

Young Learners Thriving in Multicultural Exploration: Language, Culture, Identity

**3 Colombo-American Kids in Okinawa: An Exploration on Early Construction of Language
and Identity**

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Resumen

Este estudio explora el uso del lenguaje, las interacciones lingüísticas y el desarrollo de la identidad de género entre tres niños colombo-americanos de 4, 6 y 8 años de edad, en diversos contextos multiculturales, centrándose principalmente en sus experiencias en Okinawa, Japón. La investigación examina estas dinámicas a través del uso de métodos cualitativos como la observación, entrevistas y dibujos con narrativas orales.

En el estudio, los niños, parte de una familia Americana en una base militar en Okinawa, asisten a una escuela local donde el japonés es el idioma principal. Sin embargo, el español también está presente en casa a través de interacciones en línea con miembros hispanos de la familia. A pesar de esto, el inglés sigue siendo la preferencia principal de los niños, también utilizado durante las actividades en la comunidad de la base.

Los hallazgos enfatizan las dinámicas del lenguaje, las interacciones de género y la construcción de la identidad multicultural. Los participantes muestran competencia lingüística en español, inglés y japonés, priorizando la comunicación efectiva, donde las influencias culturales dan forma a los roles de género, con los participantes desafiando las normas. La construcción de la identidad multicultural implica una interacción compleja entre el lenguaje, la cultura y la participación, evidente en las narrativas.

El estudio ofrece ideas para educadores e iniciativas de políticas educativas y a su vez sugiere direcciones futuras de investigación para explorar las influencias de los medios de comunicación, llevar a cabo estudios longitudinales y promover el desarrollo del lenguaje y la inclusividad cultural en la educación. En general, subraya la importancia de comprender la relación entre la cultura, el lenguaje y las actitudes de los niños en la educación multicultural.

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Palabras clave: Dinámicas del lenguaje, Identidad multicultural, Interacciones de género, Cultura, Desarrollo infantil, Competencia lingüística, Adaptación cultural, Educación, Multilingüismo

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Abstract

This study explores language usage, linguistic interactions, and gender identity development among three Colombo-American children aged 4, 6, and 8 in diverse multicultural contexts, primarily focusing on their experiences in Okinawa, Japan. Using qualitative methods like observation, interviews, and drawing with oral narratives, the research examines these dynamics. The children, part of an American family on a military base in Okinawa, attend a local school where Japanese is the primary language. However, Spanish is also present at home through online interactions with Hispanic family members. Despite this, English remains the children's main language preference, also used during base activities.

The findings emphasize language dynamics, gender interactions, and multicultural identity construction. Participants display proficiency across Spanish, English, and Japanese, prioritizing effective communication. Cultural influences shape gender roles, with participants challenging norms. Multicultural identity construction involves a complex interplay of language, culture, and engagement, evident in narratives and storytelling.

The study offers insights for educators and policymakers and suggests future research directions to explore media influences, conduct longitudinal studies, and promote language development and cultural inclusivity in education. Overall, it underscores the importance of understanding the relationship between culture, language, and children's attitudes in multicultural education.

Keywords: Language dynamics, Multicultural identity, Gender interactions, Culture, Childhood development, Language proficiency, Cultural adaptation, Education, Multilingualism

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1. Contextualization

The present study explores the interactions of three children aged 4, 6, and 8 years in diverse contexts within various cultural settings. It aims to investigate how the children's language usage, linguistic interactions, and gender identity are shaped by their multicultural environment. The aim is to emphasize the significant influences of both broader societal contexts and individual interactions on communication patterns and the construction of gender among the participants. Consequently, the researcher seeks to investigate the interplay between a culturally diverse environment and the formation of language-related gender identity in children.

The population consist of three biracial American children living in Uruma, a city in the island of Okinawa, Japan. Okinawa is in the south of Japan's main island. Okinawa is known for its historical sites from World War II, and it is characterized by its friendly and laid-back residents. Okinawa is a multicultural and multilingual environment since apart from Okinawans, there are American citizens living there under the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA).

The children subject of this research is part of an American family that resides in Camp Courtney, the American base located at the central point of the Island in the East coast of Okinawa. Although the participants live on base, they attend a local school in Uruma city, Okinawa. Known as Yōchien (幼稚園) kindergarten, and (小学校) *shogakko* elementary school.

The school prioritizes discipline, teamwork, and community-building. It also incorporates cultural heritage and local language (Japanese-Okinawan language). On the other hand, English is also integrated to the academic activities to enhance language skills by practicing greetings in English and some use of cognates and simple commands practiced by the whole community.

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Despite Japan's equal educational opportunities for boys and girls, there are some particularities. For instance, the school employs a subtle form of gender role differentiation through color-coding, primarily segregating girls from boys during various activities. This practice is evident not only in the assignment of colors for different tasks but also in the way it subtly influences participation dynamics.

Additionally, traditional gender roles are reinforced during protocol-table manners and lunchtime, where students are actively involved in serving food, setting their tables, and partaking in the cleaning process. These activities are not just practical but also serve to instill a sense of responsibility and cooperation, with students understanding and embodying their roles within their community.

Moreover, during cultural activities such as Eisa drumming, children are classified based on their proficiency and skills in performance rather than gender. This highlights a nuanced approach where gender distinctions may be more prominent in certain contexts, but abilities and talents take precedence in others. This approach contributes to a more inclusive and skill-based environment, challenging traditional gender norms.

Furthermore, it is noteworthy that the three children primarily utilize Okinawan-Japanese as their means of communication with peers, staff, and other school members. This linguistic choice reflects the cultural and linguistic context of the school, emphasizing a shared language for effective communication and community building. The researcher can observe these important interactions specially during free time at the end of the school day.

On base, which constitutes another context of interaction, the participants primarily interact in English with other American children and families in settings such as playgrounds and social events.

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In this American setting, gender roles become evident through the children's interactions. For instance, certain play activities might be encouraged or discouraged based on gender, reflecting societal norms. In these interactions children communicate through play where we can also appreciate that girls tend to be the leaders while playing in big groups and boys usually play a more passive role or seems less attentive.

When boys are playing in small groups and the male gender is higher, they are usually more engaged and active in their communication. Moreover, their engagement with American peers may shape their understanding of gender roles in this context, potentially reinforcing or challenging the stereotypes prevalent in the larger community.

Conversely, at home, the participants engage with Hispanic culture by conversing in Spanish with their mother. Here, the dynamics of gender roles may differ from the other contexts. The mother's intentional incorporation of various activities serves as an avenue for exploring how gender roles are portrayed and navigated within the family setting.

At home, the participants do a special activity: they talk online with their mom's Spanish-speaking family. This helps them explore how people communicate, understand gender roles, and learn about diverse cultures. These interactions provide insights into whether traditional gender roles are maintained, challenged, or renegotiated within this cultural context.

These interactions can contribute to bolstering the participants' language proficiency while fostering adaptability in acknowledging differences and similarities within their surroundings. Such experiences equip them to embrace diverse social norms and manners.

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The children are exposed to a multitude of cultural influences and rapidly internalize the prevalent social stereotypes from their school, home, and other encounters. As Solbes-Canales et al., (2020) stated, " During their first years of life, children construct the gender schemes that will guide the elaboration of expectations about what society expects of men and women." (para. 15).

The research aims to provide valuable insights into how children navigate and develop in this culturally rich context, shedding light on the impact of these experiences on their language development. This exploration is significant to the researcher, who, being a mother and educator, expects valuable insights into the complex dynamics of language acquisition. The study's intention is to unravel the intricate relationship between these key factors and their contribution to the development of children, especially in a diverse environment.

2. Research Statement

The study is poised to delve into multifaceted dimensions that converge to shape the participants linguistic practices and identity construction.

According to Xia's (2013) "Language reflects, records, and transmits social differences, so we should not be surprised to find reflections of gender differences in language, for most societies differentiate between men and women in various marked ways, (p.1). That is why in our research, we explore the intersection of three cultures (Japan, the United States, and Latin America) focusing on the distinctions between culture, language development, gender, and contexts.

As highlighted by Sugimoto (2010) While both boys and girls in Japan have access to education, societal expectations shape their behaviors based on traditional gender roles. These cultural norms differ from the more progressive attitudes in American and Hispanic cultures.

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Even in modern times, women often experience segregation and lack proper recognition for their contributions in political movements. Our study centers on young learners who actively immerse themselves in diverse environments experiencing traditional and modern concepts of gender and language dynamics in a multifaceted context.

Through this research, I hope to provide an interesting perspective on how these children communicate and engage in linguistic and cultural interactions.

As a researcher, mother, and teacher with a focus on language and early childhood education, this study aims to understand how three young learners express and develop their multicultural identity using the English language. The goal is to unravel the complex factors that influence their language use and identity formation in various social contexts.

I am captivated by how young children can easily adjust to different situations. In this study, I am looking at three children from a military family in the USA living overseas. Even though they are quite young, they have already lived in several places. Their ability to adapt to diverse cultures is a key focus of this research.

I am fascinated by watching these kids actively join and become important members of their new communities. Their communication skills are versatile as they interact with different groups. As a mom, I have noticed the big desires and challenges that come with new beginnings, which makes this even more interesting. Through my research, I want to share insights into how we can understand and help the social communication of young learners in diverse multicultural settings, drawing from both my professional knowledge and personal experiences as a mom and teacher.

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2.1 Research question

How do three young learners manifest their multicultural identity in their use of the English language?

2.2 Research objectives

2.2.1 General objective

To identify the way three young learners, manifest their multicultural identity in their use of the English language and to understand how gender and language are experienced and reflected in young children's daily interactions within a multicultural context.

2.2.2 Specific Objectives

- To explore and analyze the speech patterns and communication styles exhibited by young children in multicultural contexts, with a focus on gender distinctions.
- To investigate and document the language choices, vocabulary preferences, and linguistic strategies employed by young children in multicultural contexts, emphasizing their impact on communication and interactions.

3. Literature Review

This section focuses on four pivotal concepts: culture, multiculturalism, gender, and language development. These interconnected elements form the cornerstone of the study, guiding the exploration into the multifaceted experiences of young learners within a diverse and culturally rich environment. By delving into the intricate dynamics that emerge at the intersection of culture, multiculturalism, gender, and language development. This theoretical framework provides a comprehensive lens through which to analyze and understand the complex interactions that shape these children's lives.

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In the subsequent sections, the significance of each of these concepts will be unraveled.

3.1 Culture

As stated by Frawley et al., (2021) in the context of cultural studies and discourse analysis, culture is often understood as a complex system of shared beliefs, values, practices, and symbols that shape the way individuals and groups perceive and interact with the world. Given that culture encompasses various aspects of life, including language, customs, traditions, art, and social norms, it is essential to incorporate this factor into our research due to its significant role in shaping the participants' identity.

