

# *“Personally, I don’t like the whole interactioning thing”*: Is a Classroom as a Community of Practice for Everyone?

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This study, informed by Communities of Practice (CoP), Situated Learning (SL) and Legitimate Peripheral Participation (LPP), explored the case of a resistant student at the margin of an introductory Japanese classroom where an interactive and engaging mode of learning was implemented. Recent studies have noted that some students participate at the margin of classroom communities. Questions concerning such students’ participation, identity and learning at the margin have not received adequate attention. This qualitative case study employed a classroom ethnographic approach to gather data over a 13-week academic semester. It identified how one student’s disengaged participation, coming largely from the disjunction between the mode of learning in the course and her learning beliefs, turned her into having a rebellious identity at the very fringe of the class. This cautions us that CoP, SL, and LPP put into educational practices may not be for everyone.

本研究は実践コミュニティ、状況的学習論、正統的周辺参加の考え方を基に、インターアクティブな活動が中心となる初級日本語クラスでクラスの活動に反発を感じていた学生の周縁での参加やアイデンティティについて調査した。近年、教室コミュニティでの学生の周縁的な参加へ注意が向けられるようになった一方、そのような学生に関する研究の数はまだ少なく、新たな疑問も生まれている。そこで、質的なケーススタディである本研究はクラスルームエスノグラフィーを用い、13週のクラスで調査対象の一学生のデータを集めた。分析から、その学生の学習ビリーフとクラスの教育アプローチの齟齬が学生の教室実践への関与の希薄さや消極的な参加を生み、さらに教室最周縁での反抗的なアイデンティティを生み出したことがわかった。このことから、実践コミュニティ、状況的学習論、正統的周辺参加論といった理論を教育実践に応用する際には、細心の注意を払う必要があることを示唆している。

## Keywords

Communities of Practice, Situated Learning, Legitimate Peripheral Participation, marginalisation in a language classroom, negotiation of participation and identity

## キーワード

実践コミュニティ、状況的学習、正統的周辺参加、言語教室での周辺化、参加とアイデンティティの交渉

## *“Personally, I don’t like the whole interactioning thing”* (first interview)

This is a case study of a comprehensive metropolitan Australian university student, Joanna (pseudonym), enrolled in an introductory Japanese course designed by one of the authors as a place for social participatory learning by applying social learning theories. As a part of a larger study, the other author observed lessons in Joanna’s classes, conducted semi-structured interviews, and asked her to keep a journal, which all informed us about Joanna.

We, authors, believe that language learning is a social practice. The social turn in second language acquisition that Block (2003) identified has seen the field of language education expand its focus from learning as acquisition of linguistic codes to learning as participation in social practices. Drawing upon the view, one of us, who also taught a part of the course along with a colleague designed the Japanese language course at our university to be highly interactive and socially engaging. The sustained much higher satisfaction rate of the course compared to the average at the university, accompanied by positive comments in students’

course evaluation year after year, indicates the success of the course. However, through data collection, another of us met Joanna, who was one of the students in the Japanese course. She covertly resisted participation as seen in the above quote, and we had to ask ourselves a question: Is social participatory learning for everyone?

In this paper, we attempt to understand the experience of Joanna, a student who appears to have resisted social participatory learning in our Japanese course, which is based upon social learning theory; Communities of Practice (CoP; Wenger, 1998) and its associated concepts; Situated Learning (SL) and Legitimate Peripheral Participation (LPP; Lave & Wenger, 1991). These theories conceptualise learning as participation in social practices where the participants develop identities and negotiate varying relationships with other members in the community, i.e., in the CoP. As their participation changes from being in the periphery to the core of the CoP, they develop their identities from newcomers to competent, responsible, and contributing members, at least that is how we envisioned our practices would work out. However, as Joanna reminded us, a classroom as a place for social participatory learning is not free of challenges.

The theoretical understanding of learning as changing participation from the periphery to the core of a community tends to establish a uniform image of successful learners in CoP uncritically. Lamb (2012) states that learners who fail to follow the linear developmental process of participation, fail in learning. Theoretical discussions on CoP and LLP give little attention to such "failed" learners remaining at the margin, as they are assumed to be unsuccessful, indifferent to the community, and eventually leave the community taking an outbound trajectory (Wenger, 1998). It is perhaps because CoP was originally conceptualised as a self-formed and self-organised group of people where membership make up is relatively fluid (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). This assumption may not be relevant in the case of a classroom community, from which learners cannot easily depart.

Some learners miss classes or assessment tasks, participate in classroom activities with minimal preparation, or do not engage in pair/group activities, and end up being at the margin of the classroom community. Classroom learners at the margin in institutional settings are often trapped in their classrooms for a variety of reasons and thus need more careful attention. For some learners, leaving may not be a viable option in formal institutions, e.g., schools or universities (Lantolf & Genung, 2002), given that primary and secondary school education is mostly compulsory, and university education comes with hefty fees. A few studies focusing on such students at the margin have reported on what factors prevented the developmental processes of their participation (Morita, 2004, 2009; Toohey, 1998, 2000) and on how they responded to this lack of participation (Jang, 2017; Lantolf & Genung, 2002; Morita, 2004). These studies raised a number of issues that necessitates further investigation into marginalised learners (Duff, 2007; Morita, 2012; Norton & Toohey, 2011). The issues include how these students perceive their own learning, which is shaped through negotiating participation and identity at the margin, and how attempts to validate their own learning at the margin impact the classroom community.

In this case study of the covertly resisting student, Joanna, we describe her lived experience and identity negotiation at the margin of a classroom where highly interactive activities were successively implemented. The data come from class observation notes, interviews and student journal entries. Drawing on the description, we explore the relationship between her negotiation of positionality, identity and the perception of learning at the margin of the classroom community, and discuss its implications for classroom language education using CoP, SL, and LPP.

