RESEARCH PAPER

Exploring Identity Conflict in Learners' Linguistic Repertoires: Portraits, Stories, Poems, and Issues

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In this paper I share critical perspectives on identity conflicts that emerged in interviews with three undergraduate students about how they understand their linguistic repertoires (Blommaert, 2008, 2010; Busch, 2014) and why they frame their understandings in particular ways to do with identity conflict. The exploratory process includes students' reflections about the language portraits (Busch, 2012, 2018; Chik, 2014, 2017; Chik, Markose, & Alperstein, 2018; Wolf, 2014) that they drew of themselves as language users. It also makes use of various "I-poems" (Gilligan & Eddy, 2017) that are directly composed from what the students said in the interviews. Providing striking crystallisations of significant incidents and episodes in the students' languaged experiences, the I-poems not only illuminate their active agency in dealing with identity conflicts, but also point to wider issues of discrimination, inclusion, and power that each experienced. I relate these issues to language ideologies that are commonly reproduced in society and that can be seen to have significant impacts on learners' identities and their linguistic repertoires.

本稿は、言語レパートリー（Blommaert, 2008, 2010; Busch, 2014）に対する３名の大学生の理解および　その理解がアイデンティティの葛藤と関連付けられる理由を、インタビューから浮かび上がるアイデンティティの葛藤を批判的に考察することで明らかにする。この解明プロセスには言語使用者としての自身の言語ポートレイト（Busch, 2012, 2018; Chik, 2014, 2017; Chik, Markose, & Alperstein, 2018; Wolf, 2014）を用いた省察に加え、インタビューにおける学生の発言をもとに作られたさまざまな"I-poems"（Gilligan & Eddy, 2017)を用いた。I-Poemsは、アイデンティティコンフリクトにおける学生の主体性だけではなく、それぞれが経験した差別、多様性の受け入れ、権威など様々な問題を呈している。本稿では、これらの問題と、社会に広く蔓延り、学習者のアイデンティティや言語レパートリーに影響を及ぼしうる言語イデオロギーとの関連性について探る。

Keywords

linguistic repertoire, language portrait, I-poems, identity conflict, language ideologies

キーワード

言語レパートリー、言語ポートレイト、I-Poems、アイデンティティの葛藤、言語イデオロギー

when I'm a child

when I'm a child
I just think I am different from others so
when I go to the junior high school
it's not bullying but
it's like "gaikokujin"[1]
— Tomoko

I decided to stop talking in Tagalog at home

I entered high school
in the first year of high school I thought that my accent is very different than Japanese
it was my complex
I decided to stop talking in Tagalog at home
I said to my mother that I will not use Tagalog any more

1 = foreigner

I didn't use it for 5 years
even I know what she's saying
I will ask her to repeat it in Japanese
I also shadowed the dramas
— Haruka

I started to stop using dialect

when I came to Tokyo I had strong bias like the people from other areas can't use their own languages dialects
I felt a little bit nervous to use that word
then when I came to not just Tokyo also like big cities
I started to stop using dialect
sometimes I use Nagano's dialect without any special reason
that's why I put this in my center
I didn't know that's dialect then I just speaking that way
そんなことしなんでいいよ　しなんでいいよ[2]
it's not correct
it's not 標準語[3]
I don't know why I feel negative feeling to use local language
just not cool
— Midori

Figure 1. Example I-poems extracted from student interviews.

Each of the above "I-poems" illuminates a particular experience with language in three students' lives that was significant for the individual at the time. Haruka grew up in the Philippines using Tagalog and English. Coming to Japan in her teens to complete her secondary education, she felt that her way of speaking was different from her peers, so she took the radical decision to give up speaking Tagalog with her mother and become fluent in Japanese. Midori's poem reveals her sense of conflict about using her own local dialect after moving from Nagano to Tokyo for her university studies. Her local way of speaking felt out of place in relation to the standard Japanese that she now encountered in her new urban university life. Tomoko's poem concerns the time in junior high school that she was out-grouped by her peers and ascribed an outsider identity as "gaikokujin" [= *foreigner*] although she grew up in Fukushima prefecture bilingually, fluent in Japanese and Vietnamese.

These fragmentary sketches provide some initial insights into everyday situations of identity conflict that individuals face around the use of their linguistic repertoires. Specifically, linguistic repertoires involve a range of linguistic, communicative, and semiotic resources, including "concrete accents, language varieties, registers, genres, modalities such as writing" (Blommaert, 2010, p. 102) and "ways of using language in particular communicative settings and spheres of life, including the ideas that people have about such ways of using, their language ideologies" Blommaert, 2010, p. 102). Linguistic repertoires are highly individualised, variable, dynamic, and mobile. They function as part of "the peculiar biographical trajectory of the speaker" (Blommaert, 2008, p. 16) and take us beyond "now" in looking at the linguistic practices that learners deploy, so that we explore "… backwards to past language experiences and forwards to expectations and desires linked to the future" (Busch, 2014, p. 35). Inquiring into learners' linguistic repertoires enables us to explore identity issues in their language experiences *within* and *across* languages. Thus, an individual learner's sense of

2 "son'na koto shinande ī yo shinande ī yo" = I don't like that really don't
3 "hyojungo" = standard language (standard Japanese)

dislocation about using their local dialect at university in Tokyo is as much part of a linguistic repertoire view of identity conflict as is another student's enforced separation of their use of Japanese and Vietnamese in different spaces and at different times in their life.

Conflicts of identity are grounded in tensions between identities that an individual already has or imagines themselves as attaining—what a person wants to become or have for themselves (Darvin & Norton, 2015)—and their ingrained dispositions and practices, or "habitus" (Bourdieu, 1980/1990), as well as their capacity to exercise agency in relation to perceived and actual affordances and constraints impacting courses of action within particular social fields. These include family, school, membership groups, university, and work contexts, among others (Lin, 2012). As an individual's capacity to act is "socioculturally mediated" (Ahearn, 2001, p. 112), an important dimension to identity conflict concerns how individuals are positioned by others (and how they position others), and how (and why) such positioning aligns with or contradicts the individual's present or imagined identities (Darvin & Norton, 2015; Lantolf & Thorne, 2006; Norton, 2000). Where there is alignment, an individual will in some way be recognised as a legitimate member of a particular field—as knowing how to participate in that field (Lin, 2012). Conversely, without such recognition or legitimation in a given field, an individual will experience a mismatch because they are not recognised as legitimate and/or do not know how to take part in that field (Lin, 2012). What kind of identity conflicts arise, then, for learners in their "lived experience of language and the linguistic repertoire" (Busch, 2017, p. 53) across different social spaces and times in relation to others in their lives? How do they navigate such conflicts? Why?

