

The Identity of Joseonjok (Korean-Chinese) Migrants in Japan: The Influence of Multilingualism and Transnationalism on Self-Identification

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在日朝鮮族のアイデンティティ

—マルチリンガリズムとトランスナショナリズムが自己認識に及ぼす影響—

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Abstract

Joseonjok are the descendants of Koreans who migrated from the Korean Peninsula to Northeast China in the late 1800s and the early 1900s (Seol and Skrentny 2004). Since the 1980s under the auspices of Japanese government's "100,000 International Students Plan" Joseonjok as a sub-group of Chinese migrants have moved to Japan to seek out better life chances. During the course of their settlement in Japan, their identity has become multilayered because of their Chinese nationality and Korean ethnicity as well as their Japanese cultural competencies. Furthermore, their identity has been shaped by their multilingual and transnational experiences. To implement this research, I have reviewed Joseonjok researches performed in China, Japan, and South Korea. I have used qualitative methods combining in-depth interviews and participant observation which have been performed in the Tokyo area since 2016. I have also performed on-line surveys through the media sites of Joseonjok communities. The main purpose of this research is to examine how multilingualism and transnationalism affect the construction of Joseonjok identity in Japan. Joseonjok's trilingual ability and their transnational activities among the three countries have affected the formation of the distinctive identity as an ethnic minority in Japan. The multilingual and transnational identity of Joseonjok in Japan keeps evolving through the process of formation, construction, and negotiation.

Key Words : Migration, Identity, Joseonjok, Diaspora, Ethnicity, Transnationalism, Multilingualism

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1. Introduction

Joseonjok¹ are the descendants of Koreans who migrated from Korea to the Northeast China in the late 1800s and early 1900s (Seol and Skrentny 2004). They are often viewed as a model minority among 55 minorities in China with regard to educational and economic level (Jin 2008; Lee and Lee 2015). Approximately 2 million Joseonjok used to reside in Northeast China. However, the number has decreased sharply due to their internal migration from rural to urban areas as well as the external migration to other countries since the mid-1980s (Yoon 2006). Most Joseonjok go to South Korea (henceforth; Korea), their ethnic homeland, but some of them have arrived in Japan. They are legally registered as Chinese in Japan with their Chinese passports. However, Joseonjok in Japan simultaneously possess Korean ethnicity and Chinese nationality (Seol and Skrentny 2004), and further achieve Japanese cultural competence with their Japanese language skill and understanding of the social norms and values of Japan. As a consequence, the identity of Joseonjok in Japan is “floating in between Chineseness and Koreaness with cosmopolitan outlook by adding Japaneseness.” (Lee and Lee 2015, p.37).

Indeed, identity has become an important topic in the field of migration studies and beyond. Bhugra and Becker note “that racial, cultural, and ethnic identities form part of one’s identity, and identity will change with development at a personal as well as at a social level along with migration and acculturation” (Bhugra and Becker 2005, p.18). During their migration process, the identity of Joseonjok has been reconstructed and transformed by the social, economic, cultural, and political shift throughout their new life in Japan. Joseonjok in Japan can be categorized as one distinct ethnic minority who speak the Korean language although they grew up in China as Chinese nationals and then arrived in Japan as Chinese immigrants. La Barbera (2015) indicates that migrants’ identities are fluid and multiple. Joseonjok in Japan, too, have fostered a multifaceted and fluid identity which was inherited from Korea and constructed in China, and later blended with Japanese cultural fabric. During the course of their life in Japan, Joseonjok have typically constructed their multilingual and transnational identity and they have become competitive “hybrid transnational citizens” (Lee and Lee 2015, p.37). In this context, I argue that the identity formation of Joseonjok in Japan is significantly affected by their attributes of multilingualism and transnationalism.

There has been prolific research among South Korean scholars regarding the issues of the Joseonjok diasporas’ return migration and resettlement in the Korean society (Yoon 2006). However, the existing Joseonjok research in Japan is quite scarce because the scale of Joseonjok migration is not large enough to catch the eyes of the researchers in Japan. There is only limited research done by Joseonjok scholars acting in Japan. To fill in gaps in existing literature, I conducted my research to examine how Joseonjok in Japan have constructed their identity. Through interviews, participant observation as well as a literature review, I investigate the multifaceted identity of Joseonjok in Japan with a focus on how trilingual ability and triangular transnational activities among the three nations of China, Japan, and Korea affect their identity expressions.