In line with Cumming, (2012), the relationship between culture and identity is deeply intertwined because culture not only reflects the identity of a group but also contributes to the construction of individual and collective identities. From the point of view of the researcher, this means that it influences how people perceive themselves and others and how they express their identities through language and discourse, which is central to the present study.

Cultural practices and language use are essential components of identity formation, and they are shaped by the cultural contexts in which individuals exist, which is also a concern of the study.

Barker & Galansiński (2001a) highlight the absence of an inherent or automatic link between various aspects of identity such as class, gender, and race. These elements can be combined, connected, or articulated in diverse ways, as discussed by Barker & Galansiński (2001b). Taking this discussion into consideration we can conclude that the connections between these aspects do not necessarily create a single unified identity and can vary depending on specific circumstances. Individuals are viewed as unique combinations of these identity features, influenced by different

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elements. In our research these important combinations are shaped by social factors and conditions, which will be explored in the process.

It is worth highlighting that there is a connection between language and identity. Language plays a substantial role in preserving one's identity “because human’s thought or ideology is an important component of culture, and because language is a medium to convey thought” (Zhang, 2006, as cited in Cumming, 2012, p. 43) and consequently language being unable to be isolated from culture which are core factors in our research.

Previous research conducted within multicultural contexts, such as the work by (Nelson-Pererman et al., 2015, as cited in Szerlag et al., 2021), has often been shaped by their geographical locations and the specific inquiries they seek to address. Some studies focus on settings marked by migration and refugees, where the confluence of culture and religion gives rise to intricate relationships and social challenges. Others explore regions at the intersection of different nations or states, where the intermingling of customs, traditions, and neighborly ties is evident, as shown by Szerlag et al., (2021), an illustrative example research conducted in Lithuania, a historically rich multicultural environment where diverse communities have coexisted within a singular state for centuries.

While the previous studies have provided valuable insights into multicultural contexts, our study distinguishes itself by focusing on a different dimension. Instead of geographical locations or specific inquiries, our research delves into the intricate interplay between culture, language use, multicultural identity, and social contexts among young learners.

By narrowing our focus, we aim to unravel the dynamics that contribute to the development of language practices and identity construction in diverse environments. Our study also provides a

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fresh perspective by honing in the specific experiences of children and the role of language in shaping their multicultural identity.

In our study, the focus on children's language development is on how language learners become active participants in social groups by acquiring the necessary linguistic and social skills for effective interaction. This shift in perspective is encapsulated by the term language socialization (Ochs and Schieffelin, 1986, as cited in Cook-Gumperz & Kyratzis, 2008), which encompasses both the socialization through language and the socialization to use language.

According to Cook-Gumperz & Kyratzis, (2008) Language socialization emphasizes the role of language-mediated interactions in the production and reproduction of social practices within a society. Discourse competence is a vital component, demanding that children acquire a profound comprehension of the wider cultural norms governing social relationships and their own social identities within the specific societal context.

Yet, despite these valuable contributions, there remains a gap in the literature when it comes to understanding how young children effectively communicate within multicultural contexts. This research seeks to offer some information that will contribute to fill in the gap by examining how language, culture, multiculturalism, and gender dynamics intersect in the lives of young learners and how young children navigate their diverse identities and interactions.

3.2 Multiculturalism

Multiculturalism, as described by Longley (2020a) involves the way a society handles and welcomes cultural diversity, both at the national and community levels. It encompasses the peaceful cohabitation of various cultures, acknowledging and valuing their unique values, customs, and traditions.

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Multiculturalism may manifest on a broader scale through immigration or the legislative incorporation of culturally diverse regions (Longley (2020b)). Longley's definition of multiculturalism sparks contemplation about the intricate balance between unity and diversity within societies. It is intriguing how this concept is not just about the mere existence of various cultures but involves a deliberate effort to manage and embrace them harmoniously. In a world that is becoming increasingly interconnected, the idea of multiculturalism takes on heightened relevance.

Longley's acknowledges that multiculturalism is not just about tolerance; it is about actively recognizing and appreciating the richness that each culture contributes to the collective tapestry of society. Longley's perspective on multiculturalism aligns with the overarching theme of the research study in Okinawa, Japan. Exploring how young children interact within a multicultural context underscores the importance of cultivating a harmonious coexistence of cultures. This definition underscores the significance of understanding and appreciating cultural differences, which is crucial for fostering a sense of belonging and connection among individuals from varied backgrounds.

In essence, Longley's definition of multiculturalism encapsulates the idea that diversity isn't just a demographic fact but a dynamic force that shapes societies. It encourages the researcher to move beyond mere coexistence and actively engage with the various cultures around. Embracing multiculturalism enriches peoples' perspectives, deepens our empathy, and ultimately contributes to a more vibrant and inclusive societal fabric.

Susanto's (2017), perspective on multiculturalism as a process of knowledge sharing between cultures adds an intriguing layer to the concept. This definition emphasizes the dynamic exchange of ideas, behaviors, and values that takes place when different cultures come into contact. It's a view

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that resonates with the idea of cultural cross-pollination, where societies grow and evolve through the interactions between their diverse constituents.

Given this explanation within the framework of the research conducted in the multicultural environment of Okinawa, Japan, it's apparent that the dissemination of knowledge is a bidirectional process. It goes beyond a unidirectional impact of one culture on another, emphasizing a mutual exchange that enhances all involved cultures. This idea resonates with my personal conviction that cultural diversity isn't about preserving isolated communities but creating a space where cultures mutually learn and flourish together.

When comparing Susanto's (2017) definition with Longley's (2020) perspective, the researcher leans more towards Longley's view. Longley's emphasis on harmonious coexistence and appreciation of distinct values and traditions resonates with the need for both celebration and understanding in a multicultural society. While Susanto's focus on knowledge sharing, Longley's definition encapsulates the broader essence of multiculturalism by highlighting the importance of recognizing and harmonizing various cultural aspects.

In the context of the research study, the researcher believes Longley's definition better captures the essence of the children's daily experiences within a multicultural environment. It acknowledges the nuances of cultural diversity not just at the knowledge-sharing level, but also in terms of practical coexistence and the recognition of shared values. This understanding is pivotal for comprehending how the interplay of cultures, languages, and gender dynamics shapes the children's language development and overall experiences.

In summary, Susanto's perspective on multiculturalism offers a valuable lens through which to examine knowledge sharing between cultures. However, Longley's (2020) definition is more

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comprehensive and aligned with the holistic nature of multiculturalism, especially in the context of the research study. It underscores the importance of creating a harmonious space where cultures not only share knowledge but also coexist with mutual respect and appreciation.

3.3 Gender

Gender, as elucidated by Chrisler & Lamer (2016) encompasses the intricate social identity that society designates to individuals, categorizing them as either woman/girl or man/boy. It also encompasses a spectrum of associated personality traits or behavioral inclinations, encompassing concepts like masculinity, femininity, androgyny, and even transgender identity.

This definition is remarkably perceptive in capturing the complexity of how gender extends beyond mere labels and into the diverse expressions that shape individuals' lives. It underscores that gender is not confined to biology but rather forms a societal construct imbued with psychological attributes and role expectations. Both ideas are relevant to the present research.

Chrisler and Lamer's definition of gender aligns seamlessly with my study of language and identity in a multicultural context because by framing gender as an intricate social identity, the definition acknowledges societal categorization into specific roles, encompassing various personality traits. This resonates with my exploration of how language shapes the identity of three young learners, in a diverse context.

Dr. Helgeson (2017) provides a thoughtful view on gender. She highlights that gender isn't a single, fixed idea but involves various psychological aspects and specific social roles for males and females. This underscores the idea that gender is complex, shaped by both societal expectations and personal experiences. Dr. Helgeson's insights stress the importance of understanding gender as a dynamic interplay between identity and social context, rather than a static label.

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This definition aligns with the study's focus on the multidimensionality of gender, emphasizing the dynamic interplay between societal expectations and individual experiences. Helgeson's contributions underscore the importance of recognizing gender as a dynamic construct, reinforcing the study's commitment to understanding the fluidity of identity within diverse social contexts.

In the context of this research, these definitions of gender are highly relevant. The study involves observing young learners from various gender backgrounds and investigating how their gender identities shape their interactions and language use within a multicultural setting, in line with these nuanced understandings.

As the researcher delves into this study motivated by the realization that understanding gender is not merely about recognizing binary distinctions but appreciating the intricate layers that shape individuals' expressions and interactions in diverse settings. This exploration of gender is anticipated to enrich the research and contribute to a more comprehensive comprehension of the intricate interplay between language, culture, and identity.

3.4 Language development

Indrayani (2016), defines language development as the ability to communicate with others through various forms, including oral communication, writing expression, sign language, gestures, and facial expressions. The concept of language, as described by Indrayani, relates deeply to the researcher's understanding of how children acquire and progress in their language skills. It is fascinating to consider how language is not confined to spoken words alone but encompasses a wide array of modes such as sign language, gestures, and facial expressions.

This perspective underscores the versatility of human communication and the several ways in which children learn to connect with others. The researcher finds it remarkable how these diverse

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forms of expression come together in the intricate process of using language for communication in different settings.

Feldman (2019) describes language as a distinctly human form of communication, uniting social groups through socially agreed-upon signals—primarily words and sentences—within a rule-governed system, conveying meaning. Unlike animal communication, human language is creative, allowing the expression of ideas beyond the immediate context, covering past, future, and abstract concepts. Speech, the primary output, involves complex movements of respiratory and oral structures.

Other outputs include sign language and written language. Categorized into receptive and expressive components, language encompasses subsystems like phonology, lexicon, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics, with speech involving articulation, voice, and fluency subsystems. Feldman affirms that young children acquire language through the interplay of their learning capacities and the language environment. Computer simulation models, reflecting human brain function, depict learning as changes in activity patterns within networks, organizing based on environmental experiences.

The author contends that these unbiased models explain infants' ability to learn any exposed language. Statistical learning aids in segmenting sound into words, guided by properties like co-occurrence within words. Feldman also argues that a warm, respectful social context with competent language users facilitates learning. And that a child-directed language enhances statistical learning with limited vocabulary, short sentences, repetitions, and exaggerated intonation. Feldman also considers that an active engagement in a social context involves monitoring input, recognizing discrepancies, and progressing in semantics and syntax.

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Short et al., (2019) present a definition of language as encompassing words, grammar, and discourse reinforces the complexity of this skill. This is a vivid reminder of the remarkable journey children undertake as they grasp the mechanics of language, from constructing sentences to engaging in meaningful conversations. The researcher recognizes the complexity of language as a skill and appreciates the cognitive leaps and bounds that children make during their language development journey, setting the stage for their future interactions and understanding of the world.

