

# **SHINSAI EXPERIENCES AND INVESTMENT IN SECOND LANGUAGE IDENTITIES: JAPANESE NUCLEAR IMMIGRANTS IN NEW ZEALAND**

**Maki Hignett and Gary Barkhuizen**

*University of Auckland*

## **Abstract**

*Focusing on Japanese nuclear immigrants who have voluntarily evacuated to New Zealand in the wake of the devastating 2011 Fukushima disaster, this article investigates two participants' shinsai experiences (harm suffered as a result of a critical earthquake disaster) and examines how they affect the negotiation of their identities and their investment in L2 English learning in the New Zealand context. The data were collected via interviews. Using a 'writing as analysis' narrative approach (Benson, 2018), the shinsai stories of the participants were configured and discussed to gain an in-depth understanding of the meaning-making of the participants' life stories. The findings indicate that their past crucial shinsai experiences give meaning to their present and future actions and have impact on the degree of investment in L2 learning and on their identity construction in a new social and linguistic space, including the workplace, and ultimately determine the quality of their integration into New Zealand society.*

*Keywords:* nuclear immigrants; L2 identities; investment; narrative analysis

## **Introduction**

In 2011 the Great East Japan Earthquake and subsequent tsunami brought about a serious nuclear and radiation accident at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant (Nuclear Emergency Response Headquarters Government of Japan, 2011). Many Japanese people self-evacuated overseas as a result, although the exact number is not officially recognised in the statistics, as all emigrating Japanese are grouped together under the general heading of 'expatriates'. The recent increase of Japanese immigrants in New Zealand may suggest a causal relationship with the 2011 earthquake. According to the latest Annual Report of Statistics on Japanese Nationals Overseas (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2019), as of October 2018, the aggregate number of Japanese expatriates in New Zealand was reported to be the highest-ever recorded since the start of this statistical survey in

1968. The sharp increase began in 2011, with a rise of 55% over the next seven years, and with the number of long-term residents even more significant, rising by 72% over the same time period.

Overseas emigration is a life transition that has a high potential of disrupting one's sense of self. When individuals move across geographical and sociocultural borders much of what they are familiar with becomes unsettled (Block, 2014). In the case of those individuals whose first language is different from that of the destination country, acquiring the target language to be able to participate in the new community is an additional challenge that they have to face. Block (2014) states that for many adult immigrants they “sink or swim in the new cultural and linguistic environment” (p. 91) and necessarily get on with their lives often without the help of language instruction.

This article reports on a study, part of a larger doctoral study being conducted by the first author, that investigated the experiences of two *nuclear immigrants* who suffered the Fukushima nuclear disaster and later moved to New Zealand. *Nuclear immigrants* is a term used by members of this community, including specifically the two participants of this study. This experience, which we refer to as *shinsai* to encapsulate the various types of harm suffered, dysregulated their sense of who they perceived themselves to be – their reflexive identities (Benson et al., 2013) – transforming their identities due to a ‘critical situation’ (Giddens, 1979). In this study, we examine how the immigration experience affects the negotiation of their identities and how it interacts with their investment in L2 learning and use in the New Zealand context. Using a ‘writing as analysis’ (Benson, 2018) narrative approach, the stories of the participants are told and discussed to gain an in-depth understanding of the meaning participants make of their life stories. Particularly, their crucial *shinsai* experiences in their past are analysed to see how they are intertwined with their L2-related trajectories in New Zealand.

### **Background: Displacement Across Borders**

On 11 March 2011, the *anzen shinwa* [‘safety myth’] – the widespread belief in the absolute safety of Japan’s nuclear power plants (The Independent Investigation Committee on the Fukushima Nuclear Accident, 2014) – was disproved by the Fukushima nuclear disaster. Not only an attack on life and health, but also all other delicately balanced aspects of life were thrown out of kilter

(Iijima, 1992). For the nuclear immigrants in this study, moving to New Zealand would not have happened if there had been no nuclear disaster. External displacement is undoubtedly one of the *shinsai* experiences. The main focus in this article is to examine the participants' histories in relation to the disaster and why their experiences led to their geographical border crossing. It connects their histories to their new lives in New Zealand, focusing particularly on their English learning and use, and how this interconnects with the negotiation and construction of their identities, thus bringing to light little-known personal realities and rarely-heard voices. Identity is constructed through a dynamic and multifaceted process in which past experiences affect present actions and future intentions (Barkhuizen, 2016; Wenger & Wenger-Trayner, 2015). Past experiences are also related to present and future learning (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Dewey, 1997), and therefore influence the degree of investment in learning and using an L2 and one's commitment to it. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) claim that experiences are understood in continuity, i.e., one's past interacts with and serves as an impetus for the present and future. As we show in this study, the participants construct new identities at the intersection of the past, present and future as a result of shaping and being shaped by their sociohistories.

