

The Discursive Construction of Zanryu-hojin Identity: A Comparative Appraisal of Scholarly and Narrative English Discourses

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Abstract

Language constitutes rather than neutrally represents displaced subjectivity. This study examines how English constructs the identity of Zanryu-hojin, Japanese civilians abandoned in postwar Manchuria, through two data sources: Chan's (2011) monograph, *Abandoned Japanese in Postwar Manchuria*, and five oral narratives collected in Osaka, Japan (2025–2026). Guided by four research questions, the study adopts an integrated framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), and Appraisal Theory, combined with social semiotic analysis to examine lexical-semantic construction, modality, and traumatic memory. Analysis of Transitivity and the Attitude/Engagement/Graduation systems reveals that while Chan's monograph suppresses institutional agency through agentless passives and gendered hierarchies, survivor narratives employ generationally stratified Appraisal registers ranging from high-intensity Affect to attenuated digital nostalgia. Visual analysis of community cultural events further demonstrates how displaced subjects construct collective identity through self-directed semiotic resources. These findings demonstrate that English, as a scholarly mediator, actively constructs rather than transparently transmits the Zanryu-hojin experience for an international readership.

Keywords: Appraisal Theory, Systemic Functional Linguistics, Zanryu-hojin, Displaced Identity, Translingual Mediation, Modality, Traumatic Memory

1. Introduction

Language not only describes social reality but also helps shape it. Through lexical choice, Transitivity, modality, and evaluative stance, discourse constructs the social positions, moral values, and relational possibilities available to the subjects it represents (Fairclough, 1992, 2003; van Dijk, 1998). Critical Discourse Studies have demonstrated that discourse is not a neutral channel through which pre-formed meanings are conveyed, but the principal site at which power relations are enacted, legitimised, and contested (Flowerdew & Richardson, 2018; Krzyżanowski & Forchtner, 2016). This constitutive force is particularly salient when subjects have been removed from legal and national categories through the collapse of empire, forced abandonment, and bureaucratic erasure. In such contexts, the question of what linguistic resources a text deploys is inseparable from the question of what kinds of subjects that text makes possible. When English serves as the medium of such representation, the analytical stakes are further amplified: English functions not only as a descriptor of displacement but also as the language through which displaced subjects are rendered legible, morally evaluable, and politically intelligible to an international readership.

This study examines this constitutive dimension as it pertains to one of the most under-researched East Asian postwar displaced communities: the Zanryu-hojin (残留邦人). These Japanese civilians, primarily women and children, were abandoned in Manchuria when the collapse of Manchukuo became inevitable in August 1945. As Soviet forces entered and the Kwantung Army withdrew without warning, survivors faced violence, famine, and destitution. Many women were forced into marriages with Chinese farmers as a means of survival, while children were adopted into local families, often without knowledge of their Japanese origins. An amendment to the civil registration system in 1959 removed more than 30,000 missing persons from official records, producing a form of civil non-existence through bureaucratic practice (Hartonen et al., 2021; Chan, 2011). Following the normalisation of Sino-Japanese relations in 1972, approximately 100,000 members of this community were gradually repatriated. However, they remain structurally liminal within both national imaginaries, producing a condition of indeterminate liminality (Alkhaled & Sasaki, 2022) that cannot be resolved through repatriation alone.

This study clarifies three key terms central to the analysis. Zanryu-hojin (残留邦人) refers to all Japanese civilians who remained in China after 1945. Zanryu-koji (残留孤児) denotes war orphans raised by Chinese foster families and repatriated to Japan from 1972 onwards. Zanryu-fujin (残留婦人) refers to Japanese women who married Chinese men under conditions of material coercion. While Chan (2011) organises her work around the broader Zanryu-hojin community, the five participants in this study are Zanryu-koji and their descendants.

The primary sources for this study are an English-language monograph by Yeeshan Chan, *Abandoned Japanese in Postwar Manchuria* (Chan, 2011), and a corpus of survivor testimonies collected through interviews. Chan's monograph remains the most comprehensive

English-language account of this community and serves as a key source through which its experiences are presented to an international audience. Her positionality is analytically significant: she is a Hong Kong-born scholar writing in English about a community whose testimonies were originally produced in Japanese and Chinese. This configuration raises fundamental questions of translingual scholarly mediation, understood as the process of making consequential choices about framing, evaluation, and institutional positioning across language boundaries (Canagarajah, 2022; Li, 2018). Such choices are never neutral. The demarcation of boundaries among Japanese, Chinese, and English carries ideological implications, while the selection of English as the medium of representation foregrounds structural asymmetries between the languages of lived experience and those of global academic circulation (Wei & García, 2022). The specific lexical, modal, and evaluative strategies through which Zanryu-hojin subjectivity is constructed have not previously been examined through systematic linguistic analysis; addressing this gap constitutes the primary empirical contribution of the present study.

The analytical framework draws on Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which demonstrates that the distribution of agency, evaluation, and voice is never ideologically neutral (Leotti et al., 2022; Wodak & Meyer, 2016). Examining whether Zanryu-hojin survivors are represented through agentive, passive, or nominalised structures reveals how responsibility and culpability are discursively distributed—an approach central to CDA's aim of linking micro-level linguistic choices to macro-level social structures (Willey-Schapit et al., 2022). The comparison between Chan's authored narrative and survivor oral testimonies constitutes the study's cross-textual dimension. These two discursive formations offer structurally distinct positioning resources, and their divergence illuminates how English-language mediation shapes, reframes, or constrains the construction of displaced subjectivity. To date, no study has subjected Chan's monograph to systematic linguistic analysis, nor has any research conducted a cross-textual comparison between scholarly authorship and survivor testimony in terms of agency attribution, evaluative framing, and the discursive construction of liminality. This study therefore contributes to three interrelated areas: the applied linguistics of displacement and forced migration, critical discourse studies of postcolonial and postwar identity, and appraisal-based analyses of evaluative language in historically marginalised narrative corpora.

1.1 Research Questions

This study is guided by four analytically integrated research questions:

RQ1 (Lexical-Semantic): What lexical patterns and semantic fields does Chan employ in the English text to construct the identity of the Zanryu-hojin as a liminal subject, neither fully Japanese nor fully Chinese, and how do these choices frame belonging and displacement?

RQ2 (Modality and Voice): How do modal verbs, hedging devices, and passive constructions in Chan's English prose mediate between her authorial voice and the survivor testimonies she paraphrases and incorporates, and what power relationships between narrator, subject, and reader do these structures encode?

RQ3 (Discourse of Memory and Trauma): In English-language interview narratives with Zanryu-hojin survivors and their descendants, what narrative framing devices, tense shifts, and discursive strategies mark the construction of traumatic memory and dual national identity?

RQ4 (Cross-textual Comparison): How do the English discursive strategies employed in Chan's authored text compare with those deployed in survivor interview narratives—particularly in terms of agency attribution, evaluative language, and the framing of displacement—and what do these differences reveal about the sociolinguistic positioning of each discursive formation?

1.2 Significance of the Study

Theoretically, this study advances the understanding of how English operates as a global medium for knowledge production. Rather than merely reflecting existing communities, English discourse actively constructs them, particularly in contexts of displacement instigated by institutional practices in other languages. By addressing four research questions, the study demonstrates how specific discursive elements—such as lexical selection, modality, evaluation, and intertextual links—intersect to produce the Zanryu-hojin identity for an international audience.

Empirically, the study provides the first Appraisal- and CDA-informed analysis of Chan's (2011) monograph, alongside a corpus of corresponding survivor narratives. This addresses a substantive gap in both Zanryu-hojin studies and applied linguistics. Pedagogically, this research offers a historically grounded case study illustrating how lexical, modal, and evaluative choices manifest ethical and ideological beliefs. Consequently, it provides valuable insights for teaching higher-order critical literacy within English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts.