This research attempts to make a contribution to migration studies especially in the area of

Northeast Asia where it is believed that there have been fewer studies in comparison with North America and Europe (Massey et al.1998; Yamashita 2008). Despite an increase in migrant studies going on in Northeast Asia, not much research has yet been done in Japan in relation to Joseonjok migration phenomena. However, the topic of Joseonjok identity is important because it covers the interrelated migration issues arising among the three nations in Northeast Asia.

1.1 Research Questions

This research focuses on Joseonjok who have immigrated to Japan. The primary purpose is to investigate the influence of multilingualism and transnationalism on the identity of Joseonjok in Japan. It addresses the following questions.

- How do Joseonjok construct and negotiate their identity as ethnic Koreans with Chinese nationality in the host society of Japan?
- How do multilingualism and transnationalism affect their identity formation?
- What are the distinctive attributes of Joseonjok identity in Japan?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Joseonjok in Japan: the Invisible Minority²

Joseonjok have migrated to Japan along with the Chinese student migration wave that began in the late 1980s under the auspices of Prime Minister Nakasone's "100,000 International Student Plan."³ Liu-Farrer (2011) shows that this student flow from China to Japan is an "educationally channeled labor migration" (2011, p.3). Japan attracts Joseonjok because "the Chinese and Korean(s) have relative advantage of cultural affinity with Japan, at least in terms of language" (Liu-Farrer 2015, p.130). Kwon (2015), on the other hand, indicates that Japan is the most accessible and cost-efficient country in which Joseonjok can start a new life. Furthermore, many Joseonjok manage to secure corporate employment in Japan because their trilingual ability enables them to reinforce their business networks in China, Japan, and even Korea. Through this linguistic advantage, Joseonjok in Japan have been able to establish various social capitals in the academic field, IT businesses, trades, and global entrepreneurship (Kwon 2015). Naturally, their success stimulates more Joseonjok migration into Japan. As Levitt and Jaworsky (2007) mentioned, "doing well in the host country can favorably affect the states of transnational communities within both the receiving society and the broader global system" (Glick Schiller & Levitt 2006; Patterson 2006; Levitt & Jaworsky 2007, p.144). Indeed, successful Joseonjok in Japan have become the role models among educated Joseonjok back in China.

Although Joseonjok in Japan have distinct cultural and ethnic characteristics, they are legally included in the category of Chinese in the statistics of the Japanese government. Furthermore, most of the Joseonjok in Japan hold Chinese passports, and they use Chinese names in such official documents (Kwon 2015). In fact, their names are transformed from Korean names to be pronounced like Chinese characters. As a consequence, Joseonjok are not visible as an independent minority in

Japanese society. In fact, the number of Joseonjok is far less than that of Chinese migrants in Japan and it cannot be officially verified. An unofficial estimate has placed the Joseonjok population at around 60,000 to 70,000 people (Overseas Korean Times 2016).

On the one hand, Lee and Lee (2015) illustrate who Joseonjok are by depicting their dual identity with the traits of Koreaness and Chineseness. The dual identity of Joseonjok in Japan is an essential elements of its complexity. Lee and Lee further account for Joseonjok's complex diasporic experiences in China and Japan which have been ensued from their "twice migration"⁴ from Korea to China and then to Japan. They also point out that "the meanings of being Korean-Chinese in Japan will continuously change by negotiating and reconstructing their multiple identities in a double diasporic and deterritorialized context" (Lee and Lee 2015, p.37). On the other hand, Kwon (2015), in particular, elucidates the invisibility of Joseonjok in Japan by revealing the fact that they have not constructed their physical entity as their ethnic enclaves in Japan. Instead, they have formed their virtual communities through the social networks in the cyberspace. Owing to their scattered workplaces and habitats, Joseonjok in Japan do not have distinct immigrant enclaves that can be identified as collective Joseonjok diasporas.

