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Changes in Japanese ESL Speakers' Identities and in Their Attitudes Toward Speaking English

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ABSTRACT

This study examined changes in English as a second language (ESL) speakers' identities and in their attitudes toward speaking English, based on the responses provided by 75 Japanese students attending college in the United States (U.S.). Analyses of their responses revealed that the more time those ESL speakers spent in the U.S., the more they became in favor of speaking English in their own way, experienced a positive transition between different identity types, and felt either prouder or less proud of their identity as Japanese. The study results also suggested that two to three years in an English-speaking country or environment might mark a turning point for many ESL speakers' attitude and identity changes. Furthermore, those who had only a short-term ESL learning experience before being mainstreamed into college were more likely to experience a transition earlier during the four years of college than those with a long-term ESL learning experience.

Speaking like a native speaker is often regarded as one of the most important goals by language learners, but their goals may shift over time. According to Gao, Cheng, Zhao, and Zhou (2005), learning a new language causes changes to "one's perceptions of his or her competence, communication styles, and value systems" (p. 39). A multitude of changes may also occur in learners' perspectives toward themselves and the world as well as their attitudes toward the first language (L1) and/or second language (L2) community. In particular, it has been argued that learning a language affects learners' identity to varying degrees and that their identity develops and transforms "through continued engagement with the language and the target language community" (Capobianco, 2017, p. 16) (Gao et al., 2005; Gao, Jia, & Zhou, 2015; Gao, Ma, & Wang, 2016; Gu, 2010). Identity and other factors may also interact with learners' attitudes toward their L2.

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In a general sense, "identity" refers to "self-identity" or a unique self that has a distinct mind and body, "a private and subjective entity which self-reports as 'I'" and "the site of consciousness, of memories, thoughts, and experience" (Riley, 2006, p. 296). It also refers to "social identity" with characteristics shared among the members of certain groups in society, which include age, sex, gender, race, ethnicity, profession, and religion and may confer on people "specific social roles" (Riley, 2006, p. 296). From a "structuralist" perspective, which views an object as "entity with an inherent and enduring structure" (Gao, 2007, p. 104), identity is externally defined as a fixed and static category such as nationality, ethnicity, socioeconomic class, and age.

A general psychological view of identity also focuses on stable patterns of individual learners' minds and characteristics (Gao et al., 2015). In contrast, "constructivists" view identity as a multiple, dynamic, and ambivalent process of construction through "the interaction between the agent and the external environment" (Gao, 2007, p. 104; Gao et al., 2015, p. 138). Capobianco (2017) shares a similar perspective, claiming that identity can be constructed by numerous variables including the social and cultural environment and should be recognized as being in a continual process of development rather than in terms of binaries. That is, language itself invariably functions as "a means through which individuals are identified and establish identities" and learning a different language helps learners to develop their identity differently (Capobianco, 2017, p. 14). Language learning can thus lead to not only an acquisition of language skills but dynamic and multidimensional personal changes of perspectives, values, and identity.

These concepts regarding language learners' identity can be explained in terms of subtractive and additive bilingualism (Lambert, 1975). With subtractive bilingualism, learners' native language (NL) and identity are replaced with their target language (TL) and identity. With additive bilingualism, learners' NL and identity are maintained while the TL and target cultural identity are added. As an alternate, Gao (2001, 2002) proposed "productive bilingualism," in which learners' TL and NL positively enhance each other, and "deeper understanding and appreciation of the target culture goes hand in hand with deeper understanding and appreciation of the native culture" (Gao et al., 2005, p. 40). With productive bilingualism, learners experience "cognitive, affective, and creativity growth, achieving a '1 + 1 > 2' outcome" (Gao et al., 2015, p. 139).

Focusing on language learners' attitudinal and identity changes, an increasing number of quantitative and qualitative studies have been conducted in recent years. Gao et al. (2005), for instance, conducted a quantitative study of over 2,000 Chinese college students in China to investigate their self-identity changes associated with English as a foreign language (EFL) learning. Results showed that positive "self-confidence change" (change in the perception of one's own competence) marked the most prominent change, while some "productive and additive changes" (appreciation for and coexistence of the NL and TL) were observed in learners' values and communication styles. Gao et al. (2015) did a four-year longitudinal study of 1,000 college students in China, which found that positive self-confidence change was the most prominent throughout the four years, with "subtractive change" (replacement of the NL cultural identity with the TL cultural identity) on a steady increase, and additive and productive changes as well as "split change" (identity conflict) underwent a marked increase in the fourth year.

Gao and her associates (2016) conducted a four-year qualitative study with four Chinese college students to observe their identity development through time while learning English and using it as a lingua franca. The study found that the students constructed multiple kinds of global identity as well as a prominent Chinese national identity. Gu (2010) also investigated Chinese college students for two years and identified three stages in the national identity development related to English learning: (1) "initial admiration of English-speaking cultures," (2) "antagonism towards alien things" and (3) "conciliation between the national and the global." Capobianco's (2017) qualitative study of Japanese learners of

English also found that they underwent identity transformations/(re)construction in the continued process of their language learning and interaction with the TL community.

What, then, are the possible identity types and attitudes that learners develop at different stages of language learning? Gao (2014) conceptualized the four "identity prototypes" of English learners that have emerged during colonial and postcolonial eras and through globalization. The first prototype is the "faithful imitator," who attempts to speak and behave "in a native(-like) manner" and fully immerse him- or herself in the target culture (C2), including its values and norms (Gao, 2014, p. 60). The faithful imitator eagerly seeks accurate and appropriate use of the L2 like a child "without a distinct self" who tries to copy his or her parents in every respect (Gao, 2014, pp. 60-62). This prototype is characterized by "integration, acculturation, or socialization into the C2 community" (2014, p. 60). The second prototype is the "legitimate speaker," who strives for "effective communication and identity expression" rather than "perfect imitation of native speakers" (Gao, 2014, p. 62). The legitimate speaker believes that language has individual and cultural varieties that are as equally valid and "good" as those of native speakers. Various accents are hence no longer regarded as flaws but become "neutral or positive markers of group identity and of equal and distinct participants in communication" (Gao, 2014, pp. 62-63). This type of speaker is seen more like an independent self. The third prototype is called the "playful creator," who enjoys crossing linguistic boundaries and hybridizing different languages and linguistic elements. Unlike the legitimate speaker who claims the equal status as a speaker of the same language, the playful creator "reinvents" and reconstructs languages and interacts in society with "cynical self-expression" (Gao, 2014, p. 65). The fourth prototype is the "dialogical communicator," who engages in dialogues based on "mutual respect," "reflective sensitivity" and well-developed "self-consciousness" (Gao, 2014, p. 68). This type of speaker enjoys mutual improvement of L1 and L2 competence as well as native-culture (C1) and C2 understanding (Gao, 2014, p. 68). This prototype is also distinguished for "transcendence of dichotomies" such as L1 vs. L2 and C1 vs. C2 and for "openness and criticalness" toward integration of different languages, cultures and selfhoods (Gao, 2014, p. 68).

