

# Multi-Ethnic Japanese Identity

## An Applied Conversation Analysis<sup>1</sup>

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This study employs an ethnomethodological approach, combining Applied Conversation Analysis and Membership Categorization Analysis to document the sequential procedure in which the participants co-construct their ethnic identities, noting in particular the role of language alternation. The data collected is based on a focus group discussion with six bilingual Japanese teenagers from 'interracial' families, examining in detail approximately two minutes of conversation in which the participants attend to some of the terms that are used to refer to Japanese people who have one non-Japanese parent. In Japanese, the word *haafu*, which has been coined from the English *half*, is still commonly used. Although some parents are beginning to prefer the term *daburu* (double) in an attempt to more fully express their children's bicultural access to two or more worldviews, the participants in this study reported that they generally used *haafu*. They also mentioned other expressions ascribed to them, including *gaijin* (outsider), *konketsuji* (mixed-blood), and *zasshu* (mongrel).

The turn-by-turn micro-analysis of their conversation reveals the ways in which the participants use codeswitching in talk-in-interaction while co-constructing their understanding of the terms others ascribe to them, and identifying those which they believe to be suitable. It focuses on how the bilingual participants demonstrate their sensitivity to the dual nuances of the word *haafu* through collaborative codeswitching in talk-in-interaction. Participants were found to demonstrate a variety of allegiances to this and other ethnic identifiers. The study concludes that the ascription of such referents is still a contentious issue among multi-ethnic Japanese teenagers and their use as labels will be accepted to varying degrees by those to whom they are applied.

### 多民族的日本人のアイデンティティ 応用会話分析からー

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本稿の目的は、応用会話分析 (Applied CA) 及び成員カテゴリー化分析 (MCA) を中心にしたエスノメソドロジー・アプローチにより、言語交替 (language alternation) の役割に特に注目しながら、エスニック・アイデンティティを共同で構成する「会話順序の進み方」(sequential procedure) を示すことにある。データは、フォーカス・グループ・ディスカッションに参加した10代 (n=6) の多民族日本人 (multi-ethnic Japanese) によるおよそ2 分間の会話を詳細に分析し、お互いの呼び方について分析したものである。日本語では英語の「half」に由来する「ハーフ」という言い方が最も広く使われている。最近、国際結婚している夫婦の中には、より正確に子供達の二文化を表す「ダブル」(double) という言い方の方が好ましいと考えている人もいるが、本研究に参加者は「ダブル」を使わずに、自分たちの間でも「ハーフ」という言い方を一般的に使うと述べた。その他に、「外人」、「混血児」、「雑種」なども使うことがわかった。

ターン毎 (turn-by-turn) を基本とするミクロ分析により、参加者がお互いを指す呼称を共同で構成し、適切と思われる表現を特定していく際に、参加者のコード切り換えがいかに使われているかが明らかにされた。これにより焦点化されたのは、バイリガルである対話者の共同的なコード切り換えを通して、参加者が「ハーフ」の二重のニュアンスについてどのように敏感に反応しているかということである。さらに、参加者は、「ハーフ」に限らず、他のエスニック呼称にも、様々な形で忠誠を示していることもわかった。この研究により、このような表現が何を指すかが10代の多民族日本人にとっても議論の余地のある問題であり、その表現の使用は、それを指す人によっても様々に評価されるということが明らかになった。

## INTRODUCTION

Issues of multi-ethnic identity are gaining increased attention in Japan as the number of international marriages in Japan rises (Kawai, 1998), more so-called "half-Japanese" babies are born (Lee, 1998), and children with multiple ethnic identities attempt to fit into an education system that has traditionally dictated assimilation and homogeneity over multiculturalism (Okano and Tsuchiya, 1999; Takahashi and Vaipae, 1996). In places where multi-ethnic Japanese come together in a community, such as in an international

school (Ochs, 1993) or on American army bases (Williams, 1992), they develop a multicultural outlook on life which is manifested in an eclectic mix of language, tastes and worldviews.

Neither strictly “half” nor “double”, multi-ethnic Japanese teenagers often find themselves crossing between their parents’ cultures, as well as occupying the fluctuating middle ground in between (Greer, 2001). In order to adapt to the variety of situations in which they find themselves, they develop a fluid understanding of ethnicity that enables them to cross racial and cultural borders (Stephan and Stephan, 1989), emphasizing different aspects of their identities according to the context and the language they are using (Ervin-Tripp, 1973), and employing a mix of languages to demonstrate solidarity or distance according to the interlocutor’s perceived group alliances (Kramsch, 1998).

This ability to selectively foreground and background elements of one’s linguistic identities is common among bilingual people; however, many bilinguals have clearly recognizable physical characteristics which identify them with specific cultural groups, and their phenotype remains ready for others to invoke as they wish (Bailey, 2000). In the case of multi-ethnic people, however, even the physical cues to their heritage can be ambiguous and may allow them to resist ascription according to the changing linguistic context.

The present paper aims to document one episode in which a group of Japanese teenagers from international families co-construct identities-in-interaction (Aronsson, 1998) through the ascription and contestation of the term *haafu* (“half”), which is the most commonly used social descriptor given to multi-ethnic people in Japan. Through an applied conversational analysis of approximately two minutes of group talk, it will examine, in particular, the ways in which the participants employ positioning (Davies and Harré, 1990; Harré and van Langenhove, 1999) and codeswitching to align and disalign themselves with ascriptive societal images of exogamy and “mixed-race”.

## **DISCURSIVELY CO-CONSTRUCTED IDENTITY**

While traditional variationist sociolinguists assume a fixed notion of self in which identities are expressed rather than negotiated, the present study will adopt a post-structuralist approach whereby the notion of identity will be operationalized as a fluid, subjective position co-constructed at the discourse level. Blackledge and Pavlenko (2001) note that “post-structuralist scholarship theorizes identities as multiple, dynamic and subject to change, and the relationship between language and identity as mutually constitutive” (p. 249). The focus here will therefore be on the (re)negotiation of identity in bilingual conversation rather than on rigid socio-psychological notions of identity based on fixed and assumed group memberships.

Ethnomethodologist Harvey Sacks first introduced the idea that social identities are chiefly resources for the interactants themselves, a view that came to be known as Membership Categorization Analysis, or MCA (Sacks, 1972, 1979, 1992). He claimed that participants “occasioned”, or made relevant through talk, various ordered collections, or standardized relational pairs, such as male/female, expert/novice or driver/passenger by indexing their membership during sequences of talk. Here again, the assertion is that membership is neither fixed nor assumed, although it may be discursively ascribed by others based on their assumptions and ultimately accepted or rejected by the participants.