2. Theoretical Framework

This study adopts an integrated framework comprising Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), Appraisal Theory, and social semiotic analysis. CDA reveals the broader structural and ideological components of texts, while Appraisal Theory provides tools for a more detailed analysis of how evaluation and stance are conveyed through specific lexical and grammatical choices. This combined approach emphasises linguistic choices that form meaning at the clausal level. Social semiotics expands the discussion to include verbal, visual, and multimodal representations that collectively construct displaced identities (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006).

CDA (Fairclough, 2003) offers an analytical architecture across three dimensions: the textual (linguistic features), discursive practice (text production and consumption), and sociocultural practice (institutional and ideological context). This framework is directly applicable to

RQ1 and RQ2. The bureaucratic declarations that removed Zanryu-hojin from civil records were themselves discourse acts; Chan's monograph re-inscribes them into historical legibility through English scholarly prose. CDA enables a systematic analysis of agency, specifically whether the text ascribes it to survivors or institutions. It distinguishes between humanising lexis—vocabulary that foregrounds individual personhood and emotional experience—and bureaucratising lexis, which reduces subjects to administrative categories and institutional processes. Furthermore, the framework reveals how gendered language differentiates women survivors from orphaned children (Leotti et al., 2022; Wodak & Meyer, 2016).

The evaluative dimension is operationalized through the three interlocking subsystems of Appraisal Theory (Martin & White, 2005). The Attitude system (Affect, Judgement, and Appreciation) provides the primary categories for annotating how Chan's prose and survivor speech assess represented experiences, people, and institutions (RQ1 and RQ3). The Engagement system maps heteroglossic resources—the linguistic mechanisms through which a text acknowledges or suppresses alternative perspectives—revealing how Chan manages competing voices (RQ2). Finally, the Graduation system records the intensification or attenuation of evaluative language. This subsystem is particularly productive for RQ4, where generational differences in evaluative intensity are contrasted with Chan's scholarly register (Aljuraywi & Alyousef, 2022; Kuswoyo et al., 2021).

The integration of these frameworks is methodologically necessary: CDA without micro-analytical precision risks ideological assertion, while Appraisal Theory without a macro-structural frame risks contextually detached description. Social semiotic analysis ensures that visual evidence of shared cultural practice is mediated analytically rather than descriptively, with visual representations viewed as mechanisms for confronting and expanding verbal results (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). Together, these three frameworks address how English locates Zanryu-hojin within competing discourses of abandonment, assimilation, and repatriation (CDA); how specific textual observations support that interpretation (Appraisal Theory); and how visual practices of collective identity complement or contest verbal constructions (social semiotics). This integration is vital for RQ4, in which cross-textual comparison must be sensitive to macro-structure, evaluated with precision, and informed by multimodal awareness to demonstrate what English mediation contributes, removes, or changes across the two discursive formations.

2.1 Critical Discourse Analysis and Systemic Functional Linguistics: Theoretical Foundations and Methodological Integration

Central to Fairclough's (1992, 2003, 2012) dialectical-relational framework is the tripartite distinction between genres, discourses, and styles—the semiotic dimensions of social activity, social representation, and social identity, respectively. These dimensions are dialectically related to non-discursive social elements rather than reduced to them. This distinction is directly relevant to RQ1 and RQ2, where Chan's monograph functions as a counter-inscription of bureaucratic erasure through English scholarly prose.

The methodological relationship between CDA and Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) is well established. Alameda-Hernandez and Jimenez-Briones (2025), in a review of 78 peer-reviewed empirical studies, find that lexical choice and evaluative lexis are the most analysed features in the CDA-SFL corpus, providing a precedent for addressing RQ1. Transitivity analysis—the distribution of process types and participant roles—appears in 56.4% of these studies, making it directly relevant to RQ2 and RQ4. Appraisal Theory was utilised in 23% of the corpus; it is essential for decoding the evaluative and interpersonal meanings of politically charged texts, thereby supporting RQ3. Notably, 20.5% of the surveyed articles reference SFL without indicating which specific system was analysed, highlighting the need for the high level of procedural rigor upheld in the present research.

Baker et al. (2008) established the methodological synergy between corpus linguistics and CDA in their analysis of refugee discourse in the UK press, demonstrating that quantitative pattern identification and qualitative critical interpretation are mutually complementary. Although the present study operates on a smaller corpus scale, this principle of mutual reinforcement governs the analytical approach across all four research questions.

The specific application of Appraisal subsystems to each research question has been outlined previously; the focus now turns to empirical precedents that validate the combined use of Transitivity and Appraisal analysis in identity studies.

2.2 Displacement, Liminality, and the Discursive Construction of Refugee Identity

Forced displacement creates a profound dislocation of the symbolic and institutional forms through which identity is produced and recognised. In the first meta-ethnographic synthesis of liminality among refugees, Hartonen et al. (2021) define a “stage of limbo” as a legally constructed, bureaucratically maintained, and spatially/temporally mobile social state resulting from a lack of complete political status. Their synthesis of 17 qualitative studies identifies four structural dimensions: the process of eligibility, ontological insecurity, spatial-temporal inconsistency, and agency negotiation. These factors combine to create what the authors call a “permanent oxymoron”: being safe in uncertainty. Crucially, their research indicates that liminality is not confined to the period before repatriation or temporary protection; rather, it may be intergenerational, perpetuated through post-settlement discrimination, economic marginalisation, and the transmission of trauma. This framework is directly relevant to RQ3 and RQ4: the Zanryu-hojin experience illustrates how the erasure of Japanese family registers in 1959 led to statelessness through documentary practice, and how repatriation since 1972 has not resolved the structural ambiguity of subjects who remain “culturally liminal” in both nations.

Alkhaled and Sasaki (2022) extend liminality theory by distinguishing *indeterminate liminality*—in which actors are forcibly positioned within a transitional state lacking a clear endpoint and not resolved through institutional mechanisms—from transitional or perpetual forms of liminality. Their longitudinal study of Syrian refugee women identifies three interrelated forms of identity work that do not

produce immediate material outcomes: the recomposition of conflicting memories, the reclamation of existence, and the repositioning of tradition. Together, these processes enable what the authors describe as a stretching of the boundaries of indeterminate liminality, allowing individuals to maintain cognitive control over selfhood by symbolically recuperating the familiar past and narratively constructing a meaningful future, even under conditions of structurally constrained physical agency.

The trajectory of identity reconstruction is further shaped by the generation-specific knowledge available about the displacement event. Mijić (2022), drawing on Mannheim's stratification of experience and 30 narrative interviews with former Bosnian refugees, identifies two distinct trajectories. Individuals who migrated during late adolescence, having completed primary socialisation in their country of origin, responded to the disruption of their symbolic universe by intensifying individual performance. By contrast, those who migrated as children underwent a process of "double primary socialisation" and constructed narratives of origin oriented towards an imagined community, which often proves fragile upon direct encounter. This generational dimension is central to RQ3 and RQ4. Many Zanryu-hojin survivors were separated from their families in infancy, socialised entirely within Chinese communities, and later constructed a Japanese identity retrospectively and relationally through institutional discourse rather than through lived experience.

Finally, Shahimi et al. (2024), in their review of 28 empirical studies on refugee youth, demonstrate that young people continually reconstruct multiple, fluid identities and consistently reject the reductive label of "refugee". This observation aligns with the Zanryu-hojin community's resistance to being classified as mere administrative victims—a discursive realisation explored through RQ1 and RQ3.

2.3 English-Mediated Representation, Translingualism, and the Politics of Scholarly Voice

When English is used as the medium of representation for displaced communities whose experiences were originally produced in other languages, the analytical stakes are significantly heightened. English does not merely describe displacement; it constitutes the terms through which displaced subjects are rendered legible, morally evaluable, and politically intelligible to an international readership—the foundational premise underlying RQ1 and RQ2.

