

# Overlapping Identities: The Case of Japanese Immigrants in Cali, Colombia

Diego Pascual y Cabo<sup>1</sup>, Petta-Gay Ybarra<sup>1</sup> and Jeanne Holcomb<sup>2</sup>  
University of Florida<sup>1</sup>, University of Dayton<sup>2</sup>

## Abstract

This interdisciplinary study examines the complex and multilayered relationship that exists between language and identity among Japanese and Japanese-Colombian immigrants in Cali, Colombia. A combination of semi-structured interviews and survey instruments were used to gather data on the social, linguistic, and cultural characteristics of thirty one informants. Overall results indicate that indeterminacy and contradiction, in regards to the participants' views on language (use & value) and cultural involvement, are constant features that take part in their everyday lives revealing conflicting and overlapping identities. Moreover, our findings suggest that the Japanese community in Cali is currently in an advanced process of acculturation, shifting towards mainstream Colombian monoculturalism as well as Spanish monolingualism.

**Keywords:** identity, immigration, Japanese immigrants in Colombia, attitudes

## 1 Introduction<sup>\*</sup>

Globalization is changing how we think about ethnic and national identity. The increasing importance of transnational corporations and the relative ease of relocation have resulted in more people living and working in countries different from those in which they were born. In fact, migration has expanded from an estimated 150 million people in 2000 to about 214 million people in 2010 and is expected to continue to expand. Thus global societal issues have become a sustained focus among academic researchers with an emphasis on transnational identities, multilingualism, and assimilation.

Following this line of investigation, this project expands upon existing research by focusing on a South-East Asian migrant community in South America. Our

---

<sup>\*</sup> Special thanks go to the Innovation through Institutional Integration (I<sup>3</sup>) program at the University of Florida for funding this project and to Ana Maria Díaz Collazos for her collaborative efforts at different stages of this project. We would also like to thank our participants, the *Alianza Colombo Japonesa* in Cali, Colombia and the Díaz Collazos family for their generosity. Finally, we are grateful for the comments made by the anonymous reviewers of RWPL, whose suggestions have helped strengthen this paper. Any errors remain our own. Questions and comments should be addressed to Diego Pascual y Cabo at <dpascual@ufl.edu>.

interdisciplinary approach in this study is consistent with current theoretical and empirical research on the subject matter. In general, we aim to contribute to the amounting literature by examining the relationship between language, culture, and identity among two different generations (*Nikkei* and *issei*) of Japanese immigrants in Cali, Colombia. In this context, we will attempt to determine patterns of language use as well as to develop a better understanding of the constant negotiation of social and cultural identity among members of the abovementioned community. We start off with the idea that social, cultural and linguistic assimilation go hand in hand with the loss of the minority language (Japanese) in favor of Spanish, the dominant language. To support this hypothesis, we will present evidence obtained from a combination of sociolinguistic surveys and excerpts from in-depth interviews.

## 2 Literature Review

The terms assimilation and acculturation are often used interchangeably and in confusing manners, partially a result of disciplinary divides. For the purposes of this study, assimilation is used to refer to the process through which “the characteristics of members of immigrant groups and host societies come to resemble one another” (Brown & Bean 2006:1). Acculturation, on the other hand, is one part of the assimilation process. For instance, Gordon’s (1964) work distinguished between acculturation and other stages of assimilation. In this model, acculturation refers to the minority groups’ adoption of cultural patterns, including adopting the language, dressing habits, and customs of the host country. Acculturation could occur separately from other forms of assimilation, such as structural assimilation, indentificational assimilation, or civic assimilation. Structural assimilation occurred when immigrants were incorporated into the host country’s institutions, and this was followed by acceptance of intermarriage (marital assimilation). During indentificational assimilation, the minority group develops a sense of belonging and connection to the dominant culture. In the stages of attitude and behavior reception assimilation, there is an absence of prejudice and discrimination. Lastly, civic assimilation refers to a state in which power struggles between the majority and the immigrant group are no longer prevalent (Marger 2009). While this is the approach used in this research project, when discussing previous research by other scholars, terminology from their work is maintained.

It is important to note that unlike Gordon, (1964) who seems to focus on a more macro level analysis, Sam & Berry (2006) suggest that acculturation is the broader and more encompassing term. However, their definition of acculturation as the “meeting of cultures and the resulting change” (Sam & Berry, 2006:1), is quite similar to the definition of assimilation above. They focus on individuals and their attitudes toward the host and native cultures. According to them, individuals can be classified into four different categories based on their attitudes towards acculturation. These four categories are: assimilation, integration, separation, and marginalization. Both those who assimilate and those who are marginalized have low identification levels with the culture of origin, but those who assimilate have high identification with the receiving culture. Both those who are integrated and separated have high levels of identification with the culture of origin, but those who integrate also have high identification with the receiving culture. This model recognizes key factors that can impact the process of

acculturation: (1) the extent to which individuals want to (or are allowed to) maintain their culture of origin and (2) the extent to which they want to (or are allowed to) participate in the receiving culture (Berry 1990, Chen, Benet-Martinez and Bond 2008).

Assimilation as a concept has been critiqued in several ways. First, particularly in contexts of migration into the US, assimilation has been used in very ethnocentric manners. This criticism maintains that assimilation requires immigrant groups to abandon or unlearn their culture of origin due to its “inferior’ cultural traits” (Alba & Nee 1997:827). Taken in this way, assimilation occurs only in one direction; the immigrant group becomes more like the existing group. This view of assimilation does not take into consideration that the hosting community could also be changed by contact with the immigrant group. However, more recent proponents suggest that new hybrid cultures could develop when the minority culture impacts the majority culture, resulting in an expansion of what is considered normative. A related criticism is that many theories of assimilation assume only two groups: the existing majority group and the immigrant minority group. The criticism here is that many societies are increasingly heterogeneous with multiple groups having contact with one another. Despite these criticisms, assimilation is a useful conceptual tool because it focuses on the experiences of immigrants and the blending of cultures that is bound to happen when groups of different backgrounds come into contact with one another. Assimilation retains utility as a sensitizing concept to refer to “the social processes that bring ethnic minorities into the mainstream” (Alba & Nee 1997:828).