Despite the different terms being used for these different concepts of attitude and identity, they seem to share similar characteristics in essence. Subtractive bilingualism may be reflected in the faithful imitator, who is highly motivated to imitate the TL native speaker and the learner's identity may easily be replaced with that of the TL native speaker in the process of language learning. Similarly, additive bilingualism may be associated with the legitimate speaker and the playful creator in a sense that these types of English learners try to keep their own identity rather than lose it and acquire English skills and values on top of their identity. Productive bilingualism and the dialogical communicator appear essentially similar as both types of identity are capable of reinforcing both the native and the TL competence, understandings, and identity through language learning.

These four prototypes outlined by Gao (2014), as well as other studies reviewed above, discuss how the identity development of a language learner is intertwined with attitude changes, particularly the change of attitudes toward speaking L2. In the present study, as described below, we examined different attitudes toward speaking English and identity types that a language learner likely develops at different stages of L2 learning. In order to formulate different types of learner identities and attitudes toward speaking English, we used the categories outlined by Gao (2014).

2. The Present Study

The present study is an attempt to explore attitudinal and identity changes among Japanese college students in the ESL context. We asked the following research question:

> While attending college in an English-speaking country, what kinds of attitudinal and identity changes, if any, do Japanese ESL speakers experience? More specifically, how do their attitudes toward speaking English and sense of identity change over time?

Based on the discussion above, it was hypothesized that, just as EFL learners do, ESL speakers are likely to experience attitudinal and identity changes, as they become more aware of other cultures, more competent, and prouder of their own identity.

In order to examine this question, we surveyed Japanese ESL speakers with high English proficiency. We focused on the ESL context because the previous research on attitudinal and identity changes has primarily focused on EFL contexts and on learners with varying English proficiency—i.e., whether ESL speakers undergo similar identity development as do EFL learners needs to be investigated. Qu (2005, p. 93) emphasizes the importance of learners' English proficiency in the discussion of English learning and identity change, and empirical studies show that students with higher English proficiency were more likely to experience identity changes (Gao et al., 2005), which led the present study to focus on those with high English proficiency.

In this cross-sectional study, we examined the relationship between one independent variable—the number of years spent in an English-speaking country—and three dependent variables—the attitude toward speaking English, the degree of accommodation toward an English-speaking community, and the degree of pride in their Japanese identity. We examined the number of years in the U.S. as the only factor of identity development in order to keep the scope of the inquiry focused on attitudinal and identity changes over time.

3. Methodology

3.1. Participants

The present study investigated 75 Japanese students studying full-time in spring 2017 at Soka University of America (SUA), a liberal arts college in Southern California who indicated that their NL was Japanese, they had completed 12 years of schooling in Japan, and they had never attended an international school before attending SUA.

The 75 participants consisted of 35 males, 39 females, and one who indicated "prefer not to answer." The ages of 66 participants (88%) ranged from 18 to 22, and the rest (n=9) were 23 or older. the sample group included 19 first-year, 17 second-year, 13 third-year, and 17 fourth-year students. It also had nine ESL students attending the university's Extended Bridge Program (EBP), a one-year intensive ESL program for international students conditionally admitted into the bachelor's degree program. All participants had advanced English proficiency—high enough to study at a selective liberal arts college in the U.S. Demographic information about the 75 participants is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1.
Demographic Information about Participants

N = 75	%	n
Gender		
Male	46.7	35
Female	52.0	39
Prefer not to answer	1.3	1
Age		
18 to 22	88.0	66
23 or older	12.0	9
College year		

Extended Bridge Program (EBP)*	12.0	9
First-year	25.3	19
Second-year	22.7	17
Third-year	17.3	13
Fourth-year	22.7	17
Number of years spent in (an) English-speaking country(ies)		
< 1 year	24.0	18
1–2 years	28.0	21
2–3 years	14.7	11
3–4 years	24.0	18
> 4 years	9.3	7

*one-year intensive ESL program for international students conditionally admitted into the undergraduate program

3.2. Instrument

The present study used an online questionnaire with a set of questions related to participants' demographic data, and their personal attitudes, thoughts, and experiences pertaining to the use of English, divergence from or convergence toward American culture and community, and sense of identity over time (see Appendix A). The questionnaire first asked participants to indicate their gender, age, NL, and college year. It also asked about participants' linguistic and educational backgrounds including the length of schooling in Japan, international school attendance or ESL learning experience before enrolling in SUA's undergraduate program, study abroad experience, and the number of years spent in Japan and in an English-speaking country. Next, it asked about their attitudes and feelings toward speaking English, their relations with the English-speaking community, and their sense of identity and its change over time. Survey questions comprised of mandatory multiple-choice questions requiring respondents to choose one answer and optional open-ended questions soliciting comments and thoughts.

In the questionnaire, we formulated statements to operationally define learners' attitudes based on the four identity prototypes conceptualized by Gao (2014) as follows: (1) faithful imitator—"I want and try my best to speak English like a native speaker"; (2) legitimate speaker—"I want to speak English as a Japanese person with a Japanese accent"; (3) playful creator—"I want to speak English in a creative way, sometimes mixing different languages (including their accents, words and cultures) and reinventing English in order to express myself"; and (4) dialogical communicator—"I want to speak English by appreciating every language, culture and individual, enhancing competence and understandings of my native and second (and third) languages and engaging in productive and enjoyable dialogues with others."

Participants were asked to read these statements carefully and select one that most represented themselves (see Appendix A). Q11 shows the statement for the faithful imitator and another sentence, "I don't feel I need or want to speak English like a native speaker." Only those who chose the latter were directed to the next question Q12, showing the statement for the legitimate speaker and another sentence, "I want to speak English in my own way with my own accent." Similarly, only those who selected the latter were led to the next question, Q13, showing the statements for the playful creator and the dialogical communicator. Q12 and Q13 may not be displayed to certain respondents depending on their responses. All were instantly or later directed to Q14 and asked if they had always felt that way over the past years. Those who answered "No, or more likely no" were further asked to explain how and approximately when they used to feel compared to how they felt at the time of answering the survey.