Canagarajah (2022) demonstrates that Anglophone academic publishing institutionalises ideological, rather than neutral, epistemological commitments. He argues that micro-level textual acts—such as discursive hybridity (the blending of distinct discourse modes), code-meshing (the purposeful integration of language varieties), and the embodiment of heritage scripts—can contribute to the sedimentation of new representational norms. Wei and García (2022) extend this argument by theorising translinguaging as a decolonising project that moves beyond the named-language categories through which institutional power often measures multilingual subjects as deficient. This critique is directly applicable to RQ2 and RQ4: the asymmetry between Chan's authorised English scholarly voice and the survivor testimonies she incorporates constitutes a form of sociolinguistic positioning that the cross-textual comparison must explicitly address.

The visual register of displacement representation reveals similar structural patterns. Chouliaraki and Stolic (2017), in their analysis of five regimes of European refugee news imagery, identify a consistent pattern in which refugees are spoken about, spoken for, massified, infantilised, vilified, or aestheticised, but are rarely granted the narrative capacity to construct their own histories. Their findings reinforce the need for the social semiotic dimension adopted in this study (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006); visual documentation of community cultural events is analysed not as passive illustration, but as a meaning-making resource that complements the verbal construction of collective cultural identity. The ethical demand Chouliaraki and Stolic identify—treating displaced subjects as political agents—provides the normative horizon against which the agency attribution patterns examined in RQ1, RQ2, and RQ4 are evaluated.

Reyes and Jung (2025), using CDA to examine EFL educator discourse in South Korea, demonstrate that institutional language policy functions as a mechanism of social stratification and that the recognition of complicity in ideological reproduction is the necessary starting point for transformative practice. This finding reinforces the analytical rationale for RQ2: Chan's scholarly mediation, however well-intentioned, operates within the institutional constraints of Anglophone academic publishing, which shape how survivor voices are incorporated, hedged, and framed. Leotti et al. (2021) ground this orientation within a reconstructive CDA agenda that shifts from critique toward the identification of counter-discourses and emancipatory possibilities. This serves as the analytical and political horizon for the cross-textual comparison in RQ4, examining whether survivor oral narratives construct discursive resources that exceed or resist the representational frameworks of Chan's scholarly prose.

3. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative case study design to examine how English-language discourse constructs displaced identity across two distinct formations: Yeeshan Chan's (2011) scholarly monograph and five oral narratives from survivors and their descendants. By integrating Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) with Appraisal Theory, the research explores how lexical, modal, evaluative, and cross-textual strategies in English construct liminal subjectivity and frame traumatic memory across different generational positions.

3.1 Research Design

The study employs a multiple-case design to analyse the discursive formation of identity among Zanryu-hojin repatriates and their families (Yin, 2018). This design offers the opportunity for cross-textual comparison and preserves the richness of depth and context inherent in case study research (Merriam, 1998). Such a methodology is particularly appropriate here, as it allows for the investigation of a contemporary phenomenon—postwar displacement and repatriation—within its real-life context, where boundaries between the subjects and their environment are often blurred (Stake, 1995).

The design follows an interpretive phenomenological orientation, focusing on the meanings participants attribute to their lived experiences of displacement and cultural positioning (Van Manen, 1990). This approach allows for a granular analysis of how ‘lived experience’ is transformed into ‘scholarly data’ through the process of English-language mediation. While the case-based treatment of individuals provides the foundation for RQ1, RQ2, and RQ3, the inclusion of the monograph enables the cross-textual comparison required for RQ4.

3.2 Data Sources and Collection

The research draws on two primary data sources. The first is scholarly discourse, represented by Yeeshan Chan’s English-language monograph, *Abandoned Japanese in Postwar Manchuria* (2011). As the most comprehensive English account of the community, it serves as the primary medium through which their experience reaches an international readership. The text is analysed using CDA and Appraisal Theory to reveal how scholarly choices construct—rather than neutrally represent—Zanryu-hojin subjectivity. The second is narrative discourse, consisting of five in-depth, semi-structured interviews with Zanryu-hojin survivors and descendants in Osaka, Japan. These participants represent diverse generational and relational positions, providing the empirical basis for addressing RQ3 and RQ4. Detailed demographics and migration characteristics for these cases are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Participant Demographics and Migration Characteristics

Case	Gender	Approximate Age	Role / Identity	Place of Origin	Migration Period	Migration Context
1	Female	60	Wife of a second-generation war orphan	Fushun, Liaoning	1986	Migrated with husband; relocation route: Fukuoka → Kagoshima → Osaka
2	Female	82–83	Native Chinese spouse of a war orphan (Japanese technician)	Shenyang, Liaoning	1988	Migration prompted by husband’s mother’s illness; initially settled in Kagoshima
3	Female	60–65	Wife of a war orphan (arranged marriage)	Fangzheng, Heilongjiang	Mid-1980s	Accompanied husband following diplomatic normalisation between China and Japan
4	Female	75–80	War orphan raised by Chinese foster parents	Harbin, Heilongjiang	Early 1980s	Migrated after arranged marriage to a Japanese spouse through a brokerage arrangement
5	Female	50–60	Second-generation descendant (Zanryu-koji)	Fushun, Liaoning	1990s	Chain migration via relatives; attended language school; later became a business owner

Table 1 illustrates the relationships and generational diversity of the five participants within the Zanryu-koji community of Osaka. The participants represent a range of positionalities: direct migration following postwar marriage, an orphaned spouse, voluntary Sino-Japanese family connections, direct repatriation of war orphans, and chain migration of the second generation. This diversity is analytically significant, as variations in migration year, province of origin, and migration context reflect different degrees of generational proximity to the initial displacement—a key factor in how each actor forms, bargains, and articulates cultural identity.

The five participants are all female, which is historically significant as the majority of Zanryu-koji repatriates were women and children. This gender concentration is acknowledged as a limitation: male survivors and descendants may utilise different linguistic strategies, evaluative orientations, and Transitivity patterns when constructing displaced identity. This is particularly relevant given the gendered agency distribution found in Chan’s (2011) monograph (see Section 4.1), in which Zanryu-fujin are frequently positioned through Relational and Material processes. The absence of male voices in the current narrative corpus means this pattern cannot be empirically contested through cross-textual comparison. Future research should incorporate male narratives to determine whether the patterns identified here are gender-specific or generalisable across the community.

In addition to the five individual interviews, the study includes community-based observation at events in Osaka, such as the Chinese Lunar Spring Festival Gala and the 2026 Japan Repatriates Federation New Year gathering. The observational evidence in Figures 1 to 3 provides photographic documentation of collective identity preservation—elements that individual narratives alone may not fully capture.

All five interviews were conducted face-to-face in the Osaka region between August 2025 and February 2026. The sessions followed a semi-structured protocol organised into five sections: (1) historical background; (2) migration and identity construction; (3) evaluative orientations; (4) cultural adaptation; and (5) reflections on belonging. This structure allowed for the exploration of emergent themes while maintaining rapport. Interviews were conducted primarily in Chinese, with frequent code-switching to Japanese regarding institutional terminology and daily greetings. Audio-recorded sessions lasted between 60 and 90 minutes. Transcription protocols preserved linguistic nuances, markers of emotion (e.g. ‘bitter smile’, ‘sigh’), and paralinguistic features.

3.2.1 Translation, Transcription, and Bilingual Quality Control

The oral narratives were performed in Chinese, with extensive code-switching to Japanese; however, the analytical mode of this study is based on English-language discourse. This subsection details the processes of translation and transcription and their implications for the discursive construction analysed in this research.

Transcription was performed in two phases. Initially, audio recordings were transcribed verbatim in their original languages of production

(Chinese with embedded Japanese segments), maintaining boundaries of code-switching, paralinguistic cues (e.g. laughter, sighs, pauses), and emotional notes (e.g. bitter smiles, voice trembling). Secondly, the Chinese-Japanese transcripts were translated into English by the first author, who is fluent in all three languages. Japanese elements incorporated into Chinese phrases (e.g. greetings, institutional terms, and food-related terms) were left in their original forms, with English glosses in brackets. This preserves the sociolinguistic structure of code-switching, which constitutes a major analytical result (Section 4.3.2).