### **Negotiation of Identities and Investment in English Language Learning**

Grounded in poststructuralist discourse in applied linguistics (e.g., Block, 2007; Norton, 2013; Pavlenko, 2002), identities in this study are considered to be socially and discursively constructed and constantly evolving through the use of language in specific times and spaces. In short, language learning is not only gaining knowledge but also a reconfiguration of identity. It is "identity work" (Douglas Fir Group, 2016, p. 31). However, doing identity work involves potential challenges. Obtaining opportunities for participation in communities is often constrained in situations in which unequal power relations are evident: "Negotiation comes into play in situations of inequality" (Barkhuizen, 2016, p. 26). Language learners who struggle to speak from one identity position may be able to reframe their relationship with target language speakers by negotiating their identities and claiming alternative, more powerful identities from which to speak, thereby enabling learning to take place (Norton, 2013).

Associated with issues of power negotiations in language learning and use is Norton's (2013) construct of *investment*. Investment refers to language learners' desire and commitment to learn a language. It provides a useful lens in this study

for understanding how and why the participants engage in their sociocultural contexts, including the workplace. Investment is a sociological construct, which assumes learners to be social beings who have complex identities, changing across time and space, and reproduced in social interaction. Learners exercise their agency to invest in a particular practice with the expectation that they will acquire symbolic and material resources, broaden their existing and imagined identities and futures, and increase their capital and social power (Darvin & Norton, 2017). Darvin and Norton (2015) consider investment as occurring at the nexus of identity, ideology, and capital, and they claim that “investment indexes issues of identity and imagined futures” (p. 39). Investment, in other words, means imagining the future and imaging one’s identity in relation to that future world. *Ideology* refers to “dominant ways of thinking that organize and stabilize societies while simultaneously determining modes of inclusion and exclusion” (Darvin & Norton, 2015, p. 44). Concepts such as *social interaction*, *inclusion* and *exclusion*, and *capital* are important for understanding the life experiences of the participants in this study.

As we have pointed out, the relationship between identity and learning is socially and historically constructed. The Japanese immigrants in this study are individuals with particular dispositions in their life trajectories. In this study, we therefore pay attention to their crossing the border (both geographical and lived experience) due to their experience of the nuclear disaster and the potential impact of that on their L2 learning in New Zealand, focusing particularly on their present and imagined future identities. In addition, we explore whether the consequences of their move and experiences in New Zealand result in any decisions to resist the use and learning of English by divesting (Darvin & Norton, 2017) from the language.

In sum, this study focuses on the experiences of two nuclear immigrants in New Zealand, members of an under-researched group, and addresses the following question: How do these Japanese nuclear immigrants in New Zealand negotiate their identities as L2 English learners and users, and what is their investment in the English language practices within their New Zealand communities?

## **Methodology**

In order to gain an understanding of the participants’ meaning-making of their *shinsai* and immigration experiences, narrative inquiry was used in this study. Narrative is considered to be “the primary form by which human experience is

made meaningful” (Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 1) and an effective “way of representing and understanding experience” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 18). It makes sense, therefore, to utilise the stories that the participants share about their life experiences. Barkhuizen et al. (2014) indicate that narrative inquiry plays a crucial role in the provision of a platform that accommodates diverse voices in research. It has the potential to reveal how social forces interconnect with L2 learning, and it provides a means for understanding how individuals not only interpret these social forces but also how they respond to them. Moreover, narrative inquiry enables an understanding of how L2 learners interpret and manage their experiences of how they form their own sense of identities, both individually and in relation to others (Barkhuizen et al., 2014). Using narrative methods, we aimed to discover the meanings that the two Japanese nuclear immigrants attach to learning English in their New Zealand communities, and to explore their identity negotiations and construction in the process of their narrative sensemaking.

**Participants**

The two participants were recruited through a chain referral process. They are Nami and Yuichi (pseudonyms), a married couple, and they identify (in their interviews) as *genpatsu jishu-hinanmin* [nuclear self-evacuees]. Their biographical data can be found in Table 1.

**Table 1 Biographical Data of the Participants (as of November 2018)**

	Nami	Yuichi
Age	40	41
Previous primary residence in Japan	Fukushima Prefecture	Fukushima Prefecture
Arrival to New Zealand	February 2015	February 2015
Length of stay in New Zealand	3 years	3 years
Family members	Two daughters (8 and 2) and husband	Two daughters (8 and 2) and wife
	The family moved to New Zealand together except for the younger daughter as she was born in New Zealand after immigration.	