Aronsson's concept of *identity-in-interaction* (Aronsson, 1998) further theorizes discursively co-constructed identity by combining a number of other established sociological frameworks to analyze localized sequences of talk from the participants' perspective. Focusing on CA (Conversation Analysis) notions of embedded talk in prior and ensuing turns, Aronsson relocates social psychological issues within their discursively produced context, pointing to the responsive and formative dialogic nature of identity in locally achieved interaction. In particular, she points to the value of concepts such as frames (Goffman, 1972; Tannen, 1993) and footing (Goffman, 1979), positioning theory (Harré and van Langenhove, 1999), voice, and alignment.

It is with such a battery of micro-analytic tools that the present study will examine the ways in which the participants work through issues of multi-ethnic identity in their talk.

## **THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND APPROACH TO DATA COLLECTION**

The conversation examined in this analysis is taken from a focus group session, or more precisely, from a free conversation that continued on directly after the focus group session had officially finished. The participants were six Japanese teenagers from international families. Specifically, they each had one Japanese parent and one non-Japanese, native-English speaking parent from Canada, the United States or Britain. For five of the six participants, the non-Japanese parent was their father. Their ages ranged from 14 to 18 at the time of recording, and all were students at a medium-size international school in Japan. They have been given pseudonyms in this analysis to protect their privacy.

The data were collected by the researcher during a pilot study for a more extensive investigation of codeswitching and multi-ethnic identity. The focus group session was the first time the students and I had met, and English was used almost exclusively throughout the majority of the discussion. This was probably because they saw me as an outsider and perhaps an authority figure, and therefore someone with whom they were obliged to speak English. The international school which the students attend adopts an "English only" policy, which in practice means that students speak English in formal situations and codeswitch between English and Japanese among their peers. Although originally the wider aim of this focus group session was to discuss the participants' attitudes to codeswitching, one of my sub-agendas was to document the ethnic referents they applied to themselves, as well as those they rejected when ascribed by others.

Before analyzing the particular segment of conversation in detail, it may be pertinent to give a brief explanation of the nature of the focus group as a qualitative methodology. Its aim is to collect data through group interaction focused on the participants rather than the researcher, who instead acts primarily as a facilitator rather than an interviewer by using a discussion guide to encourage group members to talk among themselves (Morgan, 1997). Although most commonly employed in business for market research, focus groups are being used increasingly in education, psychology, and the social sciences (Morgan and Krueger, 1998). They enable a large amount of relevant information to be gathered in a short period of time, with the opinions of others in the group generating further discussion, thus leading to richer data than can be obtained by using a conventional survey instrument. However, Agar and MacDonald (1995) note that the structure of a focus group session sets certain constraints on

the interaction it produces. Typically, these include short turn length, a tendency toward moderator control, and situations in which a few participants dominate. All of these limitations can be noted to varying degrees in the data analyzed in the present study.

Ordinarily, focus group data is transcribed and coded according to the content of the discussion. In this study, however, I will adopt an Applied CA approach (ten Have, 2001) to examine not only *what* is being said, but *how* it is being said and the way in which that affects the participants' sequentially emerging discursively co-constructed identities. Typically, studies of this kind focus on identity as it is performed in real situations, including the indexing of social categories in natural conversation. This study differs in that the conversation was initiated by the researcher in a "contrived" situation, but as mentioned above, the talk stemmed from a more general discussion of language use during the focus group and actually occurred after the session had officially ended. In this sense, the language is somewhat more natural than that which took place earlier in the focus group, because the participants addressed each other far more than they did the researcher. Nonetheless, the topic of identity is being discussed far more directly here than would normally happen in natural conversation, and therefore necessitates that the present analysis addresses the content of the talk as well as its form. In doing so, it will look at how the participants contest some of the labels that others ascribe to them, as well as which labels they choose to accept.

## **ANALYSIS OF DATA**

A total of around two minutes of talk in which the participants attended to societal images of people of "mixed-race" is transcribed and analyzed below. Following CA conventions, the transcription indicates not only what was said, but also overlapping talk, pauses, emphasis, intonation and other pertinent information. (See Figure 1 on following page for key.) Since Jeffersonian transcription conventions aim to depict speech the way it actually happened, rather than the way it is conventionally written, traditional capitalization and punctuation conventions are not used. Pause symbols (.) and intonation markers (rising and falling arrows) are used instead of commas, periods and question marks in order to represent as accurately as possible the way the speakers formulated their utterances in this instance. (See Psathas [1995] for a more detailed review of CA transcription conventions.)

While the transcription has been arranged in eight segments to facilitate the present analysis, the segments do in fact represent one continuous conversation, and readers are reminded that for the real-time participants, there was no pause in between segments to consider what was happening. The segments are numbered, and each has been given a title indicative of the main content. Each turn has also been numbered for easy reference. The transcriptions appear in a different font to set them off from the researcher's analysis, which follows each segment.

**FIGURE 1: Transcription Conventions**

[	Overlapping talk
=	Latched speech in which there is no discernible pause between two speakers' turns
(0.4)	Silence, in tenths of a second
(.)	Micropause (pause of less than one-tenth of a second)
((jocular hand clap))	Transcriber's description of events such as non-verbal behavior
<i>gaijin dakara</i>	Japanese speech (printed in italics)
{Because he's a foreigner}	English translation printed in braces under the Japanese speech
( <i>gaijin</i> aren't you)	Unsure transcription (in parentheses)
{the best word (for us)}	Within a translation, parentheses indicate English that is not literally stated in the original Japanese
hh, hee, hah, heh	Laughter or breathiness
!	Emotion
<u>dog</u>	Emphasis (underlined)
HUH	Increased loudness (all capital letters)
:	The preceding sound has been lengthened
↗	Rise in pitch
↘	Drop in pitch
°zasshu°	Talk which is softer
>hashiru no ga<	Talk which is compressed, faster

**Segment 1: "It's because you're *haafu*." (Turns 1 - 9)**

Two of the participants in the focus group, Ellie and Erika, were carrying on their conversation about multi-ethnic identity, so I restarted the tape recorder just as Ellie was saying, "...was the fact that you were, well, it was not like you didn't like it, but you felt uncomfortable that you had two separate...". Segment 1 starts with Erika's response.

- 1 Erika: I didn't (0.4) I didn't feel uncomfortable at all(.) it felt  
uncomfortable when (.) {I'd
- 2 Ellie: {no but I don't like it [when
- 3 Erika: {when  
ever I'd done (0.4) something good um (0.2) it was like oh it's  
because you're half
- 4 Peter: Half and=
- 5 Erika: =>hashiru no ga hayakattara: ne (.)marason taikai  
ichii ni nattara (.)haafu dakara atarimae dayo to iwareru  
to<  
{Suppose you're a fast runner, right? If you get first place in a  
marathon, they say "It's only natural because she's half."}  
(0.4) mutto shite  
{It pisses me off.}
- 6 Others: ha ha hah
- 7 Erika: hotto [(shite)  
{Like, get lost.}
- 8 Others: [shee ha hah(.
- 9 Erika: That (0.4) that I don't need\

In this segment, Erika rejects Ellie's attempt to interpret her feelings for her, possibly to avoid being positioned (Davies and Harré, 1990) as someone who is confused about her ethnic identity. The first indication of this rejection is the self-repair she makes in turns 1 and 3, which can be taken to signify her disagreement with Ellie's interpretation.