The translation process was guided by three principles. First, semantic fidelity: English lexical choices were selected to maintain the evaluative orientation of the original utterance rather than to generate idiomatic English counterparts. For example, when a participant used the Chinese four-character idiom *jian wu si qing* (seeing an object and remembering feelings), the phrase remained in transliterated form with a gloss, as the cultural epistemology of the material object as a repository of memory would be lost during paraphrasing. Second, pragmatic equivalence: where participants used culturally specific proverbs (e.g. *mei you guo jiu mei you jia*—without a nation, there is no home), both the transliterated original and the English translation were presented to preserve the evaluative strength of the utterance. Third, structural transparency: the syntactic form of the English translation retained, where possible, the clause-level structure of the original to enable the analysis of Transitivity and Appraisal; instances where English syntax necessitated rearrangement are marked in the analytical commentary.

Bilingual quality control was maintained through the back-translation of analytically significant segments. Important passages utilised in the analysis were back-translated into Chinese by a bilingual research associate, who independently translated the English passages and then discussed discrepancies with the original versions. This step is particularly significant given that the study relies on Appraisal annotation: the evaluative meanings of Affect intensity and Judgement polarity are translation-sensitive. The back-translation procedure aimed to ensure that the evaluative orientation of the English version faithfully reflects the original.

It must be acknowledged that the discursive construction under analysis is inherently subject to the mediating effects of translation. The process of converting Chinese emotional expressions into English Appraisal categories is an interpretive act that, on a smaller scale, mirrors the translingual scholarly mediation discussed in Chan's monograph (RQ2). Three specific risks are identified: firstly, affective attenuation, whereby the Chinese emotional lexicon possesses culturally specific intensities that English counterparts might neutralise, thereby decreasing the Gradation force of Affect-laden utterances; secondly, code-switching boundary effects, where the boundary between a Japanese-embedded segment and a Chinese-framed segment is determined by the transcriber's judgement, potentially influencing the study of domain-specific language distribution; and thirdly, syntactic restructuring, in which English clause structure reassigns Transitivity roles (e.g. converting a Chinese topic-comment structure into an English subject-verb-object structure), potentially altering the agency distribution found in the analysis. These procedures do not remove these limitations; rather, they alleviate them. Consequently, readers should consider the Appraisal and Transitivity annotations as analyses of the English translations rather than the original utterances.

3.3 Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted across two integrated analytical stages corresponding to the two primary data sources.

For Chan's (2011) monograph, Fairclough's (1992, 2003) three-dimensional CDA was applied. First, textual analysis examined lexical patterns, Transitivity structures, modality, and passive/active voice distribution (RQ1 and RQ2). Second, discursive practice analysis examined the production conditions of the text as an English-language scholarly mediation of testimonies originally produced in Japanese and Chinese. Third, sociocultural practice analysis situated the text within the broader institutional and ideological context of postwar Sino-Japanese relations and English-language knowledge production. Simultaneously, Appraisal analysis (Martin & White, 2005) identified evaluative language across the Attitude (Affect, Judgement, Appreciation), Engagement (monoglossic/heteroglossic positioning), and Graduation (intensification/attenuation) subsystems.

For the five oral narrative cases, the study used a multi-stage thematic approach following Braun and Clarke (2006), adapted for cross-case comparisons as suggested by Miles et al. (2014). All transcripts underwent multiple readings for in-depth familiarisation. Initial open coding identified meaningful units relating to evaluative positioning, agency construction, temporal framing, emotional response, and identity negotiation. The coding process was both deductive, based on the interview protocol domains, and inductive, derived from emerging themes. CDA Transitivity analysis and Appraisal annotation were then applied to these coded segments to investigate the construction of displaced identity, the distribution of agency, and generational positioning—directly addressing RQ3.

The coding framework blended deductive categories derived from the interview protocol with inductive codes developed from the data, including: *Generational Transmission*, *Emotional Dimensions*, *Social Networks*, *Economic Factors*, *Hybrid Practices*, *Identity Negotiation*, *Memory and Nostalgia*, and *Code-switching*. A formal codebook was maintained to document code definitions, inclusion/exclusion criteria, illustrative excerpts, and analytical memos. The final stage of analysis combined findings from both datasets to produce the cross-textual comparative account required by RQ4, investigating how English-language scholarly representation and first-person oral testimony construct displaced identity through divergent yet complementary discursive resources.

3.4 Validity and Reliability

To establish trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), credibility was ensured through prolonged engagement with the data, triangulation across multiple data sources representing different generational positions and migration contexts, member-checking where possible, and

the provision of rich, thick description. Dependability was maintained through detailed documentation, the use of audit trails, and systematic coding guided by a comprehensive codebook. Confirmability was established via the researcher's reflexivity, the anchoring of interpretations in participants' verbatim quotes, the display of specific textual evidence, and the acknowledgement of alternative interpretations. The combination of CDA and Appraisal Theory offers methodological triangulation at the analytical level; this ensures that the ideological interpretations advanced in response to all four research questions are grounded in replicable, micro-linguistic observation.

4. Data Analysis

4.1 Lexical Construction of Liminal Identity in Chan's Monograph (RQ1)

Chan's (2011) monograph constructs Zanryu-hojin subjectivity through three predominant semantic fields—abandonment, belonging, and agency—which interact to form a textual subject suspended between institutional erasure and self-directed action. This lexical analysis directly addresses RQ1 by examining how Zanryu-hojin identity is framed as neither fully Japanese nor entirely Chinese.

The semantic field of abandonment is constitutive rather than incidental, embedded in the volume's title: *Abandoned Japanese in Postwar Manchuria* (Chan, 2011). Within CDA's Transitivity framework (Fairclough, 2003), the passive participial "abandoned" assigns the Japanese state an implicit Agent role while grammatically suppressing the Actor; the question of "who" abandoned is structurally present but lexically absent. This nominalised passivity recurs throughout the text. Chan describes how a bill "deleted the names of over 30,000 missing people from family registers and announced their deaths in war overseas" (Chan, 2011, p. 26). Here, bureaucratic actors are elided through agentless passives, diffusing culpability across an impersonal administrative machine rather than identifiable decision-makers. Within the Judgement subsystem (Martin & White, 2005), the state is negatively judged in terms of both Social Esteem (Incapacity) and Social Sanction (Impropriety). This is encoded indirectly through passive syntax rather than explicit condemnation. This heteroglossic practice enables Chan to maintain a scholarly register while incorporating moral judgement into the grammatical structure—a pattern that sits at the core of RQ1.

The semantic field of belonging exists in productive tension with that of abandonment. Chan's text alternates between lexical items coding rootedness and those coding displacement. She describes how Japanese women were "forced into sex slavery for the Soviets, and so eagerly married anyone willing to protect them" (Chan, 2011, p. 21)—a formulation that simultaneously positions these women as coerced subjects ("forced") and agentive actors who "eagerly married". The prepositional phrase serves as a Circumstantial Adjunct to the apparent agency of the main clause, developing what Appraisal Theory refers to as a Graduation resource: agency is present but diluted and limited. This semantic ambiguity is directly connected to RQ1, in that it creates subjects who are neither purely Chinese nor purely Japanese, having entered marriage as a survival strategy that was simultaneously a personal choice. This results in a lexical realisation of liminality at the level of individual clause structure. Furthermore, Chan asserts that these migrants "should no longer be seen as passive beings suffering from the loss of national identity" (Chan, 2011, p. 1), yet she concurrently places them in ambiguous positions. This employs Appreciation resources encoding "Compositional Incompleteness," where identity is assessed as structurally unresolved (Martin & White, 2005).

