

Research Paper

Living on the ‘boundaries of language’  
From language awareness about ‘mother tongue’  
‘native language’ and ‘foreign language’

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**Abstract**

This paper discusses the language awareness of Japanese language learners of Ethnic Koreans in China regarding ‘mother tongue,’ ‘native language’ and ‘foreign language,’ which are found from life-history interviews. The subjects talked about the conflict of uncertain identity for the three languages. However, it was evident that the subjects overcame the uncertainty and their “non-perfect” languages are complimenting each other. Furthermore, the subjects also discussed living on the ‘boundaries of languages,’ and the importance of using the language that is meaningful to “themselves.” This suggests the need for re-capturing the languages from the perspective of identity.

**Keywords**

Japanese language learner of ethnic Koreans in China, language awareness,  
boundary, life-history, identity

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