Erika's self-selection in turn 5 results in an interruption which may be related to her overlap with Ellie in turn 3. Her switch into Japanese at this point is significant. Bilingual speech generally maintains a preference for same language interaction (Auer, 1984), the implication being that cooperative speakers will respond in the language in which they are addressed. However, Li Wei (1994) notes that codeswitching can be employed as a turn security device. In competition for turn, a linguistic contrast draws the participants' attention to the codeswitching speaker, allowing him or her to win the floor. In this case, at the beginning of the segment Ellie self-selects in a bid for turn by interrupting Erika, and Erika attempts to re-seize the floor while obeying the same-language convention. She is successful in her attempt to speak and continues talking in turn 3, but when she is interrupted again by Peter in turn 4, she codeswitches to regain control of the conversation. This switch is accompanied by other prosodic features commonly employed in monolingual speech to fulfill the same function: higher pitch, a stronger intonation, increased volume and speed.

Erika's codeswitched outburst is significant because it is clear that she is using it to address her peers rather than the (non-Japanese) researcher. The tone of the utterance and Erika's idiosyncratic use of onomatopoeic slang terms in Japanese like *mutto shite* and *hotto shite* in turns 5 and 7 not only produce a comic effect, but these two expressions were also determined to be indicative of teenage speech in Japanese.<sup>2</sup> Along with the pace and emotion with which they were delivered, they create a decided contrast to Erika's English speech in this conversation, which would be regarded as reasonably standard. This reinforces the impression that the codeswitch into Japanese in turn 5 is intended for Ellie

and the other participants rather than the non-Japanese researcher. Although I had told the group at the start of the session that I speak Japanese and they were welcome to use either language, the majority of the formal discussion had been carried out in English up until this sequence. At this stage in the talk-in-interaction, I hadn't really backed up my claims to Japanese proficiency with an extended turn in Japanese.

Erika's switch back to English in turn 9 could therefore be viewed as a coda giving an evaluative assessment of the narrative ("That, I don't need") for the outsider's benefit—perhaps as an explanation for the laughter she received from the other participants in turns 6 and 8. Alfonzetti (1998) maintains that one reason bilingual speakers codeswitch is to signal the end of a narrative sequence by using the contrastive juxtaposition of the two codes to enact a change in footing from narrator back to participant. At the same time, Erika seems to be signaling her return to English as the preferred medium of communication in this conversation.

An additional motivation for Erika's codeswitch in turn 5 might be her own language competence. In turns 1 and 3 Erika appears to have trouble expressing her thoughts in the face of bids for turn from other participants. Thus, the codeswitch in turn 5 could also indicate that Erika has reverted to her stronger language in order to reserve the turn.

From an identity-in-interaction perspective, the switch to Japanese in turn 5 also serves the function of implicitly identifying the nationality of those who position Erika as *haafu*. In turn 3, she begins the narrative in English, but the reiteration in Japanese in turn 5 indicates that it was most likely Japanese people who said, "*Haafu dakara atarimae dayo*" {It's only natural, because she's half}. It has been widely documented that one of the key functions of codeswitching is reporting speech (Auer, 1995), and in this case, the Japanese gloss of the English "Oh, it's because you're half" makes it even clearer that Erika is reporting direct speech because the passive verb, *iwareru*, denotes that someone has said this about her without actually mentioning who the speaker was.

Another salient point to be gained from this segment of talk is that the participants use both the terms "half" and its phonological equivalent "*haafu*". In standard English, a phrase like "It's because you're half" would strike most native speakers as incomplete. However, the participants have reclaimed the word from Japanese, and since it was originally a loanword, this expression would be highly understandable by all members in this discussion. It is important to note that this is the first occurrence of *haafu* as a referent for multi-ethnic Japanese people in the discussion, and it becomes the springboard for further investigation into its usage later in the sequence.

Erika's codeswitch to Japanese in turn 5 appears to have been successful, even if it is a dispreferred act in bilingual speech. The narrative account concerning her experience of being positioned as a proficient athlete because of her mixed genetic background and her indignant response to this characterization seem to hit a chord with her audience, and are ratified by laughter in turns 6 and 8, indicating that the other members have perhaps had similar experiences, or at least can empathize with her.

## Segment 2: “*Gaijin dakara...*” (Turns 10 - 18)

Erika's coda in turn 9 signals the end of her story and allows Luke to self-select with his own narrative about another Japanese racial epithet, *gaijin*, in turns 10-14. The word *gaijin* is often translated as “foreigner”, but more literally it means “outsider” or “non-Japanese”.

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10 Luke:    When I started in the Japanese school ((inaudible))
            and we were learning English (.) when I read in
            front of the class (0.2)
11 TG:      mm
12 Luke:    I (.) I had (0.3) I have uh pretty good pronunciation(.)
            well it was better than anyone else and it was like
            gaijin dakara
            {(That's) because he's a foreigner.}
13 TG:      Oh right
14 Luke:    You know
15 Erika:    But if you don't take one hundred percent then they think(.) why↗
16 Peter:    Yeah right
17 Erika:    You're (gaijin aren't you↗)
18          (1.0)
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Segment 2 begins with Luke referring to an incident that occurred when he was studying at a Japanese public school: his classmates positioned him as *gaijin* because of his native-like pronunciation in English. Like Segment 1, this sequence relates to Japanese constructions of multi-ethnic Japanese identity, thus indicating that the previous narrative by Erika is also understood by the participants to refer to Japanese images of people of “mixed-race”. Also, like Erika's switch to Japanese in turn 5, Luke's mid-turn switch to Japanese in turn 12 (“*gaijin dakara*”) is an example of using codeswitching when reporting speech and provides further evidence that this evaluation of Luke's English ability was given by his Japanese peers. However, unlike Erika, Luke chooses to relate his experience in English. This choice, along with non-verbal cues such as the direction in which he was facing, ratify the researcher as the intended recipient.

Nonetheless, the researcher's response to this narrative is limited. In turn 11, I offer a backchannel which yields the turn back to Luke and signals approval for an extended turn. This is followed in turn 13 with a reactive token which demonstrates a minimal display of acknowledgment and is employed as a means to avoid taking a full turn. This was probably because I was still attending to Erika's use of *haafu* in turn 5. At this stage in my research, I was unsure of the appropriate terms of address to use with the group, and I had been meaning to broach the subject in this session as one of my sub-agendas. It is also possible that I was internally formulating my next question (turn 19), which I wanted to deliver in Japanese (see next segment). In addition, I wanted to encourage the participants to talk more among themselves, as the focus group had been relatively facilitator-centered up until this sequence.