Significant moments in these autobiographical journeys need, according to Busch (2012), to be interpreted in relation to the "the language ideologies and metalinguistic interpretations" (p. 510) that speakers make of their linguistic repertoires. Here I am taking a view of linguistic repertoire that is somewhat different from that of mainstream language education discourses—particularly the work of the Council of Europe on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) in drawing a distinction between plurilingualism as the speaker's competence (Council of Europe, 2001) and multilingualism as "the co-existence of different languages in a given society" (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 4) or "the presence of several languages within a given area" (Council of Europe, 2018). The CEFR view of multilingualism prioritises individuals' proficiency in separate languages rather than considering the interplay of particular semiotic resources in individuals' lives. The more situated, user-centred focus put forward in this paper is particularly relevant for constructing a critical learner development perspective on learners' languaged lives. It privileges respect for a learner's own perspectives and reflections about their multilingual experiences, practices, and desires, without which we cannot arrive at better understanding of how an individual may see identity conflicts around language that they have been through. It also invites us to consider human, material and ideological affordances and constraints that affect individual decision making, development and action within particular fields, thereby helping us to understand how wider social conditions, norms, practices, and discourses impact conflicts of identity.

My growing interest in learners' linguistic repertoires comes from visiting Myanmar in the last several years to do teacher education workshops, as well as fieldwork with students about social justice and development issues. Attending a conference workshop by Alice Chik (2015) on *Visualizing language learning* in which she shared free-form examples of students drawing themselves as language learners, I was fascinated by the different images that learners had created and what these revealed about their language histories and practices. A few months later in Myanmar, I tried a similar visualization activity during a week of teacher education workshops with trainers working in non-state education for education and development NGOs and monastic schools. My workshop co-facilitator, Jenny Morgan, and I invited

the trainers to draw themselves as multilingual language users. Their drawings revealed an astonishing range of communicative resources that they used on a regular basis, as well as pointed to important experiences in their development that were directly impacted by language (Barfield & Morgan, 2016). Fieldwork in Myanmar with students has further helped me realise how powerful ideologies about language (such as the policy of Burmanisation) have profound effects on groups, communities, and individuals, eventually leading me to explore with the students in the project reported here how they see their languaged lives and to probe with them questions of identity conflict in relation to wider issues in Japanese society.

In January 2018 I started this research with four second-year undergraduate students (Haruka, Keiko, Midori, and Tomoko—all noms de plume) from a yearlong course that they had been taking with me in 2017. I already knew the students well enough to know they had different language profiles, but from the viewpoint of understanding how they saw their own languaged lives, my understanding was quite limited. In two rounds of interviews with them I inquired into these guideline questions:

(1) How do learners see their linguistic repertoires?

(2) What kind of experiences and incidents to do with identity conflict do learners highlight in their linguistic repertoires?

(3) What connections do learners make between wider ideological issues in society to do with language and questions of identity conflict in their own linguistic repertoires? Why?

In this paper I focus on reconstructing different identity conflicts that emerged from the interviews with three[4] of the 4 students about how they understand their linguistic repertoires, and about why they perceive their language experiences and frame their understandings in particular ways to do with identity conflict. This reconstructive process includes the language portraits (Busch, 2012, 2015, 2018; Chik, 2014, 2015, 2017; Chik, Markose, & Alperstein, 2018; Wolf, 2014) that the students drew of themselves as language users, as well as various "I-poems" (Gilligan & Eddy, 2017) that I assembled by using the students' own words from the interviews. These are key areas that I wish to focus on here. As a researcher, I find it tempting to reach towards grounded theorization of learners' identity conflicts through the prism of *capital*, *field*, and *habitus* that their lives embody as Lin (2012) and Darvin & Norton (2015), for example, have argued for. Wary, though, of applying an overarching theoretical framework that may distance us from appreciating in the first place the students' own voiced accounts, in a different identity as an exploratory practitioner, I will focus for the main part of this paper on trying to understand their stories in their words and sharing my long-puzzled reflections with you.

I continue by explaining the interview process and presenting starting conversations from the interviews about each student's language portrait so that we can get a deeper sense of the students' multilingual lives. After that, I will introduce the particular method that I used for analysing the interviews—the Voice-Centred Relational Approach—and discuss the whys and wherefores in reconstructing "I-poems" from interview transcripts. I will then present and comment on a selection of I-poems from the interviews with each student. This will point us towards emergent themes to do with identity conflict and let us broach wider ideological issues to do with language that the students perceived as impacting their lives and identities.

4 For reasons of space I have limited the focus in this paper to three of the students.

The Interview Process

Lasting 45 minutes to an hour, the interviews were done mostly in English, and in part in Japanese, according to how the students wished to express themselves at certain points. In the first interview the students drew a "language portrait" (Busch, 2012, 2015, 2018; Chik, 2014, 2015, 2017; Chik, Markose, & Alperstein, 2018; Wolf, 2014) of themselves, which they then talked about and used for recalling and reflecting different language experiences they had each had. Following Busch (2012, 2015, 2018), I asked the students about their portraits, encouraging them to share how they experience language in their daily lives: the ways they use language, how language has been important for them at different stages of their lives, and how language might be important in the future for them. I also invited the students to share about particular persons, places, situations, and critical moments they had experienced in relation to language, and what those experiences now meant to them (and why). Later I listened to these initial interviews, focusing on how they used "I" to talk about themselves in the critical episodes that they had faced. I then transcribed the interviews, before reducing each critical episode to a short "I-poem" consisting mostly of statements they made about themselves in these small stories (Bamberg & Georgakopoulou, 2008) of identity conflict.

For the second round of interviews in July 2018, the students were asked to bring along 6-8 popular culture artefacts (explained as images, headlines, objects, texts, slogans, and so on) about "language issues" in society so that we might move between individual and societal perspectives in relation to their now storied linguistic repertoires. In the second interview we went over episodes from the first interview and also talked about the artefacts that they each brought with them and considered meta-narratives of language (ideologies, assumptions, and beliefs within education systems, the mass media, governmental policies, popular stories and myths, and so on) circulating within society that they saw as affecting their lives.

