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Title: About the Author: I am currently a sophomore in East Asian Languages and Cultures (EALC) with a focus in Chinese.

Keywords: Chinese, Japanese, Language, Neoliberalism, Youth, Flexible Capital, Globalization, Economics

Abstract: For our project we sought to find if Chinese is replacing Japanese as the East Asian business language just as the economy is shifting from Japan towards China. We limited our research pool to non-heritage undergraduates at the advanced level of Japanese and Chinese languages. We conducted eight interviews, four on Chinese learners and four on Japanese learners, and found their motivations behind studying these languages. We also sought to discover if their motivations reflected common trends of neoliberalism. Overall, our findings matched our hypothesis and there was a division of motivations: Chinese was learned for business purposes while Japanese was learned for entertainment purposes.


"The Organization Kid" by David Brooks and "The Best Job in Town" by Katherine Boo begins to help us see the lives of youth today. Both articles focus on children of the next generation that will be running our country, otherwise known as the "Millennials". "The Organization Kid" begins with Brooks heading to Princeton University to see the future leaders of our country. After getting the names of a few exceptional students from the faculty he emailed them to set up meetings. The next morning he noticed that he received responses at odd hours of the night. Because of this he began questioning the students in these meetings when they slept at night. Upon asking this he got much more than what he was in for. He was told about the average college student’s schedule which lasted usually from around 7:00am to 2:00am, leaving only five hours to sleep. Although these students had such long days, socializing with friends and having time for them was not part of their curriculum (unless they could somehow schedule it in advance, of course). Concerned, he began to research why this generation was so different than by looking at a child's infancy, elementary school life, playtime, and adolescence. Upon talking to the college students, he found that they are constantly trying to advance and outperform expectations in order to get a better job in the future. “It’s not the stick that drives them on, it’s the carrot” (Brooks). Students are not only completely submissive to authority but go to great lengths to impress. From the moment they are
first conceived parents begin buying books and mind-enhancing tools to help begin development as a fetus and infant. Popular magazines today push the issue with articles to help your child excel physically and intellectually from young ages. Toys and books are no longer just geared at being fun, but at cultivating children’s’ minds. I think Brooks sums up the new view on children that parents now have when he states “Your child is the most important extra-credit arts project you will ever undertake”. Annually elementary schools are becoming more and more difficult. Children increasing more often are being put on Ritalin to keep from disturbing other classmates and to help them focus, my eleven year old brother being one of them. Since elementary school is becoming harder, high schools must follow, leaving less and less time for kids to just be kids. Fewer children are watching TV and playing outside while more are spending time studying. Afterwards, these children end up at colleges like Princeton where they have absolutely no time for anything other than school and work. Brooks talks about old Princeton where “in the social sphere the really important lessons were learned”. These experiences shaped people and gave them their moral fiber. I being a millennial am definitely experiencing this phenomenon and completely agree with Brooks. But it ends soon right? I have to just get through college and then I can relax and have a social life, right? Boo’s article “The Best Job in Town” discusses life after college. It is about Office Tiger, an outsourcing company in Chennai, India started by two Princeton graduates. It walks through the daily life of Harish Kumar. Harish teaches future employees how to use Western computer tools. Harish now works extremely long hours, resulting in barely seeing his family or community and being unable to start a family of his own. Office Tiger along with other outsourcing companies are completely changing his community, but is it for better or worse? Yes, Office Tiger does give many deserving, well-qualified citizens jobs but at low pay and long hours. It is also creating a larger gap between the lower class and the middle class due to the fact of the large demand for educations. Schools have raised their prices leaving the lower class unable to attend. They currently have jobs as stone crushers and other labor jobs but technology will soon take those away. Where will they turn to after that? The two co-C.E.O.s of Office Tiger, Joseph Sigelman and Randy Altschuler, started this company on a good economic thought. By outsourcing to India they would give jobs, in some cases, to more deserving, highly qualified people who would do a better, more efficient job for less money, but did they realize that they would affect their community so greatly and take away jobs of tons of Americans? This goes back to what Brooks had discussed. Schools are no longer teaching moral lessons, just by-the-book educations. Parents are also following these recent trends. Children never have to learn if something is wrong or right on their own, they just have to memorize definitions and
theories and be able to solve complex mathematical problems. Highly qualified, efficient, profitable machines, is this what we want our future leaders to be?

Response
Paper #2:


This weeks readings focus primarily on post-war South Korea and Japan. They speak of government influences on women and on the economy and how it progressed after the war. Both governments relied greatly on commerce. Since women took care of household affairs, the articles discussed their actions and how the were looked at in society. While men worked and made the income for the household, they slipped by these critics.