In order to measure the degree of convergence toward American culture and community from different aspects, the following three components were examined: (1) Feeling comfortable being in Japan or in the U.S.; (2) Plans (e.g., going back to Japan) after graduation; (3) Socializing with Americans.

Finally, in order to measure the degree of pride in Japanese identity, participants were asked if they were proud of their Japanese identity. Choices varied from "Definitely" to "Fairly," "In between," "Not really," "Not at all," and "Prefer not to answer." Participants were then asked to indicate if they had always felt that way over the past years. If they indicated "No, or more likely no" they were further asked to provide comments on how and approximately when they had felt differently about their sense of identity compared to how they felt at the time of answering the survey.

3.3. Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

The online questionnaire was created with a survey software (Qualtrics). An e-mail regarding the questionnaire was sent to 105 potential participants identified as Japanese students at SUA in the Spring 2017 semester. Eighty-two completed the questionnaire. The response rate was 78.1%. Out of the 82 participants, those who indicated any one of the following conditions were excluded from the data: their NL was not Japanese, they had lived in Japan for less than 14 years prior to attending SUA, they had not completed 12 years of schooling in Japan, and/or they attended an international school before entering SUA. As a result, seven were excluded from the data, resulting in 75 participants, whose responses were studied (see Table 1 above). Because the "English-speaking country" for those selected respondents was the U.S., where SUA is located, the notation "the U.S." instead of "an English-speaking country" is used thereafter.

All the responses from the 75 participants were recorded and analyzed with the data analysis tools on Qualtrics. The significance threshold was set at .05. Since most of the quantitative comparisons turned out to be statistically insignificant, the results are presented descriptively using a cross-tabulation analysis and a text analysis.

4. Results

4.1. Attitudes Toward Speaking English

The cross-tabulation for the number of years spent in the U.S. and attitudes toward speaking English is presented as Table 2. The vast majority (80%) of all respondents (n=75) selected the faithful imitator's prototypical answer, "I want and try my best to speak English like a native speaker." Among the rest (n=15) who selected "I don't feel I need or want to speak English like a native speaker" and proceeded to the next question, only one chose the legitimate speaker's prototypical answer, "I want to speak English as a Japanese person with a Japanese accent." Out of the remaining respondents (n=14) who chose "I want to speak English in my own way with my own accent" and further proceeded to the next question, four selected the playful creator's prototypical answer, "I want to speak English in a creative way, sometimes mixing different languages (including their accents, words and cultures) and reinventing English in order to express myself." The remaining 10 (13.3%) selected the dialogical communicator's prototypical answer, "I want to speak English by appreciating every language, culture, and individual, enhancing competence and understandings of my native and second (and third) languages and engaging in productive and enjoyable dialogues with others."

Table 2.
Years Spent in the U.S. and Attitudes Toward Speaking English

NUMBER OF YEARS	I want and try my best to speak English like a native speaker.	I don't feel I need or want to speak English like a native speaker.			TOTAL
		I want to speak English as a Japanese person with a Japanese accent.	I want to speak English with my own accent.		
			I want to speak English in a creative way…	I want to speak English by appreciating every language, culture and individual…	
< 1 year	17 (94.4%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (5.6%)	18 (100%)
1–2 years	16 (76.2%)	1 (4.8%)	1 (4.8%)	3 (14.3%)	21 (100%)
2–3 years	10 (90.9%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (9.1%)	11 (100%)
3–4 years	13 (72.2%)	0 (0%)	2 (11.1%)	3 (16.7%)	18 (100%)
> 4 years	4 (57.1%)	0 (0%)	1 (14.3%)	2 (28.6%)	7 (100%)
TOTAL	60 (80%)	1 (1.3%)	4 (5.3%)	10 (13.3%)	75 (100%)

Although the majority (80%) indicated that they wanted to speak English like a native speaker, as the solid line in Figure 1 shows, the percentages of those who answered so decreased as the number of years in the U.S. increased—with the exception of the "2–3 years" group.

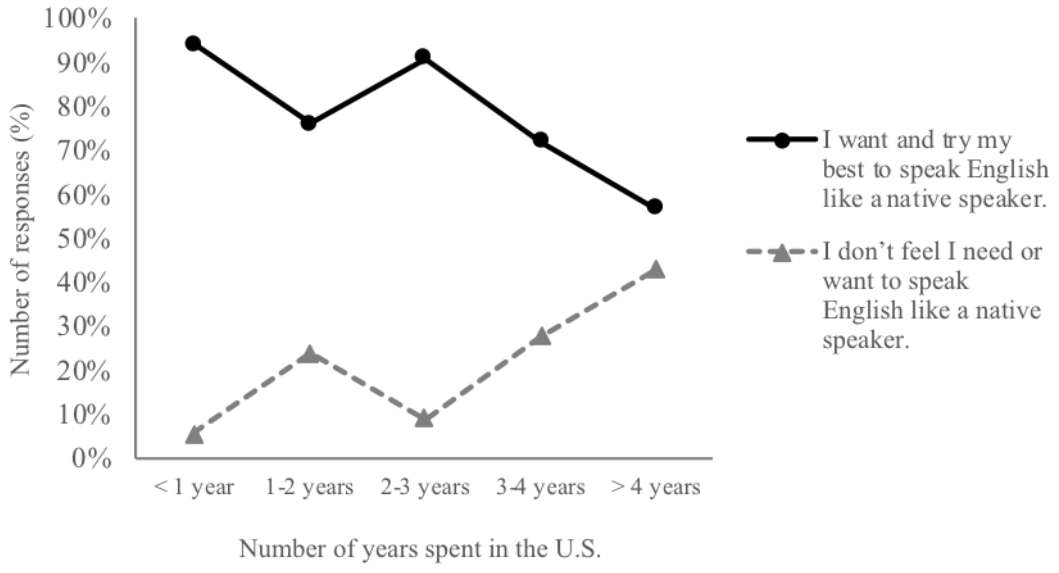

Figure 1. Relationship between the number of years spent in the U.S. and attitudes toward speaking English

Table 3 shows the cross-tabulation for the number of years spent in the U.S. and changes in the attitudes toward speaking English over time. Almost 90% of all respondents indicated that they had felt the same way over the past years, with a slight decline in the group who had spent more than four years (70%).

Table 3.
Years Spent in the U.S. and Change in Attitudes Over Time

NUMBER OF YEARS	Have you always felt that way over the past years?		TOTAL
	Yes, or more likely yes	No, or more likely no	
< 1 year	16 (88.9%)	2 (11.1%)	18 (100%)
1–2 years	19 (90.5%)	2 (9.5%)	21 (100%)
2–3 years	9 (81.8%)	2 (18.2%)	11 (100%)
3–4 years	16 (88.9%)	2 (11.1%)	18 (100%)
> 4 years	5 (71.4%)	2 (28.6%)	7 (100%)
TOTAL	65 (86.7%)	10 (13.3%)	75 (100%)

4.2. The Degree of Convergence Toward American Culture and Community
4.2.1. Feeling comfortable being in Japan or in the U.S.