As a result, Luke widens his intended audience as he signals the completion of his narrative in turn 14 with “You know?”, inviting other members to speak and appealing for recipient alignment. This allows Erika to self-select in turn 15 and reiterate the theme proffered in her earlier narrative about unfair expectations being placed on multi-ethnic Japanese, which in turn is ratified by Peter in turn 16. At this stage, the participants are not questioning the terms *haafu* and *gaijin* themselves, but rather the way they



are used in mainstream Japanese society to construct unrealistic images of an individual's physical or linguistic ability based on societal views of ethnicity and "race".

### Segment 3: Defending the use of "haafu". (Turns 19 - 29)

As mentioned above, the researcher, searching for clues as to the participants' preferred terms for use in referring to themselves, picked up on Erika's use of the word *haafu* in turn 5. In the next segment, my questioning of the use of this term as a referent for multi-ethnic Japanese people to use among themselves leads to a range of opinions from the group.

19 TG:	<i>Saki hodo haafu to iu iikata ga detan desu kedo(.) sore wa minna futsuuni tsukatteiruno</i> ↗ <i>Jibun no koto</i> ↘ {You just mentioned the word "half". Is that a word that you all commonly use? About yourselves?}
20 Erika:	<i>Iwareru</i> = {People call us that} = [I didn't y-
21 Ellie:	[um =
22 Erika:	= I didn't really use(.) I didn't really like
23 TG:	Mm
24 Erika:	the way they use that
25 Karen:	I always like <i>haafu</i> better than <i>gaijin</i> {half} {foreigner}
26 Erika:	[ <i>Gaijin wa</i> = {Foreigner is...}
27 Ellie:	[ <i>Gaijin</i>
28 Peter:	=It's better than <i>gaijin</i> but I don't really like <i>haafu</i>
29 Luke:	I don't I don't care [about that

The silence in turn 18 serves as a transition relevance place<sup>3</sup>, indicating that the participants have selected me, the facilitator, as next speaker. This allows me to change the topic and proffer the question that I have been preparing during the previous sequence. I deliberately choose to codeswitch, posing my inquiry in Japanese in turn 19. This is the first extended turn I have made in Japanese after almost an hour of interaction with the focus group, so to a certain extent this represents a dramatic change of voice for me as an outsider. I am not only attempting to demonstrate my linguistic proficiency in Japanese, but also tacitly indicating an implied comprehension of Erika's earlier narrative in Japanese, which she had probably intended more for her peers than for me. More importantly, my switch here also conveys Japanese as an acceptable form of communication within the bounds of this discussion. Use of Japanese with non-Japanese adults in the institutional setting of the international school would ordinarily be marked. As an outsider, I am therefore attempting to construct myself as different from the participants' teachers by signaling that they are free to codeswitch with me.

However, as someone who is yet to provide much physical or linguistic evidence to back up his claims to Japanese ability, this initial turn runs the risk of being taken as *crossing* (Rampton, 1995), a form

of language alternation in which the speaker is not recognized as belonging to the in-group. The way that I formulate my question demonstrates a versant understanding of Japanese syntax and pragmatics which might back up my claims to fluency, but it still does not in itself afford me the right to claim in-group membership. My Japanese has a slight Australian English accent, such that native Japanese speakers may recognize some phonological transfer, particularly at phrasal endings. In addition, the use of polite phrases (*saki hodo*) and verb endings (*desu*) in this turn adds a social distance between me and my interlocutors, as is appropriate in Japanese for someone posing a personal question at a first meeting. Moreover, the power difference between researcher and participants may be emphasized by the use of the interrogative marker *no*, which can sound either familiar or condescending, depending on the relationship between the interlocutors.

At any rate, as the question itself indirectly takes Erika to task for her use of the word “*haafu*” in turn 5, Erika self-selects, reserving the turn with a rapid response in Japanese according to the bilingual preference for same-code continuation, but quickly switching back to English to indicate her rejection of my attempt to steer the conversation into Japanese. Her immediate response “*iwareru*” (turn 20) indicates that she feels “*haafu*” is a word that others use about multi-ethnic Japanese, and her protests in turns 22 - 24 recognize that this is not necessarily the way she would identify herself. In other words, she disaligns herself with my positioning of her as “someone who uses the word *haafu* about herself”. Her shift back to English re-establishes that language as the main mode of communication, at least for out-group interaction.

Erika’s response to my question is the second part of an adjacency pair, or in CA terms, a second pair part. Preferred second pair parts, such as expected answers or acceptance of offers, are usually structurally simple and occur without delay, whereas dispreferred seconds are marked by hedges or pauses, or in bilingual speech by linguistic contrast through codeswitching (Li Wei, 1994). In this case, Erika’s response is dispreferred because she is defending herself and disputing my understanding of her use of the word *haafu*.

The temptation here might also be to explain Erika’s switch to English in turn 22 in terms of in-group and out-group codes. The argument could be made that by switching to English she can be seen to be using language to distance herself from the Japanese who position her as *haafu*. In fact, one of the most well-known early sociolinguistic studies of codeswitching, that of Gumperz (Gumperz and Hernandez-Chavez, 1975; Gumperz, 1982), explains interactional motivations for language alternation according to perceived notions of in-group and out-group. I do not dispute that there might be additional interpretations for Erika’s reversion to English here, but having adopted an ethnomethodological stance for the present paper, I am duty bound to base my analysis on the understandings of the participants as demonstrated in the talk-in-interaction. Auer (1984) notes that there can be both discourse-related and participant-related motivations for codeswitching and that quite often these may occur simultaneously, accomplishing “polyvalent local meanings” (p. 70). It is quite possible that there are multiple explanations for the switches in these data, but here I will adopt an interpretation that lessens the role of the analyst in favor of an account based on the localized talk.

Turns 25 - 29 contain a number of brief turns in which the speakers rapidly compete for turn

allocation, indicating a high level of interest in the topic. Karen disagrees with Erika's rejection of *haafu* (turn 25), maintaining that it is more appropriate than *gaijin* as an identifier for multi-ethnic Japanese. Both Erika and Ellie begin to respond with an evaluation of the term *gaijin*, but their overlap causes them to abort their bid for turn in deference to the one speaker rule. Peter then self-selects to signal his agreement with Erika while also reinforcing Karen's view of *gaijin* as worse than *haafu*. In turn 29 Luke attempts to disalign himself with the developing representation of *haafu* and *gaijin* as negative terms, but is cut off by Ellie's codeswitch to Japanese in turn 30.

Table 1 provides a summary of the way the speakers position themselves at this particular point in the talk-in-interaction with regard to the terms Japanese ascribe to them.