## Learning as Social Practice

This study is informed by CoP, which allows us to view language classrooms as platforms where students learn to participate in social practices and to negotiate identity as members of the community. CoP is defined as “groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis” (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder., 2002, p. 4). CoP is sustained through three fundamental elements: *Domain*, *Community* and *Practice*. *Domain* entails shared interest or concern that brings potential members together. The members decide what they collectively pursue based on the *domain*. *Community* is a social platform where members interact with each other regularly and form interpersonal relationships. *Practice* signifies a set of shared ways of doing those things that the members are concerned about. When the three elements develop and function altogether, the group of people is viewed as a CoP in which members with a shared concern participate in practices on a regular basis. The members of a CoP participate in practices in that they address issues, create products, complete tasks, and the like, which are of their mutual concern. In CoP, learning is not the goal but an integral part of the participation in practice in which members jointly accomplish their goal. A group of people comes to function as a CoP, when its members actively participate in and contribute to the practices.

CoP offers a place for SL, since it is a theory which views knowledge and skills as embedded in a social context (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Thus, learning is an integral part of participation in the context where one continuously constructs one’s relationship with knowledge and skills as well as with others and resources. This learning process is theorised as Legitimate Peripheral Participation (LPP). LPP holds that learning occurs in the process of changing ways of participation from peripheral to full participation in the CoP. When newcomers enter a CoP, they participate legitimately at the periphery. Such participation is a less demanding but sufficiently contributing way of participation, which functions as a breathing space for the newcomers to subsequently move toward fuller participation. Active participation moves the newcomers from the periphery to the core of the community. When they have reached full participation at the core of the CoP, they have also developed necessary skills and knowledge to responsively and competently participate in various practices of the community. This process of LPP is tied with the newcomers’ evolving forms of identity as members in a CoP. Newcomers who enter a CoP participate in a variety of practices while they jointly work with other more experienced members called old-timers. The newcomers shape relationships with old-timers, artefacts, and practices. The identity as a member is negotiated through how they view themselves, their relationship with practices and how old-timers view them (Lamb, 2012). The move toward fuller participation allows them to recognise themselves and be recognised by others as competent, contributing and responsible members.

Theoretically, if a group of people functions as a CoP, the LPP process functions successfully. When more and more members become responsible, competent and contributing, the CoP develops as a supportive *community* which ensures and empowers its members’ active participation. Thus, designing and developing a group of people into a CoP has the potential to be an effective way to support social participatory learning. This brings us to consider a classroom designed as a CoP.

We acknowledge that applying CoP in its original form to classroom research is controversial (Haneda, 2006; Lamb, 2012; Canagarajah, 2016). That is, we are aware of the issues surrounding whether a classroom can function as a genuine CoP. We have already seen one restriction of a classroom which does not allow its learners to depart from the community easily, which would not be a serious issue according to the original conception of CoP. Another concern can be that a classroom does not have old-timers whereas CoP expects to have senior members with whom newcomers would become socialised (Norton & McKinney, 2011).

This paper leaves the full discussion of the controversy to another occasion (Kojima & Thomson in preparation), and treats the classroom as a special case of CoP, which is tentatively defined as "a classroom where classmates share learning goals and collectively deepen their skills, knowledge and expertise in the relevant area by interacting with each other regularly for a sustained duration". Although a classroom CoP may not have all the features of CoP in its original form, it still strongly reflects the nature of learning as social practice.

## **Marginalised Participation**

Whereas legitimate peripherality is expected to function as a breathing space towards fuller participation, stagnation at the periphery sometimes occurs, which CoP considers to be marginalisation. For CoP, marginalisation is a form of non-participation impeding negotiation of positionality and identity toward fuller participation, potentially resulting in non-membership (Wenger, 1998). Past classroom research informed us that such negotiation of participation and identity at the margin of classrooms becomes a site of struggle (Block, 2007; Norton, 2006; Norton & Toohey, 2011). Exploring how individuals with various "needs, desires, and aspirations resist" marginalised positioning is becoming one of primary focuses in the field of classroom participation and identity research (Morita, 2012, p. 31).

Past classroom studies unpacking how students negotiate their participation at the margin has identified some reasons why not all learners move toward fuller participation in their classroom communities. For example, the classroom physical setting, for example, the seating arrangement can isolate a particular student from other students (Toohey, 1998). In Toohey's study, the class teacher organised the seating in a way that the student gained little access to other students who had the same first language (L1) so as to promote the use of the student's English as a second language (L2). Consequently, the student failed to interact with a wide group of classmates compared to other students. In a study conducted at a Canadian University, Morita (2004) identified that the stereotype held by local students, namely, that students from Asian countries are likely to remain passive, imposed a marginal position and identity onto students from Japan during in-class discussions. Lantolf and Genung (2002) reported that a postgraduate student in an intensive Chinese language course at a university was seen as incompetent and thus marginalised when she faced a conflict with the learning belief that her teacher enacted. Overall, these studies indicate that the social structure, dominant discourse, and/or beliefs of those with power, i.e., "the capacity (and privilege) to project and impose one's perspective on others without taking account of others' perspective" (Lantolf & Genung, 2002, p. 178) created direct or indirect causes of marginalisation of these students. Whereas students' participation at the margin and its causes have been identified, how learners perceive their marginalised participation is still inconclusive. Toohey (1998, 2000) reported that the student who was isolated by the seating arrangement was prevented from becoming a fuller participant of the classroom. He appeared to feel excluded from a group of other students and struggled with the positionality. In the end, he did not show developmental use of L2 English as other students did. In contrast, Morita's Canadian study (2004) reported that the seemingly marginalised Japanese student did not necessarily perceive herself as unsuccessful. The student saw her own learning as meaningful whereas she seldom actively participated in and contributed to the classroom discussion. These studies suggest that students do not necessarily perceive their participation at the margin in the same way but hold their own unique perceptions. This cautions us in interpreting studies that offer the more simplistic view of marginalized participation as failure of participation, and as failure of learning.

Regardless how they perceive their own experiences, marginalised students in most studies were considered as having little agency to assert their identity and thus unwillingly became

marginalised (Morita, 2004, 2009; Norton, 2000, 2001) or they strategically switched their identity to fit the dominant discourse (Lantolf & Genung, 2002). For example, Norton (2001) describes two migrants to Canada who resisted their teachers' decision to refuse their participation in an upper level English class. However, their teachers did not change their decision. The classroom kept its social structure, and eventually, the marginalised students had to leave the school midway. These studies created the impression that the social structure of classrooms is prescribed and static once established by the one with more power (Jang, 2017).