The cross-tabulation for the number of years spent in the U.S. and feeling comfortable being in Japan or in the U.S. is presented as Table 4. The percentage of those who felt comfortable being in either country did not increase or decrease in proportion but rather seemed relatively consistent over time. About 30% of those having spent less than one year, two to three years or three to four years in the U.S. felt more comfortable being in the U.S., as did approximately 10% of those having spent one to two years or more than four years. On the other hand, roughly 45 to 57% of those having spent less than one year to more than four years in the U.S. felt more comfortable being in Japan except for the "3–4 years" group (33.3%).

Table 4.
Years Spent in the U.S. and Feeling Comfortable in Japan or in the U.S.

NUMBER OF YEARS	Do you feel more comfortable being in Japan or in the U.S.?			TOTAL
	In the U.S. or more in the U.S.	In between	In Japan or more in Japan	
< 1 year	5 (27.8%)	5 (27.8%)	8 (44.4%)	18 (100%)
1–2 years	2 (9.5%)	7 (33.3%)	12 (57.2%)	21 (100%)

2–3 years	3 (27.3%)	3 (27.3%)	5 (45.5%)	11 (100%)
3–4 years	6 (33.3%)	6 (33.3%)	6 (33.3%)	18 (100%)
> 4 years	1 (14.3%)	2 (28.6%)	4 (57.2%)	7 (100%)
TOTAL	17 (22.7%)	23 (30.7%)	35 (46.7%)	75 (100%)

Table 5 shows the cross-tabulation for the number of years spent in the U.S. and changes in feeling comfortable in Japan or in the U.S. over time. Almost 80% of all respondents indicated that they had always felt comfortable over the past years, whereas a little over 20% had changed the way they felt over time. Except for those having spent less than a year in the U.S., the proportion of those with no feeling change over time to those with some feeling changes was relatively consistent among groups with different numbers of years—about 80 to 100% felt the same way over the past years, and 0 to 20% felt differently. With regard to those having spent less than a year in the U.S., however, the proportion was 50/50.

Table 5.
Years Spent in the U.S. and Changes in Feeling Comfortable Over Time

NUMBER OF YEARS	Have you always felt that way over the past years?		TOTAL
	Yes, or more likely yes	No, or more likely no	
< 1 year	9 (50%)	9 (50%)	18 (100%)
1–2 years	17 (81%)	4 (19.1%)	21 (100%)
2–3 years	10 (91%)	1 (9.1%)	11 (100%)
3–4 years	16 (88.9%)	2 (11.1%)	18 (100%)
> 4 years	7 (100%)	0 (0%)	7 (100%)
TOTAL	59 (78.7%)	16 (21.3%)	75 (100%)

Among the 16 respondents who indicated some changes in their feeling over the past years, 11 wrote their comments. Seven of them mentioned that they had not felt comfortable in the U.S. when they arrived due to the change of surroundings, a language barrier, cultural differences, etc., but began feeling more comfortable over time.

4.2.2. Plans after graduation

The cross-tabulation for the number of years spent in the U.S. and plans after graduation is presented as Table 6. Nearly 35% planned to go back to Japan after graduation, whereas 16% did not. The rest were uncertain about their plans. The percentage of those planning to return home increased from less than 20% among those having spent less than a year in the U.S. to approximately 30 to 40% among those having spent one to four years, and more than 70% among those having spent more than four years.

This is intuitively reasonable because those getting closer to graduation are more likely to have more specific future plans.

Table 6.
Years Spent in the U.S. and Plans After Graduation

NUMBER OF YEARS	Are you planning (or wishing) to go back to Japan after graduation?			TOTAL
	Yes, or more likely yes	No, or more likely no	I don't know yet	
< 1 year	3 (16.7%)	2 (11.1%)	13 (72.2%)	18 (100%)
1–2 years	7 (33.3%)	3 (14.3%)	11 (52.4%)	21 (100%)
2–3 years	4 (36.4%)	2 (18.2%)	5 (45.5%)	11 (100%)
3–4 years	7 (38.9%)	5 (27.8%)	6 (33.3%)	18 (100%)
> 4 years	5 (71.4%)	0 (0%)	2 (28.6%)	7 (100%)
TOTAL	26 (34.7%)	12 (16%)	37 (49.3%)	75 (100%)

4.2.3. Socializing with Americans

The cross-tabulation for the number of years spent in the U.S. and socializing with Americans is presented as Table 7. Nearly 70% of all respondents indicated that they socialized more with international students including Japanese, around 25% equally with domestic and international students, and only 5% more with Americans. Those who socialized more with international students included roughly 70% of those having spent less than a year to four years in the U.S. and around 85% of those having spent more than four years. Those who socialized more with Americans included almost 15% of those having spent one to two years and almost 10% of those having spent two to three years. The percentage of those who socialized equally with domestic and international students varied from nearly 15% for those having spent more than four years to more than 30% for those having spent less than a year and those having spent three to four years.

Table 7.
Years Spent in the U.S. and Socializing with Americans

NUMBER OF YEARS	How often do you socialize with Americans?			TOTAL
	Mostly or more with international students	Fifty-fifty (50% with Americans and 50% with international students)	Mostly or more with Americans	
< 1 year	12 (66.7%)	6 (33.3%)	0 (0%)	18 (100%)
1–2 years	14 (66.7%)	4 (19.1%)	3 (14.3%)	21 (100%)

2–3 years	8 (72.7%)	2 (18.2%)	1 (9.1%)	11 (100%)
3–4 years	12 (66.7%)	6 (33.3%)	0 (0%)	18 (100%)
> 4 years	6 (85.7%)	1 (14.3%)	0 (0%)	7 (100%)
TOTAL	52 (69.3%)	19 (25.3%)	4 (5.3%)	75 (100%)

4.3. Sense of Pride in Japanese Identity

The cross-tabulation for the number of years spent in the U.S. and sense of pride in Japanese identity is presented as Table 8. Over 80% of all respondents indicated that they were either "definitely" or "fairly" proud of their Japanese identity, almost 10% in between, and 8% not really proud or not proud at all. Those who chose either "Definitely" or "Fairly" included over 70% of those having spent less than a year in the U.S. and roughly 80% of those having spent one to two years, nearly 90% of those having spent three to four years and more than four years, and over 90% of those having spent two to three years.

