tapes were reviewed and assessed by the other researcher. Differences were discussed to assure the reliability of the ratings.

Both researchers also reviewed the background interview tapes in English, and each interview response was either categorized for analysis of variance (ANOVA) or scored to generate a numerical value to be used for correlational analysis, i.e., Pearson r , point biserial or Phi (ϕ), depending on the type of data. The types of data compiled from the English interviews were as follows:

1. Nominal data (category) for language use at home (Japanese, English, Japanese and English),
2. Yes/no dichotomous data for answers to questions about Japanese language school attendance, Japanese-speaking relatives, activities in Japanese communities, and interest in Japan generated or sustained by various media,
3. Numerical data signifying the total number of trips to Japan made between birth and the age of 15,
4. Numerical data showing the number of years of Japanese language school attendance.

The data for each subject is presented in table form in Appendix C.

The collected data was then analyzed for correlations with *the Statistical Package for Social Sciences* (SPSS, 1999). Pearson r analysis was used when both variables were intervals/ratios (i.e., OPI and number of years of Japanese school), and point biserial analysis was used when one variable was an interval/ratio and the other was a discrete dichotomy (i.e., OPI and yes/no data, number of years of Japanese school and yes/no data, and frequency of visits to Japan and yes/no data). When both variables were discrete dichotomies (two types of yes/no data), Phi (ϕ) was used to check the strength of correlation between them.

RESULTS

Research Question 1: What is the relationship between language use at home during childhood and Japanese language proficiency levels among adult JHL speakers?

Language use at home was examined from two perspectives: the language used by each parent to the subject and that used by the subject to each parent during the subject's childhood. A summary of the results regarding the language the parents reportedly used with the subjects and the subjects' OPI ratings is presented in Table 1. As can be seen there, the mean OPI rating of subjects to whom both parents spoke Japanese (Group 1) and that of subjects to whom only one parent spoke Japanese (Group 2) were both Advanced-Low/Mid, although the numerical average for Group 1 was slightly higher than that of Group 2. The average OPI rating of subjects whose parents mixed Japanese and English (Group 3) was Intermediate Mid/High, while that of subjects who spoke English to them (Group 4) was Novice-High.

TABLE 1: Language Used by Parents with Subjects and Subjects' Japanese Proficiency

Group	<i>n</i>	Mean OPI (Rating)	SD
1. Both parents used Japanese	13	6.77 (Adv.-L/M)	1.48
2. One parent used Japanese	5	6.60 (Adv.-L/M)	1.52
3. Parents used Japanese and English	5	4.80 (Int.-M/H)	2.28
4. Both parents used English	7	2.14 (Novice-H)	2.04
Total	30	5.33 (Int.-H/Adv.-L)	2.55

The ANOVA procedure and Tukey's post hoc test were used to check whether these differences were significant. The results are presented in Table 2. There we see that Group 1 and Group 2 are significantly more proficient than Group 4, but no other significant differences were found among the groups. This indicates that there is a significant difference in oral Japanese proficiency between JHL speakers with one or both parents who spoke to them only in Japanese during their childhood and JHL speakers whose parents did not speak the heritage language to them. No significant difference was found between JHL speakers with only one parent who spoke Japanese to them and those who heard Japanese from both parents.

TABLE 2: ANOVA Results and Tukey Post Hoc Test for Language Used by Parents with Subjects

Source	df	Mean Squares	F Ratio	F Prob.
Between Groups	3	35.834	11.479 ^{ce}	.000
Within Groups	26	3.122		
Total	29			

Note: Significant Tukey pairs: a=Group 1 and 2, b=Group 1 and 3, c=Group 1 and 4, d=Group 2 and 3, e=Group 2 and 4, f=Group 3 and 4.

Language use in the home was also analyzed in terms of the language the subjects spoke to their parents during their childhood. A summary of these results and the subjects' OPI ratings is presented in Table 3.

TABLE 3: Language Used by Subjects with Parents and Subjects' Japanese Proficiency

Group	<i>n</i>	Mean OPI (Rating)	SD
1. Japanese to both parents	9	7.56 (Adv.-M/H)	1.33
2. Japanese to one parent	4	6.25 (Adv.-L/M)	1.50
3. Japanese and English to parents	10	5.30 (Int.-M/H)	1.64
4. English to both parents	7	2.00 (Novice-H)	1.73
Total	30	5.33 (Int.-H/Adv.-L)	2.55

As shown in the table above, the mean OPI rating of subjects who said they spoke Japanese to both parents (Group 1) was Advanced-Mid/High, that of subjects who reported speaking Japanese to one parent (Group 2) was Advanced-Low/Mid, that of subjects who said they mixed Japanese and English when speaking to their parents (Group 3) was Intermediate-Mid/High, while that of subjects who said they spoke only English to their parents (Group 4) was Novice-High.

