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Examining Learners' Further Investment in Japanese Learning through Study Abroad Experiences

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Abstract

This study examined further investment in Japanese language learning from the perspective of Indonesian learners of Japanese through their study abroad experience in Japan. Employing a model of investment proposed by Darvin and Norton, the study analyzed learners' oral and written narratives, focusing on three key constructs, namely identity, ideology, and capital. Data analysis revealed that study abroad to Japan has become a symbolic capital, as well as a way for learners to gain benefits related to some aspects of their linguistic capital they were not able to acquire when studying Japanese in their home country. Study abroad in Japan also offered a new possibility for Japanese learners to get closer to their imagined identity they wish to realize in their imagined communities related to Japanese language. This study revealed how different ideologies have shaped Japanese language institutional practices and educational policies and how these have impacted on language learners as they position themselves within the contexts. It posed critical view on Japanese language education policy and planning with its double-edged ideologies which have created constraint and opportunity for learners. The study indicates the importance to rethink Japanese language education planning and policy from the perspective of language learners' investment on Japanese learning, in the era of globalization where student mobility across borders and boundaries is prevalent.

Keywords: Japanese language education, study abroad, investment in language learning, Japanese language policy and planning, global student mobility

Introduction

The issue of international student migration has become a significant policy agenda worldwide (ADB Institute, 2014). One reason is the significant growth in the number of international students since 2015, especially in the Asian region, which has led to increased competition in the international student

Data Availability Statement: *All relevant data are within this paper.*

market as an important economic factor. However, this also has brought on other important issues, namely the increased value of international students in the labor market and the potential of students' exploitation in labor migration. Many countries have designed programs in order to attract international students to study and work in their host country, by allowing them to work during studies and by providing possibilities for changing their status after graduation to labor migrants (ADB Institute, 2014). For instance, in Japan, as one of four OECD countries that has become the main destination for Asian students (ADB Institute, 2014) where English is not commonly used, prospective international students are given opportunity to learn Japanese and prepare for entrance exams to higher educational institutions through enrollment in Japanese language schools (Chiavacci, 2012). Consequently, the massive influx of low-skilled, cheap laborers with student visas grew concurrently with the increasing number of Japanese language schools and rapid recruitment of students in the business sector (Chiavacci, 2012; Hennings & Mintz, 2015). This study will further elaborate on these issues by looking closely at the current situation in Japan from the perspective of Japanese language education. The next section will review the growth and current condition of international student mobility in Japan.

Literature Review

Study in Japan After the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake

The Great Earthquake in East Japan in 2011 had a big impact on the number and composition of international students in Japan. The number of students from China, Taiwan, and the Republic of Korea had decreased to a certain extent. However, there has since been a sudden increase in the number of international students due to the rapid acceptance rate at Japanese language schools, especially in 2013 and 2014 (Shiho, 2015). Between 2011-2015, contrary to the decrease in the number of students from China and Republic of Korea, there was a rapid increase in the number of students from South East Asia, especially Vietnam and Nepal (Sato, 2016). Although the number of Chinese and Korean students increased again in 2016, the ratio was relatively small compared to that of other Asian countries (see Table 1).

Table 1 *Number of International Students in Japan in 2015 and 2016*

Country	2015	2016	Increase
China	94,111	98,483	4.6%
Vietnam	38,882	53,807	38.4%
Nepal	16,250	19,471	19.8%
Republic of Korea	15,279	15,457	1.2%
Taiwan	7,314	8,330	13.9%
Indonesia	3,600	4,630	28.6%
Sri Lanka	2,312	3,976	72%
Myanmar	2,755	3,851	39.8%
Thailand	3,526	3,842	9%
Malaysia	2,594	2,734	5.4%
Other countries	21,756	24,706	13.6%

Japan Student Service Association (JASSO). (2017). *International students in Japan 2016*. Tokyo, JP: Author. Retrieved from http://www.jasso.go.jp/en/about/statistics/intl_student/__icsFiles/afieldfile/2017/03/29/data16_brief_e.pdf