Table 8.
Years Spent in the U.S. and Sense of Pride in Japanese Identity

NUMBER OF YEARS	Are you proud of your Japanese identity?					TOTAL
	Definitely	Fairly	In between	Not really	Not at all	
< 1 year	7 (38.9%)	6 (33.3%)	4 (22.2%)	1 (5.6%)	0 (0%)	18 (100%)
1–2 years	6 (28.6%)	11 (52.4%)	2 (9.5%)	1 (4.8%)	1 (4.8%)	21 (100%)
2–3 years	5 (45.5%)	5 (45.5%)	1 (9.1%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	11 (100%)
3–4 years	6 (33.3%)	10 (55.6%)	0 (0%)	2 (11.1%)	0 (0%)	18 (100%)
> 4 years	2 (28.6%)	4 (57.1%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (14.3%)	7 (100%)
TOTAL	26 (34.7%)	36 (48%)	7 (9.3%)	4 (5.3%)	2 (2.7%)	75 (100%)

As shown in Figure 2, even though the "Definitely or Fairly" category was the only one that revealed a relatively proportional increase in feeling prouder of the Japanese identity over time, it began to decrease slightly after two to three years. Conversely, the percentage of those who selected either "Not really" or "Not at all" increased as the number of years increased—except for the two-to-three-years group.

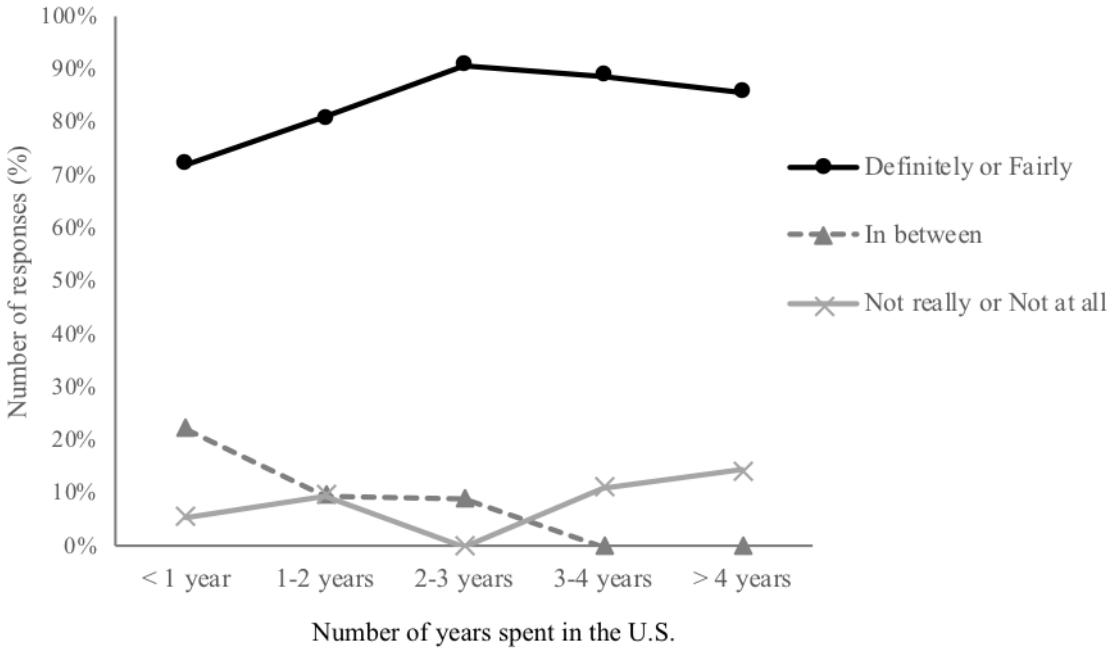

Figure 2. Relationship between the number of years spent in the U.S. and the sense of pride in Japanese identity

Table 9 shows the cross-tabulation for the number of years spent in the U.S. and changes in the sense of pride in Japanese identity over time. Almost 70% of all respondents indicated that they had felt consistent regarding their Japanese identity over the past years, including approximately 67% of those having spent less than a year in the U.S., around 72 to 76% of those having spent one to four years, and about 40% of those having spent more than four years. On the other hand, around 30% of all respondents indicated that they had not felt the same way over the past years, implying that they had felt differently about their Japanese identity at some point in the past. They consisted of roughly 24% of those having spent one to two years, more or less 30% of those having spent less than a year.

Table 9.
Years Spent in the U.S. and Changes in Sense of Pride in Japanese Identity Over Time

NUMBER OF YEARS	Have you always felt that way over the past years?		TOTAL
	Yes, or more likely yes	No, or more likely no	
< 1 year	12 (66.7%)	6 (33.3%)	18 (100%)
1–2 years	16 (76.2%)	5 (23.8%)	21 (100%)
2–3 years	8 (72.7%)	3 (27.3%)	11 (100%)
3–4 years	13 (72.2%)	5 (27.8%)	18 (100%)

> 4 years	3 (42.9%)	4 (57.1%)	7 (100%)
TOTAL	52 (69.3%)	23 (30.7%)	75 (100%)

5. Discussion

5.1. Attitudinal and Identity Changes

Overall, this study has found that ESL speakers are likely to experience attitudinal and identity changes through English learning and immersion in the English-speaking community, which essentially corresponds to the results of other studies done in the EFL contexts (Capobianco, 2017; Gao et al., 2005; Gao et al., 2015; Gao et al., 2016; Gu, 2010). In our study, Japanese ESL speakers who spent more time in the U.S. were likely to favor speaking English in their own way and experience a positive transition between different identity prototypes. In Gao's perspective, these ESL speakers may have progressed toward productive bilingualism (Gao, 2001, 2002) and a dialogical communicator's identity prototype (Gao, 2014), with which they became more aware of other cultures and different people, more competent and prouder of their own identity. In addition, their sense of identity as Japanese marked both positive and negative changes, although the changes were not proportional to the number of years spent in the U.S. Finally, the degree of convergence toward and divergence from the American community throughout four years of college varied depending on individuals.

Comments left by respondents also displayed attitudinal changes over time. For instance, a fourth-year student (#80), who had spent three to four years in the U.S., wrote:

> For the first two years in college, I felt a strong urge to speak English like a native speaker. My thought changed around the beginning of the third year. Coming back from the summer break, refreshed, I felt I could just be myself and that English proficiency was not the only measure of competency.