The semantic field of agency undergoes the most complex negotiation across the monograph's arc. Chan's trajectory shifts from characterising Zanryu-hojin as "passive uprooted migrants" to representing them as "a privileged migrant group of 'war-displaced Japanese'" (Chan, 2011, p. 154)—a transformation in Transitivity roles from Patient to Actor. Elsewhere, Chan describes repatriates who, "set in a transnational space and possessing flexible citizenship," are "able to act as opportunists and transnationalists, exploiting their ambiguous situation in Japan" (Chan, 2011, p. 125). This lexical trajectory from passivity to strategic agency is a key finding for RQ1: belonging and displacement are not static fields but are dynamically renegotiated discursive formations.

Table 2. Representative Transitivity Patterns by Zanryu-Hojin Subgroup in Chan (2011)

Subgroup	Dominant Process Types	Representative Verbs	Source Chapters
Zanryu-fujin	Mental, Relational	"suffered," "feared," "felt unable," "was torn," "could not leave," "endured," "refused," "mourned"	Ch. 2 (pp. 21–28), Ch. 5 (pp. 65–69, 82–85), Ch. 6 (pp. 82–84)
Zanryu-koji (male)	Material	"escaped," "followed," "performed," "opened," "established," "found work," "wrote a letter," "beat up"	Ch. 2 (pp. 28–30), Ch. 3 (pp. 36–39), Ch. 5 (pp. 70–74)
Zanryu-koji (female)	Mixed Mental/Material	"married," "ran away," "was bullied," "suffered," "became paranoid," "worked"	Ch. 5 (pp. 72–74), Ch. 7 (pp. 100–104)

As Table 2 illustrates, Zanryu-fujin are predominantly represented through Mental and Relational process verbs encoding interior states—Yuriko Sakamoto 'suffered', 'feared', 'felt unable to stay', and 'was torn' between her children and her parents; Shizuko 'could not leave' her daughters. By contrast, male Zanryu-koji are constructed through Material process verbs encoding exterior action: Morita 'escaped', 'beat up' offenders, 'found work', and 'wrote a letter' to the Japanese Embassy; Suginami 'refused' repatriation and 'was transferred' to better schools; and Shirasaki 'firmly refused to create a document'. Female Zanryu-koji occupy an intermediate position: Kasumi 'was bullied' and 'became paranoid' (Mental/Relational), but also 'worked' and 'married' (Material).

This gendered Transitivity pattern produces an evaluative hierarchy in which women's agency is framed as interior and affective, while male-dominated agency is framed as exterior and instrumental. This is consistent with CDA research on gendered migration discourse (Leotti et al., 2022). The distribution confirms that this is a systematic textual pattern rather than an impressionistic observation, although

a full-scale corpus frequency analysis across the monograph's entirety would strengthen these findings further—a limitation acknowledged in the recommendations for future research.

4.2 Modality, Hedging, and the Mediation of Survivor Voice (RQ2)

The modal analysis below addresses RQ2 by discussing how the modal verbs, hedging devices, and passive constructions utilised by Chan (2011) mediate the relationship between her authorial voice and the testimonies of the survivors. These structures are instrumental in encoding the power relations between the narrator, the subject, and the reader.

Chan's modal architecture reveals a systematic epistemic separation between authoritative historical claims and incorporated survivor accounts. The following excerpts illustrate this contrast:

- Excerpt 1 (Institutional action—unmodalised): Chan describes the final mobilisation in unqualified categorical terms, noting that the Kwantung Army "summoned" male settlers while leaving behind women, children, and the sick (Chan, 2011, p. 164).
- Excerpt 2 (Institutional action—unmodalised): The 1959 bureaucratic erasure is presented without epistemic qualification: a bill "deleted" over 30,000 names from registers and "declared" their deaths (Chan, 2011, p. 26).
- Excerpt 3 (Institutional action—unmodalised): Chan states that the ideology of racial harmony "continued to shape" postwar officials' thinking, who "used" wartime rhetoric to encourage colonists to remain (Chan, 2011, p. 23).
- Excerpt 4 (Survivor account—hedged): Sawako's testimony is framed through attribution: she "explained" a decline in clientele as resulting from circumstances (Chan, 2011, p. 134).
- Excerpt 5 (Survivor account—hedged): Another survivor's account is similarly mediated: she "recalled, in tears," a traumatic wartime event (Chan, 2011, p. 149).
- Excerpt 6 (Survivor account—hedged): Chan frames Handa's internal state through epistemic distance: Handa "admitted" that his failure to attend a funeral was his most painful experience (Chan, 2011, p. 37).

In Excerpts 1–3, state and institutional actions receive unmodalised categorical assertion: the army "summoned," a bill "deleted," and ideology "encouraged." No epistemic qualification is attached; these are presented as settled historical facts. In Excerpts 4–6, by contrast, survivor accounts are framed through epistemic hedges and attribution markers: "explained," "recalled," and "admitted." Within the Engagement system (Martin & White, 2005), these are Attribute: Acknowledge resources. They open dialogic space by assigning propositions to external voices rather than the author's own "factual" voice.

This is the primary result for RQ2: institutional actions are treated in a monoglossic mode (presented as settled facts), whereas survivor stories are treated in a heteroglossic mode (presented as subjective experience). This encodes a knowledge-power disparity between institutional and testimonial knowledge. Institutional history is rendered as objective truth, while lived experience is marked as contingent and individual.

Passive constructions further reinforce this pattern. The 1959 erasure is rendered via a bill that "deleted the names of over 30,000 missing people" (p. 26)—an agentless structure that suppresses the institutional actors involved. Conversely, survivor responses are often rendered in the active voice: Zanryu-hojin families are depicted as "trying only to grasp anything that is useful for tapping resources" (p. 153). This structural contrast is analytically revealing: the grammar of institutional violence is depersonalised, while the grammar of survivor response is personalised. In terms of CDA, this tendency diffuses state culpability by spreading it across an impersonalised bureaucracy, while focusing agency within recognisable human subjects (Wodak & Meyer, 2016). This power asymmetry is virtually naturalised because it is coded into the syntactic structure rather than explicit commentary, rendering the ideological framing of the monograph opaque to the lay reader.

4.3 Evaluative Strategies in the Oral Narratives (RQ3)

The examination of oral narratives addresses RQ3 by analysing the devices of narrative framing, tense switching, and discursive strategies through which the accounts of survivors and descendants generate traumatic memory and dual national identity. It is observed that participants occupy varied generational and relational positions; these structural differences result in systematically varied evaluative orientations and Transitivity patterns.

4.3.1 Affective Registers and Traumatic Memory

Across the narratives, proximity to the originating displacement correlates with increased affective density. Wang Yuxiu, the wife of a Zanryu-koji in Ikeda, Osaka, uses tense alternation as the primary marker of traumatic memory. Narrating her daughter Huimei's self-harm discovery, she shifts from the habitual past to a scene-level vivid present: "suddenly the teacher called and asked me to come to the school" (Wang, January 2026). The adverb "suddenly" functions as a Labovian (1972) evaluation device; terms such as "shocked," "stunned," and "afraid" realise inscribed negative Affect of the insecurity subtype (Martin & White, 2005). These tense shifts and affective intensifiers constitute the primary narrative framing devices through which traumatic memory is discursively constructed; the temporal disruption of syntax enacts the temporal disruption of the experience itself.

A war orphan who arrived through a brokered marriage describes similar affective density directed inward: "I can only remember it through what the Chinese often call 'seeing objects and recalling feelings' [*jian wu si qing*]" (Ito, December 2025). This translingual

Appraisal resource indexes a cultural epistemology in which material objects serve as repositories of memory; the description of the dowry as "safely preserved in my treasure box" uses the simple present to construct a continuity that collapses temporal distance.

By contrast, a second-generation descendant (Haruka, November 2025) presents the most attenuated displacement discourse. Her account of migration is notably depersonalised: "My relatives went to Osaka... one by one. So, in the 1990s, I went to Japan and studied at a language school for a year." The construction "one by one" and the sequential logic construct migration not as a rupture, but as a chain process driven by economic rationality. This generational attenuation of affective density is itself a significant discursive finding: participants with greater generational distance from the originating displacement consistently appear as Actors of voluntary Material processes ("I went," "I studied," "our family opened a business"). This Transitivity pattern contrasts sharply with the narratives of those closest to displacement, where being acted upon (Patient role) predominates.