Uno discusses the death of ryosai kenbo or "Good wife, wise mother". Ryosai kenbo is a 'slogan' started by prominent men after the Sino-Japanese War at the end of the nineteenth century to define what women's proper role in imperial Japan. Under this, women were to take care of all affairs in the home and to properly raise children. This is similar to Rofel's description of women before their liberation in China. The work place was not a proper place for women to be, but only during their marriage and childrearing years. Gordon discusses how Japan had the greatest "M curve" of any major capitalist society. This curve describes women's "leave" during these years. Most employers supported or even insisted upon this. While women in China were liberated so they could work freely without being looked down upon, I
feel in Japan it is different. Women believed it to be there "natural" role to be ryosai kenbo. It was looked down upon if a woman did not marry and have children. They were to stay at home and regulate all affairs and take care of the children, whether they wanted to have them or not, while men worked increasingly long hours and had less and less involvement at home. Later they began to resist this but by means of forming women's associations or groups. These groups were to get women more involved with politics and liberate them from other terms of ryosai kenbo. However, these groups were advocates for things that still fell under ryosai kenbo, such as better food quality, children's educations, and other things that related to ryosai kenbo.

In South Korea, women also took care of households and children. After the war, North Korea had a supporting climate for rice farming and an abundant amount of valuable natural resources to keep its economy alive while South Korea's climate did not greatly support rice patties nor did they have the amount of natural resources that the North had. General Park believed that frugality would save South Korea's economy as well as increasing exports. While he could not legally punish anyone who wasn't frugal, he would publicly humiliate these people who did not follow his policy. This form of economics relied solely on the consumers. Without them, the economy would have never become successful. But in stark contrast to frugality, credit cards became the next big thing. Here, people were encouraged to spend, spend, spend! The "buy now, pay later" era had begun. People would consume now at the rates that they hoped they could possibly afford in the future. Credit cards were easily available, and the average person held 4 credit cards, using one to pay off another. This could have either continued economic growth or ended in a crisis. Cho calls it "two sides of one coin". It resulted in the IMF crisis of 1997. Once again, the government blamed mothers and children for the economic problems by being too "materialistic" and wanting too many unneeded items such as jewelry or expensive clothing.

In summary, both Japan and South Korean governments had a condescending view of both women and children. In the case of Japan, if mothers did not follow ryosai kenbo they were socially harassed until they conformed to the ways of the government. Later, when they received more freedom they still followed these beliefs with very few divergences. In the case of South Korea, women and children were treated in a very similar manner in regards to the IMF crisis. They were hazed towards social conformity and blamed for the economic failure in 1997. Women were treated unfairly in both societies as we have seen previously in our readings about Chinese women. While the government no longer visibly hinders women, it clearly is still is in the minds of women in today's societies.
Response

Paper #3: Week 8--Japan I: Educating Neoliberal Youth in Japan


This week's readings by Yoda and Arai dealt mainly with Japan from the 1990s up until now. They discussed the post-bubble problems of the economy, politics, and most of all, society.

In Yoda's article *A Roadmap to Millennial Japan* she looked back on Japan from after the war up to the recession to try to find and define Japan today. During Japan's period of rapid industrialization, the government, without direct state intervention, caused the economy to modernize at an extremely fast rate, which later, along with other corruptions of politics and other factors, led the state to a recession. While during this time of industrialization the population was highly disciplined, but once the economy became stagnant, society changed. These changes that Yoda touches upon deal mainly with the current subcultures, such as the "return to J", the self-destructive youth, as well as the new work ethics of the population.

Arai elaborated the modern culture of Japan further in her article *The "Wild Child" Of 1990s Japan*. She used specific examples such as Shonen A and Mononokechime to help portray society’s view on children today. The phrase “kodomo ga hen da”, or “children are turning strange”, was heard everywhere in Japan during the 1990s. Following the gruesome events executed by Shonen A, his parents (actually written by his mother) released a memoir written about their child, *Shonen A: Kono Ko wo Unde* or *Shonen A: I gave birth to this child*. In this memoir, while constantly apologizing to both the public and the parents of the elementary school victims, she continued to ask, “Where, and in what way, did we as parents, make a mistake?” Not only were the parents blamed for this event, but also the school systems, coined with the phrase “gakkyu hokai” or “collapse of classrooms”. Children were considered wild and dangerous. People no longer believe just because they were children they were innocent. The Shonen A or child crisis ranked just as high, or possibly higher than, other crises of that time in Japan, such as the Sarin nerve-gas attack on the Tokyo subway which only
happen two years prior.

Arai’s second article, *The Neo-Liberal Subject of Lack and Potential* discussed other major Japanese issues, mainly the change of the workforce. “Fureeta” is the term given to the abundant number of drifting young workers who do not have a secure job and work only as part-timers. Arai identifies this group of people as the “reserve army of labor”. Through education reforms as well as a changing of the labor force by the Japanese government, this social class is growing exponentially. The estimated four million Fureetas drift from job to job and work for lower pay than full time employees and get no benefits, which is hoped to help boost the economy and pull Japan out of its recession. These Fureetas are conceived as free-loaders, or lazy people, but in all actuality they are just not smart enough to go on to higher education and get a better job or are just not wanting to be part of the old workforce where the company is their “family”. These people want to choose what will their future will be on their own, not have the company choose for them. This growing group is becoming a huge problem because this group is increasing more and more getting hired over the regular full-time employees. This low pay that fureetas receive, as well as the people who have trouble just finding a job or are losing their jobs to fureetas, is causing just surviving in present Japan to become a major issue to society.

