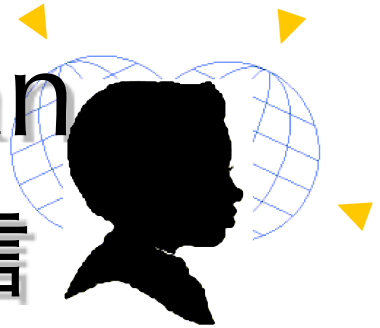


# Bilingual Japan

# バイリンガル通信



Spring 2018 • Volume 27, Number 1  
The Newsletter of the JALT  
Special Interest Group on Bilingualism

## *In this issue...*

### **Bilingual Case Study**

Major Factors that Simultaneously (Both?) Promoted and  
Hindered Bilingualism for One Child in a Family with Multiple  
Children

by Adrian Heinel.....3

### **Children's Resources**

Bilingual in Review: Resources from the 90s!

by Angela Sunaga .....6



---

## Bilingualism SIG Decision-Making Team

---

**Coordinator**  
会長

Alexandra Shaitan  
alexshaitan@yahoo.com

**Treasurer**  
会計

Tim Pritchard  
timnosuke@hotmail.com

**Director of Membership**  
会員書記

Blake Turnbull  
blaketurnbull@hotmail.com

**Director of Program**  
計画推進委員

Mandy Klein  
mklein@jcmu.org

**Publicity Officer**  
広報担当

Lauren Landsberry  
laurenlandsberry@gmail.com

**Director of Publications**  
広報委員長

Steven Ryan  
stephen05summer  
@yahoo.com

**Journal Editor**  
ジャーナル編集者

Steven Ryan  
stephen05summer  
@yahoo.com

**Newsletter Editor**  
ニュースレター編集者

Lance Stilp  
lancestilp@gmail.com

### Additional SIG Officers

**Member-at-large**  
庶務委員

Vacant

**International Liaison**  
国際仲介委員

Masae Takeuchi  
masae.takeuchi@vu.edu.au

**Directors of Newsletter**  
Distribution / 通信配

Sorrell Yue  
yue079650@gmail.com

**Regular Column Editors/  
通信編集員**

Alec McAulay, Ron Murphy,  
Christie Provenzano, Diane  
Lamb

**Website Editor**  
ウェブサイト編集者

Lance Stilp  
lancestilp@gmail.com

**Bilingip Listowner**  
Bilingip リストオーナー

Stephen M. Ryan  
stephen05summer  
@yahoo.com

York Weatherford  
yorkweatherford@gmail.com

**Proofreading:** Josh Norman

## Contribute to *Bilingual Japan*

*Bilingual Japan* is the official newsletter of the Bilingualism Special Interest Group (B-SIG) of the Japan Association for Language Teaching (JALT). The purpose of this publication is to provide B-SIG members with articles and reports about bilingualism research and bilingual child-raising in Japan. *Bilingual Japan* also provides information about recent B-SIG activities.

**The content of this newsletter depends on contributions from its readers.** All SIG members and other interested parties are invited to submit articles or reports for inclusion in these pages. Start by writing about your family's experience or something about bilingual parenting that concerns you. Even if you feel that what you have to say is trivial, there is always someone who will be interested. Everyone has a story to tell, and we look forward to hearing yours.

### Regular Columns

- Consult the description at the top of each of the Regular Columns in this issue.
- Length: Up to 1,500 words
- Submit articles to the respective column editors.

### Feature Articles

- These articles are longer and/or deal with topics not covered by the Regular Columns.
- Length: Up to 3,000 words
- Submit articles to the editor at lancestilp@gmail.com

---

**DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT ISSUE: August 15th**

---

## Bilingual Case-Study

### ある家庭におけるバイリンガリズム

In each issue, we present a case-study of a bilingual individual or family. We especially want to encourage our members to write up their own case studies of their bilingual families. The column editors would be happy to offer you assistance in writing your stories. You may also request an outline of suggested items to include. Also, if you know of a family that could be featured in this column, please contact the column editors: Ron Murphy, Ehime University, English Education Center, 3-bunkyou cho, Matsuyama, 790-8577. t: 089-927-9358 email: [murphy@iec.ehime-u.ac.jp](mailto:murphy@iec.ehime-u.ac.jp); or Alec McAulay, GSISS, Yokohama National University, Tokiwadai 79-3, Hodogaya-ku, Yokohama 240-8501 t: 045-339-3553 (w) email: [tokyomcaulay@gmail.com](mailto:tokyomcaulay@gmail.com)