**TABLE 1: Representation of Participants' Change in Footing Regarding *haafu* and *gaijin*.**

Time	Turn	Speaker	Position				
			Best	Better	Neutral	Worse	Worst
10.48 seconds	Turns 22-24	Erika				<i>haafu</i>	
	Turn 25	Karen		<i>haafu</i>		<i>gaijin</i>	
	Turn 28	Peter				<i>haafu</i>	<i>gaijin</i>
	Turn 29	Luke			<i>haafu/gaijin</i>		

As can be seen in the table, the question of an appropriate referent for this group of people is a point of contention between the speakers. In approximately ten and a half seconds they put forward four different opinions about the two terms and consequently co-construct a deeper understanding of the pragmatic force behind the referents. In this brief exchange they have discursively adapted elements of their ethnic identity according to the unfurling linguistic context.

#### **Segment 4: “*Konketsuji .... What's that?*” (Turns 30 - 39)**

In the next segment, Erika brings up a third term used to refer to multi-ethnic Japanese people, *konketsuji*, which literally means “mixed blood child”, but has a pejorative connotation somewhat like “half-breed”. The group demonstrates a variety of understandings of this word, from disbelief and rejection to bewildered incomprehension.

30 Erika: ((laughing)) [konketsuji ga ichiban iya da  
{Half-breed is the worst.}]

31 Others: un heh heh hneh HAH

32 TG: sore wa hidoi  
{That's terrible:}

33 Erika: obasan ni (.) anta konketsuji toka tte hhh  
{By some lady. She goes, "You half-breed".}

34 Ellie: Woah!

35 (0.8)

36 Karen: What's that?

37 Erika: ha konketsuji (.) Chi ga majitteru tte koto (.) [ma-  
{Half-breed. It means your blood is mixed. Mi-}

38 Peter: [ore  
{I}]

39 Erika: Ma (.) mazatta chi to kaite  
{You write it ((with the Chinese character for)) m-mixed  
-blood.}

The beginning of this segment actually overlaps the end of Segment 3, with Erika's reversion to Japanese in turn 30 serving a similar function to her codeswitched interruption in turn 5, wrenching the floor from the speaker mid-turn by creating a linguistic contrast. At the same time, it is accompanied by laughter that further indicates that it is being directed towards her peers rather than the researcher. She proffers an additional ascription for "mixed race" people, *konketsuji* (mixed-blood), and a negative assessment of the term. However, the jocular tone of her opinion identifies it as one that is not entirely serious, and the recipients' laughter also ratifies that assessment. On the other hand, as an outsider, my reaction to this term stands in contrast to the light-hearted mood of the participants, and my Japanese utterance in turn 32 notifies them that I consider it a much stronger word than they do. This may account for the pursuant change of tone in turns 33 and 34 and the micro-pause in turn 35. As an adult, my opinion on such a potentially controversial issue may hold some sway, particularly when it is at odds with the current group consensus. The participants may also be acknowledging the presence of the outsider in their midst by accommodating their assessment of the ascription to mine, as Erika initially did with *haafu* in turn 20.

However, if *konketsuji* is an offensive term, it is not one that is used often in the experience of this particular group of teenagers. In turn 36 Karen makes this clear by her question, "What's that?", occasioning Erika's switch back to Japanese to give a literal explanation based on the Japanese reading of the Sino-Japanese characters that make up the word. (See Figure 2.)

**FIGURE 2: Japanese Orthography for *Konketsuji* and Erika's Gloss**

Sino-Japanese reading: 混血児 (*konketsuji*) {Half-breed}

Erika's Japanese gloss: 混ざった血 (*mazatta chi*) {Blood that is mixed}

Erika's motivation for not reciprocating in English here may be two-fold. Firstly, the rapid pace at

which these turns are delivered make it likely that Erika is in fact continuing on in Japanese without much recognition that Karen has framed the question in English, particularly considering its short and fairly standard structure. Secondly, the literal explanation is expedited by referring to the way the word is written in Japanese. Erika supplies her own gloss on *konketsuji* by using the Japanese reading of two of the main Kanji characters of which this compound word consists.

An English explanation (“mixed-blood”) here would no doubt also have sufficed, but the lexical connection between the meaning and its pronunciation would not be as readily apparent. Thus, Erika does not use English because it is more convenient for her to continue her explanation in Japanese. This is an example of what Auer (1984) terms preference-related rather than competence-related switching. In this case the medium of Japanese facilitates a fuller understanding of the lexical item in question. Implicit in such an explanation is the expectation that Karen, as interlocutor, has not only a bilingual understanding of the spoken Japanese but at least some biliterate comprehension of both the Chinese and Japanese origins of the written language. From Karen’s perspective, the fact that she had not come across this term may in fact be competence-related. However, in acknowledging Japanese as her interlocutor’s dominant language by remaining in that medium, Erika demonstrates her preference for a Japanese gloss of a Japanese word in this case. Such codeswitching is primarily related to the discourse itself rather than a direct expression of bilingual identity; nonetheless, by giving her definition in Japanese, Erika implies an expectation that Karen will be able to comprehend it.

#### Segment 5: *Zasshu* ... That’s like a dog or something. (Turns 40 - 49)

In the next segment, Peter relates the story that he tried to begin in turn 38. This narrative has been made relevant by Erika’s introduction of the alternative racial epithet *konketsuji*. Here, Peter tenders a further term, *zasshu*, which, as Ellie mentions in turn 42, is a term normally reserved for mixed-breeds in animals, particularly dogs.

40 Peter:	ore zasshu to iwaretchatta {I was called mongrel.}
41 Others:	((loud laughter)) ooh ha ha HUH ((jocular hand clap)) that’s (a good one)
42 Ellie:	(laughing) Zasshu↗ That’s like you’re a dog or something {Mongrel?}
43 Peter:	Mm. ((casts gaze down at desk))
44 Ellie:	((changes her tone of voice)) Zasshu↗ (0.6) ° Zasshu↗° {Mongrel?} {Mongrel?}
45 Erika:	Nani↘ Kodomo ni↗ {What? By some kid?}
46 Peter:	Un {Yeah}
47 Ellie:	How could someone ↗ say that ↘
48 Peter:	((smiling again)) hee ha hidokunai↗ {Terrible, isn’t it?}
49 Ellie:	((somewhat more subdued laughter)) ° ha ha ha ↘°

The verb ending *te-shimau*, used by Peter in its colloquial past tense form *chatta* in turn 40, indicates that the action (in this case, being called *zasshu*) produced unexpected or inconvenient results (Kaiser, Ichikawa, Kobayashi and Yamamoto, 2001). It suggests that Peter has negative feelings about having the word ascribed to him, but the severity with which he uses it in this particular instance is unclear. In an earlier sequence during the focus group, Peter related several incidents in which he had been referred to as “Chinkie” and even “Nigger” while living in Britain the previous year. Within the local context of this talk-in-interaction, however, the recipients interpret it as an appropriate place to laugh, perhaps because Erika and Ellie have made jocularity an appropriate response to such terms in the preceding turns. It seems that humor is one way that multi-ethnic Japanese learn to cope with racial epithets, but this may only be a surface reaction, as becomes apparent during the subsequent turns in this segment.