2.2 What is the Identity of Joseonjok in Japan?

The question 'Who are Joseonjok?' is a prerequisite for investigating the identity of Joseonjok in Japan. To begin with, Joseonjok are Korean-Chinese residing in Northeast China whose ancestors migrated from Korea in the late 19th century and the early 20th century (Seol and Skrentny 2004). Since the diplomatic normalization between China and South Korea in 1992, a number of Joseonjok have moved to South Korea in pursuit of the so-called "Korean Dream"⁵. However, they realize that their identity is different from that of their South Korean compatriots, and this difference leads to discrimination in South Korean society. As a result, they form a negative identity as Korean descendants in their ethnic homeland. On the other hand, Joseonjok in Japan have a different identity compared with those in South Korea. Above all, their existence as a minority group has been concealed inside the mainstream of Chinese migrants in Japan. As was mentioned earlier, Joseonjok in Japan are treated as an 'invisible minority' in Japanese society (Kwon 2015). However, Joseonjok as Chinese migrants keep their Korean ethnicity while adapting to Japanese society. Despite the uncomfortable setting of Japanese immigration policy (Douglas and Roberts 2003), Joseonjok make the most of their multilingual and transnational competences to shape their identity in Japan.

Throughout the migration and resettlement process, the multilingual ability of Joseonjok has affected their social and economic mobility in Japanese society. Joseonjok in Japan speak at least three languages including Korean, Chinese, and Japanese, and they gain benefits from the three countries by utilizing their trilingual capacity. In this context, language is viewed not only as a means of communication but also as a medium of power (Bourdieu 1991). Lee and Lee (2015) argue that "the importance of language depends on their identity and future plan, and language is their

resource to compete in the host society and a tool for self-enhancement” (2015, p.37). They also argue that Joseonjok’s multilingual ability influences their identity reconstruction during the course of resettlement in Japan (Ibid.). However, there is a negative side of being multilingual as Joseonjok migrants in Japan. For instance, they have peculiar accents from their regional dialect when speaking the Korean language while their Chinese and Japanese language skills do not reach a high enough level to command the perfect proficiency. This negative phenomenon is called “Jack of all trades, master of none” which means someone who dabbles many things without one expertise. Be that as it may, on the positive side, the majority of Joseonjok seem to experience benefits from multilingualism. Kwon (2012) indicates that “Joseonjok in Japan have superiority in that they can speak Chinese, Korean, Japanese, and even English which broaden their business contacts in the global markets” (2012, p.76). Due to globalization, societies around the world are becoming increasingly more diverse and multilingual.

Transnationalism is one major component in constructing migrants’ identities. As Levitt (2009) indicates, “that many people maintain ties to their countries of origin at the same time as they become integrated into the countries that receive them” (2009, p.1225). Additionally, Waldinger (2003) notes that transnationalism plays a critical role in identifying the social connections between receiving and sending countries. In this sense, the transnational background of Joseonjok can be used to elucidate the identity of Joseonjok in Japan. Joseonjok, in general, entered Japan as a subgroup of Chinese students and turned into employees in the first place in Japanese job market. After a while, they often have good careers in Japan’s transnational economy. In case of Chinese migrants in Japan, becoming a transnational entrepreneur is a common aspiration (Liu-Farrer 2011, p.110), and in this context, Joseonjok migrants in Japan are no exception. The human and social capital Chinese migrants accumulate during their corporate careers are important resources that enable them to be transnational entrepreneurs (Ibid, p.113). Joseonjok are in the same shoes and they go through the same trajectory as Chinese. However, the transnational movement of Joseonjok in Japan is more diverse than that of Chinese in that Joseonjok also visit Korea for their businesses or family reunions. Transnationalism has acted as leverage for Joseonjok in Japan to gain a positive identity. It is because the transnational activities of Joseonjok give chances to upgrade their economic and social standing in Japan. As Lee and Lee (2015) point out, “Joseojok’s transnational identity will keep evolving to show cosmopolitan outlook” (p.35).

3. Methodology

In this research, I have implemented a qualitative method of in-depth interviews and participant observation through my intermittent fieldwork initiated from May 2016. I have interviewed 52 informants in the Tokyo area. I have conducted face-to-face interviews and sometimes conducted phone interviews with informants who lived at a long distance. During the course of the interviews, I put emphasis on the issues of identity in relation to multilingualism and transnationalism.