The significance of language becomes even more apparent when considering the research's focus on multicultural interactions three young learners are immersed in Okinawa, Japan. Language serves as a bridge connecting individuals from diverse backgrounds, allowing them to share experiences and perspectives. Kramsch's (2014), exploration of language as a

cultural and social force vibrates deeply in this context. It is intriguing to think about how language is not just a tool for communication, but a conduit for transmitting cultural nuances and building identities.

Kramsch's, defines language as a dynamic phenomenon shaped by cultural contexts. This definition resonates with the researcher as someone who has navigated multiple languages and cultures, the researcher has experienced firsthand how language can carry layers of meaning beyond the words themselves. This insight into the intertwining of language and identity is invaluable for the research study, as it delves into how young children navigate these intricate intersections within a multicultural setting. Language becomes a mirror reflecting not only their evolving communication skills but also their growing understanding of their own place in a diverse world.

The varied perspectives on language development by authors like Indrayani, Feldman, Short et al., significantly enrich the research. Indrayani's definition emphasizes language's multifaceted

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nature, encompassing forms beyond spoken words. Feldman delves into the intricacies of language as a creative human tool, encompassing speech, body language, and writing. Short et al. acknowledge the cognitive leaps in children's language development.

In the context of multicultural interactions in our research, Kramsch's exploration of language as a cultural force is crucial. It portrays language as a bridge, connecting individuals from diverse backgrounds. Kramsch's insight aligns with the researcher's experiences, offering a nuanced understanding of how young children navigate language and identity in a multicultural setting. In summary, these diverse perspectives enhance understanding of language's dynamic role in shaping interactions, cultures, and identities, underscoring its power in fostering connection and appreciation in a multicultural context.

The alignment of the former four constructs with this research is evident in the context of Okinawa, Japan, where the convergence of Japanese, American, and Spanish cultures create a rich tapestry of experiences. The study hopes to produce not only observations but also some understanding on how cultural diversity shapes the three participants use of English language, and their perceptions on their own gender through varied daily interactions.

4. Research Design

The study seeks to unravel the complex relationship between these factors and their impact on how children use language, perceive gender roles, and form their identities.

This study is framed in the B P research line named "The study of Language and its contexts" Its positioning within this domain is attributed to its active involvement in the English bachelor's degree program, operating across various contexts and roles embraced by the program's students –

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whether as educators or practitioners in schools, or as research assistants within the university setting.

Also, this project is integral to the broader macro project number 2, titled "Understanding and characterizing EFL in the LLEI: experiences and phenomena in the pre-service teachers' educational contexts." Within this framework, the project adopts a narrative and qualitative design that is purposefully aligned with the macro project's focal point – scrutinizing the experiences and outcomes derived by pre-service teachers. These insights, in turn, serve as a resource for both fellow students and instructors, contributing to a shared pool of knowledge.

Furthermore, the project is intricately linked to the subproject number 2, aptly named "The voices of the LLEI realities: life stories and experiences." Here, these life stories and experiences are positioned as the focal subjects of study, serving as tangible examples that illustrate the advantageous facets of the design employed in this research. This comprehensive integration within the LLEI's research landscape underscores the project's multifaceted contributions and its alignment with the institution's research objectives.

This section will present the elements of the current study design. To begin with, the study subscribes to the Qualitative paradigm. Cresswell (2018a) defines qualitative research as a method for understanding how individuals or groups perceive social or human issues. It involves formulating questions, collecting data in the participant's setting, analysing data inductively, and interpreting its meaning.

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This case study will employ an exploratory research design, allowing for in-depth exploration and generating new ideas related to gender and language development. Qualitative data collection methods will be utilized to gather rich verbal descriptions rather than quantitative measurements. The research will be conducted within the natural environment of the participants, focusing on their authentic experiences.

McLeod (2019a) states that through the case study approach, the researcher can observe, meticulously collect, thoughtfully compare, and thoroughly explore the expressions in the everyday interactions of these participants. This approach allows for a comprehensive descriptive narrative, capturing insights from the researcher's standpoint.

4.1 Qualitative Study

According to Billups (2021), defining qualitative research through various scholars' perspectives is suggested as the optimal approach to grasp its scope. She references Denzin and Lincoln's (2011) definition; Qualitative research encapsulates the close and personal dynamic between the researcher and the participant. She also highlights Patton's (2015) emphasis on rich conversations, Creswell, and Poth's (2018) exploration of multiple perspectives, and Saldana's (2015) contributions.

Ultimately, the study is outlined as qualitative research since it means to discover the meaning individuals attribute to their experiences through close interactions, rich conversations, and multifaceted interpretations.

Qualitative research involves a set of interpretive and material practices that make the world visible and transform it into representations. These practices include collecting field notes, conducting interviews and conversations, capturing photographs, recordings, and writing memos to

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the self. By engaging in these practices, the researcher actively participates in the research context, gaining a deeper understanding of the participants' experiences.

The intimate interaction between the researcher and the participants is a fundamental aspect of qualitative research. The power dynamics inherent in the research process are acknowledged, and efforts are made to create a safe and open space for participants to share their perspectives. By establishing rapport and trust, the researcher can engage in rich conversations and explore multiple perspectives.

A naturalistic approach is adopted in this study, allowing for an in-depth exploration of the participants' lived experiences within the multicultural context. The researcher will use the following tools closely observe the interactions and dynamics, conduct interviews, and engage in conversations and oral-narrative drawings to gain insights into how gender and language development are experienced and reflected in the participants' daily lives. The focus will be on understanding the participants' unique perspectives and the contextual nuances within the multicultural setting. In summary, this qualitative study embraces an interpretive and naturalistic approach to explore the experiences and perspectives of young children in a multicultural context regarding gender and language development. Through various data collection methods and by acknowledging the intimate interaction between the researcher and the participants, the study aims to uncover meaningful insights and contribute to the existing knowledge in this field.

4.2 Case Study

A case study involves a comprehensive exploration of an issue, program, individual, group, event, or phenomenon within its context, with the goal of understanding it from the participants' perspective (Harrison et al., 2017, citing Merriam, 2009; Simons, 2009; Stake, 2006; Yin, 2014).

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Harrison et al., (2017) state that a case study involves looking closely to a program, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals, with specific boundaries in terms of time and activity. Creswell (2018b) argues that researchers employ diverse data collection methods to gather comprehensive information over an extended period.

In this research, three young learners are the focus. The study aims to explore how gender manifests in their daily interactions, providing a descriptive account and reporting event details

from my perspective as observer. As McLeod (2019b) describes, the case study method often involves observing or reconstructing the case history of a single participant or group, such as a school class or a specific social group as it has been done in this research.

The research information will be qualitative, verbal description rather than measurement. The research entails observing their interactions and activities to understand how gender and language development manifest in their daily lives. The choice of this case aligns with the broader research domain of Language and Gender, specifically investigating these dynamics within a multicultural context.

In addition to participant observation, interviews and conversations will be conducted to gather the participants' perspectives and insights. These qualitative data collection methods will provide a holistic understanding of the participants' experiences and allow for the exploration of the interrelationship between gender and language development.

4.3 Qualitative data

As Miles et al., (2018), state qualitative data emphasis on naturally occurring, ordinary occurrences in a natural setting, so that we have a strong grip on what real life is like. The study will

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emphasis on the participant's life experiences, fundamentally connecting the contexts and constructors in which the study is occurring.

4.4 Data Collection Instruments

Throughout the research process, it was utilized a diverse array of data collection tools, including observation, semi-structured interviews, and drawing with oral narrative descriptions. These tools were specifically designed to explore the intricate dynamics of language, culture, multiculturalism, and gender among the participants in Okinawa. Together, these instruments contribute to a comprehensive understanding of how these factors intersect and shape interactions in a multicultural context.

4.4.1 Direct observation and field notes

The primary method of data collection will be direct observation, as recommended by McLeod (2019c). The researcher will closely observe and document the participants' interactions, activities, and language use. In order to observe, apply the instruments and fulfil the requirement for the study. The parent signed a consent to allow his children to be part of the research (See Appendix A).

Maxwell, (2012., as cited in Deggs & Hernandez, 2018), states that “observation can enable the researcher to draw inferences about someone's perspective that couldn't be obtained by relying exclusively on interview data” (P.255). One of the tools I'm going to implement in my study is described by Kawulich, (2005., as cited in Deggs & Hernandez, 2018) who argues that field notes serve as a record of activities, emotions, reflections, meanings, or ceremonies observed in informal discussions from the field and must be written immediately after leaving the field.

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Research field notes were taken to capture the nuances of gender-related behaviours, communication patterns, and language development within the multicultural context. The researcher used a field note format to observe the children in all three contexts (at school, home, and on base) for about 20-30 minutes, two days for a total of 6 observations. Also, to write down about the participants' interaction at home (Spanish context), Interaction with mom and mom's family online. Every night during the week, mom video-calls her Hispanic-Spanish speaker family and interact with them. Calls usually last between 20-30 minutes.

Interaction at school (Japanese context). The best time to observe the kids is between 5:00pm-5:30pm when they are usually in their free time sharing in the main rooms and playground. At this time kids are getting picked up by their parents to go home. Interaction on base with friends in an (American context). Sometimes in the late afternoon on weekdays and during the weekends, the participants meet with friends in the base housing playgrounds to play and share. The observation format has a date, a space to write down the observation, word choice and body language communication (See Appendix B).

4.4.2 Semi-structured Interview

The second tool is a semi-structured interview that goes beyond the spontaneous exchange of views in everyday conversations. It is an interaction between an interviewer and a respondent in which the interviewer has a general plan of inquiry including a set of topics to be discussed in depth Babbie, (2016., as cited in Oplatka, 2018).

A semi-structured interview consists of questions that are not necessarily required to be posed in a specific sequence. Additionally, like any interaction between individuals, there is a potential for misunderstanding, misjudgement, and unforeseen events during the interview,

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alongside an opportunity to discover new insights, emotions, and experiences (Schostack, 2006).

This tool is convenient for the researcher to use since the participants are of different ages and their answers and point of view may vary. The interview has open questions and is about the experiences the kids will have in the museum and restaurant. It took around 10 minutes per participant to complete the interview. It was concluded in two weekends after each event (See Appendix C) the questions were about their choices and point of view in the museum and the restaurant.

4.4.3 Drawing and Oral-narrative description

The third tool to collect data from young learners is drawing and oral-narrative description. They are essential tools for gaining insights into the perspectives and experiences of young individuals. This involves actively observing and listening to children as they engage in drawing, while also paying close attention to the narratives and interpretations they provide (Einarsdottir et al., 2009).

According to Einarsdottir, the narration accompanying children's drawing process documents the evolution of their meaning-making. Both the narration and the drawing offer valuable insights into children's perspectives and comprehension.

Therefore, it is crucial for researchers to actively engage in conversations with children or, at the very least, be aware of this process to understand the intentions behind children's drawings. In this manner, the utilization of drawings as a research method has proven to be an exceptionally valuable tool for engaging children in discussions about challenging and sensitive topics, even when the reasons for the children's concerns were diverse.