Pedagogical discussion in the above studies was, therefore, mostly on how educators should facilitate more active participation of the marginalised into the dominant discourse. However, each CoP is expected to change or become invigorated by its members' participation and contribution (Wenger, 1998). Thus, all participating members, including those at the margin, should have their own unique influence on the social structure given that the classroom is viewed as CoP. Pennycook (2000) argues that classrooms are not "isolated space" (p. 90) in which only teaching and learning are going on, but are "social spaces" (p. 91) in which "social relations" i.e., negotiations of power "are played out" (p. 94). This suggests to us that it is important to examine closely how a student's participation at the margin informs the design of classroom community from a CoP perspective, especially if the student is not unwillingly marginalised. We attempt to address this by conducting a qualitative inquiry using a classroom ethnographic approach (Bloome, 2012) in order to "convey a holistic understanding of the case" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 233). As a part of a larger study, this study has obtained ethics approval at UNSW Sydney.

In the following section, we will discuss Joanna's case using data from interviews and journal entries. All quotes from the interviews and journal entries are italicised. Wordings are original. Fillers are removed to ease readers' understanding.

## Joanna's Case

### *Joanna's Background*

Joanna, a Korean-Australian born in Australia, was a fifth-year student majoring in Media and Journalism at the time she participated in this study. Being a fifth-year student, she was a little older than many of her classmates. She did most of her study part time due to a number of commitments outside the university, such as her part-time job. This resulted in her spending less time on campus than most students. The courses she had taken prior to this study employed relatively new approaches to learning, e.g., flipped classroom in which students engage with content before classes and focus on discussions/activities during class-time. Thus, she was "*familiar with*" flexible ways of learning and in-class discussions (first interview). As she had grown up in Australia where teacher-student relationships are less hierarchical than is the case of many Asian countries, such as Korea or Japan, she often had had casual rather than professional relationships with the teaching staff members.

She undertook French in her high school and went on an exchange to France as her mother wanted her to do so. She studied French mostly by sitting down and memorising grammar in class and practiced using what she had learned when she went outside her class. Now, she goes to France every year for her family business and manages conversation at both daily and business level in French. She often experiences that speaking French "*breaks a lot of barriers*" between her and French speakers (first interview). This made her believe that learning languages is important. In the same way that her family received a few exchange students from France for Joanna to be eligible to go on the exchange to France, they also received exchange students from Japan for her siblings to be eligible to go on an exchange to Japanese high schools. Therefore, she stated that she was familiar with Japanese people and culture.

For her free-elective subject, Joanna wanted to take a language course. She chose Japanese because Japanese seemed easier than other languages. She felt this was so as she knew the similarity between Korean, one of her L1s, and Japanese and she was familiar with Japanese culture drawing on her experience with exchange students from Japan. Thus, she seemingly expected herself to do well in the course. Her goal of Japanese study was to be fluent enough to manage a basic conversation after completing the Japanese course in Semester 1. She planned to continue up to Semester 2 to further develop Japanese for travel to Japan. She also wished to use Japanese with Japanese customers and an Australian-born Japanese colleague at her work.

### ***The Course and Classroom***

Joanna was enrolled in a 13-week introductory Japanese course with a student enrolment of nearly 400 at one of the top eight Australian universities. The course had a vastly diverse membership as it was composed of both students majoring in Japanese Studies and those undertaking it as a non-major free-elective subject. Students in the course had different cultural and academic backgrounds, were motivated by a variety of interests and goals, and had diverse prior exposure to Japanese. This also meant that the students ranged from first-year university students to more experienced near graduation students. This created particular social dynamics in the course.

The course emphasised social participatory learning where students were encouraged to engage in various types of interactional activities and receive help from others to move from the learning stage of "I can do this with scaffolding" to that of "I can do this alone". This aimed to offer purposes and social settings for students to use Japanese with members in the course. We facilitated these opportunities in the course as students of Japanese as a foreign language rarely found the purposes and situations to use Japanese outside the course.

Students attended a large group class (about 200 students, called Lecture) for two hours, a small group class for one hour (Tutorial) and another small group class for two hours (Seminar) of about 25 students each week. Lectures tended to be where students encountered new content and engaged in initial use of the content, and Tutorials and Seminars tended to be where students engaged in highly interactive modes of learning to put their knowledge and skills into use. However, students were expected to prepare beforehand for active engagement in interactive activities for all types of classes. In this study, we will focus on Joanna's experience in Seminars.

Seminars had four features that attempt to promote social participatory learning so that the classroom would develop into a CoP. One feature was to facilitate the students' identity development as members of the Seminar through "naming" the Seminar. The course had 15 Seminar classes for the particular semester of the year. Most of them were scheduled in parallel with other Seminars. Each Seminar was designated as the students' homeroom, and the students through discussion gave it a name, such as *Samurai-gumi* or the Team Samurai. Then, the students were encouraged to identify themselves as a part of the Team Samurai. Joanna's Seminar, which was taught by one of the part-time tutors, chose *Sakura-gumi* (pseudo name) as its Seminar name. While aiming at forming group identity, this naming was also a practical device for the teaching team of seven teachers (four were full-time and three were part-time teaching staff) to manage a course of nearly 400 students. Seminar teachers, as homeroom teachers became a point of contact for each student, and the group names made it easier to distinguish students of the same or similar names. Another feature was the use of paper name plates students made. At the beginning of each class, a few students took turns in delivering the name plates to relevant classmates by calling out their names. During the class,

students placed them on their tables to display their names to others. This helped not only students get to know each other but also the teachers in charge of multiple Seminars, to learn the names of a large number of students. Thirdly, the classroom was arranged with tables and chairs to make a group of four to six students facing each other, for easier student–student interactions. Fourthly, *Senpais*, or senior students from more advanced level Japanese courses were regularly present as supporters in Seminars. *Senpais* were expected to add more variety to typical classroom interactions, i.e., teacher–student and student–student interactions (Thomson, 1998). They also became role–models for introductory students (Thomson & Mori, 2014), as well as acting as experts i.e., old–timers in the community, and often mediated teacher–student relationships. In Joanna’s Seminar, one of the authors was an observer and acted somewhat as a *Senpai* while a *Senpai* in the sense as described above was not present. In summary, these four features aimed to raise students’ awareness toward developing a membership identity, active participation and interaction, and learning enhanced by others’ scaffolding. Using these features, the Seminar teacher promoted social participatory learning.