Language Portraits

The students' language portraits are shown in Figure 2 below. From left to right portraits are by Haruka, Midori, and Tomoko. (The students could choose from two silhouette outlines or draw free-form.) In Figure 2, the silhouette form on the left and right comes from an online community for researchers and practitioners interested in heteroglossia (heteroglossia.net, n.d.). The body outline in the middle comes from a freely available collection of "person outlines" (Clipart Library, n.d.). It is worth noting that more recent work with language portraits—e.g., Chik, Markose, & Alperstein (2018)—has used a different silhouette form.

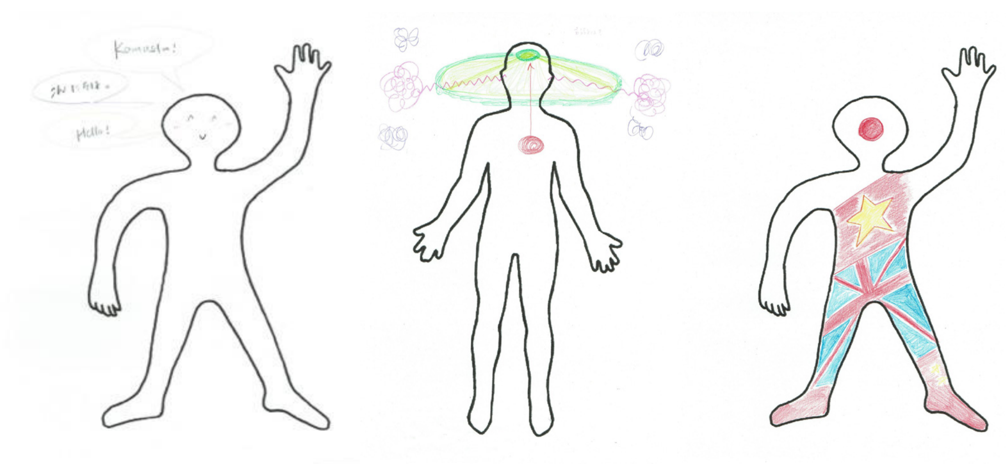

Figure 2. The Students' Language Portraits.

Let's look at each portrait in turn. In her language portrait (see Figure 3 below), Haruka gives prominence to the three languages (*Kamusta!*/Filipino (Tagalog); こんにちは [= konnichiwa]/Japanese; *Hello!*/Philippine English) that she grew up with at different stages in her childhood and teenage years. Interestingly Haruka sees herself expressing herself directly to others in all three languages.

Figure 3. Haruka's Language Portrait.

Haruka had spent her first years in the Philippines, brought up by her grandparents. She learnt from early on to use Tagalog and English. With her Japanese father and Philippine mother working in Japan, she decided at the age of 15 to come to Japan, without any Japanese at all, to live with her parents. She was highly driven and got through to university with her peers of the same age—and along the way gave up speaking Tagalog with her mother for five years ("*at first she talked to me in Tagalog but even I know that what she's saying I will ask her to repeat it in Japanese*" (Haruka, Interview 1, January 2018). She felt that this would help her mother become more proficient in Japanese and have better employment prospects in Japan.

Midori started off the first interview by commenting on the difficulty that she experiences in expressing herself precisely in whatever language she is using. She continued by reflecting on how her language portrait (see Figure 4 below) also represented important connections that "local languages" held for her:

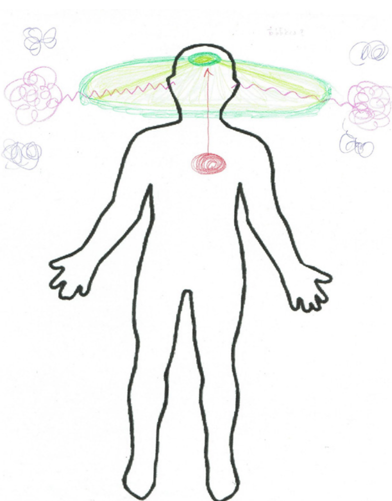

Figure 4. Midori's Language Portrait.

"*I think I can't explain what I'm really thinking with my language even if it's Japanese or my own local language. I guess I can't explain what I'm feeling exactly in a word, so this circle is my feeling or thinking or something. Then I just separated the colour. This yellow green is my ... it's top or the center of my mind is local, local feeling or local languages. I think when I hear local languages or just when I saw Nagano or Azumino, the word which is connected with my hometown, I feel... I feel happy if there is some posters or the letter in another areas, then "oh my hometown is outstanding."* (Midori, Interview 1, January 2018)

Midori had grown up in a small community in Azumino, Nagano, in the foothills of the Japanese Alps, using a local variety of Japanese at home, particularly with her grandmother. She wondered why she needed to hide her local identity when she moved to Tokyo and started her university studies—in fact, questioning why her local variety of Japanese had become/was being stigmatised and why she was feeling "dis-located." This led Midori to identify more with the branding of her local area for tourism ("*I feel happy if there is some posters or the letter in another areas, then "oh my hometown is outstanding*") than with using her local dialect in her own life.

Like Midori, Tomoko had grown up in a rural part of Japan—in Fukushima prefecture. She had been born to a Japanese-Vietnamese father and Vietnamese mother in Vietnam and had moved with her parents to Fukushima at a very early age. Using Vietnamese within the home, Tomoko learnt Japanese by going to the local elementary school ("*I put the Japanese flag on the head because since I was a children I went to the Japanese school so my thinking is mostly in Japanese*" (Tomoko, Interview 1, January 2018). Her language portrait is shown in Figure 5 below.

Tomoko observed how Vietnamese covered her heart and family relationships, as well as let her express her emotional self in particular ways:

"*I used the Vietnamese flag on my heart because I use Vietnamese with my families and I think Vietnamese language is really emotional and some words relate to emotion is really special there are so many so many words to express emotion*" (Tomoko, Interview 1, January 2018).

Figure 5. Tomoko's Language Portrait.

As she grew up, Tomoko had been required to act as mediator, quite reluctantly at times, between her non-Japanese speaking parents and wider society. She had also made great efforts to develop her English as she saw it as important for her future: "*I chose England's flag on my leg because it will help me to go to a lot of countries by using English and making contact with a lot of people*

by going there" (Tomoko, Interview 1, January 2018). Using Chinese was another important part of the future imagined identity that she was investing herself in, as shown in her feet in the language portrait ("*I also choose the Chinese language because I start to study Chinese recently and I think it will help me to take contact with people too*"—Tomoko, Interview 1, January 2018).