Notwithstanding the criticism, assimilation is expected to occur across generations. Full assimilation is generally completed within three or four generations. In classic assimilation models, it is expected that those who have resided the longest in the host country and who are members of subsequent generations would have greater similarities to the majority group. Those who are newer to the host country are expected to have greater differences. However, there is no fixed timetable for assimilation and some research suggests that assimilation is not always a linear process. Gans (1992) suggests a “bumpy-line theory” which includes the possibility of renewing ethnic identities within the host country. This theory still retains key components, including the idea that generational dynamics matter and that there is a general progression toward assimilation. Additionally, factors such as access to education, employment opportunities, social class, historical context, and issues related to racism and prejudice could impact the extent and timeframe of assimilation. For instance, those of lower social classes may be more likely to experience reactive assimilation in which they become more ethnically distinct from the host society due to their experiences with discrimination and blocked opportunities. Those of the higher social classes, on the other hand, may be more likely to engage in (symbolic) assimilation in which they achieve positions of success and then choose to maintain ethnic identities. In this model, those in the working and middle classes benefit more from assimilation and tend to conform to the majority more frequently (Brown & Bean 2006).

Immigration often provides an important triggering opportunity for developing an ethnic and linguistic identity. The development of ethnic identity is thought to be comprised of two parts: (i) exploration, in which individuals make efforts to learn about their ethnic group, including its history and its culture and (ii) affirmation, which refers to affective feelings of belonging. Ethnic identity is typically taken for granted and unexplored when living in a native country. However, during immigration, one is

confronted with cultural and linguistic differences. When individuals realize that the surrounding society's beliefs and values are different from their own, identity is likely to be impacted. Immigration could also impact ethnic identity in that those in the host culture often identify immigrants in terms of ethnic group membership as opposed to individual attributes (Matsunaga, Hecht, Elek & Ndiaye 2010). This in turn has important implications regarding language use and language maintenance.

For example, it is normal (and expected) that immigrant communities experience a shift to the language of the majority within two or three generations. Nonetheless, some immigrant communities, as seems to be the case of Spanish in Miami, are able to maintain language quite successfully (see Roca 2005 and references therein). Some factors that could lead to maintained bilingualism include continued immigration from the native country as well as the formation of multinational identities (Backus, Jorgensen & Pfaff 2010).

As presented in this section, assimilation remains a useful concept in thinking about the interactions between immigrant populations, the hosting community, and the consequential changes that occur in both cultures. In addition to that, immigration often precipitates a self-exploration of ethnic and linguistic identity. The rest of this paper focuses on these concepts and their real-life implications for Japanese immigrants living in Cali, Colombia.

### 3 Japanese Community in Cali

Although Japanese Western globalization started much earlier (Befu 2002), mass migratory waves of laborers to the Americas did not take place until approximately the end of the nineteenth century (Azuma 2002; Befu 2002). Later on, the social and political crises that were affecting Japan were pushed to their limits by the global economic downturn of 1920s. This complex situation forced the Japanese government to develop alternative measures to help alleviate the difficulties of the time. Migration to larger and less populated countries where young motivated individuals could have more opportunities was thought to be the perfect solution. At first, the US was clearly the choice of preference. This migratory pattern however, ended by the year 1889 when the US imposed restrictions towards Japanese immigration. From that moment on, Japanese emigrants directed their attention to other countries in South America where natural (untapped) resources were plentiful. Among other destinations, large numbers of Japanese emigrants started their new lives in places such as Brazil (e.g. Lesser 1999, 2002) or Peru (e.g. Irie & Himel 1951), and, to a lesser extent, Colombia (SanMiguel 2006).

According to popular culture, the arrival of the first group of Japanese immigrants to the '*Valle del Cauca*' ("Cauca Valley") is said to have been due to a translation of the novel *María* by Isaacs. According to Patiño (2006), the first five families arrived at Buenaventura on November 16, 1929. They were originally from the Kyushu island and were farmers. They had very little but in just a few years they overcame great social and economic difficulties. Socially speaking, their arrival was controversial, to say the least. Although they were generally accepted by mainstream Colombian society, negative reactions from some sectors of the host community were not uncommon. A pivotal moment in this history occurred in 1941 when the amiable

political relationship between both countries was broken due to World War II. The nations of Colombia and Japan were on opposite sides. From that moment on, Japanese immigrants suffered from ideological prejudice because they were seen as potential spies (Patiño 2006). As a result, not only did the colony remain under supervision of Colombian authorities, but some of the Japanese citizens were sent to concentration camps.

Broadly defined, the Japanese community in Colombia is made up by those who arrived in Colombia in one of two major waves (1929-1935, and 1950-1965) and their offspring (Díaz Collazos 2011). At first Japanese immigrants and their descendants married among themselves to conserve their culture. Little by little they started to marry outside their ethnic boundaries resulting in the blending of some of the identity features that characterize this group. Although the precise numbers that make up the colony in the area are not determined, they are estimated to be approximately 1,000.

Nowadays, the city of *Cali* and the nearby town of *Palmira* host the largest Japanese colony in the country. In this area, the *Alianza Colombo-Japonesa* (Colombian-Japanese Association [henceforth CJA]) is considered the heart and soul of the community due to the consulate-like role that it performs. This organization, located in a central neighborhood in Cali, attempts to spread the Japanese culture by opening their doors to both the Colombian and Japanese communities. Among other activities, they offer instruction in origami, dances, martial arts, language courses, etc. CJA also offers insights into more traditional celebrations such as the Coming of Age (*seijin no hi*), Children's Day (*kodomo no hi*), or Doll's Festival (*hina matsuri*). While they maintain an open door policy where everybody is welcome, more official services (consulate-like) are restricted to Japanese citizens. In addition to the CJA, the community is supported by some religious services such as the Tenrikyo church whose congregation consists of both Colombian and Japanese citizens. All in all, the Japanese community in Cali seems to be a strong and vibrant micro-community that enjoys social, economic, and cultural support. Nonetheless, being part of a micro- and a macro-community at the same time adds copious social and cultural complexities which may result in overlapping identities.