As a revised version of the 1983's policy which aimed to host 100,000 international students by 2003, Japanese education policy in 2008 to accept 300,000 international students by 2020 put more focus on Japan's national interest, dealing with lack of labor forces, low birth rate and an aging society (*shoshi koureika shakai*). Therefore, international students are encouraged to work in Japan after graduation and contribute to Japan's social and economic prosperity (Shao, 2008). Furthermore, domestic socio-

economic situations in South East Asian countries also play a significant role. Sato (2016) pointed out that difficulty in finding employment in their home country has made Vietnamese and Nepalese young people want to go overseas to have a better life. Moreover, many of them were lured into signing up because of the advertisement of study-abroad programs by brokers as the "opportunity to study while working in Japan." This also indicates how the Japanese government's education policy in 2008 was interpreted and implemented in a different way by related parties in the field. The policy was intended to invite more prospective highly skilled workers. On the other hand, the policy was interpreted by study-abroad brokers as a new business opportunity by adding "work" to "study abroad" without clear definition of contexts, which encouraged the participants of study-abroad programs create their own interpretation of the "opportunity to study while working in Japan" as an opportunity for a better life in Japan. The two reasons explained earlier worked side by side as push factors in making young people from a lower socio-economic background in Vietnam and Nepal come to Japan. Other important factors mentioned by Sato (2016) are the desire to work in Japanese companies, as well as a great interest in Japan and its culture.

Student-worker phenomenon in Japan

In the attempt to increase the number of international students and reach the targets of the 1983 and 2008 policies, the Japanese government encouraged more self-financed students to come to Japan, in addition to those sponsored by the Japanese government through the MEXT scholarship and private institutions scholarships. Therefore, they were granted permission to work up to twenty hours per week, and later to twenty-eight hours per week, as well as offered more simplified procedures for obtaining a student visa (Chiavacci, 2012). However, this brought about unexpected consequences. The number of students in Japanese language schools increased significantly, from about 4,000 in 1984 to over 35,000 in 1988 (Chiavacci, 2012, p. 33). The number intensified during the 2000s due to the rapid acceptance rates in Japanese language schools (Shiho, 2015; Maruyama, 2011). The surge of international students was concurrent with the increasing number of Japanese language schools, from 49 institutions in 1984 to 309 institutions in 1988 (Chiavacci, 2012, p. 33) and from 461 institutions in 2011 to 549 institutions in 2015 (The Japan Times, 3 January 2017). According to 2003 statistics, around 93% of part-time work permits were issued to language and vocational schools' students. Among 790,000 foreign workers in Japan, 11% or around 86,900 were international students (Ishikawa, 2006, p. 22). The number grew even bigger in 2015 at 168,000 and rose by 210,000 in 2016 (The Japan Times, 23 April 2017). Many of these students work in low-paid, low-skilled jobs in order to finance their studies. Yet, an article in Asahi Shimbun (5 August 2006) reported that a lot of cafés, convenience stores, and restaurants would have collapsed if it were not for international students employed in these kinds of jobs (as cited in Chiavacci, 2012, p. 34).

Nevertheless, there are certain doubts and criticism concerning international students' real intention for coming to Japan, whether to work or to study (Ishikawa, 2006; Shiho, 2015). Experts suspect and warn about the recent phenomenon in which Japanese language schools are becoming a front for importing cheap labor (The Japan Times, 3 January 2017). The issue related to the massive influx of cheap, low-skilled labor through Japanese language schools has been highlighted as well in recent studies concerning student mobility in Japan (Chiavacci, 2012; Henning & Mintz, 2015). A special program in Japanese national television NHK (17 February 2017) revealed the phenomenon of *dekasegi ryugakusei* (international student worker), referring to those who come to Japan with the student visa but instead of studying, the real intention is to work in Japan. The need to work for money met the demand from many industries in Japan who are facing problems in a lack of labor force. Furthermore, there are some concerns and fears of foreigners as a threat to public security (Ishikawa, 2006; Burgess, 2012; Kibe, 2014; Shiho, 2015) and as one of the main causes of rising crime rates in Japan (Chiavacci, 2012, p. 40). These issues related to foreigners in Japan, especially foreign workers,

had been a focus of national debates for decades and is rooted in the homogenized image of Japanese society (Herbert, 1996, p. 143). Japan's nationalists argued that as homogenous people, Japan had less problems and the acceptance of foreign workers would create a social gap within the society, which would lead to the increase of domestic security problems.

Previous studies mentioned above put more focus on the socio-economic factor in describing and analyzing the current study abroad phenomenon. Little is known about how the widely spread Japanese language education in South East Asian region has impacted the phenomenon. The next chapter discussed the role of Japanese language education overseas by presenting a case study of Indonesian learners of Japanese.