I believe that Japan no longer goes by the saying “The nail that sticks out gets hammered down”. The breakdown of the state, economy, and overall structure of Japan gave the population a profound sense of anxiety and uncertainty of the future, no longer uniting them but initiating individuality. They are no longer part of the company “family”. While some are turning to simply to “J” culture or children such as Shonen A turn to much more violent or self-destructing things from the pressures of the new neoliberal globalized world, society is on the decline.

**Response Paper #4:**

**Week 10- South Korea: Indeterminate Futures**


--Film. *My Generation.*

This weeks readings discuss the Korean youths futures particularly in the 1990’s to the present. Choi looks at an alternative high school (SGH)
and how the students view their education and career. Abelmann, Kim and Park take us a step further to discuss college students and how they view and are dealing with the new forms of neoliberal subjectivity in South Korea in relation to gender and class. Song translates all of these values that the Korean youth hopefully have 'self-managed' by the time of employment (if they can be employed) and shows how the government and economy play into this. The film My Generation is a visualization of the current dismal, gloomy lives of these youths.

Choi looks specifically at a few students at SGH to show that the neoliberal education in South Korea is visible in youth’s career aspirations and is widening the social gap between the lower classes and the upper classes. SGH is composed of students who for some reason or another have failed to get a ‘normal’ high school diploma but must still conform to society and at least get this ‘imitation’ diploma otherwise they will most likely not be able to find a job. Because of the current image of the creative and free-spirited student as well as the entrepreneur, these students value schooling much less than in previous years. The IMF crisis has also created this unmotivated student because “academic success is not a guarantee of future success.”(Choi) One student comments, “I’d rather earn money instead of paying [college] tuition.” At SGH, all of the students wanted three things: a career in the service sector, in the entertainment industry, and (very few wanted) an academic career. They choose these careers such as sushi chefs, hip-hop dancers, or models because the believe “nowadays money is the index against which to assess social status.” (Choi) While most secretly do want to go to college because it’s “normal” they feel as if they cannot gain access due to past mistakes or monetary/family problems. They want “quick money” without schooling. Most dream for the entertainment industry but almost all end up going to the service sector because they are “accessible rather than desirable.” (Choi) Here they earn low wages and have job insecurity, in turn they continue to stay in the lower classes, and the cycle continues.

Abelmann, Kim and Park show us great ethnographic insight into the college stage of Korean youth. Like SGH, some of these students face the dilemma of not being “name brand” or not going to one of Korea’s “brand capital” universities. While most students do not get into these “brand” colleges because they simply do not have the monetary funds (from their parents for extra schooling assistance such as after school tutoring, etc) they take full responsibility for their outcomes. The article describes the new perfect student and employee to be “creative, global, and high-tech” and “who is responsible for managing his or her own lifelong creative capital development.” The also “refuse to make a distinction between a private or personal self and a market-oriented or instrumental one." Abelmann, etc argue however that “it is [these] flexible
labor structures that jeopardize the secure futures of young people.” Due to this upbringing they constantly look for new careers where they can improve themselves.

Song goes further with this argument to show how with the IMF crisis and Kim Dae Jung the government pressed for this “new intellectual.” They wanted “people who generated commercializable ideas and information, and cultured new markets by opening their own small businesses risking instability.” The needed such things as traveling experiences, internet skills, and English so that their products/skills could be globally mobile. The government advocated self-manageability to both leave the responsibility for finding a job after the IMF crisis up to the individual as well as create jobs for other individuals by becoming entrepreneurs and starting up small businesses.

Like all of the articles, the film “My Generation” paints a gloomy picture of South Korean youth. While this couple tries everything to get out of debt and try to live honest lives, they seem to never be able to make it. The dismal attitude and glum outlook on the job market by the lower class youth is portrayed through the main characters of this documentary.

All of these articles reminded me of the necessity of English in South Korea. Does English fluency really help mobilize their products? It also reminded me of a short film that I watched about migratory workers in South Korea. These migratory workers are hired for under 2 years (because of a newly passed law trying to protect them) for unskilled labor at low wages and then disposed of after the short term project is done. Are these migratory workers being hired at these entrepreneur’s “venture” jobs instead of these jobs creating openings for Korean workers like they are supposed to?

Response Paper #5:

Response Paper #6:

Response Paper #7:

Preliminary Question: On Tuesday Professor Abelmann talked about how IEI (Intensive English Institute) was being dominated by Koreans. Sasha gave a great example about how at a table, there would be 10 Koreans, 1 India, and 1 other student. All of the Koreans would be speaking Korean and the other two students would just sit there. I’m sure all of us have noticed situations such as this around campus. I was very interested in this since I see situations like this everyday on campus in places such as the Foreign
My preliminary question is the same as Chie’s. “How do these students give meaning to studying abroad?” I wonder if learning English and spending time here in America will be used upon returning to their home, or if they are even planning to return home. While English is widely spoken, will they be speaking English in their future occupations if they do return home? How much is this experience related or unrelated to neoliberalism? Also, with such a huge portion of IEI being composed of Koreans, how often do they even branch out from their Korean friends and fully experience this American college life? Also, do the other students (non-Koreans) feel overwhelmed or segregated at IEI?