These differences were checked for significance using ANOVA and Tukey's post hoc tests. The results, presented in Table 4, show that Groups 1, 2 and 3 are significantly higher than Group 4, which means that JHL speakers who used at least some Japanese when speaking to one or both of their parents have higher levels of Japanese proficiency than those who spoke only English at home. Table 4 also shows a significant difference between Groups 1 and 3, but not between Groups 1 and 2. This indicates that while there is no statistical difference in Japanese proficiency between the subjects who spoke Japanese to one parent and those who spoke it to both parents, there is a definite difference in proficiency between JHL speakers who have at least one parent with whom they spoke only Japanese and those who mixed Japanese and English when speaking to their parents.

TABLE 4: ANOVA Results and Tukey Post Hoc Test for Language Used by Subjects with Parents

Source	df	Mean Squares	F Ratio	F Prob.
Between Groups	3	41.865	17.258 ^{bcef}	.000
Within Groups	26	2.426		
Total	29			

Note: Significant Tukey pairs: a=Group 1 and 2, b=Group 1 and 3, c=Group 1 and 4, d=Group 2 and 3, e=Group 2 and 4, f=Group 3 and 4.

Research Question 2: How is the combination of language used at home and Japanese language school attendance during childhood related to the Japanese language proficiency levels of adult JHL speakers?

To answer this question, the subjects were divided into the following groups according to the language their parents used with them and the subjects' experience attending a Japanese language school:

- Group 1:** At least one parent consistently spoke Japanese to the subject, plus the subject attended a Japanese language school.
- Group 2:** At least one parent consistently spoke Japanese to the subject, but the subject did not attend a Japanese language school.
- Group 3:** Neither parent consistently spoke Japanese to the subject, but the subject did attend a Japanese language school.
- Group 4:** Neither parent consistently spoke Japanese to the subject, nor did the subject attend a Japanese language school.

The Japanese proficiency for each of these groups is presented in Table 5. As can be seen there, subjects in Group 1 had the highest mean OPI rating, followed by Groups 2, 3 and 4.

TABLE 5: Language Used by Parents, Japanese Language School Attendance and Subjects' Japanese Proficiency

Group	Social Factors		Japanese Proficiency					Mean OPI (Rating)
	Japanese at Home	Japanese School	OPI Rating				N	
			Superior	Advanced	Intermediate	Novice		
1	Yes	Yes	2	9	2	0	13	6.85 (Adv.-Mid)
2	Yes	No	1	2	2	0	5	6.40 (Adv.-Low/Mid)
3	No	Yes	0	2	3	0	5	5.20 (Int.-High)
4	No	No	0	1	0	6	7	1.86 (Novice-Mid)
Total			3	14	7	6	30	5.33 (Int.-High)

ANOVA and post hoc tests indicate that there is a significant difference between Groups 1 and 4, Groups 2 and 4, and Groups 3 and 4, as shown in Table 6. This means that JHL speakers who had some early experience with Japanese — either because at least one parent spoke Japanese to them at home or because they attended a Japanese language school, or for both reasons — had significantly higher Japanese proficiency than those JHL speakers who lacked such early exposure.

TABLE 6: ANOVA Results and Tukey Post Hoc Test for Language Used by Parents and Japanese Language School Attendance

Source	df	Mean Squares	F Ratio	F Prob.
Between Groups	3	40.04	15.19 ^{cd}	.000
Within Groups	26	2.64		
Total	29			

Note: Significant Tukey pairs: a=Group 1 and 2, b=Group 1 and 3, c=Group 1 and 4, d=Group 2 and 3, e=Group 2 and 4, f=Group 3 and 4.

Research Question 3: What is the relationship between the Japanese language proficiency levels of adult JHL speakers and other childhood life and social factors such as association with Japanese-speaking relatives, frequency of visits to Japan during childhood, activities in local Japanese communities, and interest in Japan through various media?

The correlation between each of the factors seen as potential influences on knowledge of Japanese language and the actual Japanese proficiency of the subjects was tested and the results are presented in Table 7.