Status	Part-time cook at a canteen in a private school	Full-time worker in the accounts section of a company that imports used cars from Japan
Index of English proficiency	IELTS General Training 4 (gained October 2017)	Course completion certificate equivalent to IELTS Academic Training Test 6.5 (gained in May 2016)

### Data Collection and Analysis

The primary method of data collection was interviewing, a commonly-used tool in narrative research. All interviews were conducted in Japanese by the first author. Chase (2003) says that the task of the narrative interviewer is to invite participants “to take responsibility for determining the direction and significance of their talk” (p. 283), with the intention of eliciting their ‘stories’ rather than reports. Three intensive interviews and one follow-up meeting were conducted with each participant. The first two interviews were sequential, held within a few weeks of each other in November and December 2018. The third interview took place in April 2019 and focused on exploring further prominent themes that emerged through the analysis of the previous two interviews. Biographical narratives (Benson, 2013; Pavlenko, 2007; Prior, 2011; Riessman, 2008) were elicited in the interviews, which were transcribed verbatim, and excerpts selected for inclusion in the narratives below were translated from Japanese into English by the first author.

The analytical steps began with thematic narrative analysis whereby attempts were made to keep the stories “‘intact’ by theorising from the case rather than from component themes (categories) across cases” (Riessman, 2008, p. 53). Taking particular note of temporality (time references and sequences), the themes were identified by what felt most pertinent to the research question: *shinsai* experiences, negotiation of identities as L2 English learners and users, and investment in English language learning and using practices, which were then synthesised into narrative descriptions.

A story of each participant was then constructed through narrative analysis (Polkinghorne, 1995) or narrative writing (Benson, 2013, 2018), the aim being to configure a plot that shows the connections between data elements that reveal the “uniqueness of the individual case or bounded system and provide an understanding of its idiosyncrasy and particular complexity” (Polkinghorne, 1995,

p.15). In other words, in the process of writing as analysis a coherent narrative is constructed in which the focus is the topic (*shinsai*, language learning and identity construction), the particular experiences of the participants (as told in the interviews), and the relevant theory informing the study (poststructuralist perspectives on identity, including investment). Further cross-case analysis (Riessman, 2008) of the two constructed stories was conducted in order to establish “patterns that remain situated” (Josselson, 2008, p. 260) in the interconnected lives of Nami and Yuichi. The two stories are presented next, followed by a discussion of the narrators’ identity experiences in relation to the relevant theoretical concepts introduced earlier.

### **Nami’s Story**

Living in Fukushima-city, Nami was at the paediatric clinic for her three-month-old daughter’s vaccination on the day of the Great East Japan Earthquake, 11 March 2011. She recalls with horror that “wires on telegraph poles made whipping noises outside” during the unceasing quake. March was still cold in Fukushima, and that night the whole family huddled around a paraffin heater in a single room as there was no electricity. Without any means of retrieving information, they knew nothing of the tsunami that had devastated the coastal areas of Fukushima or of the nuclear powerplant, located about 50km from their home, that had exploded.

At noon, the day after the earthquake, Nami received a text from a friend who was passing on a warning that she had heard from Self Defence Forces personnel: “The radiation’s going to reach Fukushima-city by tomorrow morning!” she had written.

“What on earth!” I thought. Living in Fukushima all this time, I was ignorant of the fact that there even were nuclear power plants there. My grandma used to speak about the WW2 and of the harm nuclear radiation could do to us. All I knew was that I was in danger and that I had to run.

Never imagining that this would be the last time she saw her home, she grabbed her daughter and ran out of the house with nothing but the clothes on her back, leaving her husband, Yuichi, behind due to his work.

She headed north of Fukushima to a coastal town in the Tohoku region, and then moved to a town, even further north. Their home in Fukushima-city had been newly built only six months before the disaster. Despite the government's assurance, they felt that because of the high radiation levels, they had little choice but to sell their house. Yuichi was eventually able to quit his job and moved to live with the family.

Driven by fear of radioactive contamination, Nami became obsessively active in gathering information.

I was worried, more than anything, about my daughter. It wasn't possible to predict what the right thing to do was, but I was certain that I would regret it for the rest of my life if I took things lightly, so I always took the safest path. I got strange looks. Everyone called me crazy [laughs].

She exercised extreme caution to avoid radiation, for example, by sealing windows, keeping her daughter indoors, and limiting food that the family ate to radiation tested produce from far-away Kyushu. Unfortunately, however, radioactive caesium was found in the urine of Nami's then two-year-old niece, whose family had also evacuated Fukushima and followed Nami to their new location. Nami's daughter was too young to be tested, but she shuddered to think of her daughter's possible exposure to nuclear radiation. She felt sure that they had become "the first generation of the Fukushima nuclear radiation victims". Nami started thinking about moving overseas. She was especially concerned for her daughter, as she believed that being exposed to radiation affects girls' future fertility: "I wish for my daughter to experience what I experienced when I had her, and I think it is my duty as a mother to make sure she is able if she wishes to have a child".