The laughter reaches its crescendo in turn 41, when it is accompanied by a loud handclap by one of the participants. However, at this point Peter’s body language is at odds with the evolving comical framing of *zasshu*. Although this transcript is based on an audio recording, Peter’s body language in this segment was so striking that I remembered it and included it later in my notes. He has cast his gaze down and is staring at the desk. This is conspicuous enough to draw the attention of the other participants, who also attend to it within the localized context of the talk-in-interaction. Ellie does this verbally in turn 42. Her English description of the epithet (“*Zasshu?* That’s like you’re a dog or something!”) serves to vocalize the group’s collective understanding of the strength of the Japanese word, as demonstrated by the dramatic reduction in the laughter. Ellie attends to Peter’s minimal acknowledgment and disengaged eye contact by adopting a more sensitive tone of voice as the laughter subsides. Erika likewise adopts a more serious tone of voice and attempts to illicit further information from Peter by asking who it was that called him *zasshu*.

This is significant not only because the word *zasshu* is evolving as a term with greater potential to insult, but also because Erika is Peter’s older sister, and even though they are very close, her question implies that they have never talked about this topic. Multi-ethnic teenagers may tend to suffer in silence rather than discuss such incidents with their peers. This focus group, which was made up entirely of Japanese teenagers who have one non-Japanese parent, was perhaps a rare opportunity for them to discuss such topics in an open, sympathetic environment.

Nonetheless, by turn 48, Peter adopts his tough façade again, smiling and laughing at the term *zasshu*, implying that he would prefer to put it behind him. It has been suggested that multi-ethnic Japanese children and teenagers, particularly boys, are often victims of bullying (*ijime*) in Japan (Daulton and Seki, 2000). It is possible that Peter and the other participants have learned that adopting a jocular attitude to such name-calling is one way of avoiding being categorized as ethnically different, something Day describes as “resistance to ethnification” (Day, 1998, p. 16). The subdued laughter from the others in turn 49 acknowledges the ascription as laughable, but no longer to the same extent as it was at the beginning of the sequence.

### Segment 6: *Haafu is the best word for us.* (Turns 50 - 55)

As the discussion tends to be focusing on other-ascribed referents rather than on those words that the participants prefer to use when describing their multi-ethnic identity, in the next section of talk, the researcher attempts to steer the conversation back to his original question from turn 19 about the words they use for themselves.

- 50 TG:        *Sore wa:: ma(.) minna kara iwareru n dakedo(.) jibun kara iu no wa nihongo de nan to iu no* ↘  
              {That's, well, what everyone else calls you, but what do you call yourselves in Japanese?}
- 51 Peter:     *Haafu*
- 52 Erika:     *Haafu*
- 53 Karen:     *Haafu*
- 54 Ellie:     *Haafu*
- 55 Peter:     *Haafu ga ichiban ii n dayo*  
              {Half is the best word (for us).}

Once again this segment begins at a transition relevant place (TRP) with the researcher refocusing the conversation by forming his turn in Japanese. In this case, however, the group does not switch back to English, probably because I specifically asked them for a response in Japanese. When asked directly to choose the ethnic referent which they felt most comfortable with, most of the participants respond with “*haafu*” in rapid succession, along with an upgraded assessment of the term from Peter, acknowledging it as the best word to describe them (*Haafu ga ichiban ii n dayo*). This is surprising, given that they have earlier mentioned that they don’t appreciate the term being used by other people. The implication is that the participants in this group both align to the term *haafu* as an in-group referent and disalign when it is ascribed to them by others.

### Segment 7: *Contesting the use of Haafu and Gaijin by others.* (Turns 56- 61)

In this segment, Luke reiterates a point about the word *gaijin* and positions himself as non-Japanese, a stance that is met with both support and resistance from other participants.

- 56 Luke:     Well I don't really care if people call me (.) *gaijin* 'cause I am a foreigner
- 57 TG:        Hhh
- 58 Erika:     I don't really (.) I don't really care(.) but sometimes when they're (0.6) too fake(.) ° it's like↘°
- 59 Ellie:     I always used to hate that(.) like *gaijin gaijin gaijin gaijin* But now (.) right now I have the ability to look back at them and say(.) yeah I'm a *gaijin* and you can't speak English  
              ha ha ha=
- 60 Peter:     =Whenever s[
- 61 Ellie:     [Ima sara desho  
                  {(There's no point saying something like that) now.}

Luke's statement in turn 56 stands in contrast to the emerging theme of resistance to ethnification, both in terms of its content and its linguistic mode. He adopts an adverse linguistic footing by codeswitching back to English to position himself as a *gaijin*. Coming from someone who was born and raised in Japan and who has Japanese nationality, Luke's alignment with a term that essentially means "non-Japanese" is surprising. Earlier in the focus group discussion, he had related an incident in which he was refused a part-time job washing dishes because he didn't look Japanese enough. Physically, Luke does appear more "Caucasian" than Asian, so it is possible that he has accepted some of the ethnic ascription that has been applied to him by his Japanese peers. Thus, framing his assertion in English here may serve to emphasize his alignment with "Western" culture. However, more likely it is only serving a discourse function, since he is directing his comments chiefly to me as the researcher—someone he has demonstrated in segment 2 and earlier in the focus group that he sees as an interviewer and a representative of English speaking cultures.

In turn 58 Erika attempts to hedge her earlier assertions of resistance in order to align herself with Luke and recast herself as not overly concerned about the issue, much in the same way that Peter's casual attitude and the laughter did in segment 5. Ellie takes up on the positioning of the word *gaijin* as a positive ascription, noting that it implies knowledge of English, an elite language in Japan. She concludes her narrative with a coda, *Ima sara desho*, making an appeal for agreement from the other participants, but such acknowledgment is not forthcoming. Peter views it as a TRP and seizes the opportunity to deliver a new commentary on the word *gaijin*.

#### Segment 8: "What of it?" (Turns 62 - 66)

In the final segment, Peter and Erika give a commentary on how to disalign oneself from an unwanted ethnic ascription, demonstrating that they have considerable experience with such situations.