---

## The Road Less Traveled

by Roland Carax

### Background

I am a dual French-American national, born and raised in the US, aged 61. I teach English in one junior high school and three universities in Kanagawa. I am a native English speaker from Ohio. I am conversationally fluent in Japanese, and have a passive understanding of French, which I majored in in college. My (now former) wife Aki is also 61. She was a junior high school English teacher when we met. Although her English was very good, we always conversed in Japanese. I came to Japan in 1979, and married Aki in 1982. My daughter Isabelle was born in 1983. My son Michel was born in 1986.

To understand my thoughts on language and child-raising, you need to know a bit about my mother. She was born to my Japanese grandmother and French grandfather and raised in Japan. She met my American father when he was on military service in Japan, and went back to the US with him. Despite her upbringing in Japan, and despite being very Japanese in certain aspects, my mother has always thought of herself as French, and I was raised to emulate the French, if not to think of myself as French. I have never thought of myself as a typical American. This influenced me to bring up my own children as French-Japanese. They currently have three passports: French, Japanese and American.

### Identity issues

I arrived in Japan in 1979 with almost no knowledge of the language, but was conversationally competent within a year. I had a Japanese grandmother, but I had only spoken English with her until I became relatively fluent in Japanese after coming to Japan. (However, she did get me very interested in the culture.) My mother spoke Japanese and French, but never at home. She had spoken French, Japanese and English at home when she was a child. She had felt confused by the experience of growing up with three languages, so had a policy of only speaking English to us. I majored in French in college, so had relatively strong French when I graduated, which became passive understanding over the years.

My daughter Isabelle, now 35, was born in 1983. Bilingual upbringing was never an issue for me. Aki and I discussed it, but decided it would be easier to raise our daughter as a native Japanese and have her pick up English later in life. One important factor was that in 1983 children born in Japan only received Japanese nationality through the father, not the mother, so Isabelle was not Japanese on paper. I wanted her to stay in Japan later in life. She had distinct foreign features when she was born, and a foreign passport, so my priority was making sure she 'fit in' in Japan. At that time I never thought she could be Japanese, but I wanted her to be able to

compete with the Japanese. (In the end, we had to go to family court to petition for her to obtain Japanese nationality. My son was born in 1986, by which time the law had changed).

When Isabelle was very small, I did try to speak French to her. This was more of a notion that it would be nice if she spoke French, rather than a long-term thought out strategy. This may be slightly over-stating it, but if anything, I was anti-bilingual because I did not want my children to leave Japan. I wanted them to blend in. Thinking back on it now, I can see the contradictions in my thinking. I wanted them to blend in as Japanese, but I gave them French names and started out speaking French to my daughter.

I stopped speaking French to Isabelle when she was around 3 or 4. At that time, I worked in language schools and often came home late. I really only saw Isabelle on weekends. She was speaking Japanese with her mother and friends all day and her Japanese ability was progressing much more quickly than her French ability. At that time, I spoke Japanese to my wife and French to Isabelle. One day my daughter flared up (→this seems really strange to me... how about “got quite/really upset”?). She had realized I could speak Japanese, but that I was refusing to speak it with her. She thought I was being mean, and refused to let me even pick her up if I spoke French. After that moment, I stopped using French, and the house became all Japanese.

My daughter and son went through private Catholic school, but regular Japanese schools, not international schools. They both have recognizably Western features, and French names, but in all other respects they grew up as typical Japanese kids. At one point, when Michel was around 4, he said that he and his Mum were Japanese, but that I and Isabelle were gaijin. I think his point was that Isabelle was ‘Daddy’s little girl’ and he was ‘Mummy’s boy,’ but he expressed it as ‘gaijin’ and ‘Japanese.’

We often took the kids to the US in summer when they were in elementary school. The trips were about connecting with family, and I never thought to strategize English language learning while there. On those trips it became clear that Isabelle and Michel had different sensibilities. In the toy shops, Isabelle would go to all the American toys, but Michel would drift to the Japanese toys. Isabelle could function in English, talking with her cousins. She would translate for her brother. Michel never really spoke English in the US. I used Japanese with the kids in the US, unless we were with other family members and the language of use was English. When we came back to Japan, we reverted to being a Japanese household. The difference in the kids also showed itself in Japanese. Isabelle was never very good with kanji, and was a bit behind in school. Michel, however, did very well in kokugo (Japanese language class).