For this reason, the use of drawing as a method is frequently complemented by additional elaboration from the children, either in written or oral form. This approach provides children with an

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opportunity to connect with what they depicted and provide additional insights (Driessnack & Furukawa, 2012, as cite in Søndergaard & Reventlow, 2019). This method facilitates the recollection of specific experiences or emotions by the participants, offering a distinct perspective on the interpretations and meanings they attribute to the situations.

The tool used to collect information was 4 large card stock for each participant, 1 for each context (school, home, base) and 1 card to document the children oral narrative about their drawing (See Appendix D). The participant shared about their drawing and the researcher collected the information in the 4th card.

The introduction to the activity used by the researcher was “I want to understand what you do when you are at school, home, on base (playground-social event)?” It took around 15 minutes to the older participant to complete the 3 drawings and describing them. The second participant took 25 minutes in completing all drawings. The youngest participant had 30 minutes to complete the drawings as well.

5. Data Analysis and Discussion

This section outlines the tools and methodologies employed in the research, along with their analysis. The information gathered using tools such as drawing oral narratives, interviews, and observations underwent subsequent processes. After the completion of data collection, the interview data was transcribed. To systematically organize the information, an Excel sheet was created, allocating a separate column for each instrument.

The analysis of the information was then conducted using grounded theory. The observation was done on each setting (home, school, and on base) to get information about language dynamics, gender, and culture.

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Additionally, a drawing was made by the participants sharing their perspective and experience about those places. The primary method of data collection was direct observation, aligning with McLeod's recommendation. Research field notes, capturing gender-related behaviors, communication patterns, and language development in the multicultural context, were written down during six observations across different contexts—school, home, and on base.

The semi-structured interviews, the second tool, involved open-ended questions exploring students' experiences in the museum and restaurant. The interviews, lasting around 10 minutes per participant, were conducted after each event. The third tool involved drawing and oral-narrative description, recognized as crucial for understanding young learners' perspectives. This method included observing and listening to children as they engaged in drawing and collecting oral narratives to comprehend the intentions behind their depictions. The activity utilized four large cards for each participant, focusing on different contexts (school, home, base), and an additional card for oral narratives.

The researcher facilitated discussions about the drawings, providing participants an opportunity to share insights, taking approximately 15 minutes for the older participant and 20-30 minutes for the younger ones.

The triangulation of these tools—direct observation, semi-structured interviews, and drawing with oral narratives—ensured a comprehensive exploration of students' experiences and perspectives, contributing to a nuanced understanding of the research objectives.

5.1 Grounded Theory

This study employed grounded theory as its analytical approach. Bluff, (2005) defines Grounded theory as a methodology designed to delve deep into a phenomenon, facilitating a

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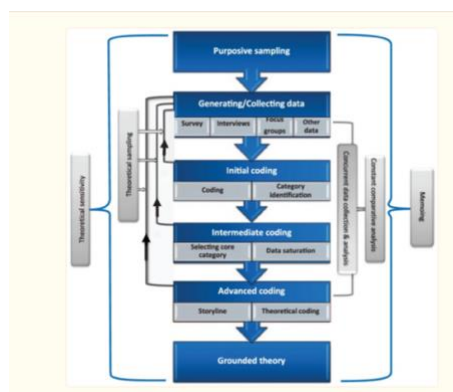
comprehensive understanding of the perspective or situation from an insider's viewpoint. The methodology involves grounding theories in observed meanings derived from the data, offering detailed descriptions and contributions to the understanding of the study.

It is particularly valuable for this research since it provides flexibility in examining participants' experiences. The constant comparative analysis, integral to Grounded Theory, is a systematic analytical approach employed for coding and developing categories in research (Chun et al., 2019). This method initiates with the first batch of generated or collected data and permeates the entire research process.

5.1.1 Grounded Theory process

Figure 1

Grounded theory design framework



Note. Taken from (Chun et al., 2019). Grounded theory research: A design framework for novice researchers. SAGE Open Medicine, 7, 2050312118822927.

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6318722/>

This method initiates with the first batch of generated or collected data and permeates the entire research process, as illustrated in Figure 1. Incidents within the data are identified and coded. The initial phase involves comparing incidents within each code. Subsequently, these initial codes

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are compared with others and further consolidated into categories. This iterative process entails the comparison of incidents within a category, both with previous incidents and those in different categories. Future codes are also compared, and categories are scrutinized against other categories.

The analysis extends to comparing new data with information obtained in earlier stages of analysis. This cyclic process incorporates inductive, deductive, and abductive reasoning, providing a comprehensive approach to data analysis. In the context of my research, understanding and employing constant comparative analysis can enhance the systematic examination of incidents, codes, and categories, thereby contributing to the nuanced interpretation of findings.

5.1.2 Triangulation

In the research, a method called triangulation was used to make sure the findings were strong and reliable. This means we checked and compared the information from the different tools used, like observing, interviewing, and drawing. By doing this, a more complete and trustworthy understanding of the study was ensured, making the conclusions more solid.

5.2 Findings

In this section, we delve into the findings obtained through a thorough analysis of the collected information using grounded theory and triangulation analysis. The results are categorized into three distinct categories, each shedding light on essential aspects uncovered during the research process.

5.2.1 Category 1 Language Dynamics in a Multicultural context

The first category explores how language works in different settings within a multicultural context. I observed participants during activities at home like video calls with their Hispanic family. I found that Participants are good at switching between Spanish, English, and Japanese language. They

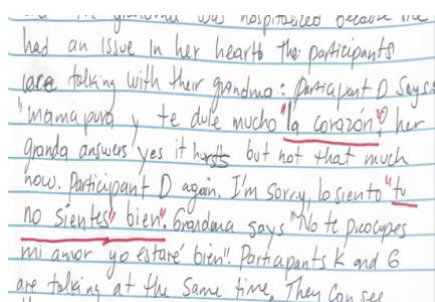
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mostly prefer using English for communication. Even if the oldest participant is better in Spanish, everyone understands each other, showing that they can get their message across even with some language mistakes.

Participant D knows more Spanish because she spent a lot of time with her grandmother whos is a native Spanish speaker. Even if she mixes up some words, like articles, everyone still understands her in the following figure, (2). Participant D seems to be making a few language mistakes in the provided statement: **Expression:** The participant uses the phrase "y te duele mucho la corazón," which translates to "and your heart hurts a lot." The correct phrase might be "¿y te duele mucho el corazón?" This correction ensures proper grammar and usage. **Word Choice:** Instead of saying "tú no sientes bien," which translates to "you don't feel good," a more natural expression might be "no te sientes bien."

Figure 2

Communication success despite deviations from strict grammatical norms



Note. This figure illustrates instances where individuals, despite making grammar mistakes, successfully communicated and understood each other. It emphasizes the idea that effective communication goes beyond linguistic perfection and that the primary goal is mutual understanding. The examples demonstrate that language variations, including grammar mistakes, do not hinder meaningful communication. Instead, they contribute to the richness and adaptability of language in diverse contexts.

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This figure highlights the resilience and flexibility of communication, showing that, in real-life situations, the essence lies in the exchange of ideas rather than adhering strictly to grammatical rules.

Another participant, K, does not talk as much but is good at using family terms (tio, tia, primo, abuela, etc), during interactions. It raises questions about the role of family dynamics and the influence of diverse language exposures in shaping language competencies. The participant's adept use of family-related terms may underscore the importance of cultural and familial connections in language development.

When talking to family over the phone, they try to use Spanish and make it fun by using different apps with interactive funny faces and effects. They also have creative ways to keep the conversation going, even when it is not flowing smoothly some activities, they do to keep engaged during the conversation are, playing a song or telling a joke.

Figure 3

Enhancing Conversations: Interactive Fun with Family



Note. This figure captures a delightful moment of the participant and his grandma using the Facebook Messenger app adorned with an interactive mask. The conversation is not only about maintaining a connection but also infusing creativity and amusement.

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When conversing with family over the phone, the participants consciously use Spanish and incorporate various apps with interactive funny faces and effects to add an element of joy. Their creative strategies extend to engaging activities like playing a song or telling a joke.

For the mother is very important to ensure that the conversation remains lively and enjoyable, even during moments that may not flow smoothly she wants to keep the participants growing their love for her native language (Spanish). This innovative approach also demonstrates their commitment to keeping family interactions vibrant and engaging.

This flexibility in using different languages highlights their adaptability in a multicultural environment. The nightly video calls with the mother's Hispanic, Spanish-speaking family serve as a unique window into the broader family dynamics. These interactions offer a glimpse into the extended family, providing a comprehensive view of cultural nuances and potentially reinforcing or challenging their Spanish knowledge and communication skills within this larger familial context.

A notable aspect of these interactions is the participants' inclination to converse with Tio Camilo, who is fluent in English. Given that the rest of the family communicates primarily in

Spanish, Tio Camilo becomes a favored communication partner due to his English proficiency. This choice sheds light on the children's preferred mode of interaction and communication – English. It signifies a distinct language preference that shapes their engagement during these family calls.

Participant G, being the youngest, adds a charming element to these interactions by endearingly referring to Spanish as "*Englishsaurus*." Her playful use of language, such as saying, "*Yia Yia, stop talking Englishsaurus*," occurs notably when her grandmother converses rapidly in

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Spanish. This linguistic playfulness reflects the children's engagement and adaptation to the multilingual environment, creating a language dynamic within the family context.

In this situation, using similar words in both languages becomes an important way of talking to each other. These words, called cognates, have the same or similar meanings in both English and Spanish. They act like a bridge, helping the kids who speak English and their family members who speak Spanish understand each other better. Relying on cognates shows how flexible and creative language can be, allowing everyone to communicate well even when speaking different languages. Whether they're cooking, playing, or dancing at home, the kids use various signals like cognates, body language, and sometimes translations to talk, keep conversations going, and get things done.

At school, the oldest participant, D, who is 8 years old, is really good at Japanese. She not only talks easily with friends and teachers but also handles more complicated conversations well. She follows the expected behavior for a girl her age in Japanese culture, showing she's comfortable using language in different ways at school.

In a specific observation involving Participant D, her body language consistently complemented her verbal communication during conversations. Notably, she actively sought clarification from peers and school staff when faced with challenges in understanding, highlighting a proactive approach to effective communication. For instance, she engaged in a conversation with a friend, using her notebook to help explain a particular phrase and even writing it in kanji. Despite encountering linguistic hurdles, she seamlessly continued the conversation in a normal manner.

This observation emphasizes the significant role Participant D plays in contributing to her school community. Her ability to successfully complete tasks underscore the importance of effective communication, prioritizing comprehension, and interaction over rigid adherence to grammar rules.