This research will be performed by interviewing students in IEI about both their studies within the program and their personal life here on campus. Also, I would like to ask them what they plan on doing after graduation and how this experience at U of I will relate to that. On top of that, why did they choose U of I? As Chie already said, the research will be limited to more proficient English speakers. This can very well be an asset to our research since graduation will probably be more imminent to them and they will have more definite plans for their future.

Interview/Ob serv. #1:

Interview #1

With the ever-shrinking job market, I was curious as to how an Advanced Korean Speaking white male would sell himself and his skills to a future employer. My interest was sparked because I wanted to know why he chose an East Asian Language over the more typical European Languages of the American Education System.

It is well-known that most high schools only offer the normal European languages. As most high school students did, my interviewee took Spanish and later placed out of it here at the University of Illinois. While taking Spanish he realized he had no interest in it whatsoever so he began to study Japanese since he didn't want something that involved a standardized alphabet. Soon he found this to be too hard so he decided to turn to Korean since "it's common knowledge that Chinese is the hardest language". He felt that he needed to learn Korean because of "globalization and all of the business relations rapidly growing with Korea".

Because of the ever globalizing world economy, he felt he needed to compete with the large number of Asian International Students
learning English. When asked why these students are here studying he replied with one word, "prestige". The Korean families he met while studying abroad in Korea his freshman summer seemed to view studying abroad at the U of I like "studying abroad at Harvard, if it was overseas, to Americans". He believes that the reason U of I seems so prestigious to Koreans is due to the fact that the university has so many connections with the few well-known colleges in Korea. He thinks U of I recognized the need for globalized education in the world before other universities did. However, he feels it is not fair for these international students because of the outrageous cost of studying at U of I. "I can study in Korea for a semester for almost the same price as tuition here, but for a Korean student to study here it is triple of what I pay. All the money being put into global advertisements is being taken straight out of their pockets". The high cost of tuition leads to what he believes is the problem of only the wealthy international students studying here. Students who study here only do so because they have the choice over less costly universities that can offer the same programs. While it is a good education, he feels they come here not because it is necessary but because they can afford the prestige. One outstanding example that he gave me was a story of one of his close Korean friends. This friend came from a wealthy Korean family, had no major, and was sent to study at U of I solely because he could afford it and it was seen as prestigious.

This is very accepted here at this university however. These students are here to study English and this is completely normal. He once again recalled his experience in Korea telling me, "Koreans are shocked when they find out I can speak Korean. I think its interesting how this does not work vice versa. Americans think it's normal that everyone can speak English regardless of nationality but when I went to Korea they were blown away and some people wouldn't even talk to me because it was too weird to them."

While he gives similar meaning to his studying abroad, his family in comparison to Korean families felt differently. He studied in Korea to develop better language skills. His family however, was everything but optimistic about him going through. He explained to me how his family was disinterested in his studies, not unreasonable since he comes from a small southern "Hicktown". Most of his family has not ever been outside of Illinois, let alone the country, so this
made them fearful for his trip abroad. In complete contrast, Korean families push for an English education.

It is clearly evident that no one is pushing him towards Korean. His enthusiasm for it is apparent. While he is not completely sure where this will take him in his future, he seems to not care. He studies Korean solely because of his interest in it. He likes the fact that he can portray ideas or feelings in Korean that are impossible to say in English. Whether he uses Korean in the workforce doesn't matter, as long as he can still use it casually. "All jobs are just jobs, not my life. They are only 8 hours of my day. What matters is my life after my day at work. I'm not going to take my job too personally, but maybe that's because of how I grew up. I don't need to buy a hummer or nothing all fancy like that… I dunno, but maybe that's because my dad drives a minivan".

At the beginning of this interview I believed that my interviewee gave answers that exemplified neoliberalistic views on globalization. This is because it seemed he recognized the fact of English as a commodity for Asians just as the Korean language was for him. Later however, his carefree nature towards the job market after graduation was in high contrast to that of "the organization kid" that we previously discussed. It is apparent that he does not feel the pressure that I feel about finding a job after college and that he is not using Korean as an advantage over those in his graduating class, who are also soon to be job-searching in the same ever-shrinking job market.

**Version #3-**

**Group Research Question:**

In David Brook's "The Organization Kid," Ann Anagnost's "Child as Value," and the A*Star Yearbook, evidence has pointed towards a heightened sense of global competition in neoliberalizing nations, which in turn focuses attention on particular skills development for children and students. Language is appreciated as one skill that is an asset for international business; Japanese has been a longstanding favorite however, due largely in part to China's meteoric economic ascent, Chinese has emerged as acontending option for students. We are interested in whether - and to what extent - non-heritage Chinese and Japanese Language learners at the University of Illinois see their language acquisition as an advantage in the global labor marketplace.
Further, we are interested in exploring the extent of involvement with East Asia that they expect to have in their future lives and careers. We are also interested in what factors outside the potential market value of a given language motivated them to begin their studies (i.e. familial influence, personal interest etc.) as well as whether or not their personal lives are culturally affected through the language learning process.