To establish the site of my fieldwork, I have been working as a voluntary teacher at a weekend

language school since 2016. This school mainly provided Korean and Chinese lessons to the children of Joseonjok in the Tokyo area on weekend basis. I made use of this school to perform my fieldwork and to interact with not only the children and their parents but also the school staff members who gave me insights to understand and experience Joseonjok's community in Japan. What's more, social media played a critical role in reconstructing Joseonjok's identity in Japan. To this end, I implemented my participant observation and qualitative research by using social networking platforms of WeChat and Facebook which proved resourceful in understanding the Joseonjok community in Japan, as well as worldwide scale of their network communities. Joseonjok in Japan formed their diasporic cyberspace and uploaded information on the topics of cultural values, current issues especially politics, economics, and business networks. They further shared the narratives of their ethnic oral histories and their literary works. Majority of them used WeChat to share important events in Japan or news about worldwide Joseonjok. They continually advertised their ethnic businesses, and spread information about job openings in Japan. I also subscribed to ethnic newspapers known as *Shimto*⁶ and *Heilong-Jiang Newspaper* (黑龍江新聞) to understand contemporary Joseonjok's migrant life in general. *Shimto News* mostly contained information and current events of Joseonjok in Japan. Above all, observing their social media gave a better understanding of Joseonjok's communities in Japan and beyond. It also provided access to the communication and social interactions with Joseonjok in the communities.

In this paper, I performed in-depth interviews with 52 Joseonjok migrants in the Tokyo area. The interviews were semi-structured to get the answers to the research questions addressed in the introduction of this paper. The main purpose of my fieldwork was to collect empirical data to substantiate my argument that multilingualism and transnationalism are the foundations of identity of Joseonjok in Japan. In fact, multilingualism and transnationalism are interrelated and these two concepts construct the basis of identity of Joseonjok in Japan. To this end, I selected 4 informants out of 52 interview pool to introduce the sample cases of multilingual and transnational issues in the identity formation of Joseonjok in Japan. Before selecting these four cases of representative informants, I classified the total informants into four category groups based on their multilingual ability and transnational mobility: 1) Informants with positive multilingual identity (26 informants), 2) Informants with negative multilingual identity (4 informants), 3) Informants engaging in transnational employment or entrepreneurship (19 informants), 4) Informants practicing familial transnationalism (37 informants). Most of the informants responded to the two issues of multilingualism and transnationalism simultaneously. However, there were some informants who did not show any responses to either one of the cases or to both cases of inquiries.

According to the numbers shown above the informants inherently indicate that multilingualism is a prevalent phenomenon among Joseonjok in Japan. At the same time, the numbers also represent that Joseonjok in Japan actively engage in transnational activities. Under this situation, the data from the four informants cannot present the full-fledged findings of this research. However, the sample cases of the four informants in the limited space of this paper are relevantly arranged to represent the rest

of the informants in the same categories. Through the interview analysis, I explain the interrelated issues of multilingualism, transnationalism, and identity arising among Joseonjok in Japan.

4. Findings

Through the findings of my fieldwork, I was able to see the multifaceted identity of Joseonjok in Japan. To begin with, they hold the traits of Korean descendants and the unique characteristics of Korean-Chinese as well as the Japanese cultural traits in their migrant life. I also observed the phenomenon of the hybridization of the identity blended with the different elements of the three countries. The dual identity of Joseonjok is inherited from the “natal homeland China and ethnic homeland Korea” (Song 2014, p.445). Then, the dual identity turns into a triple identity when they resettle in the host country of Japan. Moreover, tied with multilingualism and transnationalism the identity of Joseonjok in Japan has even evolved into a more multifaceted one. Joseonjok in Japan have evolved into one distinct immigrant group among diverse ethnic minorities in Japan, despite their invisibility. After all, they are expected to be independent of mainstream Chinese immigrants.

They found their occupational niche in the Japanese job market thanks to the multilingual demand of the globalized economy. They also make the most of their transnational activities to vitalize their businesses. As a result, the two functions of multilingualism and transnationalism have affected their identity formation and the primary focus of this research is to examine this phenomenon.

4.1 How does multilingualism affect the identity of Joseonjok in Japan?

The relationship between identity and multilingualism is a consequential phenomenon of migration. Joseonjok migration into Japan also brought about the issues of identity relating to their multilingualism. Multilingualism has become an indispensable element in developing the positive identity among Joseonjok in Japan (Lee and Lee 2015). In the literature review of this paper, I have already pointed out the positive aspects of Joseonjok identity relating to multilingualism. Yet, there is still a drawback in multilingual aspects of Joseonjok in Japan. While some highly educated Joseonjok enjoy the trilingual capacity in Japan, others suffer from language barriers with Japanese and Chinese, as well as standard Korean. More seriously, there is a tendency that the second-generation Joseonjok in Japan are likely to develop semilingualism⁷ which causes language deficit in their bilingual circumstances between family and school. While arranging my interview samples regarding multilingualism, I classified my informants into two groups based on their multilingual capacity. One group identified themselves as superior multilinguals while the other group identified themselves as inferior semilinguals. I selected two informants out of my interview pool to reveal their identities relating to multilingualism in a respective perspective.