## 4 Overlapping Identities

The interest in the relationship between language and identity is not new. For instance, German Romanticists of the 18<sup>th</sup> & 19<sup>th</sup> century (e.g. Wilhelm von Humboldt, Johann Gottfried Herder or Johann Gottlieb Fichte) raised essential questions regarding the relationship between language, nation, and identity. They concluded that these notions are indeed inseparable and consequently, they granted linguistic identity to be an essential component of a nation. More recently, researchers from different backgrounds have applied various theoretical approaches to study the relationship between society, language, and identity. For example, Structuralist approaches treated the notion of identity as a permanent feature, as a label assigned to individuals and collectivities that shared certain characteristics. Identity was indexical of certain sets of attributes that a group of individuals shared. Under this approach, individuals were therefore assigned into pre-existing and pre-determined categories. These categories, however, concealed a number of complex realities since they did not represent individual differences

(Romaine 2004). As a consequence and in direct opposition to this view, the Post-Structuralist movement thought of the concept of Identity not as immutable and predetermined but as an ever evolving and ever transforming entity. Following this line of thought, we understand the notion of Identity as a personal feature that is malleable, permeable and affected by the continuous (re)negotiation that occurs through interactions with one another. Therefore, the focal point has shifted from absolute finished values in which identity was featured as singular to the idea that identities are plural and overlapping where there is a constant friction and tension from all aspects of the individual that cause the negotiation of identity in a specific time and place.

In this study we borrow from Bucholtz & Hall (e.g. 2004a, 2004b, 2005) the concept of identity which they define as “the social positioning of self and other” (Bucholtz & Hall 2005:586). In their work, the construction of identity is described as a multilayered process that considers all complex social and cultural related phenomena. Their proposal includes the idea that identities are constructed through several, often overlapping, aspects of the relationship between self and other. We believe that two of these aspects that form our identity are language (use & value) and our participation in ethnic/cultural events. It is considering these two concepts that we will undertake our analysis in the following sections. Next, we describe the specific details of the present study focusing on the Japanese community in Cali and the methodology.

## 5 The Present Study

The main goal of this paper is to examine the relationship between language and identity among Japanese and Japanese-Colombian immigrants in Cali, Colombia. This immigrant community was specifically chosen because of the insights it can provide about several key topics related to social (e.g. immigration, social assimilation) and sociolinguistic (e.g. linguistic assimilation, perceptions and attitudes) issues. As we will detail later on, here we focus on two main issues: (i) the value assigned to each language, and (ii) the (Japanese & Colombian) cultural involvement of the informants.

Although the Japanese immigrants might be the numerical minority in this specific community, many of them have high levels of education and prestigious jobs, two things that typically lead to higher social status (Cf. Díaz Collazos 2011). Accordingly, in addition to offering a unique opportunity to study some of the linguistic outcomes that result from a language contact situation (e.g. simplification, innovation), this community also offers a distinctive context of immigration status and power.

In this area of research, the focus has traditionally been placed in the study of displaced communities in economically developed areas of the Western hemisphere (e.g. Spanish immigrant communities in the US; see Niño-Murcia & Rothman 2008 and references therein) leaving other communities relatively understudied (e.g. Japanese immigrant communities in Latin America). The present study aims to fill this gap in the literature by undertaking an analysis that will partially define the social and linguistic boundaries of the Japanese-Spanish bilingual community in the South West of Colombia. While we acknowledge that, due to the low number of participants (n=31), our data cannot fully support final conclusions that represent the whole Japanese-

Colombian community in Cali, we believe that our results provide a significant contribution to the existing literature on Japanese immigration to South America.

In the following subsections, we will discuss how language influences self-identity among the immigrant community as well as how the constructions of these individual self-identities affect the cultural, ethnic and linguistic nature that characterizes the group as part of a larger community.

## 5.1 Research Questions

As it has been stated before, this paper examines the (re)negotiation of identity through the acquisition, use and maintenance of the Japanese language in a predominantly Spanish speaking community. We acknowledge that such an enterprise should incorporate an analysis that considers the multiple and complex interrelationships that take place between globalization, multilingualism and identity in this particular community. Thus, by examining this type of (re)negotiation, we will be able to address how members of this community engage in indexical representations of languages and identities in their everyday lives.

By looking at macro- and micro-level discourses, we can observe how members of this community adhere to, negotiate, contest, and challenge their identities with respect to the larger society where they live. In order to complement our discursive analysis we will look at the responses from two different groups regarding two aspects that in our opinion constitute core aspects of identity: (i) linguistic values that participants assign to language (Japanese and Spanish), and (ii) cultural involvement (in the Japanese and Colombian culture).

Based on previous research, the questions that guide the present study are the following:

**Research Question 1:** What is the current status of the Japanese language in this community? Are there signs of language loss/language maintenance?

**Hypothesis 1:** We predict that in this language contact situation, Japanese language may show signs of relative maintenance because of the high social and economic status associated with the community. Nonetheless, a decrease in the use of Japanese is expected among members of the second generation.

**Research Question 2:** What is the relationship between language and identity among members of this community?

**Hypothesis 2:** We predict that members of the second generation will reveal a much higher degree of indeterminacy regarding their cultural involvement as well as the linguistic value they assign to each language. Their responses therefore, as it relates to identity issues, might show signs of indecision and even contradiction representing plural, ever changing overlapped identities.

## 5.2 Methodology

Potential participants were informed of the details of the project by the ACJ. As a prerequisite for participation, our informants had to be either born in Japan or born in Colombia from Japanese or Japanese-Colombian mixed family. Once initial contacts were made, additional participants were recruited through snowball sampling. Two trained, Spanish native speakers conducted data elicitation and collection. A total of 31 individuals (12 male/19 female), ranging in age from 21 to 82 (average 54) voluntarily participated in this study.

Participants were divided in two main groups according to place of birth and age of arrival to Colombia. The first group (henceforth G1) includes individuals born and raised in Japan that migrated to Colombia after the age of fourteen. Members of this group are considered Japanese native speakers. The second group (henceforth G2) includes individuals who were either born in Colombia of Japanese origin (e.g. both parents were Japanese) or born in Japan but migrated to Colombia before the age of 10. Members of this group are considered Spanish native speakers. This specific age division (10–14) corresponds to well documented maturational/biological issues that have social and linguistic effects (e.g. Lenneberg 1967).

Informants were asked to complete three tasks:

- (i) Language background questionnaire
- (ii) Sociolinguistic attitudes questionnaire
- (iii) Personal interview

The questions included in the first task tried to elicit information regarding their personal information, the level of formal instruction received in either language, the time spent in Japan (since moving to Colombia), and their language use. Although no independent proficiency measures were used, participants were asked to provide a self-reporting numeric value (1= very low to 7= very high) to rate their perceived linguistic skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) both in Spanish and in Japanese. While we acknowledge the fact that these data are just perceptions and are not indexical of the participants' real linguistic abilities, we believe that actual accuracy regarding language proficiency becomes secondary in this type of study because we are dealing with their sociolinguistic identities and not their cognitive linguistic representations per se. In addition, people's attitudes and perceptions on and about language & language use provide additional data to interpret. Thus, we accept these as very useful pieces of information for our study because in them we can observe participants' inherent attitudes towards the language(s) in this specific community.