The Seminar served as a summative class of students’ learning of the week. The teacher continuously provided highly interactive pair or group activities where students applied what they learnt during the week in combination with what they had learnt up to that week. Further, when students engaged in short dialogues or interview activities, the emphasis was on developing the short dialogues and interview activities into more realistic interactions with appropriate discourse stages starting from a conversation starter, and ending with a leave–taking remark, with ample attentive feedback in between. The discourse stages were expected to be effective scaffoldings for the students to express their own ideas when they came to rely less on such scaffoldings. At the end of each Seminar, students engaged in a role–play where they listened to a model dialogue performed by a *Senpai* and the Seminar teacher, read the dialogue in pairs, developed their own scenario using their own information and the discourse strategies, rehearsed several times with gestures, and presented the performance in front of another pair for peer–evaluation. In Week 9, the students undertook an Interaction Test in pairs where they performed their own original scenario of 5–7 minutes in Japanese in front of all Seminar members. The Interaction Test, an extension of the weekly role–play, was officially assessed by the teacher and peer–evaluated by classmates. This type of intensity of interaction and constant engagement with classmates together with the new language can only be sustained by active participation as the core value, which was expected to be shared by all members.

## Joanna’s Learning Experiences

### *How it Began*

Thrown into the intensely interactive class, Joanna encountered an unfamiliar approach to language learning from the very beginning of the semester. Unlike Media and Journalism courses where she experienced in–class discussions frequently, her expectation of language courses which she gained through her previous study of French was beginning with memorising letters e.g., Hiragana, in the case of Japanese and moving to learning vocabulary and expressions to form sentences. She expected to learn the linguistic rules in class and to develop them outside class. However, the Japanese course was “*the other way around*” (first interview). The course expected students to familiarise themselves with linguistic rules outside the class and use them in class to express themselves. Toward this approach, Joanna said that, “*personally, I don’t like the whole interaction thing*” (first interview). The pressure of interaction, though she expected it to some extent, went beyond her expectation. Thus, she felt that the course was “*moving very fast on a direction that I wasn’t expecting*” (first interview).

Joanna felt that the social participatory learning was forced upon her when the course quickly established the dominant discourse of highly valuing regular attendance, active interactions, and participation of students. The feeling of being *"forced"* was multiplied by teachers and a few *Senpais* who *"micromanage[d]"* students, for example, taking attendance even for Lectures with over 200 students and regularly checking each student's performance in Lectures, Tutorials, and Seminars (second interview). The particular way of learning in which she had to partake in interactive activities and the way of interacting in which teachers emphasised the use of discourse stages under the *"surveillance"* of the teaching team made her feel that the course had *"no flexibility"* and was *"very static"* (second interview). Not only did the way the course was run differ from her expectations of what a language course should be but it was also contrary to her expectations of what a university course should be, i.e., relaxed relationships between teacher and student, laidback attitude towards attendance and casual and free atmosphere.

Further, Joanna felt that the social participatory learning in the Japanese course essentially included forging and developing relationships with classmates, which did not agree with her view of relationships with university classmates. She was already *"tired of having Facebook friends that I haven't seen in three years [after] I had one class with them"* (first interview). She no longer wanted to bother making new friends with those whom she would not see after one semester. Her view of the university relationship was strengthened due to being a part-time student who did *"not spend time"* on campus (first interview). She came to the university to work on her studies as the university was what she *"want[ed] to get done and over with"* (first interview). However, developing relationships with classmates was inseparable from Japanese learning in the context in which she was thrown.

The imposition of the dominant classroom discourse resulted in her disengagement in the Seminar. It was because she wanted to avoid constantly feeling *"watched"*, *"forced"* and *"judged"* in the class where, in her opinion, a *"rigid"* way of doing things were repeatedly emphasised (first, third interview). However, on the surface, she appeared to participate in activities as other students did. What she did was to pretend to engage in given activities when her teacher or *Senpai*, one of the authors, came close by. Further, she did participate at least minimally as underlying motivation for her participation was to avoid unnecessarily undermining her classmates' learning. She noted that the fact that *"I'm disengaged doesn't mean I should be disengaging other students with my bad attitude"* (first interview). She sustained her disengaged identity, it appears, at the margin, which diverged from others, rather than unwillingly keeping an identity as an active student which was valued in the Seminar. This identity as disengaged student beneath the surface was not something forced upon her but something she negotiated and chose.

Having chosen to disengage herself and remain at the margin, Joanna frequently questioned, complained and dismissed messages behind the educational practices and devices in the Seminar. She described the naming activity of her Seminar as *"childish"* and remained *"indifferent"* about the name although she understood its *"concept"* which aimed to provide an identifying feature and *"more of a group identity"* (first interview). To Joanna as a disengaged student, the Seminar was *"another class I have to go to"* rather than her *"homeroom"* where she would have developed her sense of membership (first interview). In Seminars, the social participatory learning promoted awareness towards not only active speaking but also paralinguistics skills such as body language (bows, nods), and discourse strategies. Joanna felt these aspects were *"overly emphasised"* and *"forced"* regularly to *"stereotype a lot"* (first interview). Joanna said that *"I totally get that [idea], but ... I don't think it's quite necessary at this [introductory] stage"* and *"I refuse to believe that's the thing"* to use the paralinguistic skills and discourse strategies in real life settings (first interview). These remarks indicate that she dismissed



what the course expected her to absorb in the Seminars and the course. On the surface, she remained an ordinary student but underneath, she was developing what might be termed a resistant student identity.

### *A Sign of Change*

Several weeks into the semester, despite her covert resistance to the discourse of the course, Joanna started to develop relationships with her Seminar classmates. She met “old acquaintances” from her Korean community and gradually became “very close to them” by weekly attending the same Lecture, Tutorial and Seminar (first journal). She started having lunch, which is “the only extra time I spend on campus” (second interview). She also exchanged messages in an online chat group with them to discuss their Japanese studies. Even though she was still sceptical that the relationship would be maintained after the semester, the old friendships were “reinforced” (first journal) and facilitated her engagement in the study of Japanese both in and outside the Seminar. However, such positive experience was interrupted due to two symbolic incidents highlighting her marginality in her Seminar.

