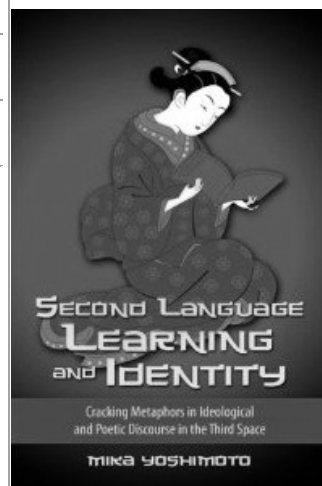


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**Second Language Learning and Identity:
Cracking the Metaphors in Ideological and Poetic Discourse in the Third Space**

Author:	Mika Yoshimoto (2008)	
Publisher:	Cambria Press, New York	
Pages	ISBN	Price
Pp. xviii + 312	978-1-60497-589-5 (hardcover)	\$109.95 USD



Identity in second language learning is complex, contradictory and dynamic. In *Second Language Learning and Identity: Cracking the Metaphors in Ideological and Poetic Discourse in the Third Space*, Mika Yoshimoto uses an innovative design of case study and autoethnography to address the topic of four Japanese women studying English in Canada. The book explores their negotiation of Canadian sociocultural values, the influence of their Japanese language and culture and what this all means for their changing identities. In order to extract a clearer picture of participants' identities, Yoshimoto draws on narrative discourse, metaphor analysis, poetry and academic discourse to present their individual stories, examine cultural and social influences, analyze identity transformation and gain a greater understanding of what it means for a Japanese woman to study English.

The book is divided into seven chapters:

- Autobiographical Self
- Situating the Research
- My Research Journey: Connecting Our Voices
- Haiku/Emerging Self
- Narrative Self: What Stories of Japanese Students Emerge in the In-Between Spaces?
- Metaphorical Self
- Troubling the Authorial Self: What Does It Mean for a Japanese Woman to Study English?

Narrative discourse, which has been overlooked in much of SLA's research, is a large focus of this book. The author's autoethnography reflects her personal stories in a creative and at times, poetic fashion. Yoshimoto explains that this structure also allows her to connect her ideas more easily with theorists and the wider academic discourse. Through her writing she is able to uncover the multiple layers of her experiences and connect the personal to the cultural. For the other participants, narrative discourse allows them to better express their multiple perspectives of past, present and future and detail their subjective interpretations of their experiences. Data collection was achieved through diary entries, in-depth interviews and transcribed conversations. By examining the participants' narratives, the author was able to access their in-between space, the place where their identity is challenged and meaning is made and re-made.

The fourth chapter briefly addresses haiku and the emerging self by examining its traditional form and cultural value as well as Yoshimoto's personal history with haiku and the reasons why she opted to adapt the form for her own purposes. Additionally, haiku are dispersed throughout the book, at the start of each chapter and amongst the narratives in order to encapsulate particularly poignant ideas. This incorporation of haiku also serves as a reminder to the reader of the differences between Western and Japanese literary styles. Yoshimoto manipulates the traditional rules of haiku and uses it as a way to access the voice she has that is neither English nor Japanese but somewhere in-between. "Though I want to cry/English tears come painfully/So I cry haiku" (p.19). Her haiku explore her transformations, fluidity, contradictions, the ambiguity she faces as a Japanese woman who speaks English and the moments of clarity that she encounters. Drawing on Bakhtin (1981) and Bhabha's (1994) work on hybridity, Yoshimoto's haiku are her way to subvert the dominant ideologies of both Japanese and English, to exist in the third space, and negotiate the difficult relationship between language and identity.

The metaphorical self is another important aspect of this book. Metaphors exist beyond words, they are experienced, in both thought and action and they are a form of linguistic expression of the self (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). They are inherently tied to

culture and ideology. Yoshimoto examines the metaphorical self as it represents the dominant cultural ideology and the assumptions to which one unconsciously subscribes. As identity is inherently political, metaphors the participants subscribe to, which Yoshimoto uses to access the discursive self, highlight unequal power relations. The identity struggles of the participants are reflected in the anti-matriarchal metaphors of the Japanese language, which the author sees as subjugating women into a position of weakness. There is a tension that exists due to the oppressive power of Japanese language against women, evidenced through various metaphors on gender, age, silence and school, and with it being the dominant ideology it can go largely unchallenged. However, it is through English language learning that participants are confronted with oppositional Western ideology, which while offering certain freedoms from Japanese constraints can be unsettling in the way in which it imposes a new set of limitations.

Yoshimoto's research fits well within the existing body of knowledge and current research trends in identity and second language learning (Duff, 2002, 2008; Kanno & Norton, 2003). The addition of Yoshimoto's autoethnography lends much value to her research. The use of personal experience as primary data is Yoshimoto's way of connecting to her participants and their shared social and cultural conditions, yet it also has the benefit of creating a closer bond with the reader. Perhaps my only critique of the book is that while the focus is on the narratives on four Japanese women in Canada, at least two of the participants were making plans to permanently return to Japan in the near future. There could have been more in-depth consideration as to what this might mean for their language learning and identity on their return to Japanese society. Much of the prominent research on identity has focused on second language migrant adults (e.g. Norton, 2000) and the concept of imagined communities is often used to theorize about foreign language learners' investment while in their native country (e.g. Norton & Kamal, 2003). However, there is very little research done to account for those who have experienced life abroad only to return to their native country, their potential struggles of reintegration and what that could possibly mean for their identity, investment and language learning.

The initial aims of this research were for the author to theorize about her own lived experiences and to help Japanese women understand what it meant for them to study English, the tensions, contradictions and freedoms that they may encounter. However, this book offers benefits for the entire field of SLA. With the burgeoning use of autoethnography in research, this book's thorough demonstration provides inspiration and illustration for researchers. Theorists can also find use in Yoshimoto's application of critical theory. Second language teachers and students alike can gain insight from this book as it details the struggles individuals face when trying to reconcile their existing sociocultural identity with an oppositional emerging identity. It addresses the fluctuations, ambiguity and negotiations of one's identity brought about by learning a new language. Even those outside the SLA field could appreciate the work of Yoshimoto. This book contains a wealth of information on examining culturally

dominant practices, what it means to be a woman, what it means to be Japanese, and how language practices are interconnected with social practices and change. From her explorations of culturally situated metaphors to her reconstructed poetry and the self-reflexive narratives of her and her participants, this book offers a personalised yet academic account of four women and their life experiences, in the context of learning English as a second language.

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Reviewed by

Carla Herewini
Dankook University, South Korea
<carlaherewini@gmail.com>

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