Japanese Language Education and the New Context of Study Abroad: Indonesian Case

The history of Japanese language education in Indonesia was dated far back before the World War II, when the first Japanese language training was held in 1903. Japanese language was first taught as a foreign language subject in a private institute during Dutch occupancy in 1934, then as compulsory subject in all stages of educational institutions under Japanese military policy during World War II. After independence, Japanese was taught in a Japanese Cultural Institute since 1958 (Fukihara, 2009). The teaching of Japanese language subject in formal educational institution officially started in 1960s, with the introduction of Japanese language as an elective subject in high school. During this period, two public universities and two universities of education were established, as well. The popularity of Japanese language was enhanced by the expansion of Japanese industries into Indonesian market in 1970s, as well as Japanese pop culture (drama, song, *anime*, and *manga*) in 1980s through 1990s (Furukawa, Kitani, & Nunoo, 2016). Within the span of ten years from 2002 to 2012, the number of Japanese learners in Indonesia has increased ten times (The Japan Foundation, 2003 & 2012). In 2015, however, the number has slightly declined due to the revision of national curriculum for secondary education in 2013, in which second foreign languages subject, including Japanese, is no longer compulsory. The new education policy greatly affected the number of Japanese learners in secondary educational institutions, which has the largest ratio (94.5%) compared to those in primary, higher, and other educational institutions (The Japan Foundation, 2017).

Since 2012, several local Japanese language schools (hereinafter local schools) have been established in some large cities in Indonesia. The newly established local schools offer not only regular Japanese language course but also study abroad programs to Japan, as well as provide study abroad consultation services. Some local schools in cooperation with Japanese language schools in Japan offer study abroad program with the opportunity to do part-time jobs in Japan. This kind of study abroad program has attracted many Indonesian students to participate, including learners of Japanese. Even though each participant has to pay initial cost around 60-80 million rupiahs (around 600,000 - 800,000 yen), the program gives a more solid guarantee for them to go to Japan compared to the scholarship program. As long as they can show proof of financial ability and pay the initial cost in advance, they will get a Letter of Eligibility from a Japanese language school.

Japanese learners at Indonesian universities mostly rely on scholarship programs for study abroad in Japan. One of the most famous programs is the Japanese Studies MEXT Scholarship offered by the Japanese government to students who major in Japanese. Other scholarships are offered by some private institutions or partner universities. However, the competition is extremely tough, and only those with excellent academic performance can apply for internal screening within the university before continuing to the national level. Not only with fellow students from the same university, they also need to compete with thousands of others from across the country. Each year, no more than 40 people out of thousands of applicants are eventually awarded a Japanese Studies MEXT scholarship.

Therefore, the emergence of the new pattern of study abroad programs offered by Japanese language schools seems to give another opportunity for those who were not successful in their scholarship application to be able to experience study in Japan.

For learners of Japanese, the new context of studying in Japan—that is to say, through Japanese language schools—has become a substantial investment in Japanese language learning, not only of money but time and energy as well. Moreover, having knowledge of Japanese language after three to four years of study at Indonesian universities distinguishes them from other international students in Japanese language schools. Studying in Japan is a further investment in Japanese learning after their previous investment for studying Japanese language at Indonesian universities. However, despite their knowledge and educational backgrounds, learners' participation in the new context of study abroad programs have entangled them in the issue of labor migration and *dekasegi ryugakusei* in Japan. This case provides hints of the significance of Japanese language education, inside and outside Japan, and the potential impact it might have on the international student mobility issue. Employing the theory of investment in language learning (Darvin & Norton, 2015), this article examines how Japanese learners negotiate their various identities—for example, a student, worker, migrant, or foreigner—within various communities of practice—for example, the Japanese language school and the workplace—during their study abroad in Japan. This study aims to address the following research question: How do learners invest in Japanese learning through study abroad in Japan? How do Japanese language education policy and planning affect learners' further investment in Japanese learning?

Investment in Language Learning

Investment in language learning is an important concept in the field of applied linguistics that marks the turning phase from cognitive oriented to focus more on social factors related to language learning (Darvin & Norton, 2016). The concept of investment (Norton Peirce, 1995; Norton, 2000, 2013) is considered as sociological complement to the psychological construct of motivation (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009) in order to examine the complex relationship between learners' commitment to learning a language, their identity, and the social world they engaged in. Norton argues that when a learner decides to invest in language learning, they believe that it will help them "acquire a wider range of symbolic and material resources, which will, in turn, increase the value of their cultural capital and social power" (Norton, 2013, p. 50). Darvin and Norton (2015) developed an expanded model of investment which has three key constructs, namely ideology, capital, and identity. Ideology is a normative set of ideas, constructed and imposed by structures of power and reproduced through hegemonic practice and consent, with control over how other ideas, people, or relation are being treated in the society (Darvin & Norton, 2015, p. 44). The ideology might be in the form of educational institutions, learning, and work sites, as well as the language itself and language education policies. Capital is a valuable resource one has in forms of economic, cultural, or social capital. Once the capital is perceived and recognized as legitimate, it becomes symbolic capital. The value of the capital one possesses might be different as he/she moves across space and time, and is determined by ideological structures (Darvin & Norton, 2015, p. 44-45). Identity is "the way one understands his/her relationship with the world, how it is structured across time and space, and how one understands possibilities for the future" (Norton, 2013, p. 4). Within this concept of identity, how learners position themselves and are positioned by others is closely examined, as well as their desire and imagined identities of how they want to become in the future (Darvin & Norton, 2015, p. 46).