Another participant occupies a mediating position. Her narrative pivot—triggered by her daughter asking, "Mom, why do we celebrate the Spring Festival?"—evokes high-intensity Affect ("I panicked—I couldn't let my child forget her roots"). However, the subsequent accumulation of Material process verbs ("taught," "told," "cooked," "taken") constructs a sustained arc from affective crisis to agentic response, encoding positive self-Judgement of capacity and propriety. Similarly, Hatano (November 2025) describes how media reshaped the affective valence of migration: "after watching news reports and certain Japanese television dramas, my anxieties gradually softened... Japan became less abstract and less intimidating." Here, television functions as an ideological apparatus (Fairclough, 1992), tracing a Graduation trajectory from high-force to attenuated negative Affect.

4.3.2 Code-switching, Linguistic Architecture, and Cultural Evaluation

A recurring pattern across the narratives is the domain-specific distribution of languages, revealing the sociolinguistic architecture of displaced subjectivity. Code-switching is not merely a communicative strategy, but a discursive resource through which dual national identity is enacted at the level of language choice itself. Wang deploys Japanese ritual formulae, such as *itadakimasu* and "I'm home," without hedging in household routines, indicating their absorption into daily practice as unmediated pragmatic elements. However, cultural evaluation reverts exclusively to Chinese: "I think Japan has 'minor etiquette without major righteousness' [*xiao li wu da yi*]. They were learning many things from China, but not the deeper philosophy" (Wang, January 2026). This pattern reveals Japanese occupying the register of pragmatic social performance, while Chinese retains the register of moral-philosophical evaluation. The proverb functions as inscribed negative Judgement of the Social Sanction subtype, reversing the expected power asymmetry by positioning the migrant as the bearer of deeper tradition rather than a recipient of civilisational hospitality.

A war orphan describes a more coercive linguistic transformation: she adopted Japanese honorifics "for the sake of survival"—a purpose Adjunct reframing assimilation as strategic performance rather than cultural conversion. This contrasts with "the open and informal culture of Northeast China" (Ito, December 2025), simultaneously deploying positive Appreciation of Chinese culture and negative Appreciation of Japanese domestic rigidity. During her early years in Japan, letter-writing to her foster parents in China became "the most traditional way of keeping my Chinese language alive" (Ito, December 2025), indicating that linguistic preservation was also an act of relational maintenance. Another participant similarly navigated two linguistic registers: in Japanese, she adopted the formal courtesies demanded by her husband's household, yet with Chinese friends from orphan-assistance organisations, she "could finally put down my burdens and speak freely" (Hatano, November 2025). This bilingual code-switching pattern demonstrates that language choice indexed not merely communicative function, but affective liberation.

One participant articulates metacognitive assessments across cultural domains: "about 25% of musical and performance traditions in Chinese have been integrated" (Takahashi, December 2025); "about 30% of clothing culture can integrate"; and food achieves "the highest degree of integration." These quantifying formulations—unique in the corpus—function as Appreciation of the Composition subtype, evaluating domains by structural compatibility. The identification of food as "the most barrier-free cultural carrier" and as a "cultural bridge" deploys the Valuation subtype, assessing cuisine as an intercultural communication medium. This quantifying register indicates a specific discursive strategy for constructing dual identity: whereas other participants employ affective intensity, this participant employs analytical detachment to construct identity negotiation as a measurable, compositional process rather than an emotionally charged survival practice. A second-generation descendant, by contrast, notes that her Chinese has "become a bit diluted" and that she maintains it mainly through business communication and daily interaction with Chinese short-video platforms (Haruka, November 2025)—reflecting a pragmatic rather than affective relationship to the heritage language.



Figure 1. Chinese opera and lion dance performances at Osaka Japan-China Friendship Cultural Centre. (Zijun Shen, February 2026)

Figure 1 illustrates a Chinese opera and lion dance performance at the Osaka Japan–China Friendship Cultural Centre. Applying the social semiotic framework adopted in this study (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006), several visual features warrant analysis. The performers are positioned centrally within the compositional frame, constructing the performative act as the nucleus of meaning rather than a peripheral or decorative element. The co-presence of Chinese opera conventions (costumes, movement vocabulary, and musical accompaniment) and lion dance traditions within a Japanese institutional space—the Friendship Cultural Centre—visually enacts the dual-cultural positioning that the verbal narratives construct through code-switching (Section 4.3.2).

Crucially, the event is self-organised by the Zanryu-koji community rather than mediated by external media. This contrasts sharply with the visual regimes identified by Chouliaraki and Stolic (2017), in which displaced subjects are typically represented by others rather than granted the narrative capacity to construct their own visual histories. The image thus provides visual evidence of collective cultural agency: the community exercises control over its own representational practices. This visual evidence complements the verbal findings of the study, suggesting that cultural identity is sustained not only through individual memory but through performative, collective iteration.

4.3.3 Preservation Strategies: From Clandestine Resistance to Digital Mediation

The narratives reveal generational differences in preservation infrastructure. One participant describes the memory of the war as "a generation of irreducible ethical ambivalence": "One time, I was having a chat with a neighbour, and they said 'the hardships of the war' in passing, and they implied Japanese guilt, and I was left awkward and at a loss; I understood them, but I was also hit by the pain of my own country" (Hatano, November 2025). The concessive-contrastive structure distributes empathetic Affect across both national positions simultaneously—a heteroglossic Engagement resource (Martin & White, 2005). This dual-empathy structure is an important discursive finding for RQ3, as it constructs a subject for whom dual national identity is not a resolved synthesis but a permanent tension, enacted through the grammatical structure of the concessive clause itself.

This participant's maintenance is managed via a "dual-festival lifestyle": "I have always insisted on celebrating Chinese traditional festivals while respecting Japanese festivals" (Hatano, November 2025). The parallel syntactical structure—"insisting on" Chinese traditions while "respecting" Japanese ones—encodes both positive self-Judgement of tenacity and positive other-Judgement of propriety. This creates a strategic equilibrium rather than confrontation or capitulation.



Figure 2. Zanryu-koji community members celebrating the Chinese Lunar Spring Festival Gala in Osaka, embodying the dual-festival preservation strategy discussed across Northeast China participant narratives. (Zijun Shen, February 2026)

Figure 2 illustrates Zanryu-koji community members wearing traditional Northeast Chinese costumes while celebrating the Lunar Spring Festival Gala in Osaka. Semiotically, the collective adoption of traditional Chinese dress rather than Japanese formal attire serves as a visual marker of cultural allegiance, paralleling Hatano's (November 2025) verbal assertion of "insisting on Chinese traditions while respecting Japanese ones." The group composition—multiple participants wearing coordinated traditional dress—constructs what Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) term a conceptual-classificational structure, in which individuals are presented as members of a shared cultural category rather than isolated subjects. The spatial setting of an Osaka venue produces a visual juxtaposition between Chinese semiotic markers (costumes, festival decorations) and the Japanese urban context, materialising the dual-festival preservation strategy. This photographic documentation constitutes a visual parallel to the iterative present tense ("I have always insisted on celebrating") through which participants verbally construct the temporal continuity of cultural practice (Section 4.4).

A war orphan's cultural preservation is correspondingly secretive, influenced by coercive household conditions: "In earlier decades, Japanese society was still heavily influenced by a strong form of male dominance, and within the household, men's authority outweighed everything else" (Ito, December 2025). Required to wear a kimono to public events and address her husband with formulaic deference, she evaluates these conditions through negative Judgement of the Propriety subtype. This is delivered indirectly through descriptive narration—a heteroglossic strategy arising from self-protective restraint. Her craft preservation is similarly clandestine: "I quietly make them for myself, simply for the joy of seeing them on the window"—the adverb "quietly" encoding force-lowering within the Graduation system. However, her child's interest transforms personal resistance into an authentic exchange of knowledge. She explains that her child requests that she teach him, thereby imparting a form of intangible cultural heritage (Ito, December 2025).