Yuichi was against the idea of migration, but after a year of persuasion, in June 2013 Nami and her daughter left for a ten-day trip to New Zealand, by way of a trial.

I never let my daughter play outside, afraid of the nuclear contamination, but in New Zealand watching her play around with the soil and splashing in the water like any child would, literally brought tears to my eyes. I mean, this was how a child should be, carefree.

New Zealand proved to be an ideal place. It became Nami's imagined and desired future, and she finally convinced Yuichi to move with her to New Zealand in February 2015. He only grudgingly agreed so that he would not have to live apart from his daughter.

Although Nami spoke very little English, considering the situation she was in, English seemed not much of an issue for her, as "securing my daughter's future was all I thought about". They managed to find a place to rent and purchased second-hand furniture, all done through Japanese contacts, using only the Japanese language.

Nami needed to work urgently, as the cost of living in New Zealand was "a nightmare". Yuichi decided to study at a polytechnic, which enabled Nami to work in New Zealand as the partner of a student visa-holder. She sent a job application to the Japanese owner of a canteen in a private school for a position in which she would be able to make use of the dietitian's license she had gained in Japan. Soon her part-time shifts as a cook started. There was almost no occasion to use English during working hours: "Only little chitchats with the students when they tell me the food was yummy or something like that. Only about 1%, really".

At home, she spoke only Japanese, as she wanted to preserve her daughter's fluency in Japanese. This is how she managed to spend most of the day without using English. Her New Zealand life was predominantly immersed in a Japanese language environment. However, there were a few situations in which she needed to use English with people outside of the workplace and home. For doing so, she devised a strategy whereby she informed English speakers of her lack of English proficiency at the very start of a conversation. For example:

I had written an email to the mother of Wakana's classmate before Wakana attended the classmate's birthday party, saying, "Thank you for inviting Wakana. By the way, I will perhaps ask for your help with my English" [laughs]. Revealing your weakness in advance is the key to communication.

After his graduation from polytechnic, Yuichi got a job in a local New Zealand company. It was at that time that they found that Nami was expecting a second child, although she had not planned to have another child due to the fear of

prenatal radiation exposure. Nonetheless, Yuichi was delighted, which gave Nami a positive outlook on her pregnancy. The maternity care system in New Zealand was different from Japan. Situations in which she had to use English, such as finding a midwife on her own, were made difficult by the language barrier. She managed to get through it by using her familiar strategy.

I told the midwife straight away that I couldn't speak English. I confided in her my worries of not being able to tell her my conditions precisely. She said it was all right. So without making any light conversation, I just sat there the whole time nodding to whatever she was saying [laughs].

She found the strategy quite useful as people become sympathetic to her when she used it: "I'm manipulative, maybe. I've come to find that New Zealand people willingly help those who are more vulnerable".

She is aware that her English is "very childish, like a kindy kid's", but says "there is nothing I can do with it", and believes that she is "doing okay" in New Zealand. She finds that she is very fortunate to surround herself with supportive people who accept her English. Also, she thinks her previous work experience that she had in Japan as a dietitian has made her life in New Zealand fulfilling. She has been working for over three years at the same school canteen. She enjoys the job and says emotionally, "all of the efforts I made in Japan are paying off in New Zealand". Her capital that she brought from Japan has been acknowledged in New Zealand.

Although their application for permanent residency was denied "because of the regime change in 2017", she has no alternative but to give it another try in the near future. She has never returned to Fukushima since their arrival in New Zealand, nor does she plan to in the future. There may still be a long way to go, but Nami appears to have a strong sense of agency with an optimistic mindset. "I want to open my own restaurant in New Zealand someday, after we finally get our hands on permanent residency", she smiled. Nami wishes to overcome any obstacle and pave the way to making New Zealand her family's new and permanent home. New Zealand still firmly exists as her imagined and desired future.

## Yuichi's Story

After resigning from his job and moving to be with his wife and child away from where the Fukushima disaster had occurred, Yuichi settled easily into his new life and job in their new place of residence. He thought that it was a safe enough place to raise a child. Nami, however, insisted that it was too dangerous to live in Japan and that they should move to New Zealand. Yuichi, who had had no opportunity to use English since attending a general English class at university twenty years previously, and had only one experience of going abroad, on their honeymoon, had never even thought of living overseas. He eventually had to compromise, and the family left Japan.