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Participant D's linguistic versatility and proactive communication approach contribute to a more inclusive and dynamic learning environment within the school setting.

At school, participant K, a first-grade male, exhibits a good use of Japanese in his conversations with peers, demonstrating effective communication skills characterized by concise questions and adept non-verbal expressions. Notably, his leadership role in activities such as Lego construction and building with recycling materials highlights a comprehensive language development that extends beyond verbal communication.

In contrast, participant G, a vibrant 4-year-old, actively engages in Japanese communication while interacting with her classmates. Having immersed herself in the Japanese culture from an early age, participant G, exhibits a great proficiency in the language. Her remarkable linguistic fluency extends beyond conventional language use, effortlessly incorporating cognates and inventing new words as she refers to items in the playground using multiple languages.

Participant G emerged as a social butterfly during the observation, engaging in conversations with many people. What set her apart was her lack of inhibition in communication; she demonstrated a remarkable comfort level in expressing herself. It was as if she possessed a "global language," effortlessly navigating linguistic diversity with finesse.

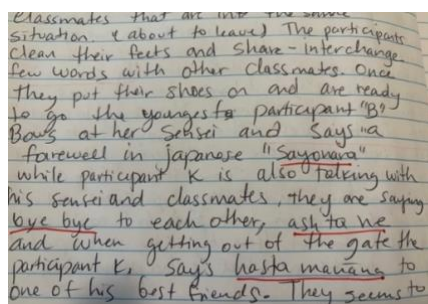
An intriguing observation during this period was the participants' tendency to use a mix of words from all languages as they say goodbye to their friends, uttering farewells like "*bye*," "*see you tomorrow*," "*sayonara*," "*ashta ne*," and "*hasta mañana*." This phenomenon emphasizes the participants' fluidity in language usage, seamlessly navigating between different linguistic contexts throughout their daily routines. The incorporation of diverse language elements adds richness to their

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communicative repertoire, highlighting a dynamic linguistic environment within the school setting and beyond.

Figure 4

Language Blend: Saying Goodbye in Many Ways



Classmates that are into the same situation & about to leave. The participants clean their feet and share-interchange few words with other classmates. Once they put their shoes on and are ready to go the youngest participant "Bo" bows at her sensei and says "a farewell in Japanese "sayonara" while participant K is also talking with his sensei and classmates, they are saying bye bye to each other, ashta ne and when getting out of the gate the participant K, says hasta mañana to one of his best friends. They seems to

Note. In this picture of the field note journal, notice how the participants mix different words from their languages to say goodbye. It's like creating a unique language melody with phrases like "bye," "see you tomorrow," "sayonara," "ashta ne," and "hasta mañana." This shows how easily they switch between languages, making their daily routines more interesting with a mix of words from different languages.

In the restaurant setting, participant D displays cultural awareness by reminding everyone about Japanese table-eating sitting and manners and talking with her family using Japanese term about food.

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Figure 5

Participant D, reminds her siblings about cultural manners “Japanese sitting at the table”



(5a)



(5b)

Note. Figs 5a and 5b illustrates participant D's cultural awareness during a restaurant setting. She reminds her siblings about Japanese cultural manners, specifically the traditional way of sitting at the table. This involves using Japanese terms related to food, showcasing her understanding and adherence to cultural norms during the dining experience.

Participant K takes a more reserved approach, using the menu for non-verbal communication and just pointing at the picture and saying “noodles”, he also displayed a focus on family interaction. The use of the menu as a communication aid may indicate a level of comfort with non-verbal expression, showcasing a diverse range of communication strategies in different social contexts.

Participant G, adeptly utilizes visual aids like pictures to express her culinary preferences, demonstrating linguistic versatility. She talked to the waitress in English and Japanese “Can I have a spoon? *arigatō* (ありがとう, thank you)”.

During the museum visit, the participants interacted with other local kids. Here the participants communicate in the Japanese language using courtesy words like “let’s take turns! *junban ne* (順番ね)!, *arigatō* (ありがとう, thank you) and *dōzo* (どうぞ, please go

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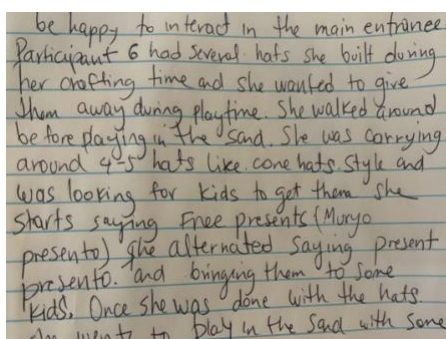
ahead). The language dynamics in this context highlight the children's adaptability and diverse ways of expressing themselves.

In summary, the study reveals a rich tapestry of language use among the participants. D, K, and G showcasing not only proficiency in different languages but also an adaptability that allows them to navigate various contexts with ease. The observations provide valuable insights into their active communication styles, contributing to a deeper understanding of their linguistic development within multicultural environments.

The participants' engagement at school unfolds as a vibrant and dynamic interaction, displaying a seamless fusion of languages. A noteworthy aspect is the adept use of cognates, where words like "present" in English find an echo in Japanese as "presento," highlighting the participants' linguistic flexibility. In this educational setting, a fascinating interplay of languages is observed. American expressions, such as the command "see you tomorrow," effortlessly weave into the participants' communication.

Figure 6

Bridging Languages: The Gift of Cognates



be happy to interact in the main entrance.
Participant 6 had several hats she built during
her crafting time and she wanted to give
them away during playtime. She walked around
before playing in the sand. She was carrying
around 4-5 hats like cone hats style and
was looking for kids to get them. She
starts saying Free presents (Muryo
presento) she alternated saying present
presento. and bringing them to some
kids. Once she was done with the hats
she went to play in the sand with some

Note. While making hats at school, participant B effortlessly used the word "presento" in Japanese, a cognate for "present" in English. This demonstrates how easily she connects similar words in different languages.

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This linguistic cross-pollination reflects not only the participants' linguistic dexterity but also their assimilation of diverse cultural expressions within the school environment.

Participant K was playing with a sword he built during dismissal time. There were more classmates playing with him and he was saying "gusutumomimo" everytime he touches his friends with the sword. The researcher asked him what was the meaning of that word and he said it was the Japanese word for stabbing. Which in reality the correct word is *sasu* (刺す)

The observation shows how the participants easily use both English and Japanese, blending expressions from both languages. This detailed look at language dynamics in school highlights how adaptable the participants are and the diverse linguistic influences in their multicultural learning environment.

While participant D. Diligently tries to employ precise grammatical expressions, a distinctive contrast emerges in the communication styles of participants K and G. Both exhibit a delightful inclination toward inventive language, fabricating words like "gusutumomimo" or opting for creative descriptors when the exact term eludes them, like saying "that thinging." This perceptive analysis unveils a spectrum of responses, offering valuable glimpses into the developmental intricacies influencing their verbal expressions.

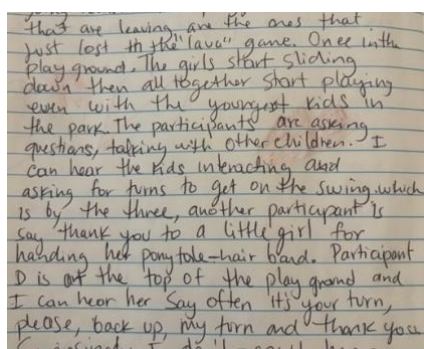
The American setting on base introduces a distinct context for social interactions, where cultural and societal norms may differ from those in the Japanese and Spanish settings. Here the

participants' communication is more fluent, and all participants use a wide range of vocabulary in English. Their language use during playtime is marked by the frequent use of courtesy words such as *"please" and "thank you,"* coupled with expressions like *"it's your turn" and "my turn,"* demonstrating an incorporation of both politeness conventions and game-specific vocabulary.

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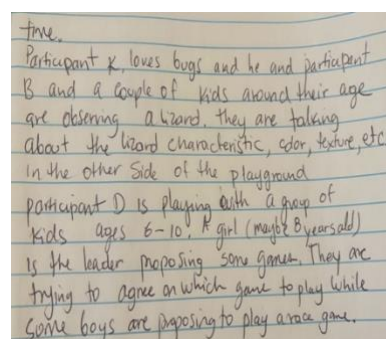
Figure 7

Playful Conversations on the American Base



that are leaving are the ones that just lost to the "lava" game. Once in the playground, the girls start sliding down then all together start playing even with the youngest kids in the park. The participants are asking questions, talking with other children. I can hear the kids interacting and asking for turns to get on the swing, which is by the three, another participant is say thank you to a little girl for holding her ponytail-hair bands. Participant D is at the top of the playground and I can hear her say often "it's your turn, please, back up, my turn and thank you. Sorry, I don't - can't hear

(7a)



turn. Participant X loves bugs and he and participant B and a couple of kids around their age are observing a lizard. They are talking about the lizard characteristic, color, texture, etc. In the other side of the playground participant D is playing with a group of kids ages 6-10, a girl (maybe 8 years old) is the leader proposing some games. They are trying to agree on which game to play while some boys are proposing to play a new game.

(7b)

Note. In Figs, (7a) (7b) observe how the participants interact in the American base setting, engaging in activities like playing "lava" and enjoying the playground. Here, their communication flows more effortlessly, with everyone using a variety of English vocabulary. The courtesy words they sprinkle in, like "please" and "thank you," along with phrases like "it's your turn" and "my turn," are showcasing their blend of politeness and game-specific language during playtime.

Here, participants effortlessly handle multiple conversations at the same time, a shift from the more focused discussions observed in other settings. This adaptability highlights their comfort in different linguistic environments and demonstrates a consistent behavioral pattern across social contexts. The use of English is more informal, showcasing their fluency and ease in navigating complex interactions.

The data collected in this context illuminates the participants' adeptness in navigating and communicating effectively within a diverse space, emphasizing the dynamic nature of their language use. Across all three contexts, the participants consistently opt for English as their primary language

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of communication, with exceptions when engaging with local Japanese or Spanish speakers. This language selection further underscores their adaptability and strategic language use based on the specific linguistic needs of their audience.

5.2.2 Category 2 Gender Interactions Across Multicultural Contexts:

The intentional integration of Hispanic culture within the home setting provides a unique lens through which we can explore the portrayal and negotiation of traditional gender roles. This specific cultural context invites an examination of how cultural traditions and contemporary perspectives intertwine, influencing the participants' evolving understanding of gender dynamics. It's noteworthy that most online interactions within the family are initiated by females, shaping the virtual landscape where discussions predominantly revolve around daily routines.

When males, such as uncles and cousins, engage online, the conversations often pivot towards recreational topics like motorbikes and leisure activities.

In this observation, the two younger participants enthusiastically engaged with their uncle. Participant K exclaimed, "Tio, quiero tu moto!" (Uncle, I want your motorbike), and immediately, participant G chimed in, saying, "¡Yo también quiero!" (I want it too!). Their interest seemed to gravitate towards recreational activities.