The attitudes questionnaire, containing a total of 30 questions, tested the overall feelings and preferences regarding social, cultural and linguistic issues in this specific community. Our interest here is centered on two key issues: (i) the value participants assign to each language (henceforth Linguistic Value) and (ii) their involvement in activities that are part of the Japanese or Colombian culture (henceforth Cultural Involvement). Each of these conditions was investigated by calculating the informants' average responses to several interrelated questions using a 5 point Likert scale (1= strongly disagree; 2=disagree; 3= nor agree nor disagree; 4= agree; 5= strongly agree) and instructed to circle the most appropriate number. Examples (1-6) below illustrate

some of the questions used to elicit information regarding the linguistic value participants assign to each language (1-3) as well as their participation in cultural events (3-6).

- (1) *¿Has sentido vergüenza alguna vez al hablar japonés?*  
[Have you ever felt embarrassed to speak Japanese?]
- (2) *¿Has sentido vergüenza al escuchar hablar español/japonés a algún miembro de tu familia?*  
[Have you ever felt embarrassed to hear a relative of yours speak Spanish/Japanese?]
- (3) *Hablo español porque lo necesito para poder ganarme la vida.*  
[I speak Spanish because I am compelled to use it in order to make a living]
- (4) *¿Cómo definirías tus gustos gastronómicos?*  
[How would you define your eating habits?]
- (5) *Si tuviera que elegir entre una invitación para una fiesta con amigos colombianos y una con amigos japoneses, decidiría ir a la fiesta colombiana.*  
[If I had a conflict between two invitations, one with Colombian friends, and another with Japanese friends, I decide to go to the Colombian party]
- (6) *Si tuviera que elegir entre una invitación para una fiesta con amigos colombianos y una con amigos japoneses, decidiría ir a la fiesta japonesa.*  
[If I had a conflict between two invitations, one with Colombian friends, and another with Japanese friends, I decide to go to the Japanese party]

The data were systematically coded and analyzed using SPSS (17.0). To test the reliability of this methodology, we calculated the Cronbach's alpha values of the scales for each language. A Cronbach's alpha of .65 or greater is considered an acceptable coefficient of reliability. The closer the alpha values are to 1 the more reliable the scale. These values can be observed in the table below:

Linguistic Value		Cultural Involvement	
Spanish ( $\alpha = .765$ )	Japanese ( $\alpha = .817$ )	Colombian ( $\alpha = .647$ )	Japanese ( $\alpha = .704$ )

Table 1: Cronbach Alpha Values

In addition to the aforementioned questionnaires, informants were asked to participate in a face to face semi-structured interview. Following well-established sociolinguistic methodologies (e.g. Tagliamonte 2006; Silva-Corvalán 1994), informants were asked a set of open-ended questions that elicited information regarding general aspects of their life. These interviews were conducted in Spanish by trained Spanish native speakers. Upon the informants' requests, most of the interviews took place in their houses. Otherwise, the interviews took place at the ACJ. The average duration of the interviews was one hour and six minutes. Interviews were digitally recorded and stored. An external person to the project, a Spanish native speaker from Cali, was hired to transcribe the interviews<sup>2</sup>. Random excerpts from the transcriptions were examined

<sup>2</sup> Complete interviews can be found at <http://talkbank.org/browser/index.php?url=BilingBank/DiazCollazos/>

for accuracy by a Spanish native speaker. No major inconsistencies were found between the content of the transcription and the actual interview.

## 6 Results

### 6.1 Demographics

Sixty-one percent of the participants were identified as women. Among them, sixty-three were categorized as non-native Spanish speakers. Non-native Spanish speakers (group 1) are immigrants who use Spanish as second language and who moved to Colombia at age fourteen or older. The remaining 37 % of women are considered native Spanish speakers. Among the former group, women reported migrating either for arranged marriages, work, or as adolescent children with their parents. The males in the sample (39 %) reported having gone to Colombia either for work, to seek new opportunities, or as children with their parents (See Table 2 below).

	<b>Group 1 (Non-Native Spanish Speakers)=19</b>	<b>Group 2 (Native Spanish Speakers)=12</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
<b>Female</b>	63.2% (14)	36.8%(5)	61%(19)
<b>Male</b>	58.3% (5)	41.7% (7)	39% (12)
<b>TOTAL</b>	61.3 (19)	38.7 9 (12)	100

Table 2: Distribution of Participants by Gender and Generations

Sixty-one percent of participants reported that they were born in Japan (See Table 2). As migrants to Colombia, a minority of this sample came as children, but the majority of them came to Colombia as teenagers or young adults. A reduced number of participants reported having parents that were a part of the military, and during the interview process they recalled stories of their parents and grandparents migrating to Colombia after WWI and WWII. Others had parents who moved to Colombia in search of a dream and to seek better opportunities.

### 6.2 Language use

According to their perceptions, members from G1 have a greater rate of proficiency in the Japanese language than in Spanish in all four aspects (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). This is not controversial since it directly corresponds to the fact that Japanese is their native language and that they were not introduced to Spanish until an advanced age, reducing the probability of achieving a native-like control of the language (see Figure 1).

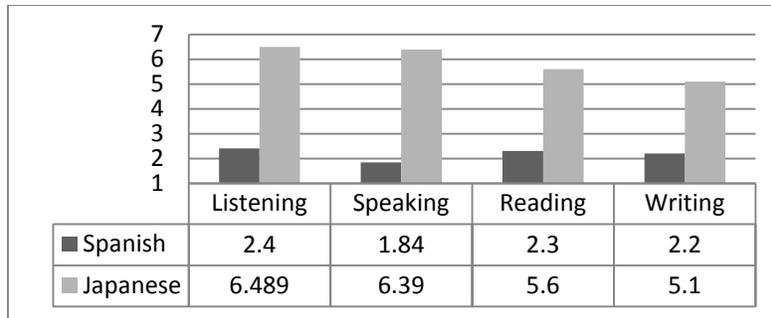


Figure 1: Group 1 Perceived Language Proficiency

Figure 2 illustrates the perceived proficiency for those informants who were born in Colombia or migrated before the age of 10. In this case, it is the Spanish language that receives higher scores for self-rated proficiency. Additionally, although still remaining lower than self-rated proficiency in Spanish, values for Japanese seem to be higher for comprehension-related activities (listening and reading) than for production related activities (speaking and writing).