62 Peter:	Whenever so:mebody calls me um (.) <i>gaijin</i> I just say (.) j-just say like <i>dakara</i> {so what?}
63 Others:	heheHEH Ha:::
64 Peter:	yeah and they they just knock it off so it's (.) <i>kekko ii</i> {pretty good}
65 Erika:	<i>gaijin da ttsara</i> {When they say, "It's a foreigner",} <i>soh dayo</i> {(I say), "Yeah, that's right".}
66 Peter:	<i>Dakara nan da</i> {What of it?}

Here, Erika and Peter present a plan for resisting ethnification that is not found in Day's (1998) data. They suggest that the ethnified should adopt an attitude of acceptance and then challenge the ethnifier to its relevance. This is the most obvious example in which the participants in the focus group are challenging forced notions of ethnicity. The switches to Japanese in turns 65 and 66, like two of the previous examples, are to accommodate quoted speech and imply that the ethnifiers in this hypothetical



frame are Japanese. The example given here is probably a generic conglomerate of a number of different past situations in which the participants have been positioned as foreign based on their looks.

Peter's hesitation in turns 62 and 64, indicated by the micro-pauses, stuttered speech and turn-final switch, has more to do with his competence in English rather than having any direct relevance to the force with which he is attempting to speak. His strong tone of voice in turn 66 makes it clear that he believes what he is saying here, even if he is having some trouble expressing it in English. In my later experiences with Peter I found that a slight stutter is typical of his speech in English.

## **ETHNICITY AS A MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIZATION DEVICE: *HAAFU* FROM AN MCA PERSPECTIVE**

The ethnomethodological roots of conversational analysis, which began with work by Garfinkel (1967), also gave rise to a complimentary discipline which Sacks (1972, 1979, 1992) called Membership Categorization Analysis, or MCA. The two approaches are reliant on the same rigorous attention to participant understandings in localized talk-in-interaction, but until recently have seldom been used concurrently. In this section of my paper, I would like to revisit the above conversation from a membership categorization analytic perspective, with an aim to demonstrating how, through their talk-in-interaction, the members are displaying their attitudes towards the various referents mentioned.

It was MCA that first introduced the notion that social identities are chiefly resources for the interactants themselves. Sacks claimed that participants "occasioned" various ordered collections, or *standardized relational pairs* such as male/female, expert/novice or driver/passenger, by indexing their membership during sequences of talk. As with discursively co-constructed identity, group membership is neither fixed or assumed, although it may be ascribed by others based on their assumptions and ultimately accepted or rejected by the participants. An individual may be described as "a 26 year-old father of two" or "an energetic young teacher" or "a terrible mahjong player". Each of these membership categories indexes a particular identity which points to different aspects of the individual's social being.

Sacks used the term *membership categorization device* (MCD) to refer to a collection of such membership categories which can be applied to a population in order to pair its members with a certain categorization (Sacks, 1972). In the case above, the MCD might be, in turn, family, occupation and experience. Like other aspects of conversational analysis, MCDs are "local, sequentially organized devices designed and administered by the members" (Silverman, 1998, p. 90). In other words, the nuance applied to any particular category is reliant on the conversational context in which it occurs. The word "sister" might ordinarily be understood to belong to the MCD "family", but according to the surrounding context in which it is being used, it may also refer to MCDs such as "religious order", among nuns, "medical profession", to a head nurse, or "political alliance", when used by feminist in-groups. Thus, an ethnomethodological approach dictates that "all categorizations are indexical expressions and their sense is therefore locally and temporally contingent" (Hester and Eglin, 1997, p. 22).

In the sequence discussed in this paper, the MCD is ethnicity. A standard relational pair that is commonly recognized in this MCD is Japanese (*Nihonjin*) /*gaijin*, where *gaijin* is understood to mean non-Japanese in its broadest sense. The participants acknowledge an understanding of this through their talk

in this sequence. *Gaijin* are co-constructed as having good English pronunciation (turn 12) and English fluency (turns 15 -17). It has been demonstrated in the earlier analysis that while the participants understand these to be Japanese ascriptions of *gaijin* characteristics, they do not always consider them appropriate descriptions of themselves. Through the ensuing talk, most of the group expresses a preference for the term *haafu* over *gaijin* (turns 25 - 28). The exception is Luke (turns 29 and 56), who does not contest the *gaijin* referent when it is ascribed to him, because as he says, “I am a foreigner”. This assertion does cause some reciprocal mitigation on the part of the other participants (such as Erika’s hedge in turn 58), but overall, *gaijin* is a category that is disputed by multi-ethnic Japanese teenagers in this group. Occasionally it may be accepted, but it’s relevance is likely to be called into question (turn 62), or the presumption of the invective is turned against the speaker (turn 59). According to the participants, *gaijin* is a term that is used by Japanese to discursively position them as outsiders, something that lino (1996) has called “gaijinization”.

Similarly disputed are the stronger and much rarer epithets *konketsuji* (“half-breed”) and *zasshu* (“mongrel”). These are constructed as outsiders’ descriptions and linguistically contested through prosodic discourse features such as pitch (turn 44), laughter (turns 30, 31, 41, 42 and 49) and gaze (turn 43).

However, it is the membership category “*haafu*” that is most problematic for the group. At one level it is clearly contested in ways similar to those used against the other referents that are ascribed to them, but at the same time, it is the word that the majority of the group most clearly identifies with (turns 50 - 55). This paradoxical attitude to *haafu* results from the fact that it doesn’t fit neatly into just one standard relational pair. At one level, *haafu* can be heard to be a subset of the category “*gaijin*” and therefore, regarded as meaning non-Japanese. This is particularly the case when the speaker is Japanese. In cases where the speaker is non-Japanese, however, it is more likely that *haafu* will be interpreted as belonging to the membership category “Japanese”. Attributes such as “proficiency in English” or “athletic prowess” may be category-bound (Jayyusi, 1984) to “*gaijin*” for Japanese speakers, just as non-Japanese may focus on other category-bound activities that tend to occasion and ascribe Japanese categories to multi-ethnic people. The fact that the position of the category “*haafu*” is ambiguous within the MCD ethnicity allows multi-ethnic Japanese to (re) interpret it according to the situation and the interlocutor.

## DISCUSSION

As can be seen from this analysis of the data, the most acceptable term for multi-ethnic Japanese is still something of an issue in Japan, even for those most directly concerned. In mainstream Japanese society, the word *haafu* enjoys many positive nuances, conferring on its recipients cosmopolitan qualities of internationalism, elite bilingualism and worldly experience. However, many parents of multi-ethnic Japanese children oppose this term because they associate it with negative terms in English (“half-breed” and “half-caste”) and because of its nuance of incompleteness (McCarty, 1996), which denies their children access to one of their cultures (Moriki, 2000). In place of it, some intercultural families in Japan have begun using the term *daburu* or “double” (Life, 1995) in order to give a fuller description of their children’s bicultural experience.