The construct of investment is also related to the concept of imagined community. Drawing on the concept of imagined community proposed by Anderson (1983), Norton defines imagined community in relation to language learning as "any community of the imagination that is desirable to the language learners" (Norton, 2016, p. 477) and assumes imagined identity, a desirable identity that learners want

to achieve (Norton, 2015). Imagined community and imagined identity of language learners might have a significant impact on the trajectory of their language learning because they help students to envision their future and their role in it (Haneda, 2005). Thus, understanding language learners' imagined community and identity can explain a great deal of their investment in language learning.

The concept of investment in language learning has been widely used, mostly in English language learning, as a way to understand how language learners participate in various contexts of language learning all over the world (e.g., Skilton-Sylvester, 2002; Bearse & de Jong, 2008; Norton 2015). Some studies have investigated the investment of Chinese-speaking students in various contexts of English medium instruction (e.g., Gao, Cheng & Kelly, 2008; Gu, 2008). In the case of Japanese learning, Haneda (2005) investigated the investment of two Canadian university students in Japanese writing and found how it closely intertwined with their life history, identities, and agency. This concept is especially effective to examine how language learners were able to participate in various contexts and gain access and ownership to valuable resources, as they move across borders and integrate into a new community (Norton, 2015). Therefore, it will be used as the framework of this study to understand the meaning-making process of Japanese learning through the case study of Indonesian learners of Japanese discussed in the next section.

Methodology

To get a better understanding of the meaning-making process in Japanese learning, a qualitative method using narrative inquiry was considered to be the most suitable approach for data collection. Narrative inquiry focuses on how people use stories to make sense of their experience, in order to understand a phenomenon from the perspective of people who experience it (Barkhuizen, Benson, & Chik, 2014, p. 2). In this study, narrative inquiry using oral and written narratives was conducted with eight Indonesian learners of Japanese (six females, two males), who graduated from a Japanese language program at Indonesian universities and pursued their studies in Japanese language schools in Japan while working in part-time jobs. Two of them (Een and Rita) graduated from a four-year bachelor's degree program (S1 program), while the rest of the participants were graduates from a three-year junior/vocational college (D3 program). Both were regarded as undergraduate programs within the Indonesian higher educational system. The study abroad programs participants were involved in varied in terms of financial system, the source of program information, and features of the program, including duration and content of each program. Ista, Ida, Irham, and Danny participated in a study abroad program offered by a local school in Indonesia called Yogya Japanese Language Course (Yogya JLC). They applied through Yogya JLC who has partnerships with various Japanese language schools in Japan. The decision of students' placement at a Japanese language school is decided by Yogya JLC through their negotiation with partner Japanese language schools. Agatha participated in a study abroad program which was intended for university graduates majoring in Japanese language. The program was offered by Bali JLC in cooperation with a Japanese language school in Gunma. Een and Rita were directly offered places in the study abroad program by a Japanese language school in Tokyo called Tokyo JLS through a broker who used to be their senior in the Japanese department at their university. All of these participants were self-financed. The only participant who went to a Japanese language school with a scholarship was Tissa, who applied for a MEXT scholarship. Japanese government through the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology of Japan (Monbukagakusho/MEXT) offers various kinds of scholarships which can be applied via Japan Embassy around the world, including Indonesia. Tissa applied for one of the MEXT scholarships called Specialized Training College program which includes one year studying Japanese at a Japanese language school and two years studying specialized skill at a vocational college, in Japan. Both schools and colleges are decided by MEXT depending on an applicant's choice of study.