Version #2-

In Brook's "The Organization Kid," Anagnost's "Child as Value," and the A*Star Yearbook, evidence has pointed towards increased global competition in neoliberal nations, focused on skill development as a child and as a student. Language skills are one of the most important skills in international business with the longstanding favorite being Japanese, but with China's recent meteoric economic ascent, have globally savvy students begun to learn Chinese instead of Japanese as demand for Chinese language aptitude increases? Do Chinese and Japanese language learners see their learning as an advantage in the global labor marketplace, and what level of involvement with East Asia do they expect to have in their future lives and careers? By interviewing non-heritage advanced students of Chinese and Japanese on the UIUC campus, we hope to answer and explore these two questions to arrive at a more complete picture of the changing language marketplace.

Version #1-

For our group project we are trying to determine through indirectly asking both Asian and Non-Asian students (undergraduate and graduate) why they are studying/learning English or an East Asian Language (Korean, Chinese, Japanese) at the University of Illinois and how this will benefit them in the future. Does this play into the new neoliberal/globalization issues today? And also, we are going to see if there are similarities/differences in their backgrounds and if that is perhaps causing them to undergo these studies at the university. The final aspect of our research deals with how these groups of students view each other. By interviewing both Asians and Non-Asians, we would like to determine the differences (or if there are any) in their choices to study their specific language at the University of Illinois. By talking to the interviewees about their backgrounds, influences, and views on fellow
students we hope to answer all of these questions.

**EUI Links:** After searching the EUI Archives, we came upon research that directly connects with some of our questions. This study concentrates strictly on why Korean International students (primarily ESA students) have chosen the U of I for their studies as well as major influences that impacted their decision.  

Another archive that we found interesting is one that deals with Chinese students enrolled in Chinese classes in order to further their Chinese languages skills and regain language skills lost due to English being their first language. It poses the question and asks their viewpoints on maintaining their native language onto subsequent generations and if fluency in their native language is necessary. This research will help us determine the actual goals of relearning/refreshing their Chinese skills and if it’s their choice or if pressure from their parents’ generation has pushed them into enrolling in Chinese classes.  
http://www.ideals.uiuc.edu/bitstream/2142/3725/2/ResearchProcess.doc

**Interview/Ob serv. #2:**

**Interview #2**

With the rise of the Chinese language I wanted to interview an advanced speaking learner who has fully experienced school, has academically matured, and with graduation getting closer, has thought about his place in the global market.

Although he has continued his studies in the Chinese language throughout college for economic reasons (his major), he began his studies of Chinese for very different reasons. He told me when he came to U of I he wanted to study any language that wasn't European. “I was so tired of Spanish, German, stuff like that.” His friends and him all enrolled in Elementary Chinese together because it was the most different from common languages learned/spoken here in the U.S. They also wanted to learn more about Chinese culture and he felt “you can learn a lot about a culture through its language. In his economic classes here at the university a topic commonly discussed due to the increasingly globalized economy was international business, including Chinese markets and how they operate. After taking many economic classes at the university he now believes “China is the dominant market of our time.”
In his Chinese language classes he is currently studying newspapers, global issues, and current issues in China. Along with his fellow classmates, which include 4 engineers, a couple business/accounting majors, and one or two EALC majors, he is building his argumentative abilities while actively discussing these topics. Overall, all of his language courses have mainly focused on their speaking ability through talking about economic or controversial issues and having debates with opposing viewpoints. This is in high contrast to the high school studies of European languages involving how to read a map or how to catch a bus.

At first his parents were completely unsupportive until he substantiated his reasoning for studying Chinese with economic reasons. After a while they decided it was a smart decision to study Chinese and even paid for him to study abroad in China recently. He was also supported greatly by a professor here at the university who he is now great friends with. He even spent time in China with this professor who has and continues to push him to continue his studies in Chinese.

With graduation just around the corner he has several career plans in mind in places such as Hong Kong, Shanghai, and “even Tokyo wouldn’t be so bad.” He is even open to working here in the United States as long as he can use his Chinese capabilities but he definitely wants to work abroad for at least a few years before he settles down. He feels that the market is changing and “other countries will become as powerful as the US making a more even playing field”, although he is skeptical about China. After studying abroad there he feels that “there are a lot of problems they just sweep under a rug and they will come back to haunt them when they become stronger” and the world’s view shifts to them. While he thinks things are definitely changing to a more global playing field, he feels as if the U.S. will remain strong and continue to influence other countries. He feels it is no longer the West versus everyone, but he does feel as if Chinese is an strong opponent for English. However, he continued “English is everywhere. English is definitely the language of Asian Business. They are much better at English than we are at any Asian language.” He does feel that here in the US there is a huge increasing trend for Chinese. He informed me that Chicago wants Chinese to be offered at all public schools and they are now pushing more for that than any European language.