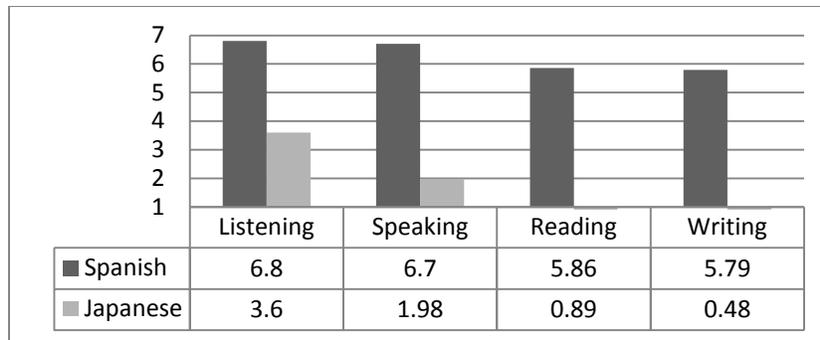


Figure 2: Group 2 Perceived Language Proficiency

### 6.3 Linguistic value

Due to the relative low numbers of participants, we do not expect that the results obtained here fully correspond to a normal distribution. Keeping this in mind, we performed the Mann-Whitney test to examine our participants' attitudes regarding the concepts of 'cultural involvement' and 'linguistic value'. The Mann-Whitney is a non-parametric test (distribution-free) used to compare two independent groups of sampled data. Unlike the parametric t-test, this non-parametric makes no assumptions about the distribution of the data (e.g., normality). This test is an alternative to the independent group t-test, when the assumption of normality or equality of variance is not met. Recall that these concepts were constructed by means of grouping together several interrelated questions from the sociolinguistic questionnaire (see section 5.2). The results obtained are presented in Table 3 below.

Conditions over groups	Mann-Whitney test
Linguistic Value- Spanish	120***
Linguistic Value- Japanese	129.5**
Cultural Involvement- Colombian	139.5*
Cultural Involvement- Japanese	230***

w\*P value  $\leq .05$ , \*\* P value  $\leq .01$ , \*\*\* P Value  $\leq .001$

Table 3: Results of Mann-Whitney test of Cultural Involvement, and Linguistic Value

Highly significant relationships were observed between the respondent's group and the linguistic value they place on each language (Spanish and Japanese). These results suggest that there is a statistically significant difference between both groups regarding the underlying distributions of the linguistic value of Spanish ( $z = 120$   $p = 0.001$ ) and Japanese ( $z = 129.5$   $p = 0.01$ ). In general, members of G1 reported moderate linguistic value in Spanish and moderate to high linguistic value in Japanese. Members of G2, however, reported a low to somewhat moderate linguistic value for Spanish and a low to moderate linguistic value for Japanese as well (see Figures 3A and 3.B).

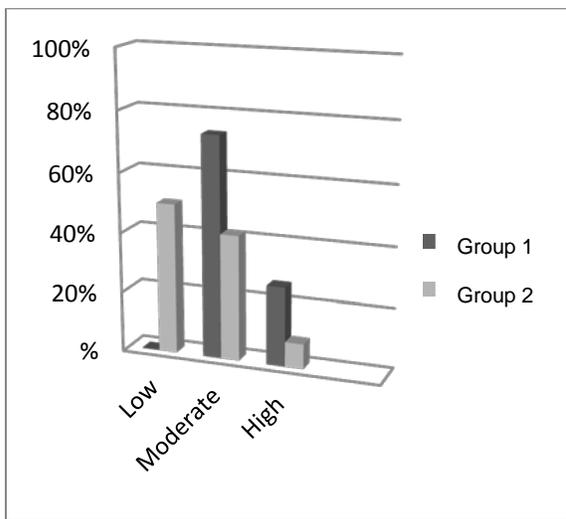


Figure 3.A: Japanese Linguistic Value

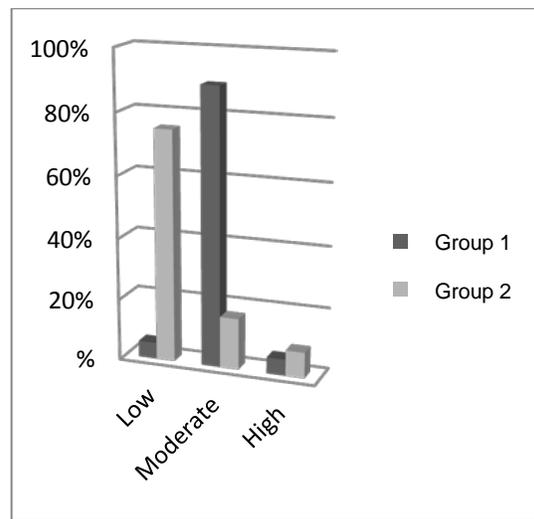


Figure 3.B: Spanish Linguistic Value

These results suggest that our participants' dominant language tends to dictate the value they will assign to both their primary and secondary languages. For example, while primary speakers of Japanese (G1) tend to value the Japanese language as moderate to high, the Spanish language only reaches a moderate value. Although Spanish seems to be not as valuable as Japanese to members of (G1), they still consider it an important tool for (social & economic) success as since they live in a (practically) monolingual Spanish speaking community. The qualitative data corroborates this evidence. For instance, members of G2 (as well as of G1) comment on the social expectations for them to speak Japanese. Although they see Japanese as a resource and an outlet for cultural connection, they tend to see Spanish as tool to navigate their world and gain opportunities. In this regard, participant 23 (G2) says,

(7) 23: [...to learn a language is ideal as a child. Then it is difficult, it is more difficult later. I think that it is important that you pass your culture...language, because it is lost. And I at least I studied Japanese because you say... well you have the slightly slanted eyes and speak Japanese but because it will be the first thing people ask me. You speak Japanese? and if one does not speak it, I think I'd feel bad, so I thought... I have to learn. It would be embarrassing to not know the language of my father or my mother.]

(8) 23: [I think if your dad is from another country I think it is necessary to know the country of your dad... and one needs to learn the language. To my shame as well, it is a necessity to know the country, right?, the country where your dad is from, and to know the country you have to understand the customs and habits need to understand the language.