### *The Incidents*

Joanna and her Seminar teacher had developed mistrust between them, especially concerning her learning attitude e.g., punctuality, as Joanna had been late for the class a few times by the middle of the semester. The course regulation states that the students must arrive in the classroom within the first 15 minutes of each lesson, otherwise the late students’ attendance will not be recorded. If a student is more than 15 minutes late, the class teacher is required to notify the student verbally on the spot and via email on the day as a record.

In Week 10, when Joanna was late for her Seminar by more than 15 minutes, she was approached by the teacher and was told that her attendance would not be recorded. However, Joanna decided to stay regardless of being recorded as absent. Then, she was told about the attendance by the teacher twice more during the class. The teacher did so possibly because Joanna remaining in the Seminar made her unsure if Joanna had understood the message. In the evening, Joanna received the teacher’s email reconfirming her absence on the day and referring to the rule written on the course outline. The teacher was simply following the institutional rule in doing so. However, Joanna who understood the message after the first notice, and did not know about the requirement of notification could not avoid expressing her anger by saying “this actually got me really angry” (second interview). She thought it was abnormal that the teacher told her the same thing three times in the class and even emailed her, and that the teacher “didn’t even ask me why I was late” (second interview). This teacher’s approach was very different from what she had experienced with other teachers in her school life. She no longer wanted to talk to the Seminar teacher. To make the matter worse, when Joanna walked in late, she realised that the class did not have one extra chair for her. This was due to the fact that a few students had temporarily joined the class from other Seminars. She complained that “my seat was taken” as she was not able to sit with her friends (second interview). These events made her feel unneeded in the Seminar and ask herself “why am I even there?” (second interview). She began considering changing her Seminar class.

After the incidents, she described herself as a “rebellious” student: “do what I want” and “fight against the rules” (second interview). She reported that, during a whole class interview activity in Week 10, she was reluctant to approach unfamiliar classmates. She recalled that, “the girls I spoke to” were those “I’ve previously been in touch with before” (second interview). Besides, whereas she successfully completed the Interaction Test in Week 9 with her partner who forged a good friendship with Joanna throughout the process, she reflected upon the test

as *"unnatural and forced"* and thus neither *"necessary"* nor *"enjoyable"* (second journal). She also dismissed the implementation of peer-assessment as she *"didn't want to be the judge of anyone's hard work"* (second journal). Joanna felt that her position even at the margin in the Seminar was threatened and thus attempted to secure and validate her presence by positioning and identifying herself as *"rebellious"* (second interview).

As a result of feeling displaced in her Seminar, Joanna seemed to lose her initial motivation to learn Japanese in order to manage basic conversation when visiting Japan or at her work. She became *"a little bit less ambitious"* compared to the beginning of her studies (second interview). She even said that *"I'd rather just fail the course rather than... do something that [I] don't want to do and feel miserable about it"* because she no longer *"care[d] about marks"* (second interview). However, she was aware that she still had to complete the course considering the institutional regulations. She stated, *"well, the census date has passed. ... So, [discontinuation] is kind of not an option"*, given that after the census date, students dropping the course receive academic and financial penalty, and thus, her motivation to continue the course became to *"finish what you started"* (second interview). The conflicting positionality and identity at the margin, i.e., wanting to discontinue but having to continue, required Joanna to seek a way to persist and finish the course in the remaining two weeks in the semester.

Towards the end of the semester, Joanna increasingly accessed Japanese learning opportunities outside the Seminar. For example, she attempted to catch up with the contents by reviewing vocabulary and grammar outside the class, which was different to her original view of learning; learn basics in class and practice outside. She still exchanged messages to grasp what was going on in the course, had lunch together, and did homework in the library with her friends with whom she had reconnected. At her workplace, she had an Australian-born Japanese friend who studied Japanese at another university. He always asked Joanna, *"How's Japanese going?"* (second interview). She frequently consulted the friend and received answers to her questions and a third opinion, which was critical toward what she was taught in the Seminar. He also gave supportive comments on what Joanna experienced in her Japanese course, which made her feel relieved from time to time. These allowed her to remain in the Seminar even at the very fringe and assert her covertly rebellious identity.

In Week 12, however, she made her decision to move from her original to another Seminar with a different teacher and different classmates. Whereas she stated that *"the relationship" she "had in the course made it easier to attend and study Japanese [in the original Seminar] because we could rely on each other"* (third journal), she confessed that *"I'm too scared to even talk to her [the teacher in her original Seminar]"* (second interview) and *"I was quite nervous that I would unintentionally offend her"* (third interview). For this reason, she freed herself from the unnecessary *"stress and tension"* with her teacher (third interview). This may have been one of a few doable coping strategies to avoid conflict with the teacher and academic and financial penalty, but simultaneously to stay on track towards graduation, which was her ultimate goal.

### ***Her Perception of Learning***

In the last interview, Joanna reported that what she learned in the course was *"another six units of credit"* toward her graduation and she was *"still far off from"* what she *"was hoping to"* initially achieve (third interview). However, the six units of credit included various things. At some point, she mentioned some learning which was expected to happen through the social participatory learning such as adopting *"certain mannerisms that are Japanese when you speak Japanese"* (second interview). She added that she learnt *"contextual use"* of Japanese while experiencing *"the flow of the language"* (third interview). She reminded us, however, that she did not learn it but was taught or, in other words, forced. As she put it, *"we are kind of taught,*

everyone starts sounding the same... and that's what they want, which is kind of scary" (second interview). It was against her view because she believed that "language reflects character and individuality" (second interview). These remarks illustrate that she was not learning what she wanted, that is to express herself and her individuality through Japanese, but learning a certain uniform way of contextualised usages of Japanese, which she dismissed as "another six units of credit". This is ironical as the course designers' intention was for the students as beginner learners to become able to express themselves using some set discourse strategies as scaffoldings. Without such scaffoldings, they would have little clue about how to express themselves freely. Joanna missed this intention. At the same time, the teaching team failed to make the intention clear.