One informant during my fieldwork expressed his favorable multilingual background as follows:

I didn't have difficulties learning Japanese in China. First of all, its grammar is similar to that of Korean and there are many Chinese characters in Japanese. Since I am one of Joseonjok, who are familiar with Korean and Chinese, learning Japanese was a piece of

cake. You know, Han Chinese are not as good at understanding the Japanese grammar as Joseonjok and have thick accents when they speak Japanese. [...] In this respect, I am so blessed being Joseonjok who can master Japanese so quickly. For this reason, I can be proud of myself for being good at three languages in Japanese society. This is so beneficial for me to work with people from all of the three countries.

(Goo, Male, 46)

As is shown, Goo identifies himself as Joseonjok in a positive manner because he speaks three languages. The reason he can quickly master Japanese is in that he attended Korean ethnic minority schools in Jilin Province in China for his secondary education. Classes in Korean ethnic minority schools are conducted through bilingual curriculums in Korean and Chinese. These schools also provide Japanese as their foreign language course, which allow Joseonjok to take advantage of linguistic proximity of the cognate languages of Korean and Japanese. In this sense, Goo is proud of himself to be Joseonjok, and he seems to make the most of his trilingual ability in his new life in Japan. Lee and Lee (2015) demonstrate that Joseonjok's multilingual skill serves as an integral resource for their survival tool to compete in the host society of Japan. In a way, Goo constructed his positive migrant identity through his multilingual ability.

On the other hand, the other informant showed a somewhat different view on multilingual identity as follows:

I think Joseonjok in Japan mostly can speak Chinese and Japanese in addition to Korean. But people like us have problems in commanding these three languages. To tell the truth, we don't command Chinese as well as Han Chinese. Our Korean isn't good enough to command standard Korean as South Koreans due to the strong accents from our dialects. Our Japanese isn't good either from the start. After all, we have deficiency in all these three languages. Our low language skill makes us feel inferior as Joseonjok in Japan. [...] And we don't know who we really are in this foreign land. Sometimes, I feel like I am an orphan without a home. I am floating all over the places like a gypsy.

(Naye, Female, 37)

Naye illustrated a basic dilemma of being Joseonjok in Japan during the interview and admitted that some of Joseonjok including herself could not proficiently speak Korean and Chinese to say nothing of Japanese. Thus, she became semilingual, and this explains her complex and ambivalent identity. She feels inferiority to the others in Japan due to the linguistic deficiency. While highly-educated Joseonjok enjoy multilingual ability in Japan, some low-educated Joseonjok like Naye suffer from inferior language status. She regrets that she did not have a strong educational background in China. In this situation, she is planning to naturalize to be a Japanese citizen because she does not want her daughter to experience the identity struggle and get bullied as a foreigner in the Japanese school. Currently, her daughter, Minji, attends a preschool and Minji's Japanese classmates often tease her because of her low Japanese language ability. Naye wants her daughter to acquire the perfect language of Japanese from early childhood. Furthermore, Naye also wants her

daughter to speak Korean as well as Chinese. She wants to make her daughter a perfect multilingual who can benefit from multilingual competency in this globalized world.

4.2 How does transnationalism affect the identity of Joseonjok in Japan?

The identities of transnational migrants are complex and hybrid. The relationship between identity and transnationalism is also a consequential phenomenon of migration. By maintaining the connection between the place of origin and the new settlement, migrants foster dual identities from the two spanned countries. Joseonjok in Japan, however, possess triple identity due to their double diasporic experiences accumulated both in China and in Japan. Transnationalism is a distinctive phenomenon which prevails among Joseonjok migrants in Japan. It acts as one of the major constituents leading Joseonjok's migrant life in the host society of Japan. As a subdivision of Chinese migrants, Joseonjok show a similar line of transnational activities by forging and maintaining contacts back in China as Chinese migrants do in Japan. The fast developing transnational economy in Northeast Asia provides many chances of entrepreneurship to Joseonjok in Japan. On the whole, the transnational life betwixt and between 'here' and 'there' (Yamashita 2008) has become a trend of lifestyle among many of Joseonjok in Japan. I categorized my informants into two groups based on their transnational activities. The first group described themselves as Chinese nationals due to their transnational attachment to their homeland China. They frequently visit China for their businesses and family reunions. The other group displayed family backgrounds in which relatives mostly recovered South Korean nationality. They showed strong attachment to Korean ethnicity. They often visited their family, and sometimes engaged in business in South Korea.