#### Interest in English

Both Isabelle and Michel developed an interest in English later in life. My daughter started working as a jewelry maker after graduating from college. The company produced customized jewelry. Foreign customers occasionally came to the store. Isabelle could understand their English, but could not respond. This made her very frustrated, and after 2 years she decided to go to London to study English. She chose the UK because she grew up loving Radiohead and The Beatles, and her graduation trip had been to London. She went there when she was 25 and stayed for two years. The first six months were spent in a language school, and after that she could stay and work because of her French passport. She got work in Japanese restaurants. Despite struggling a little with the British accent, her English became conversationally fluent.

When she came back to Japan, she wouldn’t speak English with me because we were used

to interacting in Japanese. I got the feeling she was hiding her English ability from me, but I knew she sought out and went to international events using English. And when my sister comes to visit from Ohio she eagerly speaks English with her.

Since then, Isabelle has been back to the UK a few times. As I write, Golden Week is approaching and she is going for two-and-a-half days only, because she claims she cannot take more time off work – very Japanese! Isabelle is now a grown woman and very comfortable in her own skin. She is, I would say, a ‘*kokusajin*’ (international person) – she is Japanese, she is *hafu*, and she is very much at ease with her own place in the world.

My son Michel has no real English competence. This became an issue when he started working at a TV company. At the interview, he was encouraged to apply for the International Department, which was better paid and had more prestige, but he had to admit that he didn’t speak English. When he did start to work for them, because of his name, and the way he looked, colleagues just assumed he was good at English, and he was asked several times to translate or interpret. He found having to explain that he only knew Japanese embarrassing. (One director actually got very angry on discovering that Michel was monolingual.) The interview and situation at work made Michel aware that English would have been a big benefit in his life – and he blamed me for not raising him to speak English. In his mid 20s, we went through a phase of going out once a week for dinner and drinks and he would ask me to speak English. He was keen, but to be honest, he just wasn’t very good at English. The habit of ‘English drinks’ fizzled out.

One interesting anecdote is that Michel attended the junior high school where I taught. Part of my job was evaluating the

students’ communicative ability. I had to give him a C. I also distinctly remember one test item where the answer was “I don’t know,” but Michel had written “I don’t no.” He was a typical Japanese student on the lower end of the competence scale. At that time, it didn’t bother him. These days, interaction with him is of course in Japanese, but he is extremely happy when my sister comes and he has to speak English with her.

While Isabelle thinks of herself as ‘international,’ Michel thinks he is Japanese. These days, he has no real desire to become an English speaker. He has a rather unusual Japanese middle name and he uses that over Michel. (He used his Japanese name throughout his school years.) Only the family calls him Michel.

## Conclusion

Looking back from the vantage point of 2018, I ask myself what I would do differently if I could go back. The simple answer is I would make efforts to raise my children as Japanese-English bilinguals. When they were little, I wanted them to think they were French, not American. And I wanted them to be able to function in Japanese society like typical Japanese. I remember hoping, before they were born, that they would look very Japanese, so that they would fit in more easily. I realize now I should have been spending much more time developing their English. Isabelle is single and it looks like she is staying that way – she is very independent. Michel has a long-term girlfriend and already I am determined to make up for things with any future grandchildren I may have. They, I can say with certainty, will have lots of English input from me.

## Children's Resources

### 子供の教材

A column about books, magazines, and other resources for bilingual children in Japan, including: reviews and recommendations, information about where to get the resources, offers of resources to exchange, or give free to a good home (no sales, please) and calls for help from B-SIG members interested in producing their own children's resources. Please send submissions to the editor, Diane Lamb <dianelamb.ohiojapan@gmail.com>.

---

### The Short Stories of Paul Jennings

by Alexander McAulay

My daughter is now seventeen and my son is fourteen. One thing that has surprised me over the years of raising them bilingually is how difficult it has been to find suitable children's fiction in English for them, especially for independent reading (as opposed to reading-aloud). Perhaps my children are just more fickle than others, but I have come up against a number of formidable obstacles. For instance, they refuse to engage with any book that they have seen the movie version of, so the "Harry Potter" series has never featured in our bookcase. They have a low tolerance for descriptive, atmospheric writing, so Erin Hunter's "Warriors" series was rejected before we got past page one. Pretty much every author they have read has been only a partial success – there is always some small gripe that my children have. However, one author has been an unqualified win – Paul Jennings.

