Identity has become one of the most vibrant research areas within the field of Second Language Acquisition with increased significance placed upon post-structuralist understandings of identity, unstuck from rigid reference points. The current study explores Japanese as a second language learner identity in Australian university students. In particular it focuses on how Japanese speakers negotiate their second language identity, and how affirmation of their second language speaker identity increases learners investment in acquiring Japanese as a second language. A significant outcome of this study observed students performing alternative identities accessible in Japanese language that are contradictory or inaccessible in their first language speaking context and the resultant impact of learner affect towards Japanese language.

Ethnographic semi-structured interviews were conducted with students currently studying Japanese at university. Participants reported changes in affect, extroversion and investment in Japanese language learning and use when engaging with their ‘shadow’ Japanese speaking identities. These identities included divergent gendered identities, kawaii (cute), otaku (nerd) and other identities that were either stigmatised or inaccessible in their first language context.

This study establishes that these identifies function as motivating Japanese language learners to aspire to their ideal second language self and use Japanese language to integrate with and legitimize their membership of particular communities of practice. Pedagogical implications of the study are identified as to how teachers can harness this sort of motivation in and outside of the classroom, as well as the necessity to further tease apart language and environment in light of these findings.
How are authors of Japanese manga revolutionising the use of loan words in Japanese society?

Jodie Langford

Over the years gairaigo (translated as ‘loan words’), have been considered problematic by Japanese scholars and the general public alike. With the influx of gairaigo from languages such as English into the Japanese vocabulary, some scholars have taken a new approach, looking at the phenomenon in terms of how it is actually impacting language use. Previous research has looked extensively at how gairaigo are presented in the media (Tomoda, 2009). Despite this, with nonconventional uses of Japanese orthography use on the rise, as described by Tranter (2008), there are new openings for these words to be presented in innovative ways, and for authors to use new methods and orthographic styles to assist in understanding the use and meaning of these gairaigo.

One of the biggest sources of gairaigo and the most well-known medium for nonconventional language play is manga comics. Within the genre of manga itself there are different methods authors use to convey gairaigo to the reader through orthographic and other choices. These choices can translate the word, give another meaning to a word and sometimes just spell the word out phonologically to the reader. This, in combination with footnotes and pictures, gives a great depth of understanding of the words and their meanings. With these tools, manga is a vital source through which people in Japan can access new conventions and fun ways to develop their English vocabulary.

References:
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Language’s effects on Spatial Reasoning

Thomas Poulton

This project will examine how the linguistic coding system of spatial descriptions can influence non-linguistics cognitive processes of spatial reasoning. Non-linguistic tasks have been purposefully designed to elicit alternate solutions based on the cognitive processes of the participant. Through variations of these tasks, the solutions of the participants can be analysed as adhering to a category of cognitive frames of reference. This is then compared back to the language community to which the participants belong. A correlation between the linguistic frame of reference and the cognitive frame of reference would suggest that language indeed does influence spatial cognitive processes. This project specifically looks at English speakers to see whether they think about space in the same way that they talk about space.