Table 2 *List of Participants*

Participants (Pseudonyms)	Sex	Age*1	Year of coming to Japan	Working Experiences prior coming to Japan	Program in Japan	Affiliated school (pseudonyms)/ program	Year of interviews (frequency)
Ista	F	24	2016	Teaching part-time at JLC*2	JLS*3 regular program (max. 2 years)	Yogya JLC	2016 (3), 2017 (1)
Ida	F	22		freelance Japanese translator			2016 (2), 2017 (1)
Irham	M	23		–			2016 (1), 2017 (1)
Danny	M	23		Teaching part-time at JLC			2015 (2), 2016 (2), 2017 (1)
Agatha	F	24	2016	Teaching part-time Japanese at trainees dispatch agency	JLS regular program (max. 2 years)	Bali JLC	2017 (1)
Tissa	F	24	2014	Staff at private companies	JLS (1 year) + specialized training college (2 years)	MEXT scholarship	2016 (2), 2017 (2)
Een*4	F	27	2015	Staff at Japan trainees dispatch agency	JLS regular program (max. 2 years)	Tokyo JLS	2016 (1), 2017 (1)
Rita*4	F	27		Staff at private bank			2016 (2), 2017 (2) *5

*1 Age of participants in 2016, when most participants came to Japan and first interviews were mostly conducted
*2 JLC = Japanese Language Course
*3 JLS = Japanese Language School
*4 four-year bachelor's degree graduates
*5 Last interviews were conducted in Indonesia after participant returned home

The oral narrative in this study employed semi-structured interviews which were conducted several times over a three-year period, from 2015 until 2017. Interviews were conducted in three ways: individual interviews, pair interviews, and group interviews. The duration of the interviews ranged from one hour to five hours (in the case of a group interview). Some interviews were conducted in 2015 with one participant, Danny, when he was in the last year of his study at university. The interview asked questions concerning the meaning of Japanese language learning experience during the three-year period of his study and planning for the future after graduation. Interviews conducted in 2016 asked questions about reasons for the decision to take part in the study abroad program, their first experiences on Japan, problems, and difficulties they encounter, how their imagined community of Japan differ from the reality they were facing, and how they dealt with it. Interviews conducted in 2017 asked about the way participants saw their study abroad experience and Japanese learning, as well as how they made meaning of it in relation to their future. The last interview with one participant (Rita) was conducted after returning to Indonesia, asking about the impact of her study abroad experience on her current work and life in Indonesia. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed later by the author herself. A total of 43 hours of audio data and 343 pages of verbatim transcription data were collected and analyzed.

In addition to the oral narrative, the written narrative was conducted the form of self-reflective writing titled "My Story with Japanese Language," where learners were asked to write their reflections on their Japanese learning experiences for a minimum one page. The aim of the writing of the language learning histories was to understand how learners make sense of their Japanese learning experiences by noticing some key episodes in their learning histories (Deacon, Murphey, & Dore, 2006). By writing and reflecting on their own stories of learning Japanese, participants were able to better understand their lives related to Japanese learning so far and to inspire themselves for the future. On the other hand, the language learning histories of Japanese learners provided valuable insights into the meaning-making of their learning experiences. The key episodes in participants' learning histories included positive and negative experiences related to Japanese learning, what they have learned from those experiences, as well as their plan for the future. Although the author sometimes reminded participants to write their stories, the writing itself was voluntary. Six participants sent their stories via email and Messenger, while the other two (Agatha and Rita) decided not to write theirs due to time constraints. A total of twelve pages of self-reflective writings were collected.

Questionnaires on learners' backgrounds and language learning histories were also distributed to all participants to gather information on learners' prior language learning experiences. As additional data, communication conducted through social media, as well as some expressions learners used in their social media related to their study abroad and Japanese learning experience in the communities of practice, were included as well. All interviews, questionnaires, and communication through social media were conducted in Indonesian.

The analysis of qualitative data includes description, analysis of key factors and their relationships, and interpretation of the results to make sense out of the issue of concern (Wolcott, 1994, p. 10). In the current study, thematic analysis (Barkhuizen, Benson, & Chik, 2014, p. 76) was also employed in which emerging themes relate to concepts of investment, imagined communities and identities were recognized as the analysis proceeded. Emerging themes were then categorized into three main themes that connect each of key constructs of investment's concept, namely *systemic patterns of control, affordance/perceived benefits*, and *positioning* (Darvin & Norton, 2015). Systemic patterns of control explain the relationship between ideology and capital, of how ideology determines the value of learners' capital. Affordance/perceived benefits explain the relationship between capital and identity, of what learners perceived as the benefit of their investment and how their capital becomes the affordance for their Japanese learning. Positioning explained the relationship between identity and ideology, of the way learners position themselves and were positioned by others in various contexts. The next section will further discuss these themes in a detailed manner.