After arriving in New Zealand, Yuichi felt that his duty was “to build the essential foundation of life for my family” and to be a pillar of strength. To do so, he developed a life plan and followed it exactly. First, he attended an English school for six months and fulfilled the English language requirement for admission to a polytechnic. He then enrolled in the polytechnic to gain a Postgraduate Diploma in Business Administration. Graduating with the qualification in one year, he gained employment at a company operated by a local New Zealander as liaison for the Japanese branch. Everything was going as planned for Yuichi. However, shortly after beginning to work, he was quick to notice that something was not quite right. The attitude and values that were expected in the workplace in Japan were not what Yuichi observed in New Zealand.

When I was in Japan, I used to think that as long as you do a good job nothing else mattered. So even if I couldn't speak English well, giving results would please the boss and the company, but I was wrong. You weren't accepted by the New Zealand people if you fail to make good relationships and create a good workplace atmosphere even if you give good results.

What bewildered Yuichi was that people considered small talk to be important prior to getting on with their work. For example, the mornings in the New Zealand company were restless, full of chatter about sports and TV shows. In Japan, he stayed focused only on work throughout his day: “I realised that joining in the conversations of last night's rugby match is actually significant. That is the hard part for me. I got left out of their social circle”. Striving to maintain a good workplace atmosphere also meant that he had to be careful not to work too hard.

At his workplace, overworking was viewed unfavourably, as nobody was expected to do more than fulfil their basic responsibilities. The workers seemed to lack aggressive self-motivation. He could not get accustomed to the New Zealanders' work ethic and became very stressed.

He tried to accept the fact that he was a foreigner and it was obvious that his colleagues would have fundamentally different ways of thinking. He noticed that Japanese immigrants in New Zealand generally make an effort to follow the New Zealand style of operating, and he tried to as well. "But I ask myself if it is the right thing to do. I couldn't shake off the feeling that I was making light of the experiences and values that I myself had cultivated in Japan", he insisted.

In order to deal with his dilemma, Yuichi did make several attempts to propose a working style that he thought was efficient based on his professional career in Japan, but that did not seem to turn out well: "I know that this is due to my lack of ability, my lack of English and communication skills. If I could speak better English and join in the conversations of rugby and cricket with the colleagues and boss, there might have been better reaction". He found out that one of his Kiwi colleagues often went out drinking with the CEO. Yuichi felt that the CEO seemed to listen to his colleague's opinions, at least more so than his own.

His struggle with communicating in English is a daily occurrence: "When you get in a bit of an argument at work you want to assert your opinion, but lack of English skills pulls me back". He cannot argue back. "This is a handicap that I carry", he said, and believes that this is one of the main reasons his capability is undervalued at his workplace.

In Yuichi's case, institutional patterns and practices in a New Zealand workplace were a major obstacle, which he realised he was incapable of overcoming. After three years working for the same company, the conclusion he came to was to change the job, not himself.

I immigrated here at the age of 37, and I don't mean to make that an excuse but you can't renew your code of behaviour from that age. I wanted to step up in my career and grow as a person through my job like I was doing in Japan. So, spending further time at the company seems pointless. I'm now thinking of pursuing jobs where I can work with Japanese people.

Yuichi would prefer to work with people with similar values and experiences. “Producing good results more than other colleagues, with tenacity and perseverance till you were worn out was how I fulfil each day and feel satisfied”, he asserted, and concluded, “I don’t think New Zealand people can understand my way of doing business”.

No matter how difficult he finds life in New Zealand, he feels he has a responsibility to continue building a solid foundation for his family to continue living in New Zealand. His goal is to gain permanent residency in New Zealand for his family, but at heart, he longs for his hometown. Having left his old parents behind, he said, “I had this guilt and a sense of feeling that I abandoned my hometown”. However, as a married couple, they had had to make a decision. “It was very much my wife’s wish to come to and stay in New Zealand. All I have to do is just put up with it a little”, he tells himself.

In order to come to terms with his reality, the best he feels he can do for now is to get a new job that reflects more closely Japanese workplace practices. He is eager to work hard and perform at his full potential in such an environment, as for him “work is *ikigai* [reason for being]”. As long as he has the *ikigai*, he believes that his life in New Zealand will become worthwhile.

## **Discussion**

Nami’s and Yuichi’s narratives foreground their attempts at negotiating membership of various communities in New Zealand and the effect on their investment in English learning and using practices. The three sections that follow examine salient themes that emerged as a result of the process of ‘writing as analysis’ (Barkhuizen et al., 2014; Benson, 2013, 2018; Polkinghorne, 1995); that is, configuring the interview data into story form, while focusing on the research questions as well as the relevant theoretical concepts informing the study.