TABLE 7: Correlation Coefficients Among Japanese Language Proficiency and Life and Social Factors

	OPI	JS	Relatives	Visits	Activities	Media
OPI	$r_p=1.00$					
Japanese language school (JS) [number of years]	$r_p=.487^{**}$	$r_p=1.00$				
Japanese-speaking relatives [Yes/No]	$r_{pb}=.667^{**}$	$r_{pb}=.250$	$\phi=1.00$			
Frequency of visits to Japan [number of times before age 15]	$r_p=.308$	$r_p=.030$	$r_{pb}=.185$	$r_p=1.00$		
Activities in Japanese community [Yes/No]	$r_{pb}=.080$	$r_{pb}=.213$	$\phi=.218$	$r_{pb}=.029$	$\phi=1.00$	
Interest in Japan through media [Yes/No]	$r_{pb}=.608^{**}$	$r_{pb}=.214$	$\phi=.426^*$	$r_{pb}=.306$	$\phi=.202$	$\phi=1.00$

Notes:

r_p : Pearson r

r_{pb} : Point-Biserial

ϕ : Phi Coefficient

*Significant at the 0.05 level

**Significant at the 0.01 level

As seen in Table 7, there is a positive relationship between the JHL speakers' oral proficiency and three of the factors considered: the number of years the subjects attended Japanese language school, their association with Japanese-speaking relatives, and their interest in Japan cultivated through various

types of media such as Japanese TV, music, videos, and so on. No significant relationship was found between the subjects' Japanese proficiency and the frequency of their visits to Japan, or between their proficiency and their involvement in activities in a local Japanese community.

Correlation coefficients among the life and social factors considered in this study are also shown in Table 7. Besides a weak correlation found between association with Japanese-speaking relatives and interest in Japan through media, no other significant relationships were found among these factors. Thus, it is safe to say that these factors can be considered independently.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study showed a significant relationship between the language the parents used with the subjects during their childhood and the subjects' oral proficiency in Japanese as adults. This finding agrees with past research suggesting that parents' choice of language at home influences their children's proficiency in that language (Bain and Yu, 1980; Kondo, 1998; Li, 1999; Nakajima, 1988; Noguchi, 1999; Ono, 1989; Richards, 1998; Schechter, Sharken-Taboada, and Bayley, 1996; Swain and Lapkin, 1991; Tong, 1996; Yao as cited in Tong, 1996). Although our results indicate that the mean OPI score for JHL speakers raised by two Japanese-speaking parents was higher than that obtained by the subjects who had been raised by only one Japanese-speaking parent, the mean OPI rating for both groups was the same, and the difference between these two groups was not statistically significant. This implies that if one parent uses Japanese with his/her child at home without mixing the language with English, the child has as good a chance of acquiring and maintaining oral proficiency in Japanese as children with two parents who speak Japanese to them.

Language mixing, however, seems to be a common phenomenon among many families of JHL speakers. Some subjects said that their parents constantly switched from Japanese to English when expressing abstract ideas. In such a language environment, children have fewer opportunities to be exposed to higher levels of Japanese language use, making it difficult for them to attain the skills necessary to be rated Advanced in oral proficiency. Nevertheless, the results of this study suggest that parents' mixing Japanese and English still results in a higher level of Japanese oral proficiency than the average achieved by a JHL speaker whose parents do not use Japanese with him or her at all.

This present study alone cannot be considered conclusive in determining whether minority language parents should use one or two languages with their children, and it is certainly not our intention to dictate the role parents should assume in their children's language acquisition. There is still debate about the advisability of various approaches to language use in families dealing with more than one language. For instance, some studies show that when parents must speak a non-native language to their children, the parents may find it emotionally stressful (Cunningham-Andersson and Andersson, 1999; Kouritzin, 2000) and so may the children (Nakajima, 1998). It was also claimed that family discord may be caused by one parent speaking a language that the other parent does not understand (Nakajima, 1998, p. 61). Noguchi (1996, as cited in Nakajima, 1998) emphasizes that flexibility of language use by parents is important in the maintenance of family cohesiveness and unity as a child grows. The language which parents choose

to use with their children depends on the family's situation and background, and decisions should be made carefully by considering not only the parents' ability to speak each other's languages but also their personalities, emotions, and their long-term goals for their children.

Returning to the current study, it also found a significant relationship between a child's use of Japanese with parents at home and his/her oral proficiency in Japanese as an adult. JHL speakers who spoke Japanese to their parents when they were growing up attained higher oral proficiency levels in Japanese than those who didn't. This result supports studies in language acquisition which show that learner output as well as input plays an important role in language acquisition (Swain, 1985), and therefore suggests that active language production among JHL speakers should be encouraged.