Another participant constructs folk knowledge as possessing an efficacy unavailable in institutional structures: "I tried to take her to see a psychologist, but the whole thing did not really work... in the end, it was that [Chinese practice] which worked" (Wang, February 2026). Here, Japanese services are negatively Appreciated, while Chinese practices are positively Appreciated.

Digital platforms make this preservation framework intergenerational. A second-generation descendant describes scrolling through Douyin or Kuaishou "almost every day" (Haruka, November 2025). While Wang employs Kuaishou as an emotionally charged portal to childhood memories, for the second-generation descendant, it is a site for regular digital consumption. This affective-to-pragmatic shift in digital interaction is a key discursive revelation for RQ3: the same technological platform enshrines radically different evaluative positionings based on the generational distance from the displacement source. This is further reflected in the transition from craft to commodity; Haruka (November 2025) notes, "I have not collected many Chinese handicrafts, except to buy at times some Chinese lanterns." The lexical choice of "buying" instead of "making" indicates a generational shift from production to consumption, and from functional ability to symbolic representation. To support this generational trend, Table 3 illustrates the distribution of recorded Affect tokens—lexical items that explicitly convey emotional states—across the five participant narratives (Martin & White, 2005).

Table 3. Distribution of Inscribed Affect Tokens Across Participant Narratives

Participant	Generational Position	Transcript (approx. words)	Length	Inscribed Tokens (n)	Affect	Affect Density (per 1,000 words)	Dominant Subtype	Affect
Wang Yuxiu	Wife of 2nd-gen. Zanryu-koji	4,200		28		6.7	Insecurity	/
Ito	War orphan (1st generation)	3,600		20		5.6	Unhappiness	/
Hatano	1st generation	4,800		19		4.0	Insecurity	/
Takahashi	1st generation	2,400		7		2.9	Dissatisfaction	/
Haruka	2nd-generation descendant	2,800		10		3.6	Mixed Insecurity	/
							Happiness	/
							Satisfaction	/
							Appreciation	/
							Low-intensity	/
							Happiness	/

Table 3 illustrates a clear generational pattern: participants closest to the original displacement express the highest density of negative Affect, utilising high-force Graduation markers such as "shocked," "stunned," "afraid," "guilty," and "suffocating." In contrast, later generations tend to employ lexical items reflecting lower-intensity positive Affect, such as "enjoy," "festive," and "at home."

While Haruka scored 3.6 on the raw scale—slightly higher than Takahashi's 2.9—the evaluative orientations of the two individuals differ significantly. Haruka's discourse is characterised by positive Affect tokens, whereas Takahashi's lower score reflects a preference for metacognitive assessment over personal emotional expression. This suggests that as generations pass, emotions become not only quantitatively less intense but also qualitatively distinct: the "anguish of insecurity" (characteristic of the first generation) is replaced by "practical contentment" (characteristic of the second and third). This shift confirms that the discursive construction of Zanryu-hojin identity is moving from a framework of traumatic survival to one of pragmatic cultural integration.



Figure 3. Chinese calligraphy practice at an Osaka community event, representing the intangible cultural heritage transmission documented in participant narratives. (Zijun Shen, February 2026)

Figure 3 illustrates Chinese calligraphy as a communal event in Osaka. This dynamic is defined by the materiality of writing; the figure demonstrates the practitioner's focused engagement with brush, ink, and paper. This concentration on the act of creation assigns high value to calligraphy as a process rather than a finished aesthetic object. Such a focus on process aligns with the Transitivity findings in this study, where Material process verbs (e.g. "making," "cooking," "teaching") are utilised to depict activities directly connected to cultural production.

The Chinese characters being practiced constitute a form of visual code-switching within the Japanese urban environment. They serve as evidence of the community expressing a sense of cultural and philosophical "saturation"—a register that contrasts with the pragmatic, daily functions assigned to the Japanese language (Section 4.3.2). Furthermore, the communal nature of this environment, where members are literally "doing" their heritage together, emphasises the preservation of cultural identity as a collective effort rather than the solitary act of a nostalgic individual. The image provides visual evidence that displaced identity is sustained through repeated embodied practice—a dimension of cultural maintenance that individual oral narratives alone cannot fully capture.

4.3.4 National Belonging and Documentary Identity

The narratives reveal a scalar progression in the construction of national belonging. This progression constitutes the primary structural finding for RQ3: across the generational positions represented in the corpus, the discursive construction of national identity shifts from documentary permanence to pedagogical maintenance, through strategic equilibrium, and finally to administrative rupture with affective

persistence. This generational gradient is enacted through systematically distinct evaluative and temporal resources.

Wang asserts documentary continuity: "My passport has never changed, I'm still Chinese," and "Without a nation, there is no home" [*mei you guo jiu mei you jia*] (Wang, February 2026). Here, the present-perfect and simple-present tenses construct identity as a state continuously maintained through documentary permanence and nationalist proverbs. Similarly, Takahashi (February 2026) operates pedagogically across the two cultures, sustaining identity through long-term educational labour. Strategic equilibrium is constructed by Hatano (November 2025) through the observance of a "dual-festival lifestyle," while Ito (December 2025) practises covert cultural maintenance under household constraint.

At the generational terminus, second-generation descendants acknowledge administrative rupture while asserting affective persistence: "Although we have changed our passports, we still feel a deep longing for our homeland" (Haruka, November 2025). The concessive conjunction "although" grammatically subordinates the fact of changed citizenship to the affective continuity of "longing," constructing a subject for whom administrative identity and felt identity have become explicitly decoupled. Haruka further expresses the hope that "our motherland and the government can continue to show us care and attention" (November 2025)—deploying "motherland" as an Affect-laden lexical item that encodes belonging even after the passport formalising that bond has been relinquished.

4.4 Cross-Textual Comparison (RQ4)

The comparative analysis between Chan's (2011) monograph and the oral narratives examines how discursive strategies diverge across these two formations. Specifically, it investigates agency attribution, evaluative language, and the framing of displacement.

Agency Attribution: Chan distributes agency across a macro-structural field of states and bureaucracies, framing survivor action within sociological categories like "flexible citizenship" (Chan, 2011, p. 125). In contrast, the oral narratives locate agency in embodied domains that vary by generation: maternal-spiritual action, pedagogical theorisation, and digital-economic pragmatism. This reveals that while the scholarly frame views agency as structurally constrained, oral histories constitute it as a relational, generational manifestation.

Evaluative Register: Chan relies on Appreciation-dominant evaluations of institutional systems. Conversely, survivors operate in Affect-dominant registers of longing and fear. A key finding is the generational scalar attenuation: as generational distance from the trauma increases, active Appraisal resources shift from the "anguish of insecurity" to "practical contentment." Displacement discourse is thus the mechanism through which generational positioning is enacted.

Temporal Framing: Chan presents displacement as historically produced and analytically resolvable. However, the oral narratives resist this linearity through the iterative present tense (e.g., "I'm still Chinese," "I insist on cooking"). This performative iteration (Butler, 1990) suggests that identity is not "resolved" but continuously reconstituted through embodied practice—a non-linear temporality that analytical English prose structurally struggles to accommodate.

The comparative analysis between Chan's monograph and the oral narratives directly addresses RQ4 by examining how English discursive strategies diverge across the two formations in terms of agency attribution, evaluative language, and the framing of displacement, and what these differences reveal about the sociolinguistic positioning of each discursive formation.