### **Different Perceptions of the Shinsai Experiences**

Nami and Yuichi’s newly-built home in Japan was located only 50 kilometres away from the Fukushima nuclear plant. Needless to say, their sense of crisis and urgency would be extreme. However, as a married couple who had been through the same disaster in the distressed area, their personal experiences of *shinsai* and how they perceived and interpreted the risk associated with nuclear radiation were

very different. Nami decided that she wanted to leave Japan to avoid nuclear radiation affecting her daughter's future. Yuichi, on the other hand, thought that Japan was safe enough to raise a child, but being firmly convinced by Nami, he agreed to relocate to New Zealand. For Nami, New Zealand exists as a desirable place to alleviate the worry in her life in Japan. Yuichi, however, felt he had no choice but to accompany Nami to a country that he had no affinity for. Given that he was content with living in Japan, with a secure job and his old parents living not far from him, it is little wonder that in his imagined future in New Zealand he saw himself as an outsider who felt primarily anchored in Japan, and this is how it turned out to be for him. As research shows, the past plays a crucial role in the construction of one's identity in the present and the future (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Wenger, 1998). Nami is committed to her present life in New Zealand and has no intention of returning to radioactively contaminated Japan. Yuichi still feels guilty about abandoning his hometown and wishes to go back. The past has given meaning to their present and future actions and has impacted their levels and quality of integration into New Zealand society. It also affects their L2 investment.

### **Factors Leading to Investment or Divestment in L2 Learning and Use**

Right from the start, Nami was not very concerned about English when immigrating to New Zealand, as all she thought about was safeguarding her daughter's future. She barely uses English in her daily life, which she estimates to be "only about 1%". For situations where she unavoidably has to interact in English, she has mapped out a strategy whereby she informs English speakers in advance of her insufficient English. Using this strategy, Nami attempts to claim the right to speak and be heard (Norton, 2013); by letting English speakers know that she herself acknowledges her low level of English proficiency, she expects them to listen to her attentively. At the same time, she gains the right not to speak and not to be heard. If her conversation partners understand that her lack of English proficiency inhibits her willingness to communicate, she can legitimately remain silent and be sheltered from a sense of embarrassment and obligation to respond in English (Duff, 2002). Either way, she circumvents any power confrontations by choosing not to stand on an equal footing with native speakers. By interacting in this way Nami considers herself to be "manipulative". Knowing that "New Zealand people willingly help those who are more vulnerable", she leans on them and pleads for help with her English. By revealing her weak point in advance she negotiates an identity that enables her to swim with the current of

her New Zealand communities. Her L2 identity is constructed by strategically placing herself in a vulnerable position that appeals to sympathy.

Nami seems resigned to the fact that there is nothing she can do to improve her English. She appears to suffer no emotional stress because of this, and it does not disrupt her daily life after all, which is in contrast to Yuichi's case. She says she is "doing okay" with the status quo, and thus has no desperate need to invest in further English learning.

For Yuichi, English is vital to his life. With his experiences in the results-oriented business culture of Japan, he was initially confident about making a strong impression and contributing to his company's success in New Zealand. In this way, he hoped he would get approval from his manager and colleagues, which would conceal his lack of English proficiency. Instead, it seemed to him that he was expected to demonstrate the appropriate communication skills to relate to his workmates. He also felt that he was expected to contribute to creating a pleasant workplace atmosphere, more so it seemed to him than producing results, otherwise he would not be recognised as a legitimate member of his work community. Holmes et al. (2009) points out that for immigrants "socio-pragmatic differences are undoubtedly sources of potential miscommunication in New Zealand workplaces" (p. 18). For example, the small talk that Yuichi deemed trivial and unimportant was in fact one of the relationally oriented crucial communicative strategies in establishing good collegial relationships at work. It also influences whether people are perceived to be good or even effective workers (Holmes et al., 2009).

The skills, knowledge, and resources Yuichi possessed did not seem to be valued. He experienced discomfort due to discrepancies between his actual and imagined membership in this community (Higgins, 1987), and a lack of communicative (including socio-pragmatic skills) and symbolic competences prevented him from successfully negotiating the conditions of power for him to exercise agency (Kramsch, 2011). He was unsuccessful in reframing his relationship with others in the company in order to appropriate more powerful identities and to claim the right to speak (Norton, 2013). His experiencing a sense of marginalisation was the result.

Wrestling with the conflict of not being able to adjust to the dominant way of thinking at work resulted in Yuichi's decision to resign from the company. "I

don't think New Zealand people can understand my way of doing business", he concluded. Darvin and Norton (2015) indicate that the "desire to be part of an imagined community or to take on an imagined identity enables the learner to gain from or to resist these positions" (p. 47). In Yuichi's case, his desire to achieve membership finally led to his resisting the position because of the ideology that operated in his institutional environment. As Blommaert (2005) says, "power differentiates and selects, includes and excludes" (p. 2). The mode of exclusion that he experienced restricted his opportunities for socialisation within the work culture in New Zealand and ultimately resulted in his divesting from the space and its corresponding social and communicative practices. Eventually, a workplace that reflects Japanese institutional practices, where he believed he could have *ikigai*, emerged as his new imagined community where he believed he could make his life in New Zealand worthwhile.

