When I was a kid, I really loved to watch Pokémon after school. I remember talking about it to one of my classmates for the first time and he looked at me with very bright eyes and asked if I had ever played the video game. He reached into his backpack and pulled out a handheld gaming device I had never seen before called the Game Boy Advance, but his wasn’t from America. His was decorated with glittered characters I couldn’t decipher, and when I asked him about it he told me it was a language called Japanese. His Pokémon game was also in Japanese, and I remember being so in awe with how the characters looked and promised myself I would one day learn how to read and write in Japanese. It was the first language goal I had ever set for myself and I wanted to be able to share this passion with others who could also understand the language.

In middle and high school, I sort of set aside my love of Japanese culture since my parents didn’t approve and my schools didn’t offer any courses on it. Regardless of this, I would often find myself in the library trying to read manga and magazines that were in Japanese. I felt proud whenever I would come across some kanji I had seen before. In my notes I would doodle katakana since they were the easiest, and then I would go and excitedly show my friends and ask them if they knew what any of it meant. It was at this point that I realized I would love to formally teach Japanese to anyone who has the desire to learn it.

Before coming to CSUMB, I thought I would be better off with a Spanish major while minoring in Japanese, but once I started my classes, I realized that my love for Japanese language and culture is too great. My passions in life are branched from my deep interest in Japan, so naturally I switched my major to Japanese and plan on taking culture courses in Japan.

My goal in life is to become a translator and interpreter for a Japanese company. I also want to teach and share what I know about this language and culture to others. I want to do this because I see this type of work as a means of connecting two worlds. I don’t want a language barrier to be the reason why I can’t explore and engage in another culture; I want to be able to embrace it and help others to use it in a way that brings people of different backgrounds together. I plan on graduating California State University Monterey Bay with a B.A. on Japanese Language and Culture and then either start working on my Masters in Japanese or go into the JET program for a year or so.