These starting conversations underline the rich diversity of identity issues in these three students' linguistic repertoires. Haruka foregoes speaking with her mother in their shared language, Tagalog, partly to help her mother find better employment, and partly to force herself to use Japanese as much as possible and to become the same as her peers. Midori has a sense of confusion about using her Nagano variety of Japanese in Tokyo and at university to express herself; she feels, in effect, compelled to suppress her local identity, and this bothers her. Tomoko, on the other hand, navigates between the Vietnamese-using environment of her home life and wider Japanese society to mediate social inclusion for herself and her family, and to find ways to express herself to others in positive terms. In the interviews, as Busch (2017) predicts, the students used their language portraits to interpret their linguistic repertoires multimodally, i.e., both visually and narratively, and to move between places and the past, present, and future as they re-constructed their lived and imagined experiences of language. For each of these young women important questions of identity and conflict came up as they started seeing their multilingual selves both more holistically and more "contradictorily."

I-poem Analysis: Standing Alongside the Learner

To develop the research further, I listened to each interview a few times and made notes as I listened, before transcribing the interviews. One question I had was how to work with the interviews as speech rather than written text. Although I was intent on trying something different from the exhaustive thematic codification that a conventional Grounded Theory Analysis requires, I was not yet completely clear about what kind of creative process might enhance critical analysis of learners' voices in the interviews. My search led me to the Voice-Centred Relational Approach/Method (Gilligan & Eddy, 2017), a qualitative approach that Gilligan and her collaborators originated in the 1980s and which focuses on the voices and perspectives of individuals in the stories that they tell of their experiences. In their overview of the Voice-Centred Relational Approach, Gilligan and Eddy (2017) refer to a Listening Guide that includes "aspects of thematic and narrative analysis as well as elements of a grounded theory approach" (p. 76), but which distinctly specifies "a series of 'listenings,' including … Listening for the 'I' (the first-person voice of the speaker) and Listening for Contrapuntal Voices (the counterpoint of voices that speak to the researcher's question)." (ibid.) In the first listening, "Listening for the Plot", the researcher focuses on plotting the narrative (who is present, who is not, particular themes, looking for "emotional hotspots", and striking images or metaphors that the interviewee uses in telling their story). Here the focus of the researcher is predominantly descriptive, whereas with the second listening, "Listening for the 'I'", the researcher focuses on how the interviewee uses "I" in different phrases. S/he separates each "I phrase" to create an "I-poem" around clusters of knowledge and experience that the interviewee articulates "in an associative logic, rather than linear, rational, causal thought processes" (Gilligan & Eddy, 2017, p. 78). The third stage in the Listening Guide is called "Listening for Contrapuntal Voices" and pushes towards a deeper analysis. Here the researcher's task is to listen for the interplay between voices, looking for harmonies and dissonances, trying to pick up "what is not being said or what may be silenced" (Gilligan & Eddy, 2017, p. 79). Edwards and Weller (2012) point out that the Voice-Centred Relational Approach gives attention to identifying "the different subjectivities from which the participant speaks" (p. 205) in "the stream of consciousness that is carried by the first person references" (p. 205).

This enables the researcher to “stand alongside” the interviewee as they make an interpretation of the interviewee’s different voiced experiences and social reality.

At a more general level adaptations of the Voice-Centred Relational Approach (e.g., Bright, Kayes, Worrall, & McPherson, 2017; Paliadelis & Cruickshank, 2008) tend to emphasise reading rather than listening to interview transcripts in successive stages. Bright et al. (2017) propose, for example, four stages of reading, with a substantially more elaborate and explicit set of guideline questions for each stage (see Appendix A for the complete set of guideline questions). For the present research I used both successive listenings and readings. While voice-centred listening helped to sensitise me to the perspectives of the students on their experiences and to potential counterpoints central to my research interests, reading was useful for extracting the I-phrases, questioning what non-I-phrase details to include, creating I-poems, and thinking further through some of the ideological aspects of each student’s experiences.

The actual application of I-poem analysis made me question how to stand alongside an interviewee and represent their voice(s) in a trustworthy way in the I-poems that I created. The three learners often provided further details about an element of an “I-phrase” without using “I” when they did. Should such details be included or not in an I-poem? Under what conditions? An example episode from the first interview with Haruka (see Appendix B for a verbatim transcript of this segment) serves to illustrate some of the questions about voice that came up. In this episode Haruka recalled searching for a different language school in Tokyo after being initially placed in a community school class with much older adults. She wanted to find a class with people closer in age to herself, adding the detail that it was a class taught by volunteers: “*I also looked for different language school which is taught by university students there is a voluntary circle*” (Haruka, Interview 1, January 2018). In a following detail, she commented that she had indeed found such a volunteer-taught class, but the other children were much younger than her: “*yes but almost all of them are elementary school (laughter) there is no students that are the same age as me*” (Haruka, Interview 1, January 2018). Both details provide contextual elaboration of “place” and “participants” in this narrative episode, but do not have any explicit or implicit reference to “I”. Similarly, the final detail in this segment—“*... and they think that Japanese is kind of weird*” (Haruka, Interview 1, January 2018)—is a “non-I” detail. What is different is that it points to how Haruka experienced being negatively positioned by her classmates in high school for the way that she spoke Japanese. This “non-I” detail functions as a complication and connects to further actions that Haruka took in trying to change her accent and align herself with her peers so that she would not be judged as different. This led me to include it in the I-poem. I also decided to put at the end of this I-poem the phrase “*it was my complex*” even though it is not an I-phrase, either. Haruka uses “*it was my complex*” as a coda for the whole narrative episode that the I-poem addresses, so it shows the evaluative stance that she took about the incident. The phrase creates, as it were, a signature (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) for her voice here, as if to signal: This is Haruka. This is Haruka making sense of her languaged life. This is Haruka voicing how an identity conflict has impacted her development.

Figure 6 below shows the process of creating this particular I-poem. The text of the resultant I-poem is written in italic style with the deleted details struck through in plain style.