According to the previous excerpts, participant 23 is implying that he needs to maintain a sense of cultural connection for his descendants (as well as for himself) through the use of the Japanese language. As a Japanese person, he feels that there are expectations for him to know about his culture. In this case, language (and the ability to carry culture on through language) serves as a connection to the Japanese culture. However, he suggests that to truly understand language you must also understand culture (habits and customs).

Among members of G2, it is interesting to note that participants reported a low value on Spanish while also rating Japanese language value as low to moderate. This may indicate that dominant Spanish speakers value Japanese a little more because it connects them to culture.

(9) 5: [No, I was born a year later, I came almost half a half, half ... I came for ... I was born in 1953. My oldest sister came here for 3 years. She really is in Japan right now and she picked it up [Japanese]. But she lost it [Japanese] here...she forgot it because she never practiced it and [while she was here] then was learning Spanish. Although we do [understand Japanese] because [as kids] we were all day listening to them [Japanese native speakers], then the ear is used to it, I do understand. Then one understands a lot about what they were talking, but not to speak for myself...not that. I, for example [can participate] in a conversation that is routine, the routine you understand, right? Although there are already words so suddenly [that] I don't understand, more like that, [...]then one can make a summary of words that they tell you in conversation [...]Yes there are things I understand, for example the lady who came here talking to me things [in Japanese] I understood...]

Members of G1, on the other hand, value Japanese more than they value Spanish, probably due to the fact that they are Japanese dominant. To them, Spanish is a necessary tool that guarantees their social and economic well-being.

## 6.4 Cultural involvement

Our results suggest that there is a main effect between the scores regarding Colombian and Japanese cultural involvement and whether a person belongs to G1 or G2. A statistically significant difference between the distributions of Colombian cultural involvement for G1 and the Colombian cultural involvement for G2 ( $z = 139.5$   $p = 0.05$ )

is observed. Similarly, a significant difference is also observed between the distributions of the Japanese cultural involvement between groups ( $z = 230$   $p = 0.001$ ) who are dominant Japanese speakers and dominant Spanish speakers (see Figure 4 a&b).

Members of G1 report high levels of involvement with the Japanese culture and moderate levels of participation in Colombian culture. Conversely, members of G2 report an almost even distribution of time spent on moderate to high levels of involvement in both Japanese and Colombian Cultural events. Therefore Japanese involvement seems to be more important to Japanese native speakers (G1). For native Spanish speakers (G2), it is equally important to participate in both Colombian and Japanese cultural events.

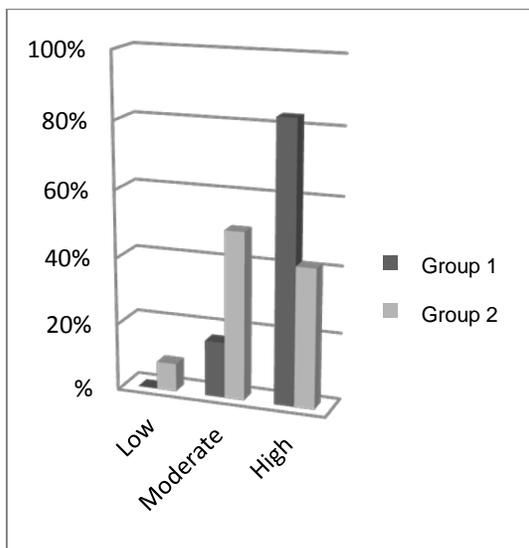


Figure 4.A: Japanese Cultural Involvement

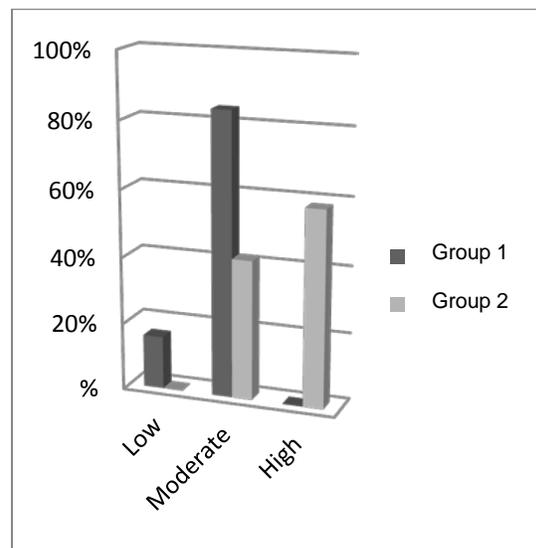


Figure 4.B: Colombian Cultural Involvement

Taking this together, the data seem to suggest that, culturally speaking, while members of G1 still exhibit strong connections to their native land and culture, members of the second group show signs of preferences that line up with the core values of the Colombian main stream society in which they live. Members of both groups alike value the Japanese language not so much as a tool for communication but as a symbolic element that is indexical of a remote past of which they are proud. Among members of G2, only a reduced percentage feels that they are part of the Japanese Community. Most of them feel stronger connections with the Colombian mainstream society. Participant 20 from group one suggests that language and culture intersects but more importantly culture pervades:

(10) 20: [...Of course for me they are very important...language and culture, because language alone does not exist (...). So if you do not know everything [about language], then you will reflect the cultural level you have. But I think there are many things that are involved (in language) and that is what I'm trying to teach here, not only the language but the other things...]

For native Spanish speakers (G2) their participation in cultural events, and not their use of and attitudes towards the language is what allows them to feel connected to the larger Japanese community in the area. This may explain their high participation in Japanese-related cultural activities as well as their attitudes on their heritage language.

## 7 Discussion

Our first research question was formulated with the goal to find out about the current status of the Japanese language in this community and to observe current trends of language use and signs of language loss/maintenance. We predicted that in this language contact situation, Japanese language would show signs of relative maintenance due to the high social and economic status associated with the success of the community. Conversely, we also predicted that a decrease in the use of Japanese is expected among members of the second generation.

Our second research question attempted to shed light on the relationship between language and identity among members of this community. We predicted that individuals from the second generation will reveal a much higher degree of indeterminacy regarding their cultural involvement and the linguistic value they assign to each language. Their responses therefore, as it relates to identity issues, will show greater signs of overlap and contradiction which we describe in the following subsection.