### **Value of Capital Shifting Across Time and Space**

Nami's and Yuichi's stories illustrate that the way capital is utilised in particular contexts affects how individuals position themselves as well as how they are positioned by others. As Darvin and Norton (2015) argue, the "valuing of their capital is an affirmation of their identity, a legitimation of their rightful place in different learning contexts" (p. 46). Yuichi discovered that transferring of capital is not an easy process. First, he imagined that the social, cultural and economic capital he had acquired through past accomplishments as a Japanese businessman would be appreciated in the L2 work community and would gain him the membership he desired. Furthermore, he thought that gaining such recognition would make up for his self-perceived lack of English proficiency. However, he struggled due to being unfamiliar with New Zealand workplace discourse and his own inadequate English. His capital was measured against institutional ideology (e.g., the beliefs, expectations, and values prevalent in his workplace) and repeatedly devalued as it did not align with the symbolic value of the structures of power (Darvin & Norton, 2015). His experience of failure resulted in his resistance to invest in identity within the new context. It prompted him to avoid this particular L2 community and to find a Japanese-oriented workplace instead. His adherence to the values associated with his pre-existing capital is an affirmation of his original socially and historically constructed identity.

Nami, fortunately, found a suitable place in New Zealand that she feels makes all her previous hard work in Japan worthwhile. Her capital is well-valued, and she

is content with the status quo of her life. Ironically, it has undermined her chance of investing in English learning and denies her opportunities to practice English, as English proficiency does not affect her already approved capital in her work community. She has settled for a vulnerable position within that community and in Wenger's (1998) terms, accepts being limited to peripheral participation.

## Conclusion

This study sought to address the question: How do the Japanese nuclear immigrants in New Zealand negotiate their identities as L2 English learners and users, and what is their investment in the English language practices within their New Zealand communities? The participants' past crucial *shinsai* experiences affect their degree of investment in English learning and in their identity construction in a new social and linguistic space. It also ultimately determines their degree of integration into New Zealand society (Comănaru et al., 2018); that is, the extent to which they are included or excluded (socially, economically, emotionally, and politically) in their unfamiliar social environment. Further, if they can transfer to New Zealand their capital already acquired in Japan and make the most of it in their new lives, a subjective sense of belonging to the new community is potentially generated and a sense of empowerment achieved. Nami felt that "all of the effort I made in Japan is paying off now in New Zealand", and Yuichi longed for *ikigai* [a reason for being] in the new space in which his capital is valued. However, if Nami's and Yuichi's symbolic and material capital is accredited in a dominantly non-English community, such as a Japanese institutional environment, there is little reason for them to invest in English. Nami located herself in a position where she was able to avoid direct confrontation with native English speakers. After all, she immigrated to New Zealand not to learn the language and the culture, but to take refuge from radiation. Yuichi, too, withdrew from his first workplace community when he realised that the work ideology was irreconcilable with and suppressed his *ikigai*, which led to disinvestment in L2 learning and using practices, and thus in an English learner identity.

This study has shed light on some salient features of a new immigrant group in New Zealand. Details of two Fukushima nuclear immigrants' unique experiences and their L2 learning trajectories were foregrounded, particularly how they negotiated their identity in their L2 communities. According to Wenger and

Wenger-Trayner (2015), individuals participate in multiple communities and transfer their learning while carrying their identity across these community contexts. As a result of multimembership, the ways they participate in one community are influenced and shaped by the ways they participate in others. Further study might explore how the knowledge gained in their main community, even a non-English speaking community, may promote more comprehensive L2 learning, and consequently the benefits of successful integration into New Zealand society more widely.

## References

- Barkhuizen, G. (2016). Narrative approaches to exploring language, identity and power in language teacher education. *RELC Journal*, 47(1), 25-42.
- Barkhuizen, G., Benson, P., & Chik, A. (2014). *Narrative inquiry in language teaching and learning research*. Routledge.
- Benson, P. (2013). Narrative writing as method: Second language identity development in study abroad. In G. Barkhuizen (Ed.), *Narrative research in applied linguistics* (pp. 244-263). Cambridge University Press.
- Benson, P. (2018). Narrative analysis. In A. Phakiti, P. De Costa, L. Plonsky, & S. Starfield (Eds.), *The Palgrave handbook of applied linguistics research methodology* (pp. 595-613). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Benson, P., Barkhuizen, G., Bodycott, P., & Brown, J. (2013). *Second language identity in narratives of study abroad*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Block, D. (2007). The rise of identity in SLA research, post Firth and Wagner (1997). *The Modern Language Journal*, 91(1), 863-876.
- Block, D. (2014). *Second language identities*. Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Blommaert, J. (2005). *Discourse: A critical introduction*. Cambridge University Press.
- Chase, S.E. (2003). Taking narrative seriously: Consequences for method and theory in interview studies. In Y. S. Lincoln & N. K. Denzin (Eds.), *Turning points in qualitative research: Tying knots in a handkerchief: Crossroads in qualitative inquiry* (pp. 274-296). AltaMira.
- Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. (2000). *Narrative inquiry: Experience and story in qualitative research*. Jossey-Bass
- Comănanu, R. S., Noels, K. A., & Dewaele, J. M. (2018). Bicultural identity orientation of immigrants to Canada. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 39(6), 526-541.