In Capobianco's (2017) view, this respondent may have experienced "a broader and more dynamic personal change that affects many components of a person's social, psychological, and cultural understandings" (p. 16) through years of English learning and immersion in an English-speaking environment.

A fourth-year student (#44), who had completed EBP (a one-year intensive ESL program for international students conditionally admitted into the undergraduate program) and had spent more than four years in the U.S., wrote that she used to think she should try to speak English like a native speaker, but realized, during her study abroad program, that no one could speak "perfect" English and that it was "okay not to speak English like a native speaker." Her case may correspond to Capobianco's (2017) findings that Japanese learners' identity had shifted in a way that incorporates a more intercultural aspect in the continuous process of English learning.

A second-year student (#70), who had completed EBP and selected the dialogical communicator's prototypical statement, wrote that her experiences and years of English learning had helped her transition from envying native speakers of English to appreciating her NL, which may partly exemplify the transition from a faithful imitator to a dialogical communicator. These cases may not always be generalized, but they are important as they exemplify how ESL speakers may go through attitudinal changes and a transition between different identity prototypes through years of English learning and immersion in an English-speaking environment.

5.2. Participants Having Spent Two to Three Years in The U.S.

As aforementioned, the group having spent two to three years in the U.S. was found to be an exception in various respects. For example, as seen in Figure 1 above, there was a conspicuous decrease in the percentage of those having spent two to three years who indicated that they did not feel they need or want to speak English like a native speaker. In other words, there was a conspicuous increase in the percentage of those who said they "want and try to speak like a native speaker." Also, as seen in Figure 2 above, despite their positive attitudes toward speaking like a native speaker, the two-to-three-years group scored the highest in choosing either "Definitely" or "Fairly" (90.9% combined) when asked if they were proud of their Japanese identity.

Participation in the mandatory one-semester junior-year study abroad program at SUA might have influenced the attitudinal and identity changes of the respondents but seems to have had little effect on this particular group. Out of the 11 in the group, three had already completed their study abroad program but they all selected the faithful imitator's prototypical statement. The only one (#17) who did not select the same was a third-year student who had not completed his study abroad. Even though a fourth-year student (#44) mentioned that the study abroad program at SUA helped her realise that she did not have to speak English like a native speaker, the same did not seem to apply to the two-to-three-years respondents who had completed their study abroad.

Comments written by two-to-three-years respondents are insightful. A second-year student (#64) appeared to have a relatively strong sense of Japanese identity and to be more likely converging toward the Japanese community. While she selected the faithful imitator's prototypical statement, she indicated that she was "definitely" proud of her Japanese identity, felt more comfortable being in Japan than in the U.S., planned to go back to Japan after graduation, and socialized more with international students including Japanese than with Americans. Indicating that her sense of Japanese identity had changed over time, however, she wrote that studying in the U.S. had helped her cultivate her perspective toward her identity as Japanese.

On the other hand, another second-year student (#72) was more comfortable being in the U.S., did not plan to go back to Japan after graduation, and socialized equally with domestic and international students including Japanese. She explained that she used to feel "ashamed" of being Japanese and became attracted to American culture, but taking classes at SUA and reflecting upon her values helped her appreciate her identity as Japanese. A third-year student (#17) shared his thoughts on how he had felt differently over the past years. He first felt neither comfortable with speaking English nor connected to anyone in the U.S., but "as years passed, […] I have made many friends at SUA and I was able to feel connected to the community, with my improved English competency."

These comments suggest that two to three years is needed for ESL speakers to begin to feel comfortable with communicating in English and living in their English-speaking community. Similarly, Gao et al. (2015) observed: "By the end of the sophomore year, most students had more or less adjusted to their university life" (p. 147). After this period, these learners may either continue trying to speak English like a native speaker or begin to speak English in their own way. Some retain a strong sense of their Japanese identity, whereas others start feeling less proud of their identity.

It also seems that having a desire to speak English like a native speaker does not necessarily lead to a lowered sense of ethnic identity. A second-year student (#68), who had completed EBP, and a current EBP student (#29) selected the faithful imitator's prototypical response, even though they indicated that they had become prouder or more appreciative of their Japanese identity since they had come to the U.S. Ke and Cahyani (2014) found that Taiwanese and Indonesian EFL learners "favoured NS [native speaker] English not because of identification with NSs, but for reasons of hospitality, or one's market value enhancement" (as cited in Gao et al., 2016, p. 261). Favoring speaking English like a native speaker could

also be for more effective communication as three respondents wrote at the end of the questionnaire that they wanted to improve their English skills as much as possible to have "more precise communication" or express themselves better. Possible causes of the particularity of the two-to-three-years group, however, need be further examined, possibly in connection with, for instance, their personal goals, peer relationships, L2 proficiency and so forth.

5.3. Effects of ESL Learning Experiences

Although the present study did not originally focus on college years as the independent variable, it found a stronger correlation between college years, rather than the number of years in the U.S., and the attitudes toward speaking English. As shown in Table 10, all of the nine EBP participants selected the faithful imitator's prototypical statement, and the percentage consistently went down to 84.2% (first-year), 88.2% (second-year), 76.9% (third-year), and to 58.8% (fourth-year). Conversely, the percentage of those wanting to speak English in a respectful, productive and joyful way consistently increased from 5.3% (first-year) to 11.8% (second-year), 23.1% (third-year) and to 23.5% (fourth-year).

Table 10.
College Years and Attitudes Toward Speaking English

COLLEGE YEAR	I want and try my best to speak English like a native speaker.	I don't feel I need or want to speak English like a native speaker.			TOTAL
		I want to speak English as a Japanese person with a Japanese accent.	I want to speak English in my own way with my own accent.		
			I want to speak English in a creative way…	I want to speak English by appreciating every language, culture and individual….	
EBP	9 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	9 (100%)
First-year	16 (84.2%)	1 (5.3%)	1 (5.3%)	1 (5.3%)	19 (100%)
Second-year	15 (88.2%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (11.8%)	17 (100%)
Third-year	10 (76.9%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3 (23.1%)	13 (100%)
Fourth-year	10 (58.8%)	0 (0%)	3 (17.7%)	4 (23.5%)	17 (100%)
TOTAL	60 (80%)	1 (1.3%)	4 (5.3%)	10 (13.3%)	75 (100%)

In order to find a possible explanation, participants' ESL learning experiences were examined. Out of the 75 participants, 48 indicated that they were currently participating or had participated in EBP, a one-year ESL program for conditionally admitted students, whereas the remaining 27 had only participated in the Summer Bridge Program (SBP), an optional eight-week ESL program for admitted students during summer before the undergraduate program starts.