### 7.1 Overlapping identities

As it pertains to ideas of overlap and contradiction, several key themes emerged from the interviews. First, participants in both groups 1 and 2 indicated a sense of embarrassment about not knowing the Japanese language or participating in significant cultural practices. At the same time, there are indications of preference to maintain Japanese culture. Lastly, many participants expressed awareness of difficulties both being part of Colombian culture and maintaining Japanese connections. Each of these themes is discussed below.

There is a general sense of embarrassment regarding the social, cultural and linguistic expectations related to their ethnicity. This is obvious in the following excerpt (11). Participant 3 (female/G1) is asked to describe sumo, a popular sport in Japan.

(11) 3: [...it has like a circle, but I don't know how many meters...I don't know how many meters....What a shame...I am Japanese but I don't understand...]

(12) 3: [...Well...it is more or less, it's ok but I am very ashamed of it because we have a traditional game without Japanese (players)...]

This idea is further exposed by participant #5(Female/G2). She is talking about language and culture in general and describes that members of the second generation are not usually interested in learning about it.

(13) 5: [(speaking about language)...but I don't know...and we did not want to learn those kinds of things. It was also like a mistake, they did not teach us that, so...]

Participant 8 (Female/G1) talks about other cultural topics such as food choices, her positive attitudes towards Japanese food contrast with negative opinions towards Colombian food.

(14) 8: [(speaking about food)...I prefer Japanese food, because one eats less fats and more vegetables. A Colombian person eats a lot of fat, *chicharrones*. Rice, for instance, I add some salt and oil, but no, kids like it like that (Colombian style)]

Throughout the whole interview, participant 6 (Female/G1) showed a great deal of indeterminacy regarding cultural and social position within this community. One of these topics of indeterminacy is represented in the opinions regarding marriage choices for themselves or their offspring. This is what participant #6 had to say about it:

(15) 6: [...I'd like him to be a Japanese person, as long as she likes him...]

(16) 6: [...they didn't accept marriage to Colombians, there were families that accepted, but my husband's family almost did not...]

(17) 6:[...She would like to marry a Japanese person, not a Colombian...because Colombians, especially the ones from Cali, are womanizers and that they do not respect whether they are married or with a girlfriend...]

Additional contradiction is evident in the following excerpt from participant 21 (Female/G2) in which she describes her relationship with her relatives that had returned to Japan. Some of them have had children and they suggest that the communication among them is hindered because they speak little Spanish. In regards to the communicative skills of her nephew she states the following:

(18) 21: [No...no my nephew in Japan does not, in Japan he does not speak Spanish, he speaks in a funny way]

Interestingly, though she does not speak Japanese, she expects her relatives living in Japan to speak Spanish. This is exemplified in (19) below where, after being asked about her nephew not speaking Spanish, she directly asserts that it is important for him to learn the language.

(19) 21: [He must learn...(Spanish)]

Members of the second generation Japanese community often showed signs of distancing themselves from the members of the first generation and especially from the Japanese community in Japan. Participant 22 (Male/G2) clearly exemplifies this distance by excluding himself from a group that he accuses of being racist.

(20) 22: [I have Japanese passport, not there (in Japan), one is not well regarded, one is treated as a foreigner, even if one is born in Japan...and has the official documents

from Japan, one is a foreigner for them. I don't know...they are very racists. No, the language has nothing to do with it...]

These excerpts reveal a great deal of contradiction between our participants' beliefs and their actions regarding cultural involvement and the value they assign to each language. This indeterminacy largely supports our predictions. In the next subsections, we discuss the results obtained from linguistic value and cultural involvement.

## 7.2 Linguistic value

As it relates to the value that informants assign to each language, our results suggest that members of G1 (native Japanese speakers) assign a moderate value to Spanish. This is corroborated with the results from the interviews. Those who were Japanese native speakers and migrated to Colombia at an early age are also able to speak Spanish fluently and able to gain employment in Colombia. Their parents typically encouraged them to drop their Japanese language and adopt Spanish in order to be successful. These results demonstrate that the Spanish language in this case is used as an economic resource and fluency in the language is expected from others (e.g. through parental encouragement). In addition, native Spanish speakers (G2) also find value (although to a lesser extent) in Japanese and report moderate levels of linguistic value in the language. Low linguistic value in Spanish and low and moderate linguistic value in Japanese for members of G1 imply that members of G1 use language purely as a utilitarian product.

However, there are other factors that also have an impact on the kind of language participants are motivated or socialized to speak, such as a person's perceived ethnicity. Japanese people in Colombia reported being held accountable by people they encountered on their day to day interactions to be able to speak Japanese—usually people can tell from the way they look that they are of Asian descent and therefore they are expected to be able to speak the Japanese language.

## 7.3 Cultural involvement

Regarding cultural involvement, an interesting observation is that members of G2 report participating almost equally in both Spanish and Japanese cultural events. In our opinion, this is revealing because native Spanish speakers face the most social and linguistic pressure since they encounter strong pressures to maintain the Japanese language and culture but are also highly expected to be an active part of the social, cultural, and economic makeup of Colombia. We interpret this to mean that, to some extent, participation in Japanese-oriented cultural events allows them to feel connected to a culture and a community that they feel should be a part of, and at the same time, such active participation serves a substitute for their lack of command in the Japanese language.

Overall results indicate that identity encompasses multiple aspects which are very complex and often intertwined. Japanese-Colombians are found in a constant state of (re)negotiation regarding social, cultural and linguistic identity. In general,

participants see language as tool to access economic resources and consider their participation in cultural events as a way to represent (in the absence of language) their cultural and ethnic identities. Most interestingly, we find that when participants face deficiencies in language they often use other aspects of their identities to make up for what they are lacking.

## 8 Conclusion

With continued global migration, issues related to language use, cultural adaptations, and conflicts between minority and majority groups remain important topics for interdisciplinary study. Following this line of investigation, this paper has examined a bilingual community of Japanese–Spanish speakers in Cali, Colombia and the role of language and of language choice as they relate to the social, cultural, and linguistic identities of the members of this community. Results from sociolinguistic questionnaires as well as personal interviews point to elevated signs of indeterminacy and contradiction. We interpret this indeterminacy as a result of multiple overlapping identities that represent both the expectation to be part of the minority group as well as the expectation to fully assimilate to the host community. As a result, these identities compete with each as acts of ‘conflicting loyalties’: “Acts of loyalty conflict with uncommitted behavior (i.e. lack of commitment to turn positive attitudes into action) in most speakers” (Silva-Corvalán 1994: 168).