- Darvin, R., & Norton, B. (2015). Identity and a model of investment in applied linguistics. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 35, 36-56.
- Darvin, R., & Norton, B. (2017). Language, identity and investment in the 21st century. In T. L. McCarty & S. May (Eds.), *Language policy and political issues in education: Encyclopedia of language and education* (pp. 227-240). Springer.
- Dewey, J. (1997). *How we think*. Dover Publications.
- Douglas Fir Group. (2016). A transdisciplinary framework for SLA in a multilingual world. *Modern Language Journal*, 100, 19-47.
- Duff, P. A. (2002). The discursive co-construction of knowledge, identity, and difference: An ethnography of communication in the high school mainstream. *Applied Linguistics*, 23(3), 289-322.
- Giddens, A. (1979). *Central problems in social theory: Action, structure, and contradiction in social analysis* (Vol. 241). University of California Press.
- Higgins, E. T. (1987). Self-discrepancy: A theory relating self and affect. *Psychological Review*, 94(3), 319-340.
- Holmes, J., Marra, M., Newton, J., Joe, A., Riddiford, N., & Vine, B. (2009). Enhancing socio-pragmatic skills among professionally qualified workers. *Language in the Workplace Occasional Papers, Number 10*. School of Linguistics and Applied Language Studies, Victoria University of Wellington.
- Iijima, N. (1992). Social structures of pollution victims. In J. Ui (Ed.), *Industrial pollution in Japan* (pp. 154-172). United Nations University Press.
- Josselson, R. (2008). Narrative research and the challenge of accumulating knowledge. In B. Harrison (Ed.), *Life story research* Vol. 1 (pp. 254-262). Sage.
- Kramsch, C. (2011). The symbolic dimensions of the intercultural. *Language Teaching*, 44(3), 354-367.
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. (2019). *Annual report of statistics on Japanese nationals overseas*. Retrieved on 3 May 2020 from [http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/toko/page22\\_000043.html](http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/toko/page22_000043.html)
- Norton, B. (2013). *Identity and language learning: Extending the conversation* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition). Multilingual Matters.
- Nuclear Emergency Response Headquarters Government of Japan. (2011). *Report of the Japanese government to the IAEA ministerial conference on nuclear safety: The accident at TEPCO's Fukushima nuclear power stations*. Retrieved on 3 May 2020 from [http://japan.kantei.go.jp/kan/topics/201106/iaea\\_houkokusho\\_e.html](http://japan.kantei.go.jp/kan/topics/201106/iaea_houkokusho_e.html)

- Pavlenko, A. (2002). Poststructuralist approaches to the study of social factors in second language learning and use. In V. Cook (Ed.), *Portraits of the L2 user* (pp. 277-302). Multilingual Matters.
- Pavlenko, A. (2007). Autobiographic narratives as data in applied linguistics. *Applied Linguistics*, 28(2), 163-188.
- Polkinghorne, D. E. (1988). *Narrative knowing and the human sciences*. State University of New York Press.
- Polkinghorne, D. E. (1995). Narrative configuration in qualitative analysis. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 8(1), 5-23.
- Prior, M. T. (2011). Self-presentation in L2 interview talk: Narrative versions, accountability, and emotionality. *Applied Linguistics*, 32(1), 60-76.
- Riessman, C. K. (2008). *Narrative methods for the human sciences*. Sage.
- The Independent Investigation Committee on the Fukushima Nuclear Accident. (2014). *The Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power station disaster: Investigating the myth and reality* (M. K. Bricker, Ed.). Routledge.
- Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning, and identity*. Cambridge University Press.
- Wenger, E., & Wenger-Trayner, B. (2015). Learning in a landscape of practice: A framework. In E. Wenger-Trayner, M. Fenton-O'Creevy, S. Hutchinson, C. Kubiak, & B. Wenger-Trayner (Eds.), *Learning in landscapes of practice: Boundaries, identity, and knowledgeability in practice-based learning* (pp. 15-23). Routledge.