Participants were divided into two groups based on the participation in either program, i.e., the length of ESL learning experience. Responses regarding their college years and attitudes toward speaking English by the two groups with long-term and short-term ESL learning experiences are shown in Tables 11a and 11b, respectively, and the comparison of the two groups in Figure 3.

Table 11a.
Cross Tabulation of College Years and Attitudes Toward Speaking English with Long-Term ESL Learning Experience

COLLEGE YEAR	I want and try my best to speak English like a native speaker.	I don't feel I need or want to speak English like a native speaker.	TOTAL
EBP	9 (100%)	0 (0%)	9 (100%)
First-year	9 (81.8%)	2 (18.2%)	11 (100%)
Second-year	9 (90%)	1 (10%)	10 (100%)
Third-year	8 (88.9%)	1 (11.1%)	9 (100%)
Fourth-year	5 (55.6%)	4 (44.4%)	9 (100%)
TOTAL	40 (83.3%)	8 (16.7%)	48 (100%)

Table 11b.
College Years and Attitudes Toward Speaking English with Short-Term ESL Learning Experience

COLLEGE YEAR	I want and try my best to speak English like a native speaker.	I don't feel I need or want to speak English like a native speaker.	TOTAL
EBP	n/a	n/a	n/a
First-year	7 (87.5%)	1 (12.5%)	8 (100%)
Second-year	6 (85.7%)	1 (14.3%)	7 (100%)
Third-year	2 (50%)	2 (50%)	4 (100%)
Fourth-year	5 (62.5%)	3 (37.5%)	8 (100%)
TOTAL	20 (74.1%)	7 (25.9%)	27 (100%)

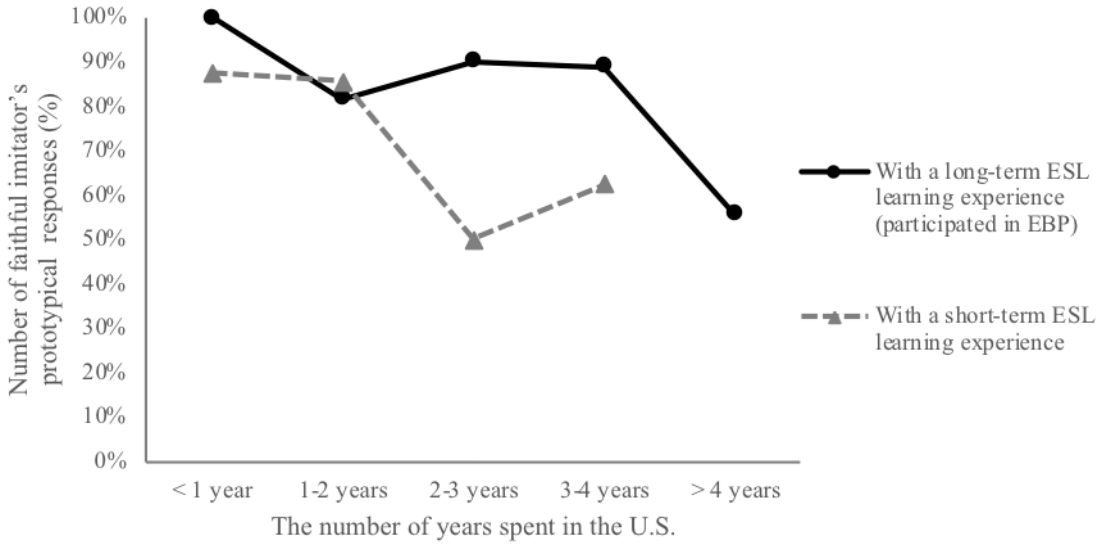

Figure 3. Relationship between the number of years spent in the U.S. and faithful imitator's prototypical responses by groups with long-term and short-term ESL experiences

Table 11b shows that among the 27 who did not participate in EBP, the majority (74.1%) answered that they wanted to speak English like a native speaker. The third year, however, marked a precipitous decrease in the percentage for the same response, which may suggest that those mainstreamed into college with only a short-term ESL learning experience began to diverge from speaking like a native speaker in the second year in college. Table 11a indicates that the majority (83.3%) of those with a long-term ESL experience also wanted to speak like a native speaker. A sudden decrease was found in the fourth year, not the third year as found in Table 11b. There is, therefore, as seen in Figure 3, two years of gap between the two groups in terms of the timing for undergoing an attitudinal change diverging from speaking like a native speaker.

With regard to those currently enrolled in EBP, it is plausible to explain that 100% of them wanted to speak English like a native speaker because they were intensively learning English in order to be admitted to the undergraduate program. While striving to improve their academic English, EBP students likely develop a high motivation and desire for an "authentic" English. Those having participated in EBP in the past may also retain this motivation, leading them to choose the faithful imitator's prototypical responses. Only after spending four years at SUA did they begin to feel less need to speak like a native speaker. This seems to echo the finding by Gao et al. (2015) that significant identity changes, including additive and productive changes, were observed among college EFL students in China particularly at the end of their fourth year.

The short-term-ESL group, on the other hand, plunged into the mainstream, where they were invariably exposed to the native-speaker community. These experiences in an American community, or "meaningful interactions with members of the target language community" (Capobianco, 2017, p. 23), may have accelerated their learning and transitioning processes and led to their attitudinal changes occurring earlier than the long-term-ESL group.

5.4. Other Factors

In addition to the two-year gap, a change in the third year to the fourth year among the short-term-ESL group is noteworthy. As Figure 3 above shows, there was a substantial decrease in the percentage indicating their desire to speak English like a native speaker after two years in the U.S. The percentage increased, however, from 50% to 62.5% (see Table 11b), indicating that they once again began to favor speaking English like a native speaker after spending three years in the U.S. The study abroad experience, or third language (L3) learning experience, in their third year might have helped them become "a language learner" again and realize (or reconfirm) the importance of speaking a language like a native speaker. On the other hand, the study abroad experience might not have influenced the long-term-ESL group in the same way as they had already experienced being a language learner for an extended duration of time. In short, L3 learning experience may have different effects on students' perspectives and attitudes toward English, depending on their prior ESL learning experiences.

6. Conclusion

This study examined changes in Japanese ESL speakers' identities and in their attitudes toward speaking English. It has found that the more time those ESL speakers spent in the U.S., the more they became in favor of speaking English in their own way, experienced a positive transition between different identity types, and felt either prouder or less proud of their identity as Japanese. The study also suggested that ESL speakers having spent two to three years in the U.S. had both a relatively positive attitude toward speaking English like a native speaker and a relatively strong sense of their Japanese identity. This might suggest that spending two to three years in an English-speaking country marks a turning point for many ESL speakers to experience attitudinal and identity changes.