I couldn’t speak I think the modern Japanese

I also looked for different language school which is taught by university students ~~there is a voluntary circle and~~
I go there for 5 months and enter junior high school
~~but almost all of them are elementary school – (*laughter*) there is no students that are the same age as me~~

when I enter the junior high school
I couldn't speak I think the modern Japanese
I can speak the formal Japanese
they think that Japanese is kind of weird
~~*so from them*~~ *I studied the modern Japanese by watching TVs or dramas*
I entered high school
in the first year of high school I thought that my accent isn't so is very different than Japanese
it was my complex

Figure 6. Curating and creating I-poems: an example.

The selection and deletion of non-I-phrase details in Figure 6 goes some way to de-constructing the process of standing alongside each interviewee and of re-constructing their voice(s) through I-poems. I-poems help crystallise moments of identity conflict by zeroing in on what Clandinin and Connelly (2000) term "the participant signature" (p. 148) of the respective individual. Is this I-poem trustworthy? Does this I-poem (and its interpretation) "give a tone and a feel" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 148) for the identity conflict that the individual experienced? With these questions in mind, I would like to look next at a selection of I-poems from each student and explore different issues of identity conflict that they highlight.

I-poems: Haruka

With her parents working in Japan, Haruka grew up in her early childhood under the care of her grandmother in the Philippines. They used Tagalog at home, and from a young age Haruka started learning and using English in a neighbourhood nursery school. Fluent in both Tagalog and English when she moved to Japan at the age of 14, Haruka at first went to a community school in Tokyo. Because of her lack of Japanese ability, she couldn't start high school with children the same age as her. Instead, she dropped back a year to go to the community school (which, further below, she calls a "volunteer class") and studied with a group of much older classmates. As Okano and Tsuneyoshi (2011, pp. 14–18) indicate, it is quite possible that they had not completed their basic education and had been forced to leave school early for reasons of poverty or bullying. In this period of intense assimilation Haruka applied herself to learning Japanese formally at the community school as well as at a language school that was taught by volunteer university students; she also worked on becoming fluent in everyday standard Japanese (which she refers to as "modern Japanese") by watching TV shows and dramas:

I couldn't speak I think the modern Japanese

I also looked for different language school
I go there for 5 months and enter junior high school
when I enter the junior high school
I couldn't speak I think the modern Japanese
I can speak the formal Japanese
they think that Japanese is kind of weird
I studied the modern Japanese by watching TVs or dramas
I entered high school
in the first year of high school I thought that my accent isn't so is very different than Japanese
it was my complex

Constantly corrected by her classmates and teachers, Haruka developed a complex about sounding different in Japanese. It was at this time that she decided to stop speaking Tagalog and took on what she believed to be a monolingual Japanese-using identity. She gave up using Tagalog with her mother, as well as with her younger brother, and her cousins in Kyushu, and entered junior high school less than half a year later. Haruka started talking exclusively in Japanese, even with one of her oldest Filipino friends in Japan:

we talk in Japanese now

before there was a friend that is a Filipino
I used to talk with her in Tagalog
when I attended the volunteer class
when I decided to not talk Tagalog
she also decided not to talk in Tagalog
we talk in Japanese now

This group of I-poems represents the voice of "assimilating Haruka." Haruka wanted to become and sound the same as her junior high school classmates. Any conflicts of identity were buried deep within the desired normalcy of the monolingual world that she inhabited in her relationships with her peers at school. To attain this new identity, she started speaking English with a heavy *katakana* accent—just as those around her did—so that she could put distance between herself and any semblance of proficiency in that language. This also let her avoid being put in the position of translating English into Japanese for her classmates:

I want to be normal

when they listened to my Japanese
they knew that I came from other countries
I don't like that
I entered Japanese school
I want to be normal
if they know that I can do English
they will ask me everything to translate in Japanese
the English that I know and they know is quite different
the English I know is not translating English
the Japanese people's English is something about translating English to Japanese
I don't want that situation

The above I-poem reveals Haruka recognising the language norms of her peers, including their resistance to using English communicatively. She decided to perform a monolingual identity and follow their language practices in order to belong with them. Yet, much as she wanted to show herself as monolingually performative in standard Japanese, Haruka had—from extensive exposure to TV shows and dramas—unconsciously picked up different varieties of Japanese:

I didn't know anything about dialect in Japan

I didn't know anything about dialect in Japan
I input a lot of dialects
my cousins lived in Kyushu

I talked to them there is Kyushu dialect
I don't realise I'm talking in that
I thought all of them are Japanese
I input everything that I heard
now when I talk to my friends
sometimes they will ask me if I know Kansai dialect
I am supposed to use only the modern Japanese

Thus, for others, Haruka sometimes passed for someone who had lived in Kyushu or Kansai. She was never quite as monolingual as she proclaimed herself to be to others, or as others wished to position her.

In a different act of subversion to the monolingualism that she espoused in public, Haruka secretly continued to use Tagalog on Facebook with her friends in the Philippines. Despite her claims to the contrary with her parents and family, she continued to read, write, and talk the language she had once used with her mother and other members of her family. For several years she could not show that side of herself to others in Japan. Invisibilising (Grant-Thomas, 2018) a significant identity of hers, Haruka kept her membership of this home community hidden and suppressed her otherness. Yet while she made efforts to hide both her secret use of Tagalog and her abilities in English, she unwittingly acquired traces of other identities through speaking different, truncated varieties (see Blommaert, 2010, pp. 103-106) of Japanese. The second set of I-poems points to a "masking and passing" voice of Haruka.

At university Haruka uses Tagalog on social media for keeping up with her friends in the Philippines and maintaining her fluency. She combines this with doing research for different courses:

I don't want to lose it

I use it in my research
I'm reading articles in Tagalog
I'm chatting with my friends
if I'm researching about something
I don't want to use Japanese
I use Tagalog when I research about the Philippines situation
I think it has more information than English and Japanese
I read it
I sometimes write about it in Tagalog
I don't want to lose it
I'm practising
I think if I lose it
I couldn't talk with my friends as normal as before

Still sensitive about how she may be accepted by her peers, Haruka often affects a heavy *katakana* accent when she first talks in English with other Japanese students at university. That way, her experience tells her, they will not feel scared or intimidated by how fluently she speaks.