Although we are cognizant that our discussion of the results may not yield valid conclusions for the whole Japanese community in Cali, we believe that it represents general trends of the social, cultural, and linguistic patterns of a representative group for this community. This study therefore contributes to current social, cultural, and sociolinguistic research of communities in exile-like situations and on the diverse processes of assimilation they may encounter.

Notwithstanding such contribution, we acknowledge several deficiencies in our data. As a result, we recommend that further research on this community should include a larger pool of participants. In addition, factors associated with various levels of assimilation should be explored, including work opportunities, cultural events, and perceived self-identity.

Finally, while it is important to understand perceptions of cultural identity and assimilation in immigrant communities to gain a better understanding of adaptive processes, we also believe that it is necessary to explore ways to support both host and immigrant communities. Thus, it would be of tremendous value to develop a better understanding of how the dominant community sees the members of the Japanese-Colombian colony as well as to determine what (individual/social/administrative) efforts and (symbolic) investments are currently being made towards retaining different aspects of the Japanese culture (e.g. language, traditions, etc).

## References

- Alba, R. and Nee, V. 1997. Rethinking Assimilation Theory for a New Era of Immigration. *International Migration Review* 31: 826–874.
- Austin, J. 1975. *How to Do Things with Words*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. J.O. Urmson and M. Sbisà (Eds). Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press.
- Azuma, E. 2002. Introduction to the Impact of Globalization on Nikkei Identities. In *New Worlds, New Lives: Globalization and People of Japanese descent in the Americas and from Latin America*, ed. L. Hirabayashi, A. Kikumura-Yano, and J. Hirabayashi, 1–5. Stanford, Ca: Stanford UP.
- Befu, H. 2002. Globalization as Human Dispersal: Nikkei in the World. In *New Worlds, New Lives: Globalization and People of Japanese descent in the Americas and from Latin America*, ed. L. Hirabayashi, A. Kikumura-Yano, and J. Hirabayashi, 17–40. Stanford, CA: Stanford UP.
- Berry, J. W. 1990. *Psychology of acculturation*. In *The culture and psychology reader*, ed. N. R. Goldberger and J. B. Veroff, 457–488. New York: New York University Press. [Reprinted from *Nebraska symposium on motivation: Cross-cultural perspectives*, by J. J. Berman (Ed.), 1989, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.]
- Bourdieu, P. 1977. *Outline of a theory of practice*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Brown, S., and F. Bean. 2006. New Immigrants, New Models of Assimilation. Prepared for a Special Issue on “The Second Generation,” *Migration Information Source*, Migration Policy Institute, Washington, DC.
- Bucholtz, M. and K. Hall. 2004a. Language and identity. In *A Companion to linguistic anthropology*, ed. Duranti, 369–394. Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- , 2004b. Theorizing identity in language and sexuality research. *Language in society* 33: 501–547.
- , 2005. Identity and interaction: a sociocultural linguistic approach. *Discourse Studies* 7: 4–5.
- Cameron, D. 2001. *Working with Spoken Discourse*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Chen, S., Benet-Martinez, V., and Bond, M. 2008. Bicultural Identity, Bilingualism, and Psychological Adjustment in Multicultural Societies: Immigration-Based and Globalization-Based Acculturation. *Journal of Personality* 76: 803–838.
- Díaz Collazos, A. M. 2011. An Interdisciplinary Approach to Studying the Japanese Immigrants in Colombia: Community, Identity, and L2 Spanish Variation of Articles. *Divergencias. Revista de Estudios Lingüísticos y Literarios*. 9,1;76-89.
- Irie, T. and Himel, W. 1951. History of Japanese Migration to Peru. *The Hispanic American*.
- Gans, H. 1992. Second Generation Decline: Scenarios for the Economic and Ethnic Futures of Post-1965 American Immigrants. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 15: 173–192.
- Gordon, M. 1964. *Assimilation in American Life*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Hirabayashi, L., A. Kikumura-Yano, and J. Hirabayashi. 2002. The Impact of Contemporary Globalization on Nikkei identities. In *New Worlds, New Lives: Globalization and People of Japanese descent in the Americas and from Latin America*, ed. L. Hirabayashi, A. Kikumura-Yano, and J. Hirabayashi, 19–27. Stanford, Ca: Stanford, UP.
- Lenneberg, E. H. 1967. *Biological Foundations of Language*. New York, NY: Wiley.
- Lesser, J. 1999. *Negotiating national identity: Immigration, and the struggle for ethnicity in Brazil*. Duke University Press.
- Lesser, J. 2002. In Search of the Hyphen: Nikkei and the Struggle over Brazilian National Identity. In *New Worlds, New Lives: Globalization and People of Japanese descent in the Americas and from Latin America*, ed. L. Hirabayashi, A. Kikumura-Yano, and J. Hirabayashi, 37–58. Stanford, Ca: Stanford, UP.
- Marger, M. 2009. *Race and Ethnic Relations: American and Global Perspectives*. Belmont, CA: Cengage Learning.
- Matsunaga, M., Hecht, M., Elek, E. and Ndiaye, K. 2010. Ethnic Identity Development and Acculturation: A Longitudinal Analysis of Mexican-Heritage Youth in the Southwest United States. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* 41: 410–427.
- Niño-Murcia, M. and J. Rothman. 2008. *Bilingualism and identity: Spanish at the crossroads with other languages*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Oriyama, K. 2010. Heritage Language Maintenance and Japanese Identity Formation: What Role Can Schooling and Ethnic Community Contact Play? *Heritage Language Journal* 7 (2) 76-11.

- Patiño, G. 2006. *Revista Semana* No.1278, 30 de octubre de 2006
- Peirce, B. 1997. Social identity, investment, and language learning. *Tesol Quaterly* Vol. 29, 1.
- Romaine, S. 2004. The bilingual and multilingual community. In *The Handbook of Bilingualism*, ed. Tej K. Bhatia and William C. Ritchie, 385–406. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Sam, D. & Berry, J. 2006. Introduction. In *The Cambridge Handbook of Acculturation Psychology*, ed. D. Sam and J. Berry, New York: Cambridge University Press.
- SanMiguel, I. 2006. Japoneses en Colombia: Historia de inmigración. *Revista de Estudios Sociales* 23, 81–96.
- Silva-Corvalán, C. 1994. *Language Contact and Change: Spanish in Los Angeles*. New York, NY: Oxford UP.
- Tagliamonte, S. 2006. *Analyzing Sociolinguistic Variation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University.