Another correlation found in our study was one between the number of years the subjects attended Japanese language school and their Japanese oral proficiency, a correlation that suggests a positive role for community language schools in the maintenance of heritage languages. This finding does not support Oketani's study of post-war Japanese-Canadian students (Oketani, 1997), which found that the number of years of Japanese language school attendance was related to neither speaking proficiency nor reading competence in Japanese. However, in her study the subjects all went to the same Japanese language school, described as 'very unique' by the author, and therefore Oketani admits that it would be difficult to generalize the results. It should be noted that the success level of each language school in meeting its goal of establishing or improving literacy in a minority language may vary, depending on factors such as curriculum, professional resources, students' motivation, and the amount of support received from parents and community (Furuya-Wise, 1998; Shibata, 2001; Usui, 1997).

The correlation between interest in Japan furthered through media such as Japanese TV programs, music, videos, etc. and JHL speakers' oral proficiency found in this study supports the socio-psychological model put forward by Landry and Allard (1991, 1992), which hypothesized that the amount of exposure to the language is positively associated with proficiency in that language.

Our study also showed a weak correlation between an association with Japanese-speaking relatives and interest in various Japanese media. This can be explained by the fact that frequent interaction with Japanese-speaking relatives may create more opportunities for JHL speakers to have access to items related to Japan. Many interviewees mentioned that their relatives in Japan often send them the latest Japanese music, videos, comics, and so on.

Two other factors which are considered to be positive predictors of language proficiency in the context of Landry and Allard's socio-psychological model (1991, 1992) — visits to the parents' home country and involvement in the heritage language community activities — were not found to be related to higher oral Japanese proficiency in this study. An explanation can be drawn from the possibility that conversations between JHL speakers and their relatives may not go much beyond routine daily conversation, or the fact that mothers often play the role of interpreter for their children when they are in Japan. In other words, with the help of "the interpreter", JHL children do not need to interact directly with native speakers of Japanese as much as they might otherwise have to do during a visit, and as a result, the visits to Japan may not necessarily create chances for JHL speakers to use Japanese. However, if

the length of each stay in Japan and the quality and quantity of language use during the visits had been taken into account, the results may have been different. A similar explanation can be made for the null relationship between the subject's oral Japanese proficiency and the JHL speakers' involvement in local Japanese community activities such as volleyball, basketball, martial arts, *taiko* (Japanese drums), tea ceremony, etc. These activities may require extensive physical interaction, but not necessarily linguistic interaction with Japanese speakers, and therefore may not promote much acquisition of the heritage language.

CONCLUSION

Even though the sample size used in this study was rather small, the results suggest the importance of interpersonal contacts involving the heritage language in promoting Japanese language proficiency. The combination of active parental involvement and the use of informal education provided by Japanese language schools creates chances for JHL speakers to attain higher levels of Japanese language proficiency. Pursuing Japan-related interests through various media and maintaining a close relationship with Japanese-speaking relatives also seems to be associated with higher levels of Japanese competence. However, as this study focuses only on the study of Japanese as a heritage language, further investigation will be necessary to see whether or not these findings hold true across languages and cultures. Research on interpersonal contacts that considers the quantity and quality rather than the mere existence of such contacts (i.e., more than yes/no responses) is also needed to investigate how these factors relate to the development of a heritage language.

Our interviews often revealed some of the indescribable complexity and intricacies of growing up as a JHL speaker in the U.S. and being placed between two languages and cultures. It is noteworthy that many subjects in this study, regardless of their proficiency level, are now proud of their ability to speak Japanese and appreciate their parents' efforts in providing the opportunities to learn, although as children they did not understand why they were pushed to learn Japanese and maintain their linguistic and cultural heritage. It is hoped that these proud JHL speakers will continue to use Japanese and study it to maximize their language skills. The choice now lies not with their parents, but with the subjects themselves.

NOTES

1. This study investigates the oral proficiency of Japanese heritage speakers because heritage languages are primarily spoken languages and reading and writing skills are usually acquired later through formal training.
2. The term "Japanese language schools" in this paper refers to any school, both for-profit and nonprofit, which teaches Japanese as a heritage language, excluding formal educational institutions. Out of the 30 subjects, 24 answered that they took Japanese classes at formal educational institutions (2 in high school and 22 at college). The influence of this experience on the OPI results was not examined in the present study.
3. This study is a part of an interdisciplinary research project which covers broader research purposes. The data presented in this paper was taken from the interview questions relevant to the purpose of this paper.

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APPENDIX A

Coding of the ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) Rating

ACTFL Rating	Assigned Score
Superior	9
Advanced-High	8
Advanced-Mid	7
Advanced-Low	6
Intermediate-High	5
Intermediate-Mid	4
Intermediate-Low	3
Novice-High	2
Novice-Mid	1

APPENDIX B

Interview Outline

Please answer the following questions concerning the period of time between the ages of 0 and 15. Please elaborate on your answers as much as possible.