In contrast, the oldest participant, D, engaged in a different set of topics, focusing on aspects of life, health, and nutrition. In contrast, interactions with female family members, including grandma, great-grandmother, and aunties, tend to center around essential aspects of daily life, reflecting a distinctive gendered pattern in the participants' online engagements within the Hispanic cultural context.

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Observations in the school setting offer valuable insights into gender dynamics influenced by cultural expectations. Adherence to traditional gender roles prevails, reflecting societal expectations within the school environment. This context emphasizes the impact of cultural settings on shaping participants' behaviors and interactions, particularly in the realm of gender roles.

During a restaurant outing, participant D, the eldest participant, exhibited cultural awareness by reminding everyone about behavior in public. Additionally, she effectively communicated with the staff while placing food orders, showcasing her ability to navigate social situations beyond the school environment. This observation provides valuable insights into D's leadership qualities and cultural sensitivity, shedding light on the gender dynamics within the context of dining etiquette.

Participant K, actively engages with his female peers during dismissal, bringing enthusiasm to collaborative Lego-building sessions, crafts and participating in ball games, often drawing in other boys. Beyond that, he takes delight in exploring the monkey bars and the school playground. What sets participant K apart is his gentle approach towards his peers, especially allowing the girls to take the lead in various games, he is usually called “sweet boy”. Interestingly, his leadership skills become evident when he's involved in activities like Lego construction and crafting with recycled materials. Here, he showcases his creativity by fashioning items like dinosaurs, hats, swords, and guns.

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Figure 8

K's Fun School Adventures



Note. In figure 8 participant K is playing and working together with his friends at school. He's called "sweet boy" because he's kind and lets girls lead in games. K also enjoys making cool things like dinosaurs and hats during crafts time. He's a friendly and creative classmate!

In the museum setting where the children actively engaged in a professional activity, a notable observation unfolded regarding the selection of costumes. Despite the costumes being traditionally divided by genders, the youngest participant B, demonstrated an interesting departure from this norm. She was observed choosing costumes from the "boy" section, while the eldest participant explored the offerings in the "girl" section to find her preferred attire.

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Figure 9

Breaking Costume Traditions



Note. Participant G challenges costume norms! Youngest participant B chooses from the "boy" section, while the eldest explores the "girl" section. They show that costumes are for everyone, no matter the traditional labels.

All participants chose professions based on personal interests rather than gender stereotypes.

Participant D wanted to be a doctor, participant G opted for a firefighter, and participant K aspired to be a pilot.

Figure 10

Children's Profession Choices: Breaking Gender Stereotypes

Sept 10, 17, 2022	Role play activity: (professions) During this activity we would be able to observe the participants through role playing, they can interact freely, and we would be able to see their choices, gestures, language and how it is related to gender.	What professions did the participants choose depending on their gender? They didn't look at professions as a fact of gender. Ask them why they chose that profession or that outfit? They didn't make distinction on the gender of the professions, they looked more about what profession they preferred.	Why did you choose this profession? D: "I choose to be a doctor because when I grow up I want to be a doctor and help people and also be healthy." G: Firefighter because I like yellow and I'm strong." K: "Pilot: because I like planes and helicopters. I want to be a pilot. He also chose the police costume because he likes the dress."
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Note. The semi-structured interview captured the participants' motivations for selecting specific costumes based on their interests. All three participants (D, G, and K) chose professions aligned with personal passions, challenging traditional gender stereotypes.

Interview Excerpts:

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Question: Why did you choose this profession?

Responses:

- **D:** "I chose to be a doctor because when I grow up, I want to help people and be healthy."
- **G:** "Firefighter because I like yellow, and I'm strong."
- **K:** "Pilot because I like planes and helicopters. I want to be a pilot." (He also chose the police costume because he likes the dress.)

Profession Choices and Gender Neutrality:

Participants did not associate professions with gender; they focused on personal preferences when making their choices.

Interview Questions and Responses Summary

Question: Why did you choose that profession or outfit?

Responses: They did not consider gender distinctions; their choices were based on personal preferences and aspirations for the future.

Role Play Activity (Professions):

This activity provided an opportunity to observe participants engaging in role-playing. Their interactions, choices, gestures, and language were explored to understand how they relate to gender stereotypes. The participants freely expressed themselves, challenging traditional norms associated with specific professions.

The participants played different roles but interacted during the museum activity, sometimes together and sometimes exploring independently. This deviation from the gender-assigned divisions hinted at the children's independent choices and a willingness to challenge stereotypical expectations.

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The museum context serves as a rich tapestry for unraveling the intricate dynamics of gender interactions among participants, offering a nuanced perspective on their perceptions and behaviors. In this setting, participants boldly challenge conventional gender norms by autonomously selecting costumes, irrespective of traditional gender classifications.

This courageous departure signals a notable shift, showcasing children's inclination toward a more progressive outlook that breaks free from traditional expectations and gender norms.

The data collected within this specific museum context plays a pivotal role in enriching our understanding of how cultural settings influence participants' attitudes and behaviors concerning gender. It serves as a valuable lens through which we gain insights into the dynamic relationship between cultural influences and the evolving perspectives of the participants. This comprehensive exploration contributes to a deeper understanding of the intricate ways in which cultural contexts shape their attitudes and behaviors related to gender.

The participants, in their autonomous costume choices, become agents of change, challenging established norms and embracing a more inclusive and progressive stance. This observation not only highlights their individuality but also emphasizes the impact of cultural contexts on shaping their evolving perceptions of gender roles. As they navigate the museum space, the participants showcase a dynamic and evolving relationship with gender expectations, creating a narrative that transcends traditional boundaries.

In summary, the museum context stands as a unique arena where the participants actively contribute to redefining gender interactions. Their bold choices and progressive outlook provide valuable insights into the malleability of gender norms within diverse cultural settings.

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This study opens up avenues for further exploration into the complex interplay between cultural influences and the participants' evolving attitudes and behaviors related to gender, fostering a deeper comprehension of these intricate dynamics. Diverging from the restaurant setting where the eldest participant takes on an advisory role concerning manners within the family, the dynamics in the Japanese customs play a crucial role in shaping roles related to gender and family.

In Japanese traditions, each family member has a designated order to be seated at the table and to express their thoughts. This practice aligns with the behavior observed in the oldest participant, D, who actively engages with other participants and her family following these established customs.

The Observations on base during in-play interactions showed us girls tended to take on leadership roles in larger groups, while boys adopted more passive roles or appeared less attentive. In smaller groups with a higher male presence, boys were observed to be more engaged and active in their communication. It also suggests that societal norms and expectations regarding gender roles extend into play activities, influencing the dynamics of group interactions. Both boys and girls seem to enjoy playing equally with the girls being more outgoing and boys more reserved.

This observation may reflect broader cultural attitudes prevalent in the American community on base. Interactions with American peers on base may contribute to shaping the participants' understanding of gender roles in this specific context. Exposure to these dynamics may either reinforce or challenge the stereotypes present in the larger community. Participants are exposed to children with a broader definition of gender. This observation also underscores the dynamic nature of children's engagement, highlighting the impact of group size and composition on their communication styles and roles during play.

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5.2.3 Category 3 Multilingual Identity

In exploring the Multicultural Identity Construction category, participants showcase a good integration of their multilingual abilities into the fabric of their evolving identities. The data collected offers a diverse array of experiences, explaining how participants adeptly navigate linguistic diversity within their multicultural environments at home, school, and the base.

The participants seamlessly switch between Spanish, Japanese, and English during nightly video calls with family and at home, showcasing a high degree of linguistic flexibility.

This effortless language switching contributes significantly to the formation of a multicultural identity, emphasizing the participants' nuanced development of their multilingual capabilities. The understanding that there are various ways to express feelings and needs is evident, with participants utilizing body language and visual aids to support their communication across all scenarios.

At school and during local interactions at the restaurant and museum. Participants demonstrate language adaptability by proficiently using Japanese and incorporating cultural practices like saying "itadakimasu." This data underscores the intricate relationship between language and cultural identity, illustrating how participants navigate cultural expectations through their linguistic expressions. Their ease in using a rich vocabulary in different languages further contributes to the fusion of their multilingual identity. At the same time it was interesting to see the participants play with global expressions as "bye or see you later" In the same context a semi-structured interview was applied.

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Figure 11

Exploring Multilingual Identity in School Play Preferences

		food was delicious.	green and blue."
			What girls play at school?
			D: " babanuki:
			Play with cars,
			naotobi: Jump rope,
			and play house. "
			G: "dinosaurs"
			K: " blocks! "
			What boys play at school?
			D: "Boys and girls play the same thing"
			G: "blocks"
			K: "Blocks, looking for bugs."

Note. Fig 11 an excerpt from the semi-structured interview we can observe how is the exploration of multilingual identity within the context of school play, participants shared their preferences. Shedding light on linguistic variations, gender inclusivity, cultural influences, and harmonious multilingual interactions.

Interview Excerpts:

Question: What girls play at school?

Responses:

D: " babanuki: Play with cars, naotobi: Jump rope, and play house "

G: "dinosaurs"

K: " blocks! "

What boys play at school?

Responses:

D: "Boys and girls play the same thing"

G: "blocks"

K: "Blocks, looking for bugs."

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Responses summary

Play Preferences:

- **D's Multilingual Play:** D effortlessly integrated Japanese terms like "babanuki" and "naotobi" into her response, unveiling a rich linguistic identity associated with specific play activities.
- **G's Individual Expression:** G, opting for "dinosaurs," provided a unique linguistic imprint, showcasing how personal preferences intertwine with language expression.
- **K's Bilingual Vocabulary:** K, choosing "blocks," demonstrated an ease in navigating multilingual spaces by expressing a commonly shared play activity in English.

Breaking Gender Stereotypes:

- **D's Inclusive Stance:** D boldly declared that boys and girls play the same things, challenging gender stereotypes and fostering inclusivity in play preferences.
- **G's Gender-Neutral Choice:** G's preference for "blocks" echoed a non-gendered play activity, contributing to dismantling traditional gender norms associated with specific toys.
- **K's Adventurous Twist:** K's interest in "looking for bugs" transcended gender associations, promoting a diverse and adventurous approach to play.

Cultural Affiliation and Inclusivity:

- **D's Cultural Elements:** D introduced Japanese play concepts, adding a cultural layer to her identity and emphasizing the interplay between language and cultural influences.
- **G's Universally Understood Response:** G's mention of "blocks" presented a neutral and universally understood term, contributing to an inclusive multilingual play environment.
- **K's Multilingual Harmony:** K's choice of "blocks" echoed D's preference, illustrating a harmonious multilingual space where shared play activities bridge language differences.