Through this interview it is apparent that this person is clearly aware of changing markets and economies (he should be since it is his major afterall). His language skills are his number one “selling point” for employers and he not only looks for job availability in the U.S., but in the world. Another way the changing economy was visible was through the conflict with his parents, where one represented the old economy while the other represented the new world economy. In his class it was easy to
see that most (including himself) were "organization kids" looking for "flexible capital" since the majority were engineers or economic/accounting majors and only one or two were EALC majors. I believe that my interviewee is definitely aware of neoliberalism and globalization and that is why he has chosen to be an “organization kid”.

**Interview #3**

In my final interview I wanted to see if this advanced Chinese speaker was as fully aware of the flexible capital Chinese language skills were for him as my last interviewee was. The answer was obvious right from the beginning.

When asked why he began studying Chinese he told me that although he just loved studying languages and cultures in general, his father had worked in the corporate world for as long as he could remember and had told him of the high demand of Chinese in the business world. Since my interviewee was majoring in International Studies with a minor in International Business, he directly enrolled in Chinese and that is why he is continuing his studies of the language to this day. He told me with these skills he would have “no worries” about getting a job upon graduation, even though he does see himself in a global playing field, because of his language advantage.

Not only did his father push him to continue studying Chinese though, so did his teachers. His teachers in the business department pushed on him the fact that China is a huge power house in the business world now and it is still growing. They stressed the fact to him that acquiring these language skills would give him a great advantage over others in business. He continued to tell me that “America’s cashed. They don’t export enough” and that the power distribution is shifting to Asian, specifically China. While he feels the power is shifting, he later adds that “the economy of the US will rise again. There are a lot of times when the economy goes up and down and this is just our generation’s time. It will correct itself.” He adds however that “countries such as China, India, and Russia will be more powerful than the last ten years but the US will still be on top.”

This is perhaps the reason that he does not care where he works, as long as he feels “welcomed.” He feels as if he has cultivated himself with Chinese culture,
but that can be argued. While studying abroad in China he did not have much
time to study the culture, just more business. He studied in Shanghai, or as he
referred to it, “the New York City of China.” He took only business classes there
where he learned about the stock market. At the University of Illinois is where he
“learned the culture.” He explained to me that in the intermediate level you learn
more about the culture then in the advanced level you learn more about politics,
society, as well as social and safety issues. He informed me that “you can’t learn a
language without learning a culture.” When I asked him to talk to me about
Chinese culture he told me about how “women are white there because they think
it’s beautiful.”

I think this is quite funny that this is what he sees as Chinese culture, since this is
not China specific whatsoever. In most Asian countries this is beauty standard.
While he does believe that he has cultivated himself with the culture, I believe
differently since this was the only thing he could tell me about the culture at the
time. It seems to me as if he is just a business machine. He began studying
Chinese, and has continued, solely for the fact that he knows it will be an
advantage, or “flexible capital”, in the global corporate world.

Group Summary of Findings

(Version #2)

Although we completed 12 interviews, due to the changing nature of our
project a few of our initial interviews have limited use with regard to our
final inquiry. We sought to discover the motivations behind non-heritage
undergraduates studying the Chinese and Japanese languages at
advanced levels. We hypothesized that Chinese is currently displacing
Japanese as the East Asian business language of choice for students
involved in a career path affected by transnational neoliberalism, while
Japanese students are increasingly learning Japanese for personal
reasons or out of a desire to work in the entertainment industry.

In accordance with our hypothesis we found that those students studying
Chinese tended to be very goal-oriented and had a very clear idea of
using Chinese as an advantage and commodity in their future careers,
much like David Brooke’s "skill enhancement" in the "Organization Kid."
Those studying Japanese who expressed an interest in entering the
entertainment industry developed their career goals over the course of
their studies rather than entering the language learning process with
them in mind. Additionally, not all of the Japanese students planned on using the language professionally. Those studying Chinese were very conscious of the "flexible capital" (Ong) they gained by learning Chinese, while, overall, Japanese students had a tendency to be less interested in business-oriented careers requiring Japanese fluency.

Interestingly both Chinese and Japanese students seeking to use their language skills professionally intend to work either in America or for an American company in Asia on a temporary basis as opposed to making a long-term commitment to working in East Asia. However, while they predominantly plan to work in America, they see themselves as global players on an internationally competitive level. In the case of the Chinese students, this may reflect an awareness of the possibility that China will supercede America economically while giving a nod to the present reality of America as the current world superpower, or simply a faith in the continued success of America.

Perhaps related to their differing motives for studying their respective languages, the Chinese students had a tendency overall to be less invested in Chinese culture whereas the Japanese students showed greater dedication to Japanese culture. We saw this through both their reactions to studying abroad and lifestyle here at the university. For instance, one Chinese student who proclaimed that he "lived by" the Chinese culture could not name a single example of Chinese culture, save for a trend among women for having pale skin. This, unfortunately, is not even specific to China, but can be seen in various East Asian cultures today. In contrast, two of the Japanese students interviewed talked enthusiastically about the myriad of ways Japanese popular culture has infiltrated their everyday lives, including an enjoyment of both traditional food and candy, reading manga, and deliberately seeking further enrichment in cultural activities.