Regarding transnational phenomenon of Joseonjok in Japan one of the informants I interviewed mentioned his experience as follows:

I have managed this Kimchi manufacturing company since last year. The headquarters is in Qingdao, and the CEO is Joseonjok, my *senpai* who is an alumnus from the same school in China. They are building a new Kimchi manufacturing facility in my hometown of Yanbian soon. I am in charge of the Japanese branch. I go on business trips to China to attend meetings and observe factories. When I visit China, my heart is still there with tons of nostalgia and emotions. The reason why I am doing this business is that I want to emphasize and appeal my ethnic identity as Joseonjok in the Japanese business world. I tell Japanese people that I am an ethnic Joseonjok from China and I am different from South Koreans. As a Kimchi businessman, I can tell the difference between Joseonjok Kimchi, and South Korean Kimchi because they use different vegetables and spices from different climates. I am not only selling the product itself to consumers in Japan, but I really want to introduce our ethnic culture to Japan through the taste of Joseonjok Kimchi. I want to stand out as a cultural messenger of our ethnic group. I feel thankful for my old home in China and the new home in Japan. I have my one foot in China and the other in Japan.

(Chen, Male, 37)

Chen demonstrated the role of transnational migrants who “provide access to resources across national borders” (Yoon 2017, p.397). Thus, he traveled back and forth to China to run his business and bring new resources to Japan by keeping social contacts in China. When he introduced himself to Japanese people, he identified himself as Joseonjok with Chinese nationality, not as Korean because he was educated in China and affected by Chinese norms and values. He explained that Korean ethnic schools translated Han Chinese curriculum into the Korean language, so he also learned Chinese ideology. As a result, the curriculum influenced by Chinese-style socialism, was different from that of South Korean education. Although he ran his business in Japan, he still defined himself as a Chinese ethnic minority and emphasized his Chinese nationality. He was willing to bridge transnational businesses between China and Japan, and further act as an intermediary by filling the cultural gaps between China and Japan. In a way, his identity is spanned between the two countries with his transnational activities.

One other informant also talked about her transnational life between the country of origin and country of settlement as follows:

My husband owns his business in Shanghai. So, my husband and I travel back and forth from Tokyo to Shanghai frequently. When I am really busy, I send my son, Minho, to Shanghai to spend time with his dad. It makes him see how Tokyo and Shanghai are different. I also want him to get used to Chinese culture and language. My husband conducts trading business between China and Japan. I hope my husband’s business will thrive. I can say that my home ground is Tokyo since my workplace is here, but I am planning to send my son to an international school in Shanghai. I think the educational system in China is better for him to be a global citizen. In fact, there are some problems in Japanese education. As an overseas Korean, I get angry to see how Japan deals with historical conflicts with Korea. Anyway, my parents and some of my siblings live in Korea. They are all scattered in Suwon, Incheon, and even in Jeju Island. The other ones live in Shanghai, too. To see my family, I often fly to Incheon Airport and have a family reunion in Korea. Then, I go to Shanghai to see other family members. Isn’t it a small world?

(Jisoo, Female, 46)

Jisoo worked for an American company in Tokyo as a life insurance consultant. She was born and raised up in Heilongjiang and attended Joseonjok ethnic schools. Then, she went to a college as Japanese major and worked at a Japanese firm in Shanghai, meeting her Han Chinese husband there and becoming a long-distance couple. After that, she went to a graduate school in Japan to study management and temporarily went back to China to give birth to her son. At the time of this research, she lived in Tokyo with her son and her Han Chinese husband ran a trading company in Shanghai. Her family members move back and forth from Tokyo to Shanghai on a regular basis. Unlike other informants, she confidently described herself as an overseas Korean, not as a Chinese national. She told me that her parents were born in Seoul and moved up to Northeastern China. Her parents had a strong impact on her identity formation as an overseas Korean. Moreover, most of her

family members moved to Korea by recovering their South Korean citizenship. Their life in Korea was more affluent than their life back in China. For her son's education, Jisoo was planning to send him to an international school in Shanghai and also summer camps in Seoul for studying Korean. In fact, she freely crossed the three national borders of Japan, China, and Korea to see her family. She told me that she did not want her son Minh to grow up as a Japanese national and encouraged him to enjoy transnational experiences as a global citizen. During the interview, she revealed her positive identity uplifted by the transnational opportunities which arose from being a Joseonjok migrant in Japan.