5. Discussion

This section situates the findings within the existing literature, identifying where the present study converges with, extends, or challenges previous scholarship. The findings broadly support Hartonen et al.'s (2021) theorisation of refugee liminality as a structurally maintained condition, but introduce a critical refinement: liminality in the Zanryu-hojin case is not merely a social condition that discourse describes, but is itself constituted through lexicogrammatical choices. The agentless passives through which Chan (2011) represents bureaucratic erasure produce liminal subjectivity textually by suppressing institutional actors, while the semantic ambiguity of constructions simultaneously encoding coercion and volition realises liminality at the level of individual clause structure. Alkhaled and Sasaki's (2022) concept of "indeterminate liminality" resonates with the oral narrative findings; however, the iterative present tense maintained across all five narratives—"I'm still Chinese," "I insist on cooking," "I have always insisted on celebrating"—suggests not temporal stasis but active reconstitution through performative iteration (Butler, 1990). This distinction is reinforced by the visual evidence of repeated annual community events (Figures 1–3) which serves as a complementary semiotic mode of identity maintenance. Mijić's (2022) generational differentiation finds empirical support in the scalar attenuation of affective density across generational positions (Table 3), though the present study extends this finding by demonstrating that generational distance is actively constructed through differential Appraisal deployment rather than merely reflected in discourse.

Regarding translingual mediation, the modal asymmetry identified in Section 4.2 provides concrete lexicogrammatical evidence for Canagarajah's (2022) argument that Anglophone publishing institutionalises ideological epistemological commitments—a level of specificity that his theoretical account does not itself supply. The code-switching patterns in Section 4.3.2, in which Japanese occupies the register of pragmatic performance while Chinese retains moral-philosophical evaluation, extend Wei and Garcá's (2022) translanguaging framework. By demonstrating how bilingual subjects deploy code-switching not merely as a communicative strategy but as an evaluative resource, these subjects effectively reverse the expected power asymmetry between migrant and host culture. Furthermore, Chouliaraki and Stolic's (2017) finding that displaced subjects are denied narrative capacity in media imagery is directly challenged by the community-controlled visual documentation in this study, suggesting their typology may be specific to externally produced media rather than community-generated representations.

At the level of Appraisal analysis, the bidirectional Judgement pattern identified in Hatano's dual-empathy structure—distributing empathetic Affect across both national positions simultaneously—has not been previously documented in Appraisal-based displacement studies and constitutes a significant empirical contribution. The systematic difference in the Graduation force across generational positions elaborates on Martin and White's (2005) framework by showing that scalar variance among speakers within a corpus may also serve as a means of social positioning. Baker et al.'s (2008) principle of mutual reinforcement between quantitative pattern identification and qualitative critical interpretation is confirmed at the smaller corpus scale of this study through the Transitivity distribution (Table 2) and affective density data.

Several limitations qualify these findings: the gender homogeneity of the oral sample means that gendered Transitivity patterns cannot be empirically contested through cross-textual comparison, and the Appraisal annotations are based on English translations rather than original utterances. A full-scale corpus frequency study across Chan's entire monograph would further strengthen the quantitative grounding provided by the targeted analysis in Tables 2 and 3.

6. Conclusion

This study set out to investigate how English-language discourse constructs Zanryu-hojin displaced identity across two structurally distinct formations: Chan's (2011) scholarly monograph and five related oral narratives. The integrated CDA and Appraisal analysis was guided by four research questions addressing lexical-semantic construction (RQ1), the modal mediation of survivor voice (RQ2), traumatic memory discourse in oral narratives (RQ3), and a cross-textual comparison of discursive strategies (RQ4). Three principal findings emerge.

First, in response to RQ1, Chan's monograph constructs liminal identity through a lexical architecture that systematically suppresses institutional agency via agentless passives while progressively attributing strategic agency to survivors. This is a gendered pattern whereby women's agency is mediated through an affective and interior context, whereas male agency is framed as instrumental and exterior. Semantic fields of abandonment, belonging, and agency intertwine to create a textual subject suspended between institutional erasure and self-determination, actualising liminality through individual lexicogrammatical decisions rather than through thematic content alone.

Second, regarding RQ2, Chan's modal architecture captures an institutionalised power asymmetry between bureaucratic and testimonial knowledge. State actions are presented as unmodalised, categorical assertions, while Zanryu-koji accounts are frequently mediated through epistemic hedges and attribution markers. While agentless passives depersonalise institutional violence, active constructions personalise the responses of survivors. This pattern simultaneously diffuses state culpability and centralises survivor agency, demonstrating how English scholarly prose displays ideological commitments encoded at the syntactic level even in the absence of explicit evaluative assessment.

Third, in answering RQ3 and RQ4, the five oral narratives construct displaced identity using evaluation resources that are systematically differentiated by generational location. This generational gradient—ranging from high-intensity Affect and code-switching in first-generation survivors to metacognitive Appreciation and digital nostalgia in second-generation descendants—indicates that displacement discourse actively constructs generational distance rather than merely reflecting it. Furthermore, the iterative present tense maintained across the narratives directly challenges the analytical framing of "identity transformation" (Chan, 2011, p. 154). It suggests that displaced identity is not a problem to be solved, but a state continuously reconstituted through the enactive repetition of embodied cultural practices. This finding identifies a structural gap in the ability of English academic prose to accommodate the non-linear temporality of lived displacement.

The four research questions converge on a single overarching finding: English, as a medium of scholarly mediation, does not transparently transmit Zanryu-hojin experience. Instead, it actively constructs the terms of its legibility through lexical selection, modal distribution, evaluative framing, visual semiotic conventions, and generic conventions that embed ideological commitments invisible to readers who approach the text as neutral documentation. This finding does not diminish the indispensable contribution of Chan's (2011) monograph. Rather, it makes visible a structural condition of all translingual scholarly mediation: the language of representation is never separable from the subject it represents. Recognising this constitutive function of English is a precondition for a more ethical, reflexive, and methodologically transparent engagement with the voices of displaced communities—an engagement that requires attending not only to what is said, but to the lexicogrammatical, modal, evaluative, and semiotic architecture through which it is made sayable.

7. Recommendations

Future research should expand the use of corpus-based approaches to encompass Chan's entire monograph, incorporate male survivor voices to balance the current gendered perspective, and conduct longitudinal discourse analyses of evaluative registers across successive generations.

From a cultural heritage and social welfare policy perspective, Japanese municipal governments and organisations such as the Support and Communication Centres for People Returned from China should tailor interventions to generational needs. These may include state-funded communal rituals and culturally appropriate bilingual social services for first-generation survivors; community centres and heritage language programmes for descendants; and digital heritage platforms that facilitate transnational cultural connections for third-generation members. The domain-specific code-switching patterns identified in this study further suggest that bilingual education programmes should build upon existing sociolinguistic practices rather than treating Chinese and Japanese as competing competencies. From a research ethics perspective, scholars mediating displaced testimonies through English should include explicit reflexive statements acknowledging the representational politics identified in this study.

In EFL (English as a Foreign Language) pedagogy, this study highlights specific linguistic features—namely passive constructions, hedging devices, and evaluative lexis—that can serve as replicable exemplars for teaching critical literacy. By deconstructing these features, students can learn to identify the ideological commitments embedded in seemingly neutral academic discourse.

Ethically, scholars who mediate displaced testimonies through English must recognise that academic registers can systematically marginalise affective, translingual, and generational nuances. Acknowledging these representational dynamics is essential for ethical engagement with displaced voices.

AI Disclosure Statement

AI-assisted tools were used for language editing during preparation. The authors take full responsibility for accuracy, integrity, and originality of all content. No AI tools were used for generating references, interpreting data, or producing original analysis.

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Author contributions

Zijun Shen and Somrak Chaisingkananont conceived and designed the study. Zijun Shen collected the data and prepared the original draft. Somrak Chaisingkananont supervised the project and edited the manuscript. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Informed consent

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Ethics approval

The study protocol was approved by the Central Institutional Review Board of Mahidol University, Thailand (COA No. MU-CIRB 2025/473.2309).

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The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

Data sharing statement

No additional data are available.

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