Group Summary of Findings

Although we completed 12 interviews, but due to the changing nature of our project a few of our initial interviews have limited use in regard to our final inquiry. We sought to discover the motivations behind non-heritage undergraduates choosing to study the Chinese and Japanese languages.
In accordance with our hypothesis we found that those students studying Chinese tended to be very goal-oriented and had a very clear idea of using Chinese as an advantage and commodity in their future careers. Those studying Japanese who expressed an interest in entering the entertainment industry developed their careers goals over the course of their studies rather than entering the language learning process with them in mind. Additionally, not all of the Japanese students planned on using the language professionally. Those studying Chinese were very conscious of the flexible capital they gained by learning Chinese.

Interestingly both Chinese and Japanese students seeking to use their language skills professionally intend to work either in America or for an American company in Asia short-term as opposed to making a long-term commitment to working in East Asia. However, while they plan predominantly to work in America, they see themselves as global players on an internationally competitive level.

Perhaps related to their different motives for studying their respective languages, the Chinese students had a tendency overall to be less invested in the culture whereas the Japanese students showed greater dedication to Japanese culture. We saw this through both their reactions to studying abroad and lifestyle here at the university.

**Paper:** Ever since Japan’s economic bubble in the mid to late 1980’s Japanese has been associated with the language of business. But with Japan’s economic growth slowing rapidly alongside with China quickly becoming an economic superpower in recent years, could this language of business be shifting? We hypothesize that Chinese is currently displacing Japanese as the East Asian language of business. To discover if this is in fact true, we sought to uncover the motivations of both Chinese and Japanese language learners at the University of Illinois. We limited our interviewee pool to non-heritage undergraduates at the advanced level so they would be academically matured and would have put deep thought into their place in the global market. I will discuss the interviewees in terms of their initial enrollment, familial support, cultural involvement, as well as their future career goals.

Our findings were analyzed through comparison with articles written by Abelmann, Song, and more specifically Ong and Allison. These articles informed us of college students needing an “entrepreneur spirit” as well as “flexible labor” qualities and experience. They also emphasized the
necessity of having the qualities and skills of students entering the global job market being “mobile” by means of language. Ong more specifically discussed the disappearing national boundaries and the creation of global competitors who are less American and more globally successful. Allison also discusses the important role of “cultural capital”.

In order for us to understand the significance of these qualities we must place them into the overlying theme of neoliberalism, which was broadly discussed by Duggan and Giroux. Anagnost told us of the parental influence on today’s youth due to the “child as a sign of value”. She spoke of “high quality” children who are constantly compared on a transnational level. These children are shaped through a highly organized childhood, inside and outside of school, as talked about by Brooks in his discussion of the “Organization Kid”. Did our subjects reflect what was discussed in these articles?

The Chinese language learners and Japanese language learners were clearly separated by their initial enrollment in the class of their language. Both the Japanese and the Chinese learners however spoke of the difficulty of enrolling due to the high demand of these classes. Most of the Japanese students were highly enveloped in the popular culture of Japan, mainly manga and anime, which caused them to enroll in the Japanese language class purely due to their passion, or what can be argued, their obsession. Many of these students I would personally label as ‘Otaku’. They feel as if it is more than this however, that learning Japanese is part of their life, “maybe even the most important” part, and it is their “destiny”. The Chinese students however demonstrated a much more business-oriented academic path, stating that Chinese language acquisition would be necessary for an edge over other competitors in the global market. One interviewee cited it as his “number one selling point” to his employee. Some Chinese language students did mention a social factor, but regardless, the continuation of their studies was primarily due to the business aspect as they began to realize the important role China plays in today’s economy.

Familial support was also a very contrasting theme between the two languages’ students. Chinese students had their parents support in studying this upcoming country’s language. One student told a story of how his parents did not support him until he told them about their economic influence, which in turn caused his parents to enthusiastically support him so much that they immediately responded, “Do you want to study abroad?” and subsequently paid for him to do so. Another Chinese learner’s father was involved in the corporate world and constantly spoke of the demand for Chinese fluency. The Japanese learners, however, had much more difficulty with their parents. Two of our interviewees said
that their parents had tried to get them to go into Chinese instead. "My dad says I should be a scientist or at least study Chinese instead" one said. In order to maintain her father’s respect, she has lined up further education in order to ensure she can get a job with her degree. Other interviewees just said that their parents did not approve or just did not mention them at all. Perhaps they did not need their support, however, since they were so extremely passionate about learning.

Cultural involvement was a primary focus of our study since solely acquiring the language skills would prove it would only be “flexible capital” for them, rather than a personal interest. In interviewing our Chinese learners, it was not apparent whether or not they were highly involved in the cultural aspects of the country, although a few comments made it seem as though they were not. One interviewee commented that she was instructed to learn everything in simplified form. The traditional form was only for cultural value and had limited usage otherwise. Since she did learn everything in simplified, this indicates that she did not want the cultural value of the traditional characters. While this is a very small detail, it should be considered since it is one of the few details offered to determine whether they were involved in the culture or not. The Chinese learners also said that in their class they studied economic and political vocabulary instead of the cultural-based vocabulary, specifically stock market related words. The Japanese students in high contrast tried to make it clearly evident that they were completely involved in the Japanese culture. A group member described them to “live, eat and breathe” the culture. It is their “way of life”. Every one of our Japanese learners spoke of watching anime and reading manga. They stated that it was part of their life. One of the students who seemed to be the most involved in the culture later said “I think that our Japanese classes here and the manga that we read really shapes the way we view Japan—but I don’t necessarily think that view is right, so I’m going to go and find out.” This shows that while they believe that they are completely involved in Japanese culture they may actually only be aware of and involved in the Japanese popular culture that is here in America, such as the anime and manga they love.