Findings and Discussion

Systemic patterns of control: JLPT and different standard of Japanese language proficiency in academic and labor market contexts

When the author asked the participants their reasons to participate in a study-abroad program in Japan, most participants voiced similar anxious and inferior feelings. They had feelings of inadequacy regarding their Japanese language skill and proficiency, even after spending three to four years at university studying Japanese. Tissa said how difficult it was for her to look for a job that suited her educational background and interest.

> Tissa: I don't like leaving things half done. I've already thrown myself into this (studying Japanese) and still it feels it's not enough. My only reason to go to Japan is that I don't want my three-year study and my parents' money to go to waste because I can't speak Japanese.

> I did job hunting after I graduated. Companies didn't want to accept me. You know why? I knew it's because my (Japanese) skills are not enough. I tried to apply for an interpreter position, but being a vocational college graduate only is not enough. They also require N1 or N2. Most people who applied for the job have been to Japan. I have never been there. The point is if you are a vocational college graduate, and you're looking for any job, then it is okay. But, if you want to have a job related to the language you studied, it's absolutely impossible. It's difficult.

Learners' cultural capital, in the form of academic degree and Japanese language knowledge as some of the symbolic elements they have acquired (Bourdieu, 1986), were once perceived by learners as meaningful, and were expected to provide them "access to hitherto unattainable resources" (Norton, 2000, p. 10), such as good employment in a Japanese company. However, the value of these capitals was also determined by dominant ideologies in different contexts. Each context has a different ideology structure that determines the way one's capital is perceived and recognized as legitimate (Bourdieu, 1987). For instance, in an academic context, a different standard of Japanese language skill is applied for learners who wish to graduate and obtain a degree. Most Japanese language programs in Indonesian universities set the minimum requirement of JLPT N3 certificate or Japanese proficiency equivalent to JLPT N3 as the standard for their students. On the other hand, many Japanese companies set the minimum requirement of JLPT N2. N3 was meant to be a bridging level between N4/N5, which measures the understanding level of basic Japanese studied in class, and N1/N2, which measures the understanding level of Japanese used in various contexts of actual life (official website of Japanese Language Proficiency Test). The different standards of Japanese language proficiency in an academic context and the labor market diminishes the value of learners' cultural capital, causing learners to feel somehow inadequate in their Japanese-related job task. One of the participants, Rita, experienced it and had worked in a non-related job for two years before quitting the job and coming to Japan.

> Rita: The problem is, when we graduated from the Japanese language program, people assumed we must be fluent in Japanese. When we applied for a job opening available for Japanese major graduates, we might get through the document review. But later on, we will still be required to speak Japanese fluently at work.

The difference in language learning standard ideology between the academic and labor market contexts occurrs due to the accreditation assessment of study programs in Indonesian higher education. Every study program needs to ensure conformity between the competency standard of graduates and their actual condition. Setting up high standards of Japanese language proficiency for their graduates might become a double-edged sword for the institution. On the one hand, it might provide a favorable outcome to meet the demands of the labor market. On the other hand, lack of infrastructure, human resources, and teaching materials have made it difficult for the institution to guarantee their students can keep up with high standards of language proficiency, and this instability becomes a high-risk factor that might be unfavorable for the institution's accreditation. Therefore, level N3 is considered as a "safe zone" for most Japanese language programs in higher educational institutions in Indonesia.

In this sense, various language ideologies have created systemic patterns of control (Darvin & Norton, 2015) that determine different values of learners' capitals in the academic and labor market contexts. This situation has resulted in learners' lacking self-confidence in their own Japanese language skills after they graduate from university. The new context of study abroad in Japan, which mostly offers JLPT preparation programs, has provided learners with new opportunities to envisage their imagined community and identity. An imagined community where they would be able to learn and to experience "the real" Japanese language and life, as well as an imagined identity of being a global citizen with Japanese language competence.

Furthermore, JLPT is often positioned as "the gatekeeper" to a certain level of Japanese society. To continue to higher education or other educational institutions, such as universities or vocational schools, as well as to apply for a permanent job in Japan, learners of Japanese were encouraged and sometimes required to have JLPT N1/N2. Ida mentioned how one vocational school she was interested in offered a reduction in school fees to prospective students who have a JLPT N1/N2 certificate. Another participant, Ista, was asked to provide proof of her JLPT N1/N2 when applying for a permanent job in a job-hunting event for foreigners. These circumstances reflected the ideologies of Japanese language, of which it is not only considered to be an empowering drive to join Japanese society and a key to social integration (Iino, 2010; Kobayashi, 2014), but also as "the gatekeeper" for international students, requiring proof of a high-level language competency for those who wish to enter a higher status or position within the society.