I-poems: Midori

As shown in Midori's I-poem at the start of this paper, using her local variety of Japanese made her feel deeply connected to her local area. A key anchor for Midori is her grandmother

who lives with her parents in the same house in Azumino, Nagano prefecture (Midori tends to deploy a less localised variety of Japanese with her parents):

I feel strong connection with her

my way of using Japanese is biased from Nagano
I don't think it's proper way of Japanese
my parents don't have that strong dialect
when I talk with her in strong dialect
I feel strong connection with her
then I often use dialect
but when I talking with my parents
I don't really

Midori also professed a sense of conflict about using her local variety in Tokyo or other major cities: "*Just not cool*," she commented at first, as if using her Nagano dialect would amount to an incongruent act of identity (Le Page & Tabouret-Keller, 1985) in her new student life.

Other see-saw tensions tended to de-centre Midori too. She had taken an extra year to prepare for university entrance exams. One year behind her peers of the same age, she now struggled with using "keigo" (= a polite and respectful register used according to age and status) with older students as opposed to using "plain" Japanese (or "straight Japanese" as she calls it). She recalled that she had first learnt to use "keigo" in her junior high school sports club where younger members were bullied if they did not show due respect to their seniors by employing "keigo". At university Midori felt compelled to deploy "keigo" but confessed to having no sense of showing respect by doing so; it was simply something that she needed to do:

I just get used to this way of using keigo

I often feel I should use
I have to use keigo to sempai
sometimes I can use keigo to teacher
but for sempai I can't
I think it's strongly connected with my experience in my junior high school age
I joined volleyball club and these sports club have strong hierarchy system
if younger people didn't use keigo to senior people
senior people just angry for not using keigo
I think it's stupid
I just get used to this way of using keigo
because I have gap age
when I entered this university I was worried
I was worried for using keigo to third years student because they're same age to me
I just want to use keigo
I think it's from my experience
that's why I can't use the straight Japanese
I just use keigo
but it's not the sign of respect
I didn't show respect to him
but I just use keigo

In addition to feeling social pressures around her use of her local variety of Japanese and "keigo," Midori was at first lost about using English at university. Yet, she soon started identifying in a positive way about speaking English. Part of this change involved idealising people who use English communicatively rather than just studying it:

it's a shame I didn't have the courage to use English

when in the first class they started to use English in self-introduction
it was my first time to use English in the classroom in 10 years
I couldn't say anything
I didn't like English
I didn't think anything
maybe speaking in English is significant
the people who use English is adorable I thought
it's very 恥ずかしい　とても恥ずかしい[5]

Overcoming the embarrassment that she initially felt in speaking English at university, Midori starting to restructure part of her identity around becoming a proficient English user. Now in Tokyo, she could hear many different languages around her, particularly English, and this let her connect—albeit indirectly at first—her own increasing use of English with adopting a globalised identity for herself:

I felt "Oh Tokyo is now global city"

when I walking through the town
I often hear many languages especially in Shinjuku or Shibuya
I can hear English
then I recognize it's English
but if I want to understand what they're saying
I need to listen carefully
I thought it's very interesting
"Oh that's Tokyo"
when I'm in Nagano we never hear other languages
sometimes Chinese but not English
I felt "Oh Tokyo is now global city"

Aware that this would be good for her future, Midori started to invest herself heavily in using English and in making friends with international students on campus. She also made plans to study abroad in her third year in Sweden and was later awarded a scholarship for this, thus developing other forms of capital along the way.

Midori's I-poems reveal significant identity shifts and conflicts. There is the enduring emotional impact that using her local dialect has on her, as well as the tension between using her local dialect or standard Japanese outside of her home area as she starts to encounter and desire "the global" in her university life. She finds hierarchical relationship norms bothersome to accept, yet is also compelled to use "keigo" without ever feeling that she is showing others the respect that is expected. The alluring branding of her local area as a tourist destination helps her keep a sense of her Azumino identity, while at the same time the salience of English around her in Tokyo pulls her towards "the global" and to cultivating friendships

5 "hazukashi totemo hazukashi" = embarrassing very embarrassing

with students from different countries and preparing to study abroad for a year in Stockholm. All this seems to have distanced her from the bothersome norms of formality that she experiences in using Japanese. Midori knew how to navigate those social rules, but they were empty for her. Wishing to relate to others as equals, she also became more and more focused on moving from university in one global city in Japan to another in Sweden. All in all, a composite voice emerges in the ensemble of Midori's I-poems—a "mobile glocal-egalitarian" voice, so to speak, of someone who embraces her *local* roots, yet wishes to develop and convert English into a *global* resource for making friends with international students outside of hierarchical relationships and becoming an international student herself by studying in Europe for a year.

I-poems: Tomoko

Growing up in Fukushima, Tomoko longed to be seen as the same as other children in the way she used Japanese. She wasn't, and this led to an enduring sense of misalignment for her in her everyday life, first at elementary school and later at junior high:

"Oh she's Vietnamese"

I live in the countryside of Fukushima
the international people like me is really not really much there
if they talk me "Oh she's Vietnamese"
some people see me in the different ways
actually I use Japanese like Japanese people
so after that they don't mind that
I have many other points that they can mention
the first thing that they say to Tomoko will be in the class "She's Vietnamese"
sometimes I think it's a bias
I want to use Japanese like every other Japanese children

The othering (Grant-Thomas, 2018) as "foreign" that she experienced when younger did not however lead Tomoko towards a clearer sense of her own Vietnamese identity. Rather, it simply left her feeling different from others, and she became unwilling to assert at school the Vietnamese identity that her peers assigned her:

I just think I am different from others

now I grow up
I can speak Vietnamese
it's a strong point of me
when I'm a child
I just think I am different from others
when I go to the junior high school
it's not bullying
but it's like "gaikokujin"[6]
then I couldn't think that I have a Vietnamese identity
it's not a really good thing
it makes me different from other students

In the interview Tomoko was careful not to characterise her experiences as bullying. She

had many friends, but being positioned as different made her long to be "fully" Japanese ("*I just want to be one hundred per cent Japanese*" is how she put it), a desire that she kept secret from her family. In this first set of I-poems Tomoko repeatedly articulates her sense of being socially and emotionally displaced by others—a voice, so to speak, of "marginalised position and desire" around her heritage language and contested otherness (Doerr, 2010).