4.3 Multilingualism and Transnationalism as foundations of Joseonjok's Identity

Through the literature review and the data from my fieldwork, I observed that Joseonjok in Japan made the most of their multilingual capacity and transnational activity to enhance their social and economic status in the host society of Japan. They resorted to the transnational niche job markets for their employment or transnational entrepreneurship by exploiting their multilingual ability (Kwon 2012).

Multilingualism affects the identity formation of Joseonjok in Japan. Highly educated Joseonjok tend to identify themselves as superior migrants in Japan due simply to their trilingual ability of Chinese, Korean, and Japanese. Furthermore, the growing demand of multilingual speakers in the global economy has positively affected their identity formation in Japan. In this light, multilingualism empowers Joseonjok in Japan to overcome their marginality in the "non-immigrant country of Japan" (Roberts 2013, p.208).

On the other hand, the transnational activity of Joseonjok in Japan has also acted as an indispensable element of their identity formation. The trajectory of their transnational activity is more diverse than that of other minority groups in Japan because their movements involve among the three countries of China, Japan, and South Korea. As a consequence, Joseonjok in Japan take advantage of their diverse transnational mobility in securing their employment and businesses in this globalized world today.

Multilingualism and transnationalism have substantially contributed to overcoming their marginality and securing their stable migrant life in Japan. As a consequence, the majority of Joseonjok in Japan have formed their positive identity as newcomers in Japan although there are small number of Joseonjok who do not carry their positive identity because of their low function of multilingual ability and transnational mobility. Overall, the hybrid identity of Joseonjok in Japan is complex and multifaceted. Thus, their transnational mobility coupled with their multilingual function has formed their distinctive identity as ethnic Koreans with Chinese nationality under the influence of Japanese culture and norms.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

How do Joseonjok reconstruct and negotiate their identity while living in Japan? How do Joseonjok in Japan identify themselves with their multilingual and transnational traits? These

questions have provided the constant impetus for me to investigate the issues regarding the Joseonjok migration and their identity in the host society of Japan. More specifically, the question “How do multilingualism and transnationalism influence the self-identification of Joseonjok in Japan?” contrived the main subject to be discussed in this paper.

More than anything else, being multilingual migrants largely impacted the identity of Joseonjok in Japan. Practically, their multilingualism has empowered them to get over their marginality in the closed society of Japan which is considered to have “no official immigration policy” (Roberts 2013, p.208). They exclusively make use of the benefits of trilingual ability which enables them to compete in Japanese corporate world and international business arena in East Asia. The increasing volume of the trade among Korea, China, and Japan constantly necessitates the competent multilinguals who can serve as go-betweens. In this sense, Joseonjok, undoubtedly, are indispensable agents in the global market in East Asia. Thus, many of them have a sense of superiority regarding their multilingual capacity (Kwon 2015). However, some of Joseonjok in Japan have experienced an identity struggle because of low self-esteem inherited from semilingual inferiority rooted in their low-level of education. These individuals usually engage in low-quality jobs since they do not have multilingual ability let alone the professional skills, to perform other work. Thus, they suffer from their negative identity as low status migrants in Japan.

Transnationalism also plays an integral role in constructing the identity of Joseonjok in Japan. Many of highly-educated Joseonjok in Japan accomplish the “upward mobility of transnational entrepreneurs” (Zhou 2004: Yoon 2017; p.393). Above all, the transnational practices of these Joseonjok in Japan have been used to overcome their marginality as migrants in Japan. Indeed, they make the most of their transnational practices to uplift their migrant position in Japan. They are able to conduct transnational businesses between Japan and China as well as Korea. They also have a tendency to visit their family in China or in South Korea. In particular, some Joseonjok families are scattered in the three countries by forming triangular family networks. For example, one of my informants said, “My parents are in Seoul working hard for money, my brother is in Shanghai doing his business and I am in Tokyo studying in a college. We are all a transnational family” (interview informant).