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This exploration highlighted the participants' ability to navigate a multilingual identity seamlessly, challenge stereotypes, and foster inclusivity through shared play preferences at school. The intertwining of language, culture, and individual expression illuminated the rich tapestry of their multilingual identities.

When out in town, especially sharing in the local community, the oldest participant, D, recognizes the importance of communicating with courtesy and employing proper words for a successful communicative experience. This highlights the participants' awareness of cultural nuances and the significance of respectful communication in diverse settings.

The drawing and narrative exercises reveal insightful aspects of multicultural identity construction. Participant G's drawings emphasize unity across different settings, seamlessly integrating daily activities without separation. In contrast, the oldest participant portrays a versatile self-representation across various contexts. Participant K's meticulous approach, focusing on details like different hairstyles, showcases his ability to articulate distinct aspects within each context, adding depth to his visual narratives.

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Figure 12

Exploring Multilingual Identity Through Participant Narratives



Note. Participant K's drawings and narratives vividly capture his dynamic engagement across various contexts—school, home, and on base. The drawings reflect his active involvement in activities such as hide and seek at school, playing with sisters on the trampoline at home, and enjoying the playground on base. Notably, his favorite toy, the baby T-rex, becomes a central element in his school narrative.

Participant K loves dinosaurs and can spend a good amount of time explaining about them. This toy also seems like a nice bridge to share with friends. K's verbal descriptions add depth to his drawings, emphasizing the joy of playing and the uniqueness of each setting. The figure highlights the participant's expressive representation of his multicultural experiences through visual storytelling.

Participant K's narratives provide a compelling glimpse into the intricate tapestry of his multilingual identity.

Language Variation:

At School: K mentions playing Legos, a universally understood term, and expresses his fondness for the park. His narration seamlessly incorporates English, showcasing its role in his school experiences.

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At Home: Describing his sisters' different hair types involves language nuances to express diversity, revealing how language is intricately tied to familial and personal identity.

On Base: K's remark about drawing many kids and waiting turns for the slide reflects his awareness of language etiquettes, highlighting a blend of communication skills in a multicultural setting.

Code-Switching Dynamics:

At School: While drawing, K effortlessly transitions between play-related activities, reflecting a natural code-switching pattern as he navigates diverse social scenarios.

At Home: The linguistic code switches to Spanish as he describes trampoline play, emphasizing shared experiences and familial connections in his mother tongue.

On Base: K's description of the playground includes an intention to draw people and waiting for turns—a demonstration of code-switching within the context of social interactions.

Cultural Sensitivity and Inclusion:

At School: The mention of playing with a dinosaur toy might signify an appreciation for diverse cultural elements, possibly influenced by educational activities that promote cultural sensitivity.

At Home: K's acknowledgment of different hairstyles among siblings reflects cultural awareness within the family context, suggesting a celebration of diversity at a personal level.

On Base: Expressing the need to draw people and waiting turns implies a cultural understanding of social dynamics and a sense of inclusion within a diverse group of kids.

Expressive Multicultural Narratives:

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Across Contexts: K's narratives weave a cohesive story across school, home, and on base, reflecting a rich and expressive multilingual identity that seamlessly integrates into various cultural and linguistic landscapes.

This analysis underscores the intricate interplay between language, culture, and identity, showcasing the participant's ability to navigate and express himself in a multilingual environment. The depicted narratives from Participants D, B, and K highlight their multicultural experiences across different contexts—home, school, and on base. Each participant's unique expression through drawing and storytelling provides valuable insights into the complexity of their identity construction.

Notably, Participant K emphasizes recreational activities, Participant B intricately describes her surroundings. She draws all the context in the same card. She did not separate each context. Instead, she described her home, school, the social place on base and some interactions. Participant D blends familial and social experiences.

The tool's effectiveness in capturing nuanced perspectives is evident, allowing participants to articulate specific emotions and meanings associated with each context. The figure sheds light on the richness of multicultural identity conveyed through visual narratives.

In essence, this category provides a comprehensive understanding of how participants actively shape their evolving identities through the intricate interplay of language, culture, and engagement with diverse environments. The participants' adeptness in navigating linguistic and cultural diversity underscores the richness of their multicultural identity.

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Figure 13

Key Aspects Across Categories

Aspect	Description
Language Dynamics in a Multicultural Context	Participants display proficiency in Spanish, English, and Japanese, showcasing adaptability in communication. Despite variations in language skills, effective communication prevails, emphasizing mutual understanding over strict grammatical norms. Here we can observe the participants communicating using body language and using different aids to express themselves.
Multilingual Identity Construction	Participants seamlessly switch between languages during nightly video calls, and other interactions demonstrating a high degree of linguistic flexibility. Their ability to express feelings and needs using various languages contributes to the formation of a multicultural identity.
Gender Interactions Across Multicultural Contexts	Cultural influences shape gender roles. While online interactions within the Hispanic family are initiated by females, conversations with males tend to revolve around recreational topics. Gender roles are also influenced by Japanese customs and societal norms on the American base.
Awareness of Cultural Nuances	Cultural awareness is evident in various settings. Participants display knowledge of Japanese table manners, and their costume choices challenge traditional gender norms. Their engagement reflects an understanding of cultural nuances and the importance of respectful communication.
Dynamic Language Use at School and on Base	At school, participants demonstrate proficiency in Japanese, and at the American base, they use English fluently. When interacting with their Hispanic family they use Spanish and English. Language selection is strategic, emphasizing adaptability based on the linguistic needs of the audience being English the main language used to communicate.
Multicultural Identity Formation	Drawing exercises provide insights into multicultural identity construction. Participants showcase unity and versatility in self-representation across different contexts, emphasizing the intricate interplay of language, culture, and engagement.

Note. The table synthesizes information across the categories, capturing the key related to language dynamics, multicultural identity construction, gender interactions, cultural awareness, language use at home, school and on the American base, and multicultural identity formation.

5.2.4 Relationship between your findings and the research question

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The findings of this research directly address the overarching research question shedding light on how three young learners manifest their multicultural identity through their use of the English language.

The findings provide detailed insights into how the three participants express their multicultural identity through language, thereby addressing the central research question. By examining the participants' speech patterns, communication styles, language choices, and vocabulary preferences, the study uncovers the intricate ways in which their multicultural identity is reflected in their English language usage. Through these analyses, the research illuminates the multifaceted nature of multicultural identity construction among young learners within a diverse linguistic environment.

5.2.5 Relationship between your findings and the literature review

The findings of the study are closely intertwined with the literature review, as they build upon and extend the theoretical framework established by the review. Here's how the findings relate to each of the pivotal concepts discussed in the literature review:

Culture: The findings of the study illuminate how cultural influences shape language use and identity formation among young learners in multicultural environments. By documenting participants' proficiency in multiple languages and their sensitivity to cultural nuances, the study provides empirical evidence that supports the theoretical discussions on the role of culture in shaping identity and language development.

Multiculturalism: The study's focus on young learners' experiences within a multicultural context aligns with the theoretical perspectives on multiculturalism discussed in the literature review. Through observations of participants' interactions and language choices, the study contributes to a

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deeper understanding of how multiculturalism manifests in everyday experiences, emphasizing the importance of fostering harmonious coexistence and appreciation of diverse cultures.

Gender: By exploring gender distinctions in language use and interactions among young learners, the study extends the theoretical discussions on gender dynamics presented in the literature review. The findings highlight how societal expectations and individual experiences shape gender identity and influence communication behaviors within multicultural settings, thereby enriching our understanding of the complex interplay between gender, language, and culture.

Language Development: The study's examination of participants' language choices, communication styles, and linguistic strategies contributes to the theoretical discourse on language development outlined in the literature review. Through empirical observations, the study provides a holistic insight into how children acquire and navigate language skills within multicultural environments, underscoring the dynamic nature of language as a cultural and social force.

Overall, the findings of the study complement and extend the theoretical framework established in the literature review, offering empirical evidence that deepens our understanding of the complex interactions between culture, multiculturalism, gender, and language development in young learners within diverse and culturally rich environments like Okinawa, Japan. By bridging theory and empirical research, the study contributes to a more comprehensive comprehension of how these interconnected elements shape children's experiences and identity construction processes.

6. Conclusions

In exploring the diverse facets of multicultural experiences, this research enlightens us into three compelling aspects: the language dynamics, gender interactions, and multicultural identity construction.

Regarding the Language dynamics in a multicultural context, the participants' language proficiency and adaptability across Spanish, English, and Japanese underscore their resilience in communication. The use of creative strategies, cognates, and cultural nuances reveals their flexibility and creativity. The study highlights the importance of effective communication over strict grammatical rules, showcasing the participants' ability to navigate and thrive in a multilingual environment, at home, in school and on base.

Gender interactions across multicultural context also became evident. Cultural influences play a significant role in shaping gender roles, as evidenced by online family, school and local interactions (diverse settings). The participants challenge traditional norms during a museum visit, emphasizing personal interests over gender-specific costumes. This research illuminates the participants' evolving perspectives on gender roles within multicultural contexts, offering insights into the intersectionality of culture and gender dynamics.

The phenomenon of multicultural identity construction was of big concern to the researcher. It can be said that the participants actively construct their identities through a complex interplay of language, culture, and engagement. Proficiency in multiple languages, code-switching, and cultural sensitivity showcases their adaptability to diverse environments. The narratives through drawings and storytelling provide nuanced perspectives on their multicultural experiences, emphasizing the

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richness and dynamism of their identity construction. This category provides valuable insights into how individuals navigate and express their multicultural identity across various contexts.

This study shows that language is more than just a tool; it's a dynamic and complex force that shapes how people interact, cultures develop, and identities form.

Language isn't just for communication; it's a dynamic force. Children effortlessly switch between languages, showing not just proficiency but also creativity. They use funny faces, interactive elements, and cognates, demonstrating how language evolves and adapts for expression, enjoyment, and connection. This flexibility supports the idea that language is alive, changing with different situations.

The study also reveals how language shapes cultural norms, especially regarding gender roles. Traditional roles are seen in some situations, but the study also shows how language challenges and redefines these norms. For example, in the museum, children choose costumes based on personal interests rather than conforming to traditional expectations. This dynamic relationship between language and gender interactions proves that language serves both to uphold and challenge societal norms.

The study explores how language shapes identities, emphasizing the richness of multicultural identity. Children seamlessly blend their multilingual abilities, showing that language isn't limited to one role. It actively contributes to forming individual identities. The children's skills in navigating linguistic diversity, being culturally aware, and communicating courteously highlight the many ways language influences and shapes identities within a multicultural environment. This study's results strongly support the idea that language isn't just a tool; it's a living, dynamic, and multifaceted force.

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It intricately shapes interactions, cultures, and identities in the diverse and vibrant tapestry of Okinawa, Japan.