Another significant finding was that those who were mainstreamed into college shortly after their arrival in the U.S. were more likely to begin favoring speaking in their own way earlier than do those with a long-term ESL learning experience before being mainstreamed into college. That is to say,

> […] the identity transformations that occur at the outset of language study and those that happen with the application of skills in meaningful interaction are of a qualitatively different nature. This indicates that greater connections need to be drawn between the process of identity change and its relation to different stages of language learning. Specifically, meaningful interactions at different scales may be requisite for more profound identity changes to occur. (Capobianco, 2017, p. 25)

Language teachers often equate success in language learning with the ability to speak like a native speaker. As seen in the present study, however, speaking like a native speaker may not be or remain the ultimate or permanent goal for language learners who experience dynamic personal changes of identity over time. It is thus important for teachers to understand the transitions that their students go through toward different types of bilingualism in order to help them achieve positive identity changes over time. Teachers' awareness toward such changes would be of great value in creating a successful learning environment, whether it is an EFL or ESL learning situation, that helps students at different stages of language learning engage in meaningful interactions at suitable scales in order to enhance positive identity changes while improving their communicative competence and intelligibility.

At the outset of language learning, students may want to have a native speaker as their model. This should be beneficial at that stage and help them solidify their basic proficiency in the TL. The more advanced they become, however, the less they may want to speak like a native speaker. If this transition leads to decreased intelligibility, students may be encouraged to focus on their intelligibility and communicability rather than reverting to speaking like a native speaker. When students begin to pursue

multiculturalism as their goal, teachers may try to create a learning environment where the students can explore the TL culture as well as their own in order to enhance their positive identity changes.

Although this study has made valuable findings, we are aware of its limitations. First, the number of participants was not large enough to yield statistically meaningful results. Second, the study was conducted as a cross-sectional one despite its focus on L2 learning and attitudinal and identity changes over time. Third, although the questionnaire was designed to measure the participants' attitudes toward speaking English, the study depended on self-reports by the participants and did not examine their actual use of English. For future research, the actual shifts in ESL speakers' speech styles, attitudes toward speaking English, and sense of identity over time need to be examined, preferably using a longitudinal research method. In the increasingly globalized world, such future research on English learners' attitudinal and identity changes through the process of English learning and immersion in an English-speaking environment will offer important implications for those who are engaged in intercultural interactions in various L2 environments and contexts such as ESL and mainstream programs.

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Appendix A

Survey Questions

Thank you for taking part in this study. You will be asked a series of questions. Please respond to the following questions as honestly as possible.

Q1. Gender
- ❍ Male
- ❍ Female
- ❍ Prefer not to answer

Q2. Age
- ❍ 18 to 22
- ❍ 23 or older
- ❍ Prefer not to answer

Q3. Native language
- ❍ Japanese
- ❍ Other
- ❍ Prefer not to answer

Q4. In the current academic year, you are a/an
- ❍ Extended Bridge Program student
- ❍ First-year student
- ❍ Second-year student
- ❍ Third-year student
- ❍ Fourth-year student
- ❍ Prefer not to answer

Q5. Did you participate in the Bridge Program at SUA?
- ❍ Extended Bridge Program (EBP)
- ❍ Summer Bridge Program (SBP)
- ❍ No
- ❍ Prefer not to answer

Q6. For how many years did you live in Japan before coming to SUA?
- ❍ 18 years or more
- ❍ 14 to 17 years
- ❍ 8 to 13 years
- ❍ Less than 8 years
- ❍ Prefer not to answer

Q7. Did you finish all 12 years of your schooling (from elementary school to high school) in Japan?
- ❍ Yes
- ❍ No
- ❍ Prefer not to answer

Q8. Did you ever attend (an) international (English-speaking) school(s) before coming to SUA?
- ❍ Yes
- ❍ No
- ❍ Prefer not to answer

Q9. For how many years have you lived in (an) English-speaking country(ies)?

- Less than 1 year
- 1 to 2 years
- 2 to 3 years
- 3 to 4 years
- More than 4 years

Q10. Have you already completed, or are you currently doing, the study abroad program at SUA?
- Yes
- No

Q11. Please read the following statements carefully and choose one answer that most fits you.
- I want and try my best to speak English like a native speaker. [Directed to Q14]
- I don't feel I need or want to speak English like a native speaker.

Q12. Please read the following statements carefully and choose one answer that most fits you.
- I want to speak English as a Japanese person with a Japanese accent. [Directed to Q14]
- I want to speak English in my own way with my own accent.

Q13. Please read the following statements carefully and choose one answer that most fits you.
- I want to speak English in a creative way, sometimes mixing different languages (including their accents, words and cultures) and reinventing English in order to express myself.
- I want to speak English by appreciating every language, culture and individual, enhancing competence and understandings of my native and second (and third) languages and engaging in productive and enjoyable dialogues with others.

Q14. Have you always felt that way over the past years?
- Yes, or more likely yes
- No, or more likely no [Directed to Q14a]

  Q14a. Please provide comments, if you have any, on approximately when and how differently you used to feel.

  _____
  _____

Q15. Do you feel more comfortable being in Japan or in the United States?
- In the United States
- More in the United States
- In between
- More in Japan
- In Japan
- Prefer not to answer

Q16. Have you always felt that way over the past years?
- Yes, or more likely yes
- No, or more likely no [Directed to Q16a]

  Q16a. Please provide comments, if you have any, on approximately when and how differently you used to feel.

  _____
  _____

Q17. Are you planning (or wishing) to go back to Japan after graduation?
- Yes, or more likely yes
- No, or more likely no
- I don't know yet

- ❍ Prefer not to answer

Q18. How often do you socialize with Americans?
- ❍ Seldom/Mostly with international students (including Japanese)
- ❍ More with international students than Americans
- ❍ Fifty-fifty (50% with Americans and 50% with international students)
- ❍ More with Americans than international students
- ❍ Mostly with Americans
- ❍ Prefer not to answer

Q19. Are you proud of your Japanese identity?
- ❍ Definitely
- ❍ Fairly
- ❍ In between
- ❍ Not really
- ❍ Not at all
- ❍ Prefer not to answer

Q20. Have you always felt that way over the past years?
- ❍ Yes, or more likely yes
- ❍ No, or more likely no [Directed to Q20a]
  Q20a. Please provide comments, if you have any, on approximately when and how differently you used to feel.
  _____
  _____

Q21. Please leave your comments, if you have any, on anything about this survey and your own linguistic, cultural experience.
_____
_____
_____
_____

Thank you!