As Duff et al. point out “Japan is shrinking. If trends continue, the working-age population will by 2050 drop from 81 million to 49 million” (Duff et al., 2008, p.1). The aging population and declining demographic base of Japan generate the need for a foreign labor force, which entails a wave of migration to this non-immigrant country. As a consequence, Japan, with its lack of an adequate official immigration policy, has to accommodate a legitimate way for foreign workers to immigrate to Japan. In this context, I hypothesize that more and more Joseonjok will choose to come to Japan for their better careers, which means the migration stream of Joseonjok will continue. However, the early stage of the Joseonjok migration has been blurred in recent years because of the newly emerged wave of low-skilled Joseonjok. This group of new Joseonjok does not have the multilingual ability and transnational business skills to achieve the same level of upward mobility as their

predecessors. They may go through a different process of identity formation compared with those early arrived Joseonjok. In this context, the study about these new Joseonjok should be carried out in my future research. I will also put a focus on the identity issues based on multilingualism *vis-à-vis* semilingualism arising among the second generation Joseonjok in Japan.

In sum, the main question of this research was to ask how multilingualism and transnationalism affected the formation of Joseonjok identity in Japan. To this end, I have endeavored to answer the question throughout this research by investigating previously researched sources and performing original fieldwork on the identity of Joseonjok in Japan. It is justifiable that the identity of Joseonjok in Japan which has been hybridized with Koreaness, Chineseness, and Japaneseness can be explained as “complex multidimensional and multi-level identity, fluid in time and trajectory” (Pries 2004, p.10). With all those complex elements of identity, Joseonjok in Japan still strive to enhance their identity by making use of their multilingual capacity and transnational functioning. Thus, the larger part of Joseonjok in Japan tend to identify themselves as global Joseonjok who can perform multilingual and transnational tasks in this globalized world. After all, Joseonjok in Japan will continue to exist as “transnational multilinguals” (Duff 2015, p.64) acting as intermediaries in Northeast Asia, and their identity will keep evolving through the process of “formation, construction, and negotiation” (La Barbera 2015, p.3).

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Notes

- ¹ Joseonjok is a Korean pronoun representing Korean-Chinese people living in the northeastern provinces of China (Liaoning, Jilin, Heilongjiang). They are called *Chaioxianzu* in China and *Chosenzoku* in Japan. In this paper, I use the term Joseonjok representing all Korean-Chinese whatever area they live in the world.
- ² A group whose minority status is not always immediately visible is considered an invisible minority. Joseonjok are termed as an invisible minority because they are mainly counted as Chinese in Japan. Their ethnicity, in this sense, is disregarded as an independent one. Negatively, the lack of visibility may make it challenging for Joseonjok to organize their salient identity in Japanese society.
- ³ The 100,000 International Students Plan was decided under Prime Minister Nakasone’s government. The plan “set a target in 1983 to increase the number of international students enrolled in Japanese universities and colleges to 100,000 by the beginning of 21st century” (Ota 2003: 27). The principal intention was to foster mutual understanding between Japan and foreign countries, especially in East Asia. However, the true intention was to internationalize Japanese universities, and the plan was eventually used to invite highly educated workforce in Japanese labor market.
- ⁴ Twice migrants refer to those immigrants who re-migrated to other countries from their settlement countries to which their ancestors had originally migrated from their ancestral homeland (Bhuchu 1985; Min and Park 2014).
- ⁵ After the 1988 Seoul Olympics, Joseonjok in China viewed South Korea as a land of opportunity. The income

disparity was so huge that they could earn more than 10 times their Chinese income in Korea. Even highly educated young people were willing to work in 3D industries to realize their Korean Dream.

- ⁶ Shimto is the most frequently viewed community portal site among Joseonjok in Japan. This is the most powerful media that influence Joseonjok life in Japan (Kwon 2015). It shows every aspect of Joseonjok life, from political concerns to trivial matters of lost dogs. It is a virtual center for Joseonjok community.
- ⁷ Semilingualism was introduced by a Swedish researcher Hansegard N.E. in 1975. It is a phenomenon when people speak several languages at a low level of development, with evident deficiencies in all languages. (Hinnenkamp 2005).

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