Affordance/perceived benefits: Previous learning experience and the realization of the "Japanese dream"

Through study abroad, participants in this study expected to gain some benefits from studying in Japan—things they were not able to gain access to when studying Japanese in Indonesia. The first benefit was access to a Japanese-speaking community and the improvement of Japanese communication skills. One of the participants, Een, said that her dream was to be able to communicate with Japanese people using the Japanese language, something that she could not achieve while learning Japanese in Indonesia.

> Een: From the beginning I always wanted to be able to use Japanese, to speak Japanese. It's not about going to Japan that matters. I wanted to go to Japan after I learned Japanese, thinking something like "maybe it would be better if I go to Japan."
> Author: What did make you think about going to Japan?
> Een: I want to speak Japanese fluently. Because in Indonesia, for example, even when we were talking with teachers, we were still using the Indonesian language. Even though they're our Japanese teachers, we keep using the Indonesian language. We did the same in the classroom. Even asking a simple question, we did it in the Indonesian language. When we are in Japan, we have to use Japanese, so we will get used to it.

The second benefit was a living-in-Japan experience, something that, for some participants, was regarded as a meaningful resource that would increase "the value of their cultural capital and social power" (Norton, 2013, p. 6). Six of eight participants wanted to go back to Indonesia after their study in Japan. Their experience of living in Japan and their Japanese skills, as well as other cultural capital in the form of academic credentials would be used to gain access to hitherto unattainable resources, such as employment in a Japanese company.

> Danny: Job applications sometimes require things like one or two-year experience of living in Japan, or having been to Japan. So, I think the Japanese language itself is not enough.

> Irham: I had job interviews several times but failed because I was far from the criteria, compared to those who have been to Japan. Even if you have a JLPT certificate or a diploma, you will still be defeated by those who have experienced living in Japan for several years, even though they do not have both. The key is the "experience." This is my turning point where I had this intense feeling that I need to go to Japan as soon as possible. I want to know what is there in Japan that makes Japanese companies prioritize those who have studied and worked there.

Furthermore, the learners of Japanese possessed capital they gained before coming to Japan, that is, their previous Japanese learning experience. This capital became their affordance for learning Japanese in various communities of practice. In Japanese language school, participants used their basic knowledge of Japanese to work their way to the advanced level of Japanese language. In the workplace, their previous Japanese learning experience helped them to quickly adapt to the language use and the environment of the workplace.

Positioning: Having multiple identities in Japanese society

All participants mentioned in their interviews that their reason to come to Japan was to improve their Japanese knowledge and communication skills. This could be done in two ways: (1) by studying at a Japanese language school to improve their linguistic skills in order to get the JLPT certificate, or (2) by working part-time to improve their Japanese communication skills. As students, their focus was to study more about the Japanese language. However, other than Tissa who got a scholarship, all participants were funding their own studies. Therefore, they all needed to work part-time as well. The Japanese government has set up part-time job regulation of a maximum of 28 hours/week for those with a student visa. Nevertheless, one part-time job is not enough to cover their school fee and daily expenses. According to Ista, having two part-time jobs with more than 28 hours/week has become common practice among students in her school. The school management was actually aware of this situation.

> Ista: The school is fine with it (working more than 28 hours/week). It's because they already knew. We had a guidance session at school. They explained about all expenses we need to cover in two years of our study here. So for example, we only work part-time for 28 hours and get paid with minimum wages of 900 yen, with all those expenses, it won't be enough. That's why the school let us do it. Most people do it anyway.

Japanese language school has been regarded as a big private business in Japan, in line with government policy and planning to increase the number of international students. A rapid increase of international students ran parallel to the increasing number of private Japanese language schools (Chiavacci, 2012). However, previous studies also highlighted the problem in which many of these schools focused more on how to improve their business profit rather than educational quality (Chiavacci, 2012; Sato, 2016). Students could work more part-time jobs, so they would be able to pay their tuition. On the other hand, many businesses relied on these part-time student workers, as well. As a result, they established cooperation with Japanese language schools by putting their job vacancy advertisements on schools' bulletin boards and even utilize the empty classroom for a job interview (NHK News, 17 February 2017).

However, being a student worker whose working hours are longer than study hours had great consequence. Participants admitted that it was difficult to stay focused on study after spending so much time and energy on working. The hardship of the situation put them in a dilemma between work and study, as Irham experienced.