I. Demographic data

- How old are you?
- What do you do now?*
- What is (was) your major in college?*
- What is (was) your college grade point average?*

II. Family background

- Please tell me about your personal history. Where were you born? Where did you grow up? etc.
- Who was in your family when you were growing up?
- When did your native-Japanese speaking parent(s) come to the U.S.?
- In what language(s) did your parent(s) speak to you at home?
- In what language(s) did you speak to each of your family members at home?
- Where are your relatives, such as aunts, uncles, and cousins? In Japan or the U.S.?
- Did you have close relations with these relatives?
- In what language(s) did you speak with these relatives?

III. Other life and social environment

- Who were your friends in your school days?*
- In what language(s) did you speak with these friends?*
- Who were your neighbors?*
- In what language(s) did you speak with your neighbors?*
- How often did you visit Japan?
- Were you involved in any Japanese community activities? If you were, what activities?
- Did you keep up with Japan-related interests through media such as TV, comic books, videos, etc.?

IV. Schooling

- Did you go to Japanese school? If yes, how many years did you go?
- Have you taken any Japanese courses in high school or in college?*

* The results were not reported/analyzed in this paper.

APPENDIX C (Continued: Part II)

Subject	#11	#12	#13	#14	#15	#16	#17	#18	#19	#20
Age	21	26	22	25	27	23	19	21	24	23
Gender	M	F	F	M	F	F	F	F	M	M
Father's Language (Ethnicity)	E (JA)	E (AM)	E (AM)	JP (JP)	E (JA)	S (MXA)	JP (JP)	JP (JP)	JP (JP)	E (AM)
Mother's Language (Ethnicity)	J/E (JP)	E (JP)	J/E (JP)	JP (JP)	E (JP)	JP (JP)	J/S (MXA)	JP (JP)	JP (JP)	E (JP)
Parent-to-Child Language(s)	2 PTs J/E	2 PTs E	2 PTs J/E	2 PTs JP	2 PTs E	1 PT JP	1 PT JP	2 PTs JP	2 PTs JP	2 PTs E
Child-to-Parent Language(s)	J/E to 2 PTs	J/E to 2 PTs	J/E to 2 PTs	JP to 2 PTs	E to 2 PTs	JP to 1 PT	JP to 2 PTs	JP to 2 PTs	JP to 2 PTs	E to 2 PTs
JP Language School	12 yrs.	5 yrs.	0 yrs.	10 yrs.	5 yrs.	11 yrs.	4 yrs.	9 yrs.	10 yrs.	0 yrs.
JP-Speaking Relatives	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Activities in JP Community	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No
Interest in Japan Through Media	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Number of Times Visited Japan (Ages 0 - 15 years)	3	2	5	2	3	2	6	10	4	5
OPI	Int.-mid	Adv.-low	Adv.-low	Adv.-low	Int.-mid	Int.-high	Adv.-high	Adv.-high	Sup.	Nov.-mid

APPENDIX C (Continued: Part III)

Subject	#21	#22	#23	#24	#25	#26	#27	#28	#29	#30
Age	21	21	20	20	23	18	18	24	20	34
Gender	F	M	F	F	M	M	M	F	F	M
Father's Language (Ethnicity)	J/E (JP)	E (AM)	E (AM)	JP (JP)	E (AM)	JP (JP)	JP (JP)	JP (JP)	E (JP)	E (JA)
Mother's Language (Ethnicity)	J/E (JP)	E (JP)	E (JP)	JP (JP)	E (JP)	JP (JP)	JP (JP)	JP (JP)	E (JP)	JP (JP)
Parent-to-Child Language(s)	2 PTs J/E	2 PTs E	2 PTs E	2 PTs JP	2 PTs E	2 PTs JP	2 PTs JP	2 PTs JP	2 PTs E	1 PT JP
Child-to-Parent Language(s)	J/E to 2 PTs	E to 2 PTs	E to 2 PTs	J/E to 2 PTs	E to 2 PTs	JP to 2 PTs	JP to 2 PTs	J/E to 2 PTs	E to 2 PTs	JP to 1 PT
JP Language School	10 yrs.	0 yrs.	0 yrs.	0 yrs.	0 yrs.	10 yrs.	0 yrs.	13 yrs.	0 yrs.	5 yrs.
JP-Speaking Relatives	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Activities in JP Community	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No
Interest in Japan Through Media	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
Number of Times Visited Japan (Ages 0 - 15 years)	5	3	2	10	2	3	5	2	2	5
OPI	Int.-mid	Nov.-mid	Nov.-mid	Int.-high	Nov.-mid	Sup.	Adv.-low	Adv.-low	Nov.-mid	Int.-high