Joanna remained as a rebellious student, albeit covertly, because her fundamental identity as a "leisure learner" was explicitly threatened. As the semester progressed, her interview revealed an expectation of the course as a place for "leisurely learning" as a free-elective subject i.e., "fun thing to do" focusing not on "academic" but "practical side" "for a tourist" since she heard that this is how the course would be (third interview). Nevertheless, in the middle of the semester, she had to admit that "it's harder than I thought" (second interview). Joanna had studied French in high school and could have expected a similar pace of learning in the university Japanese course, while in fact university language courses move twice as fast as high school language courses. It gradually became difficult to accept the requirements of the course, which was "fast-paced and content heavy" to her, as she wanted to sit back, listen, and enjoy "leisurely learning" Japanese (third interview, journal). She said that, "everyone is super serious. Everyone needs to relax" to highlight such a gap between her as leisure and other classmates as non-leisure learners (second interview). In the end, she survived the semester and passed the course using learning opportunities outside the Seminar. However, she changed her original plan and decided not to undertake the Semester 2 Japanese course as she hardly imagined a place for herself as a "leisure learner" in the imagined Japanese course community. Joanna concluded that, "the course aims and what the students aims are, it doesn't really match up" (third interview). A series of interviews and journal entries revealed to us that Joanna underwent a range of emotions where her history, ongoing experiences, and expectations for future dynamically interplayed with each other to determine her ongoing positioning, participation and identity.

### "Why Am I Even There?"

Joanna, who initially positioned herself at the margin in a somewhat deliberate way by intentionally disengaging herself, had to change the way to negotiate her marginal positionality and identity when the conflicting views between her, her teacher, the majority of her classmates, and the course became apparent. The dominant "right" discourse of valuing participatory learning was reinforced through repeated emphasis and practice by more and more members moving toward the core of the community. Joanna must have felt that the other 400 students, seven teachers, and a number of *Senpais* formed a force against her. In classrooms, this type of dominant discourse and power are not easily negotiable, and thus not easily changeable especially by those with less power (Jang, 2017; Lantolf & Genung, 2002). Joanna had no way to overtly negotiate and express her desire to be a leisure learner who could sit back and relax during the class. Thus, she covertly disengaged herself and developed her covertly resistant identity beneath her apparently "right" participation at the margin where she felt being outside the "surveillance". This resistance notwithstanding, the participatory practices were forced upon Joanna, and she became immovable towards anywhere other than remaining at the very fringe. In a CoP in its original form, stagnation at the margin may result in non-membership (Wenger, 1998), however, as expected, leaving the course and accepting academic and financial

penalty was never a choice for her since her ultimate goal was to finish the university degree as quickly as possible. In this context, Joanna coped by establishing a rebellious identity to secure and validate her presence even at the fringe of the community. Marginalised students in previous studies were depicted as those with little agency to assert their marginal identities (Morita 2004, 2009; Norton, 2000, 2001), which was not the case of Joanna, who asserted her rebellious identity and willingly stayed at the fringe. However, the incidents in Week 10 strikingly symbolised the loss of her legitimacy even at the margin in the Seminar for Joanna, and that was when she chose to move to another Seminar instead of staying.

Throughout the semester, Joanna was consistently resistant to social participatory learning, which we believe is essential in the success of the Japanese course. It is normal that students come to this course with their own expectations about how a foreign language course should be managed. Joanna's expectation was to sit down and memorise grammar in class and practice using it when she went outside her class, due to her past successful experiences with learning French. This approach may have allowed her to express her individuality in French outside of the classroom, using the basics she learned in the classroom. Unfortunately, the Japanese course approached language learning in an entirely different way. She was expected to sit down and memorise the basics at home, and practice using Japanese in class. It seemed to be one of the causes of her resistance toward the course which aligns with a case of a student in a Chinese course whose learning belief clashed with her teacher's teaching belief, reported in Lantolf and Genung (2002). This student of Chinese ended up changing herself to adopt her teacher's approach to survive the course. However, Joanna remained covertly resistant; she positioned herself at the margin by disengaging herself from and being indifferent to the practices to which she did not assent.

The gap between the approach in the curriculum and individual students' preferred learning styles is nothing new. For example, similar observations could be made in the era of Communicative Language Teaching which benefited students who willingly interacted with others, while possibly undermining the learning of students who preferred a solitary mode of learning. In contrast, Lantolf and Genung (2002) reported that the student who stressed the importance of communication resisted a teaching approach that was based on recitation and memorisation. No matter which method the teacher adopts, the disjunction and conflict would remain between different learning beliefs. We assert that any students who are not used to the social participatory learning, not just Joanna, would naturally feel a certain degree of anxiety and frustration. Thus, it may be incorrect to attribute her resistance solely to the disjunction between her learning belief and the course's approach.

Interviews with Joanna gradually revealed her identity as a "leisure learner", and this may explain her persistent resistance toward the dominant discourse of social participatory learning, which demanded consistent preparation outside class and active participation in class. It is hard to imagine that her successful learning experience of high school French did not demand any degree of consistent preparation and active participation. Whereas we note that a university language course proceeds twice as fast as a typical high school language course, Joanna's overconfidence as a successful language learner-speaker of English, Korean and French, who was familiar with Japanese culture, and as a seasoned university senior student, compounded by the course's reputation as a "*leisurely learning*" course seemed to undermine her judgement on how much work would be required. In this sense, her claim of being a "leisure learner" sounds like an afterthought. Joanna's characterisation of a "leisure learner" is a little different from Stebbins' (2007) and Kubota's (2011) characterisation of leisure learners as those who do not pursue language learning for practical benefit or professional development but who consume "short-lived pleasurable core activity, requiring little or no special training" (Stebbins, 2007, p. 38). Before having come to the course, Joanna indeed wanted to

gain some practical benefit, i.e., linguistic skills and credit for graduation. Nevertheless, she mistakenly thought that she could do so while enjoying the course as entertainment without putting any significant amount of effort into the class. Paradoxically, the Seminar was where being serious and active was the key to enjoying the entertainment aspect of learning. We assume that remaining at the margin i.e., being disengaged from and indifferent to what she experienced, was possibly Joanna's way to justify her presence as a "leisure learner", and by claiming this identity, she must have further justified her legitimacy to herself. Under the circumstances, it was most likely the only way that she could cope.