Wardhaugh (2006a) contextualizes gender differentiation, suggesting that genders, like other groups, may display differences, making it challenging to predict individual characteristics. Our study echoes this perspective, noting that observations from various encounters may not consistently predict the traits of the next person encountered. Quoting Wardhaugh (2006b), our viewpoint aligns with the notion that language differences linked to gender may decrease over time, leading to greater language similarities between males and females.

Wardhaugh argues that men's and women's speech patterns differ due to societal upbringing and role distinctions. He suggests that reducing sexism in language may result from less sexist child-rearing practices and role differentiations. However, achieving complete neutrality in language may be unrealistic, as humans inherently use language to create distinctions among themselves.

The findings of this study contribute significantly to my growth as both a teacher and a researcher, offering profound insights into the intricate dynamics of language, gender, and multicultural identity among children in Okinawa, Japan. As a teacher, the study enriches my professional development by enhancing my understanding of the diverse ways in which language functions beyond mere communication.

It underscores that language is a dynamic force shaping interactions, cultures, and identities. This realization is pivotal for creating inclusive and culturally responsive learning environments. Moreover, the exploration of gender interactions sheds light on the multifaceted role of language in reinforcing or challenging societal norms.

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As a teacher, this prompts a reflection on the language used in the classroom and its potential impact on shaping students' perceptions of gender roles. The study encourages a meticulous approach to language use, recognizing its power to either perpetuate stereotypes or empower students to challenge normative expectations.

In terms of my role as a researcher, this study broadens my perspective on the interconnectedness of language, culture, and identity. It highlights the need for continued exploration into specific aspects, such as the impact of cultural variations on language development and the role of family dynamics in shaping multicultural identities. This insight fuels my motivation for further research endeavors that delve into these dimensions.

Furthermore, the study suggests that language is not confined to a single role but actively contributes to the formation of individual identities. This understanding encourages me to explore innovative teaching methodologies that leverage the dynamic nature of language for identity development. It prompts me to incorporate diverse linguistic elements and cultural references into educational practices, fostering a rich and inclusive learning experience.

Despite the careful consideration and application of multiple research methods, including observation, interviews, and drawing narratives, there are limitations to consider in this study. While these methods aimed to capture a comprehensive understanding of participants' interactions, activities, and language use within the multicultural context, certain challenges persisted. One notable limitation is the sample size.

The study involved a relatively small number of participants, which may impact the generalizability of the findings to a broader population. The small sample size limits the extent to which the results can be applied to other multicultural settings, and caution should be exercised in

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extrapolating the findings. regardless the close observation and documentation of participants' interactions, activities, and language use. The reliance on field notes for data collection, while capturing nuances of gender-related behaviors and language development, presents some challenges.

Firstly, communication patterns, a crucial aspect of the study, might not be exhaustively captured through observation alone. The intricacies of verbal exchanges, nuances in tone, and subtle cues in non-verbal communication may not be fully captured in field notes. These subtleties play a significant role in understanding the depth of language use and communication dynamics, and the study's reliance on field notes might not provide a complete picture.

Additionally, the study's focus on children's perspectives, while valuable, introduces a limitation in comprehensively understanding the broader contextual influences on their language use, gender perceptions, and identity formation. The perspectives of parents or caregivers, teachers, or other significant figures in the participants' lives were not directly incorporated, potentially limiting the holistic understanding of the observed behaviors.

Furthermore, the observational nature of the study inherently introduces a level of subjectivity. Interpretations drawn from observations are influenced by the researcher's lens, and potential biases might impact the accuracy of the findings. Direct participant interviews or surveys could have offered an opportunity to triangulate the data, providing a more well-rounded and validated understanding of the observed behaviors.

Lastly, the study's cross-sectional design, while offering valuable insights into a specific timeframe, limits the exploration of developmental trajectories. A longitudinal approach would have

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allowed for a more in-depth examination of how language, gender roles, and multicultural identities evolve over time, providing a richer understanding of the participants' developmental journeys.

These limitations underscore the need for cautious interpretation of the study's findings and suggest directions for future research to address these constraints, ultimately contributing to a more nuanced understanding of language dynamics, gender interactions, and multicultural identity formation within this context.

The study significantly contributes to the understanding of the object of study, which is the manifestation of multicultural identity through the use of the English language by young learners. Specifically, the contributions are as follows:

In-depth Exploration: The study offers an in-depth exploration of how multicultural identity is expressed through language use among young learners. By focusing on specific speech patterns, communication styles, language choices, and linguistic strategies, the research provides nuanced insights into the complex interplay between language and identity within multicultural contexts.

Contextual Understanding: Through observations and analyses conducted in multicultural environments, the study enhances our understanding of how cultural influences shape language use and identity formation among young learners. By considering the unique cultural dynamics at play, the research contributes to a more contextualized understanding of multicultural identity construction.

Gender Dynamics: The study delves into gender distinctions in language use within multicultural settings, shedding light on how cultural norms and expectations influence communication behaviors among young learners. By documenting the role of gender in language

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choices and interactions, the research adds a valuable dimension to our understanding of multicultural identity expression.

Practical Implications: The findings of the study have practical implications for educators, policymakers, and practitioners working in multicultural settings. By highlighting the importance of fostering inclusive language environments and promoting cultural sensitivity, the research offers insights that can inform curriculum development, language teaching strategies, and intercultural communication initiatives.

Overall, the study enriches the object of study by providing a comprehensive examination of how multicultural identity manifests through the use of the English language among young learners. Through its detailed analyses and contextual insights, the research advances our understanding of language and identity in multicultural contexts and offers practical implications for promoting cultural inclusivity and communication effectiveness.

The study suggests various areas for more research. It proposes looking into how media and digital platforms influence children's language use and cultural understanding. Long-term studies could help us understand how language skills, gender views, and multicultural identities change over time. Additionally, we could create and assess programs in schools to boost awareness of different cultures. This might involve training teachers in multicultural teaching methods to create more inclusive learning environments.

Essentially, this study inspires further exploration into the intricate relationship between culture, language, and how children's attitudes develop over time. It encourages a deeper understanding of these complex dynamics, especially regarding gender and cultural influences in educational settings. This study also gives us more questions to think about.

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We can study how phones and games affect how kids talk and understand different cultures. Also, we can look at how ideas about boys, girls, and cultures change as kids grow up. We might help teachers understand kids better. By teaching them new ways to understand kids from different cultures, we can make schools better. Listening to kids' stories about their day at school helps us understand them more. Trying new ideas in schools could make kids like and understand different cultures better. Special pedagogical training for teachers to learn new ways to make school enjoyable for all kids, no matter where they're from. This way, schools can be better for everyone.

Keep studying how cultures and being a boy or girl influence how kids behave and think in school. This helps us learn more about kids and cultures.

In essence, the study has ignited a passion for continuous exploration, encouraging me to delve deeper into the complexities of language and cultural dynamics within educational contexts. It serves as a catalyst for refining teaching practices and shaping future research inquiries that aim to contribute meaningfully to the field of multicultural education. This study opens avenues for further exploration into the complex interplay between cultural influences and the participants' evolving attitudes and behaviors related to gender, fostering a deeper comprehension of these intricate dynamics.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Parental Consent Form for Research Participation

Research Title: Exploring Multicultural Influences on Language, Gender, and Communication Development in Young Learners

Researcher: Angela Taylor

Dear Parent/Guardian,

I am writing to request your consent for your child to participate in a research study titled "Exploring Multicultural Influences on Language, Gender, and Communication Development in Young Learners." The purpose of this study is to investigate how multicultural influences shape language acquisition, communication development, and the manifestation of gender distinctions in young learners.

Researcher's Contact Information:

- Name: Angela Taylor
- Email: angela.m.taylor1107@gmail.com
- Phone: 09064847869

Research Objectives:

The general objective of this research is to identify the way three young learners manifest their multicultural identity in their use of the English language and to understand how gender and language are experienced and reflected in young children's daily interactions within a multicultural context.

Specific Objectives:

1. To explore and analyze the speech patterns and communication styles exhibited by young children in multicultural contexts, with a focus on gender distinctions.

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2. To investigate and document the language choices, vocabulary preferences, and linguistic strategies employed by young children in multicultural contexts, emphasizing their impact on communication and interactions.

Research Procedures:

Your child's participation in this research will involve:

- Observations of their daily interactions in the educational setting.
- Pictures and recordings
- Documenting language choices, vocabulary preferences, and linguistic strategies employed by your child.
- Semi structure interview

Risks and Benefits:

Participation in this research involves minimal risk, as the observations are non-intrusive and focus on natural interactions. The potential benefits include contributing valuable insights to our understanding of language development, communication, and the influence of multicultural contexts on young learners.

Confidentiality:

All information collected will be kept confidential. Participants will be assigned pseudonyms to ensure anonymity. Data will be securely stored and accessible only to the researcher.

Voluntary Participation:

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You may withdraw your child from the research at any time without consequence. Your decision will not affect your child's educational status.

Questions and Concerns:

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact me using the contact information provided.

Consent:

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By signing below, you indicate that you have read and understood the information provided and give your consent for your child to participate in the research.

Parent/Guardian Name: Manuel Taylor

Parent/Guardian Signature:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Manuel Taylor', written over a horizontal line.

Date: 8/08/2022

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Angela Taylor

Universidad Santo Tomas

Appendix B

Observation Format

Interaction at home (Spanish context) Interaction with mom and mom's family online.

Direct observation:

Day 1:

Date

Word choice

Body language communication

Direct observation:

Day 2:

Date

Word choice

Body language communication

Interaction at school (Japanese context).

Direct observation:

Day 1:

Date

Word choice

Body language communication

Direct observation:

Day 2:

Date

Word choice

Body language communication

Interaction on base with friends in an (American context)

Direct observation:

Day 1:

Date

Word choice

Body language communication

Direct observation:

Day 2:

Date

Word choice

Body language communication

Appendix C**Participants' Interview forms****At the Museum****Name:** _____**Date:** _____**Location:** _____**Questions:**

Why did you choose this profession?

What do you like most about his place? A, B, C

Are these professions for girls and boys? why?

Who do you like to play with more?

Is there any difference between professions?

Can you work in any profession?

What professions did the participants choose depending on their gender?

Ask them why they chose that profession or that outfit?

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What role play they chose and why?

Do the three children interact with each other?

Do they interact with other children?

If yes, how do they interact with others?

Do they use the same words to refer to objects?

Are girls and boys playing together?

At the restaurant

Name: _____

Date: _____

Location: _____

Questions:

How do you sit here?

Do we need to eat in a special way?

What do you want to eat? why?

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Do girls and boys eat the same way?

What dessert/ice cream color do you like? A, B, C, and why?

What girls play at school?

What boys play at school?

What kind of restaurant is this? (American, Japanese style)

What do children think about the place?

What kind of food do they sell?

Appendix D**Drawing and Oral Narrative Format**

At School	At Home	On base
Oral Narrative		

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