> Irham: I came to Japan to study Japanese. However, because of doing part-time jobs like this, I started to think that studying while working is useless because work is exhausting already. At the same time, the study also requires great effort and energy. I have to give up one, and for now, I am giving up study.

Their status as self-funded students in Japan put them in a position where they needed to do their part-time job(s) in order to cover their school and living expenses. Indeed, both the schools and the students

were well aware of an impossible situation where students depend on only one job. On the other hand, there was a big demand for workers in growing service businesses in Japan. In general, it reflected a symbiotic relationship for both students and Japan's businesses, providing a win-win solution for all parties involved, including Japanese language schools. Students had the opportunity to practice their Japanese skills in various workplaces as their communities of practice, as well as to earn money. However, work has become the dominant part of their life in Japan, making them easily categorized as *dekasegi ryugakusei*.

Even though learners' further investment in Japanese learning was constrained by how the society has positioned them in different contexts, other participants chose not to give in to the constraints. Ida, for example, chose to prioritize her study and to stick to only one part-time job.

> Ida: I used to have two part-time jobs. Not long after that, I quitted one of them, because I had my EJU (Examination for Japanese University) exam coming soon, and I wanted to focus on that, so I just quitted.

As participants started, in their study-abroad experience, they also started to move between the school and the workplace, between their identity as a Japanese learner and as a foreign worker, negotiating their positioning between their multiple identities and different ideologies. The situation created both constraints and opportunities for learners. Some learners resigned themselves to the dominant ideology (i.e., working), while others claimed their right to secure their access to Japanese learning.

However, having multiple identities—i.e., a student, worker, migrant, or foreigner—put participants in a somewhat ambivalent position within Japanese society, thus making them vulnerable to prejudice and discrimination. Agatha, Danny, and Irham described their experiences of prejudice and discrimination in the workplace and some public spaces.

> Agatha: We had a job training for two weeks. Foreigner trainees were four Nepalese, me, and one Vietnamese. Usually, during job training, we are moving around to all departments because we are still learning. But for foreign trainees, we were only at the buffet restaurant the whole time. While for the Japanese trainees, some days they were at the front desk, some days at the hotel kiosk, and some days at the hotel rooms. There were some days when they visited other hotels under the same management group, as well. But for us, it was at the buffet restaurant only, because our Japanese is not good yet, they said. But my Nepalese friends had been staying in Japan for four years. They already got their N1, and they can speak fluent Japanese. I do not know why they also were treated like that during on-the-job training. We did not have an opportunity to learn at other departments.
>
> Danny: The way Japanese people treat foreigners offended me sometimes. When we were standing in line in the store, they did not want to stand in the same line with us. They just go and stand in another line. In the train, too.
>
> Irham: We were hanging out at the park one day. Some kids were playing there as well, and their mothers were sitting near them, talking with each other. When we were walking across the park, the police came out of nowhere and started to ask for our ID cards. He said that someone has reported that there were some suspicious people in the park. Someone who was in the park reported us. It was so upsetting.

The issue of public security and crime in Japan has a tendency to be associated with the increasing number of foreigners that are not permanent residents in Japan, especially unskilled foreign workers

and illegal foreigners (Kibe, 2014). Also, visa regimes for those non-permanent residents, including those with a "student" visa, favored temporary migrant labor who were expected to work in Japan during their productive age (Arudou, 2015). The basic concept of this unfavorable view towards foreigners came from the idea of Japan as a homogenized society, inhabited by homogeneous people, thus having "minuscule minority problems" (Herbert, 1996, p. 143). Therefore, with the increasing number of foreigners with their diversity and multicultural backgrounds, this idea is facing a great challenge. Japanese learners with their multiple identities were positioned at the intersection of Japan's national interest and its homogeneous society view.

Conclusions

This study provides significant implications for Japanese language education in Japan and overseas, especially in Indonesia. It indicates the importance of rethinking Japanese language education planning and policy from the perspective of language learners' investment in the language learning itself, especially in an era of globalization and internationalization where learners' mobility across borders and boundaries is more prevalent than what they used to be. As Darvin and Norton (2015, p. 51) stated, "We need to recognize learners' agency and capacity to invest in learning that not only allow them to acquire symbolic resources, but also to explore, to question, and even to resist dominant practice and ways of thinking that have become systemic in different fields."

This study also revealed how different ideologies have shaped Japanese language institutional practices and educational policies and how these have impacted language learners as they position themselves within these contexts. In-depth understanding of learners' investment in Japanese learning is indispensable for redesigning Japanese educational policy and planning that can provide a solution to the global issues of student mobility and labor migration.

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