Unfortunately, social participatory learning constantly required Joanna to expose her ability or inability in public, i.e., in her Seminar, unlike a solitary mode of learning. She emphasised a feeling of discomfort at being "watched", "forced", and "judged" that she felt was characteristic of the Seminar. The Seminar as CoP, if we may view it as such, determined the "right" practice, i.e., a set of discourse strategies, the domain, i.e., valuing active participation in interactions, and the community, i.e., a place for befriending classmates. Joanna's rebellious identity may have been an unconscious or perhaps conscious strategy to avoid facing up the fact that she was falling behind by the measure of the "right" standards. Considering the "right" standards that she neither shared or valued, she had no other choice than to disengage herself, to pretend to participate as others did, and to remain at the margin until the two incidents pushed her to move to another Seminar, and discontinue her Japanese studies at the university. It is now understandable that she exclaimed "why am I even there?". For Joanna, instead of continuing to struggle at the margin, leaving the Japanese course community was perhaps the right choice. If this was a more standard CoP, Joanna, as its member, could have chosen to contribute to practices to negotiate the domain and move to the core of the community, or to exit the community. However, as stated above, the special nature of the "classroom" CoP kept her stuck at the margin.

No matter how we view Joanna's experiences, it is true that she underwent a range of emotions dynamically. Joanna anticipated a course where she could engage in "leisurely learning", so was surprised at the new learning approach. She was uneasy with her younger classmates, feeling a short-lived comfort with her "friends". Becoming upset and angry at her teacher, she remained covertly defiant at the margin. When learners experience an emotionally loaded experience, they may resort to reticence and withdrawal as a form of emotional defence (King, 2013). Such an emotionally loaded experience may have frequently occurred for Joanna in the Seminar where she was forced to participate in interaction on a regular basis. We need to acknowledge that language classrooms can be the cause of "emotional turmoil" and sites of "emotionally highly loaded experience" (Dörnyei & Murphy, 2010, p. 22). For Joanna, the Seminar is best described as a cause of emotional turmoil and the site of an emotionally highly loaded experience.

### "Six Units of Credit"

Joanna described her learning outcome in this course as the "six units of credit" toward her graduation. Despite her initial motivation to be able to manage basic conversations in Japanese, she concluded that she had not achieved that goal. Then, she decided to discontinue Japanese study after completing Semester 1 though she had originally planned to continue until the end of Semester 2. Past studies have mostly classified marginalised students as unsuccessful when they failed to move toward the core of a community (Morita, 2004, 2009; Norton, 2000; Toohey, 1998; 2000; Wenger, 1998). However, Joanna did at least complete the course and acknowledged some progress in the contextual use of Japanese and Japanese behaviours, which were intended outcomes of the course. Nevertheless, she remained critical

toward the course and its approach. Once a dominant view is established and regularly imposed, it becomes hard to be self-reflective especially at the core of the community, but Joanna at the margin did remain so. On one hand, she may have been unsuccessful in moving towards the core of the classroom community, on the other hand, she gained the six units of credit toward her graduation and acknowledged her own learning outcomes. In other words, she survived in the CoP. Instead of classifying her as unsuccessful, we might want to conclude that Joanna was after all a successful student even at the margin, and that she exited the community with the unique outcome she gained, especially because of her positioning at the margin and covert resistance or rebellious identity. Her experience gave us an opportunity to reflect upon and question the uncritical view of full participants as successful and marginalised participants as unsuccessful.

Joanna made us question what it means to "participate". In the course, the teachers and *Senpais* came around the tables to "watch" the students to "judge" whether they were "participating". In Joanna's opinion, the students were under "surveillance". Social participatory learning views more contributing, responsible and thus valued participation to be overt engagement with a person and a *practice* in a situation. The teachers perhaps wanted to see the students to be genuinely engaged in oral practices with their classmates. We assume that the Seminar teacher readily assessed Joanna's engagement as genuine participation. Actually, one of the authors as an observer who knew her covert resistant identity through interviews and journals, did not see much difference between her and other students' participation. In fact, what the Seminar teacher saw as Joanna's seemingly genuine engagement when she approached Joanna was pretend-participation. We know so now only because Joanna disclosed that she pretended to be engaged when the teacher and one of the authors as a *Senpai* came closer, while she was actually disengaged beneath the surface. Joanna reminded us that the saying "seeing is believing" does not apply in this context.

Especially in language classroom where social participatory learning is employed, we, the teachers, are easily inclined to regard ideal classroom students as extroverts, with overtly active participants collaborating in the classroom activities orchestrated by us. This view is prevalent not only in teachers but also in students, as well as the general public and this discourse must have pressured Joanna to act in the way she did. However, what Joanna demonstrated was that overt participation can be a mask covering disengagement or pretend-engagement. In turn, a seeming lack of overt participation may not necessarily signify disengagement but could mean deep mental engagement. In fact, Morita (2004) reported that a student who remained quiet at the margin during in-class discussions was actually satisfied with her learning experience. Given that we acknowledge the diversity of the student population and in the way that students participate, either overtly or covertly, or being engaged or disengaged, we also need to promote diverse models of ideal classroom students rather than impose a uniform model informed by the concept of "full participant" onto students.

## Classroom CoP?

Joanna's experience led us to rethink the validity of "imposing" the social participatory learning on all students, and to reflect upon other students who might actually be resistant without being noticed by us, in other words, to reconsider what it means to implement CoP, SL, and LPP for classroom CoP. We now know that Joanna's emotionally loaded negative experience in the course not only forced her out of the Seminar community but also took away her appetite for studying Japanese any further, at least at the university. What this suggests to us is that a strong insistence on social participatory learning may result in the unintentional effect of forcing some members out of the community.

We believed that the application of the concept of social participatory learning in a form of CoP functions well when “all” members are on board, that is, by valuing active participation and contribution to practice. This might work well in the original CoP in which the membership makeup is fluid. However, this study showed that in classroom CoP where the membership was basically static, expecting all to be on board without question would not work. In the course overall, there were indeed many students who came to enjoy and exploit the social participatory learning where they not only learned but also practised Japanese. However, large courses such as this introductory Japanese for hundreds of students are very likely to include students who may not be ready to be fully on board for a number of complex reasons, as Joanna exemplified. We need to reconsider if “all” have to be on board to the same degree and in the same way.