Yet, as Singer (2000) warns, multi-ethnic children in Japan have to “tread the fine line between self-confidence and conceit” (p. 77) because by using the term “double” they risk sounding arrogant or boastful in front of their Japanese classmates—an unforgivable sin in a society which values group harmony over individual prowess. Some parents also regard the term *daburu* as counter-productive because of the unfair pressure it places on children to be “double(ly) good and talented” (Singer, 2000, p. 80). The participants in this particular focus group did not mention the word *daburu* (double) or other recent terms like *kokusaijin* (international person) or English referents like “multi-ethnic” or “biracial”. Instead, they seemed to accept the term “*haafu*” at least by way of default, recognizing that in some contexts it is less bother to bear it than to dispute it. As bilingual teenagers, they are acutely aware that *haafu* is acceptable in Japanese but less so in English.

It is perhaps this discrepancy between the Japanese and non-Japanese interpretations of *haafu* that occasioned this whole conversational thread. When the researcher, as an outsider, challenged Erika’s use of *haafu* in turn 5, she was quick to point out that it was others that were using the word, not her. Outsiders, particularly non-Japanese parents and authority figures, demonstrate a greater reaction to *haafu*, and this creates a conflict of interest for multi-ethnic Japanese as they try to please both camps.

The negotiation of ethnic identity is not something that happens as clearly as this on a daily basis. It is only because the researcher has occasioned it that this conversation is occurring at all. In most situations, the everyday co-construction of ethnicity is carried out at a much more subtle level. This will be explored further in my on-going ethnographic investigation of communication at the international school.

During the first contact experience for a more extensive study, gaining knowledge of how the informants label themselves was both pragmatic and exploratory. Initially, my interest in their use of *haafu* was primarily so that I could gauge the most appropriate way to address them as a group. In fact, in my later daily dealings with them I adopted what seems to be the most common practice among the participants themselves, that of not referring to them by any ethnic category at all. It seems the only time someone refers to them as *haafu* or *gaijin* is when they particularly want to index their ethnic identity, such as in the talk analyzed in this study.

Finally, there is one more interesting observation to be made about the tone of the talk in this analysis. Although the transcript tends to render it a fairly dark topic, the participants treat it with an overwhelmingly jocular attitude. There are numerous instances of laughter and the group resists the ethnification (Day, 1998) by ridiculing it. This may be one method of coping with the gravity of the topic, particularly within the company of peers.

## CONCLUSION

The conclusions to be drawn from this analysis are necessarily tentative, since they are based on a limited amount of data, but they do bear comparison to similar discourse analytic studies of language alternation and the co-construction of identity-in-interaction (Bailey, 2000; Bailey, 2001; Cashman, 2001; Lo, 1999). As such, it is important to note that the participants’ identities are not fixed, but co-constructed through and by the local unfurling sequence of their talk. Their position towards the referents that are

applied to them by Japanese people vary depending upon the individual and the context. Their level of acceptance changes even during the two minutes of conversation dealt with in this paper. They adapt their attitudes towards the use of *haafu* when challenged by a non-Japanese outsider, demonstrating that they realize it can have negative connotations for native English speakers, but at the same time they use it unquestioned among themselves, perhaps because they have been ethnified that way by others throughout their lives. Depending on the situation in which the participants find themselves, the word *haafu* is tolerated and ignored, assumed and ascribed, accepted and contested.

This may well be particularly true in first-time meetings, as in this situation. The focus group setting allowed me as an ethnographer to gain access to a deeper understanding of the participants' reactions to the word *haafu* than would normally be allowed to outsiders at a casual first time meeting. However, the reaction is inevitably the same, whether it comes from a researcher or a curious child: multi-ethnic people are routinely met with the inquiry, "What are you?" (Gaskins, 1999). Their position at the borders of established definitions of ethnicity and "race" allows them to (re)define themselves according to the context and interlocutor. In the case of multi-ethnic Japanese, bilingual proficiency is also an expected part of what it means to be *haafu*. For this group, codeswitching played an important role in both participant- and discourse-related aspects of their bilingual speech, allowing them to direct comments at their peers or the researcher according to the language they employed.

A further limitation of the present study is the mode in which the data were collected. Analyses of discursively constructed identity typically originate from more "natural" talk in which the interactants index some aspect of their identity in the everyday course of "real" conversation. As the talk in this paper arose from a focus group session, the topic of multi-ethnic identity was already occasioned in a far more obvious way than it occurs on a daily basis. One resultant outcome is that the analysis has focused more on the content of the discussion than is common in most CA studies.

There is therefore obviously a need for further research which focuses on similar kinds of positioning and discursively co-constructed identity in natural conversations in which the researcher is not a co-participant. If I hadn't questioned Erika's use of the word *haafu* in turn 19, the talk would probably have continued without any noticeable challenge to the credibility of the referent. This does not invalidate the findings, but it does place the onus on the researcher to acknowledge his part in the discussion. In this case, in fact, the author's participation elicited a demonstration of the different nuances the word *haafu* holds for multi-ethnic Japanese teenagers and native-English speaking parents.

The terms the group listed represent only some of the words that are currently used in Japan to describe multi-ethnic Japanese. The teenagers in this study were able to identify a variety of racial epithets and euphemisms that are used about them in both English and Japanese, even if they disagreed about the strength that these words hold. It would seem that most of the participants involved in this study identify themselves as *haafu*, but don't always appreciate being positioned that way by others. As Japanese is their first language, they are no doubt acutely aware of the generally positive intentions Japanese people have when using the word. The referent *haafu* is inescapable for multi-ethnic people in Japan, and to varying degrees most tend to learn to live with it as a label, particularly from those they don't know well. Parents who accept the word *haafu* often prefer not to make an issue out of it for the

sake of their children's self-concepts (Singer, 2000). Like the word *gaijin*, it is not always intended to be derogatory, even if it is taken that way.

However, this does not mean that all multi-ethnic Japanese will identify with the referent *haafu*. Researchers must respect that ownership of these terms is dependent on group membership, and while some participants may call themselves *haafu*, this does not automatically afford outsiders the right to use this term. Many multi-ethnic Japanese people who recognize the negative connotations of this word are becoming increasingly reluctant to have their identities imposed on them by others (Life, 1995; Murphy-Shigematsu, 1997). Ideally, the future will see the decline of terms based on binary notions of ethnicity, such as "double" and "half", in recognition of the dynamic and shifting in-between culture which is closer to the experience of not only multi-ethnic people, but perhaps all of us who have access to more than one worldview.

## NOTES

1. This paper is based on data presented by the author at the 4th International Symposium on Bilingualism at Arizona University, U.S.A. on May 2nd, 2003. It appears here in a revised version.
2. As indicated in the text by parentheses, *hotto shite*, is an uncertain transcription. It may be Erika's idiosyncratic adaptation of *hotto oite*, meaning "leave me alone", or it may be a novel expression of disbelief ("huh?") combined with a breathed laugh. I have played the recording to numerous native Japanese speakers, including a group of CA specialists in a data session, and although there was disagreement as to the actual words, all identified the utterance as casual teenage Japanese speech.
3. See Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson, 1974, for explanation of the term transition relevance place.

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