In her mediating role, Tomoko could fluently communicate in both Vietnamese and Japanese to create greater inclusion (and acceptance) for her younger brother and parents. Yet, rather than experiencing this role as a benefit, she felt that it disadvantaged her. Questioning why she was asked to do this, she was not able, on an emotional level, to find common ground with her family about the extra responsibility placed on her:

I had to handle something that other children didn't have to do

my parents couldn't speak Japanese fluently
it is disadvantage for me
sometimes I had to handle something that other children didn't have to do
in the school regularly they have a meeting with the parents
I have to sit there to hear what teachers say
when I grow up
I can't sympathise with my family
when I was a child
I thought why I should do that
why I should do a lot of work
then I didn't have to

Tomoko's sense of belonging was further complicated by different expectations and practices within the family. Her parents made the home a Vietnamese-using environment for her. She would listen to songs and watch films in Vietnamese, her parents insisting that she not use Japanese at home. They were worried that she might otherwise lose her proficiency in Vietnamese, as outside the home her environment was mostly in Japanese. At the same time, her (younger) brother grew up with limited proficiency in Vietnamese. He developed greater expertise in Japanese, so at home Tomoko and her parents would use Vietnamese, and her brother Japanese, but, outside, the two siblings communicated in Japanese with each other. Through her life Tomoko has been expected to respond on her brother's behalf when needed. His teachers would call Tomoko to come to the school and help interpret what they wanted to teach her brother. Many different demands were made of Tomoko by her family and by the school to mediate and bridge gaps of understanding and communication. This second set of I-poems seems then to embody the "constrained mediating" voice of Tomoko.

Over time she began to resolve some of these disconsonant tensions by affirming that she had Vietnamese heritage and that she could speak different languages—not just Vietnamese and Japanese, but also English (and later Chinese). Once at senior high school, she started to assert her different roots as a strong point:

I don't hide that I have a Vietnamese identity

when I go to the high school it changed
I don't hide that I have a Vietnamese identity
I don't want to show that
in the high school I start to show that I can speak Vietnamese
when I introduce myself

I use
I talk like it's my strong point
I changed my thinking
I show it like the positive not negative
my name is Tomoko and I'm from …
watashi no chosho vietnam-go hanasareru koto desu[7]

Her experiences of growing up bilingually and being required to use language helped Tomoko find her own active way of learning English through films and music rather than study. She was also driven to excel in using English fluently and, by dint of hard work, outshone her peers. They in turn ascribed her English prowess to the fact that she was Vietnamese, once more out-grouping and subordinating (Grant-Thomas, 2018) Tomoko, this time by re-establishing an implied monolingual norm for themselves as non-communicative users of English:

it's natural that she can she could speak English

when I was in junior high school
in the English lectures I do better than other students
I worked really hard that I have to remaember the vocabularies or grammars
other students said "Oh she's Vietnamese"
"So it's natural that she can she could speak English"
"She can write English better than us"
I did same thing as they did
I have to attend the lectures or do the homework did the homework as they did

After a school trip and homestay in Yorkshire, England, Tomoko took up reading short stories aloud to improve her pronunciation and take her English further. This was part of a longer, complicated process of addressing some of the identity conflicts that she had been experiencing. Finding different part-time jobs where she could use a range of languages, she gained further skills and benefits. In one job Tomoko worked for an employment agency for international students, most of whom were Vietnamese. She would interview them in Vietnamese and check their Japanese skills for initial placement; her work also involved visiting different employers and resolving any problems of communication in the workplace. She would help Vietnamese students find employment and reduce misunderstanding and discrimination against them. In another job, Tomoko could use Vietnamese, Japanese and English, as well as some Chinese, in researching intellectual property issues in Southeast Asia. All this activity helped her create a sense of greater alignment for herself. She could now re-negotiate what had previously been subordinate positions and re-position herself according to how she wished to belong (Brocket, 2018). This final set of I-poems points, then, to how, over time, Tomoko came to adopt what I have come to see as an "agentive bridging voice" in finding ways through language to perform different identities by her own choice, intention, and desire (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006), as well as mediate conflicts for herself and others.

Interestingly Tomoko mentioned that she wanted to let people learn about the lives of multilingual people like herself. Somewhat surprisingly, until being interviewed about her own linguistic repertoire, Tomoko had never had the opportunity to make sense of the twists and turns in her languaged journey through life, and of how she had worked through different identity conflicts that had previously entangled her—just as Haruka and Midori had similarly

7 = "My strong point is that I can speak Vietnamese."

exercised their agency to negotiate issues of discrimination, inclusion, and power in their own strikingly individual ways.

Discussion

The research has let us recognise how these three learners' languaged lives are rich and complex. Situated in the external and internal social worlds that they inhabit, the three students' identity conflicts are deeply embedded in different sites, norms, practices, and discourses that extend far beyond the here-and-now. To navigate their way, they adeptly draw on their linguistic repertoires and re-negotiate different positions for themselves in the identity conflicts that they face. Applying what Burgess (2011) observes in relation to previous research about "newcomer" young learners in Japan, we see that the three students in this research "… are not passive 'victims' moulded by their environment but active agents negotiating multiple discourses… as they constantly construct and re-construct their identities" (p. 195). A case in point is how Midori's life trajectory includes entrenched identity issues that she has faced over several years in using a non-standard variety of Japanese and in deploying "keigo" in her relationships with her peers from junior high school through to university.

As active agents, the three students struggle and adapt, learning to act in a given social field through "… exercis(ing) agency in the interstices of power" (Parker & Dales, 2014, p. 165). In their micro-practices the students find ways to take part in a particular field on their terms as far as they can. Tomoko's decisions about her use of Japanese, Vietnamese, English, and Chinese have taken her, for example, through challenging contradictions across her whole life, within her family, her home community, at school with her peers, as well as in parent-teacher meetings, and in different work contexts. She has constantly re-negotiated with herself and with others to get by and resolve different identity conflicts that she has faced.

As with Haruka and Midori, Tomoko develops her agency not only in relation to others, but also in response to dominant ideologies (Horner & Weber, 2018, pp. 20-28) that order the world around her/them and regulate her life/their lives by creating different "modes of inclusion and exclusion" (Darvin & Norton, 2015, p. 43). Thus, for a certain period, Tomoko experiences the exclusionary effects of "the one-nation-one-language" ideology when she is othered as Vietnamese and marginalised by her peers (Norton, 2000, pp. 127-8). Midori is wrong-footed by the "standard language" ideology when she moves to Tokyo to go to university and is thrown into confusion about using her local variety of Japanese in her new social world. Intensely focused on gaining acceptance by her peers, Haruka responds to the all-pervasive "ideology of monolingualism" by going to extraordinary lengths to perform in public a monolingual identity so that she may be seen to be the same as her peers. In these cases, the three students are each positioned outside dominant ideological norms to do with language which those around them reproduce (whether intentionally or not) in their everyday micro-practices. The students get caught in the gaps—and it is in these gaps, these interstices of power, that they experience a sense of "in-betweenness" (Brocket, 2018) arising from their differing experiences of inclusion and exclusion by others in their lives.