The course we have discussed is difficult to manage as not only is the number of people involved large, but also the participants are diverse, and thus, they come with their own culturally and historically loaded expectations. Taking Joanna for an example, her heritage is Korean, but her upbringing is Australian. Her interviews partially revealed that she had a strong mother figure who decided that Joanna would study French and go on an exchange to France and host French exchange students. This home experience may have been different from her other experiences of the Australian education system in which she could form casual relationships with her teachers. Joanna appears to cope with the two value systems but got lost when she stepped into the Japanese classroom within the Australian education system. In the Japanese classroom, the teacher, or the mother figure, chose what she was to do, which perplexed her. The glimpse of her life lets us envisage the complexity that each student has and brings to the classroom community. In reality, students like Joanna may be more common than we can detect.

We also need to be aware that teachers have different statuses, experiences, and teaching philosophies and thus different expectations for student participation. Joanna’s Seminar teacher was a part-time teacher on a semester-by-semester contract, who was in a vulnerable position and so may have felt obligated to strictly follow the institutional rules, such as the university’s attendance policy, and implement the teaching approach that the full-time continuing teachers decided on, no matter what teaching philosophy she might have personally held beneath the surface. This does not mean that there was little communication between full-time and part-time teachers at the university. They had rather frequent communication to manage the large course as a team. However, we do not know to what extent individual teachers understand the theories to implement in her or his classrooms. It is possible that the teachers at the university were implementing the participatory approach without fully appreciating the theory and philosophy behind it. Another possible explanation about Joanna’s Seminar teacher could come from Japanese discourse strategies. In communicating in Japanese, people tend not to give reasons for being late, but simply apologise. Giving reasons is seen as giving excuses to justify wrong-doing, and not taken as graceful. Although it does not excuse the teacher for not acknowledging why Joanna was late, we could surmise that it was most important for the teacher on the day to enforce the attendance rule. Mistrust between Joanna and her teacher may have been built upon not only individual but also complex layers of social, historical and organisational relationships brought in by the various members, of which, we, the teaching team, might not be aware. Just as Pennycook (2000) argues that classrooms are not isolated but situated in a larger social space in which social relations are played out, a classroom CoP is, just as an original CoP would be, connected to the diverse and complex realities and histories through its members, and meanwhile regulated by the nature of the classroom. In the case of our Seminar, the social relations between Joanna and her teacher were indeed influenced by the diverse and complex realities and histories as well as the nature of the classroom.

In fact, theoretically, CoP, SL, and LPP do allow members to locate themselves in the periphery of the community even as leisure participants as long as they wish to be part of the community. As a student who undertook the Japanese course as a free-elective subject, Joanna's identification as a "leisure learner" at the margin should have been justified or at least recognized as valid. The course overall may have allowed her to remain at the margin as she passed the course, but it is questionable whether Joanna's Seminar allowed her to situate herself in this manner at the margin of the community. Ideally, a classroom CoP should not rigidly determine a single *domain*, *community* and *practice* to give those at the margin, like Joanna, opportunities to express their desired identity and to contribute to the *practices* of the classroom in their own ways. In such a classroom, teachers may well be able to orchestrate different ways of students' participation in and contribution to *practices*, and divergent students can assert their own positionality and identity as meaningful. However, classrooms including ours are embedded in the broader social context e.g., the university system with a number of regulations such as the attendance policy, and grading the students for units of credit. Whether leisurely learning expecting a little workload is a viable option especially within a highly competitive university such as ours is debatable. This cautions us to communicate more thoroughly with students about different ways to participate in the classroom, the broader context in which the classroom is situated and possible outcomes resulting from their participation in the classroom.

## Concluding Remarks

The course Joanna was enrolled in finished successfully with an overall highly positive student evaluation. We are thankful to Joanna who made us turn our attention from this overall evaluation to the individual lived experience at the margin, which is often overlooked. Before closing this discussion, we address how marginalisation might be dealt with given that it must be more common than we assume.

Most crucially, if we acknowledge the diverse culturally and historically loaded expectations of students and thus different positioning in classrooms, "it is important for educators to explore with students which identity positions offer the greatest opportunity for social engagement and interaction" (Norton & Toohey, 2011, p. 429). Further, given that we expect a certain way of learning, we may need to explain why we employ the particular approach (Sato et al., 2015), especially if it is relatively new such as social participatory learning. We feel that we have to become more resourceful in communicating crucial information to our students, as we find that stating the information in official university course outlines or syllabuses, and verbally conveying it again in lectures would not be enough. These tailored supports have the potential to avoid immediately imposing a teacher's view of learning on students (Rogoff et al., 2001), and students with contrasting views need not feel marginalised but should be able to remain at the periphery until they find the means to contribute to the classroom community in their unique way.

We suggest that resisting is not necessarily an unhealthy practice but is actually a part of a process of constructing new practices, which should be received positively. However, when all students are required to become full participants who are integral to the core part of the community, resistance to the core value may not be valued or allowed. Instead, the dominant view which the core participants hold may be forced upon the students, and thus they will only learn what the community wants them to learn in a way which the community sees as the "right" practice. This may result in merely reproducing the same practice and negating individual uniqueness because it fails to conform the "right" *practice* (Freire, 1970) or students pretending to participate in the "right" way and dismissing their learning experiences as un-



meaningful as this study revealed. Thus, those who have more power in the community i.e., teachers and course coordinators, need to legitimate other views and to turn various views, including resisting views, into valued resources for community development. We would like to learn from Joanna's experiences and develop our Classroom CoP, into one in which resistance is not outlawed.

This study focused on Joanna's learning experience at the margin. One case study cannot reveal enough to understand the experiences of all students who for one reason or another find themselves at the margin. Furthermore, this case study is about a particular course at a university in Australia, which may not be relevant to other courses. As students like Joanna must not be rare, we hope to hear more voices of students who experience participation at the margin to incorporate their views into designing better language classrooms.

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