The future career goals of our interviewees were extremely insightful to our research. The Chinese language learners wanted to use their language skills as an edge over others in the highly competitive job market that exists today. All of them did say that learning Chinese would give them many job opportunities. Many talked of a possibility of working in China, but most wanted it to be short term and for an American company and eventually wanted to come back and settle in the United States. They were even open to the possibility of starting a small business in China but once again they did not want to settle there. All of
them did use China’s rising economy as a reason for studying the language but most only thought of knowing Chinese as a benefit here in America. One casually stated “China is the dominant market of our time” and talked of its upcoming importance in the world. He said it is easily a strong opponent to English and told of how Chinese is replacing the European languages in schools. Another said that the power is shifting towards Asia, specifically China while another also said that the world is not longer dominated by the West. They both contradicted themselves later though by saying that America would remain on top, although they did recognize that it does have competitors. The Japanese language learners were not so uniform however. One was not going to use his Japanese skills whatsoever. He only studied Japanese to fill his personal passion. Another was unsure what he would do with his skills, but had the American outlook of ‘whatever I decide to do, as long as I am happy everything will be alright’. The other two interviewees wanted to go into the entertainment industry with their language skills as translator. This job would not require them to leave the U.S. though. It seems as if both language learners are still confident in America and do not plan on leaving for long.

While both Japanese and Chinese are very popular languages I believe it is for very different reasons, all of them however fulfilling neoliberal subjectivities. The Chinese learners clearly seemed to be interested in language acquisition solely for business-oriented reasons and recognized China’s upcoming status in the world’s economy. They demonstrated the “entrepreneur spirit” that Abelmann and Song spoke of in their articles. The Japanese learners, however, seemed to be more interested in the “cultural capital” that Japanese offered as referred to by Allison. Their parents tended to support their decision for studying Chinese while the Japanese learners’ parents tended to be very reluctant to support their decision. Their involvement with what their children should and should not study is very similar to the image that Anagnost discussed. All of these students reflected images of “Organization Kids” offered by Brooks and had obtained “flexible labor” skills and means of making it mobile by studying their respective languages (as Abelmann and Song spoke of). It is interesting though that these students who seem to not recognize national borders (Ong) want to settle in the U.S. I believe this is due to this being a rather new phenomenon. America has always been dominant in the world and the playing field is just beginning to become more even. I believe these students question the stability of China and Japan’s economy. I believe it is also due to the fact that they do not know too much of the culture of their respective countries. One Chinese learner questioned her ability to be successful in China due to her “American-ness”. Most of the Chinese learners have only learned economic aspects through their studies, not
culture. Although the Japanese students claim they “live, eat, and breathe” Japanese culture, they only spoke of anime and manga and their career aspirations are to go into these fields if they use Japanese at all. I would argue that these students are only passionate about the Japanese culture that is available in America, anime and manga. This is supported by the fact that they want to settle in America and go into these fields. If they truly wanted Japanese culture other than what is available in America wouldn’t they want to live in Japan and actually “live, eat and breathe” the culture? Either way, they fulfill the neoliberal subjectivity in that they can not separate their personal and professional lives.

In conclusion, the majority of our findings were in accordance with our hypothesis that the East Asian business language is shifting from Japanese to Chinese. This was visible through Japanese students learning the language increasingly for personal fulfillment while Chinese was being learned for much more business-oriented reasons. I showed this by looking at four different aspects: initial enrollment in their language courses, familial involvement/support, cultural involvement, and future career goals.

Our findings were limited however due to our small pool of interviewees (only eight people, four of them being Chinese learners, the other four studying Japanese). We were also limited by time constraints as well as personal biases (two researchers were studying Chinese while the other two studied Japanese). Also, none of the researchers had ever done any ethnographic research whatsoever.

**Reflect:** Because of the EUI page on Moodle along with all of our resources it was very easy to do research in compliance with IRB. Tim also came to our class and thoroughly explained everything. Nancy and Karen were readily available if a question arose at any time and most of the students in our class had already done research of this nature and were able to give helpful insights to our project. Being able to post our research step by step online where anyone could comment on it was also helpful in that when you made a mistake it could be easily fixed before you continued making it later.

**Recommendations:** I would recommend that this same study be done in a few years on campus. I believe that the results may change in that many students may actually be planning on working and living in China long term in comparison to only short term for experience. By then the global playing field might be more even and a foreign language such as Chinese might be a necessity in order to get a good job. I would recommend however to ask more questions concerning social pressures on learning the language (friends, etc) as well as familial views.