Each student is resourceful in how they deal with the in-betweenness that they face. Lantolf and Pavlenko (2001, as cited in Lantolf & Thorne, 2006, p. 239) argue that agency is "never a 'property' of a particular individual; rather, it is a relationship that is constantly co-constructed and renegotiated with those around the individual and with society at large" (p. 148). We see this relational co-construction of agency in action as Haruka, Midori, and Tomoko respond to how their peers position them. Yet, it does not follow that they are instantly "empowered" to realign themselves or resolve the conflicts that they experience. Rather, there are long periods of confusion, resistance, and struggle, as with Tomoko's dis-

appointed questioning of her family's demands of her, Midori's dis-located use of Azumino Japanese, and Haruka's decision to act monolingually. They struggle over time to get by and re-negotiate their "positioned belongings" (Brocket, 2018). At the same time, as much as the students work to re-align and re-position themselves, it seems that they also wish simply to get by and survive the forceful effects of othering, subordination, invisibilization, and alienation (Grant-Thomas, 2018) that they experience to differing degrees in the identity conflicts that they go through.

In working in the interstices of power, the students make use of their agency as the "capacity to negotiate with power in whatever form" (Parker & Dales, 2014, p. 165). And they do this even when their actions may make them complicit or leave them compromised, as with Haruka in the decisions and actions that she took to fit in, but which also entangled her in reproducing the monolingual norms that prevailed around her. The students' agency is thus situated "as complicity, compromise, deviance, resistance" (Parker & Dales, 2014, p. 165) as is their motivation—"whether it be intentional or unintentional, voluntary or involuntary, self-expression, self-interest or group interest ..." (Parker & Dales, 2014, p. 165). In so much as this holds, the three students' exercise of agency helps us understand their creative and critical resourcefulness in dealing with the complexity of power, inclusion/exclusion, and discrimination in the "peculiar biographical trajectories" (to use Blommaert's 2008 phrase) that they each take in their linguistic repertoires.

Looking back at this research project now that it is finally written, my sense is that it is the combination of seeing the students' language portraits, hearing their stories, and puzzling over their individual voices in the I-poem analysis that has let us develop a deepening awareness of how they addressed the identity conflicts that they faced. Why that might be? While the three I-poems at the start of this paper presented us with a fragmentary sketch of each person's life, the language portraits within silhouette outlines let us see each person holistically (yet still impressionistically). We were then able to embellish our formative holistic impressions through short interview extracts and small stories. Be that as it may, at the same time any sense of unitary coherence that you or I started to gain about the students' identities was repeatedly dislodged by the associative logic and counterpointing impacts of the I-poems. With each student, we were confronted, in short succession, with particular identity conflicts that an individual had experienced in different places, at different times, and in different personal and social interactions—the three fundamental dimensions of the narrative inquiry space that Clandinin & Connelly (2000, pp. 48-62) propose. In that case, was it then the combination of language portraits, interviews, and the compressed, contrapuntal narratives of the I-poems that helped us crystallize our own perspectives on (how the students see) the identity conflicts that they experienced? For my part, I'm still not sure. Perhaps, on further reflection, it is not so much the different modes of inquiry in themselves, but rather the process of inquiring with our learners creatively and repeatedly, while recognising their distinctive situated participant signatures, that takes us towards new, critical perspectives on learner development?

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Review Process

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Appendix A

Questions guiding the Listening Guide analysis (Bright, Kayes, Worrall, & McPherson, 2017, p. 40)

Reading	Questions
Reading One: The story and response	• What is going on here? • What are the events, sub-plots, characters, metaphors, and recurrent phrases? • What is my emotional and intellectual response to the participant?
Reading Two: Participant voices	• Who is speaking and with what voice? • How does the participant experience, feel, present and speak of themselves? • How does the participant believe others see them? • What emotions, reflections, opinions, actions, intentions are evident? • What pronouns does the person use when speaking of themselves? • What are people saying and doing (acting)? How do they expect to act? How do they do things and how did they develop that knowledge? • What roles are the participants playing? • How do they perceive situations, words and actions (symbols)? How does this impact on action?

Reading Three: Others and relationships	• Who is spoken about, the relationships, emotions, statements and stories associated with each? • Who is related to who in what way? • How are people positioned within the relationships and interactions? • What are people saying and doing (acting)? How do they expect to act? How do they do things and how did they develop their knowledge? • What roles are the participants playing? • How do they perceive situations, words and actions (symbols)? How does this impact on action?
Reading Four: Context	• What are the broader social, political, cultural, professional and structural contexts surrounding the participants' story, experiences, actions and interpretations? • What is spoken and unspoken, overt and taken-for-granted? • Whose voices are heard informing the situation? • What social values surround the interaction? • Why do people act in some ways and not others? • What is institutionalized? What is the 'right' way to do things? Where did this come from? How have different roles come about? • What is privileged in talk and/or action?

Appendix B

Interview segment for the I-poem "I couldn't speak I think the modern Japanese" (Haruka, Interview 1, January 2018

(...)

AB: so you were you were quick to learn yeah yeah

Haruka: yeah and then I also looked for different language school which is taught by university students there is a voluntary circle and I go there for 5 months and enter junior high school

AB: and that was for children they were teaching Japanese to immigrant children so did you have other classmates

Haruka: yeah

AB: in the university school

Haruka: yes but almost all of them are elementary school (*laughter*) there is no students that are the same age as me

AB: right right

Haruka: so when I enter the junior high school I couldn't speak I think the modern Japanese

AB: yes yes yeah

Haruka: so I can speak the formal Japanese

AB: yes yes

Haruka: and they think that Japanese is kind of weird so from them I studied the modern Japanese by watching TVs or dramas

AB: yeah

Haruka: and yeah I entered high school and in the first year of high school I thought that my accent isn't so is very different than Japanese so it was my complex

(…)