I came across the work of Australian writer Paul Jennings completely by chance. A few years ago, I was in a thrift store in Melbourne, browsing the second-hand books. I picked up a tattered copy of "Unreal," a collection of short stories. Flicking through, I liked the length of the stories, and the uncomplicated prose. I could tell they were all set in Australia, and wondered if they would work with my Japanese-Scottish offspring. I bought it on a hunch, took it home to Yokohama, and started reading it to my daughter at bedtime. She was instantly hooked. Within six months, at my daughter's insistence, we owned every book by the author.

Here is the opening of Only Gilt in Paul Jennings' "Unbearable" collection:

The bird's perch is swinging to and fro and hitting me on the nose. I can see my eye in its little mirror. Its water dish is sliding around near my chin. The smell of old bird droppings is awful. The world looks different when you are staring at it through bars.

Fool, fool, fool.

What am I doing walking to school with my head in a bird cage?

This short piece of prose embodies many of the elements that make Jennings such a suitable author for bilingual readers: accessible language, a bizarre image, some scatological elements, and a situation that hooks the reader immediately. Only Gilt is one of eight stories in "Unbearable." Other stories are about eating flies at the dinner table, a girl with goat poo in her pocket, a boy who thinks he is a chicken, a child covered in scales, shape-shifting beasts that turn into vomit, a stuffed fox coming back to life, and a boy who uses his incredibly smelly feet to save a turtle. Yet, even though Jennings' stories hit you on a visceral level, there is real heart and inventiveness alongside all the gross-out elements. Many of the child protagonists are underdogs and put upon in some way, such as being bullied, bearing an embarrassing secret, or suffering with difficult parents. You sympathize with their trials and cheer their triumphs.

The lack of complex constructions and artifice in Jennings' writing is part of what made him an instant hit with my two children in their primary school years. There is very little vocabulary that needs explaining. The stories are punchy and pacey, with lots of twists. With no need to stop to explain difficult words, the reading experience becomes pure uninterrupted entertainment. There is absurdity, whimsy, magical realism, but also some genuinely moving moments. The stories work for both read-aloud at bedtime, or as read-alone material. I started with that one collection from the Melbourne charity shop as read-aloud material for my daughter when she was 11 years old. In the 12 months that followed, we ordered all of the author's other books and she enthusiastically read through them all on her own. This was not a conscious strategy on my part. My daughter was reading for the simple pleasure of it. She could finish a Jennings book in less than a week. In fact, she was getting through them so fast that I began to wonder if she was reading them properly. One day we had a conversation about the stories and I took the opportunity to quiz her on the details. Sure enough, she had read every word and could recall many details. At one point the problem we had was that I was falling behind. My daughter had read some amazing story and wanted to chat with me about it, and got frustrated because I was not keeping up with her.

My son reads a lot of Japanese manga, and he is a more reluctant reader of English fiction than my daughter. He has not taken to the stories of Paul Jennings with the same fervor as his sister, but Jennings was his first choice when it came to bedtime reading. Perhaps the most wonderful thing about Jennings is how well his stories stand up to re-reading. My son is now fourteen. We are currently re-reading Paul Jennings' stories and using them as writing prompts. My son reads a story, or I will read it to him, which happens a lot because he is in the soccer club at school and is too tired after club training sessions to read

on his own. He then writes a review in his notebook, summarizing the story and giving his opinion of it. Ideally, we would do this once a week, but we regularly fail to keep up that pace.

Unbearable is the fifth of Jennings' ten short story collections, which also includes *Unreal*, *Uncanny*, *Unmentionable*, and *Undone*. With their child protagonists, hints of fantasy and the supernatural, and twisty endings, it is no surprise many reviewers have called Jennings a rival to Roald Dahl.

Jennings seems to be marketed towards the eight-to-14-year-old demographic. However, I think older bilingual teenagers in Japan would also enjoy and benefit from the stories. They are authentically Australian, featuring kangaroos, wombats, koalas, Australian fauna and landscapes, and the odd slang term such as *dunny*, which means toilet. However, the stories are also universally comprehensible. We have never come across a term or scenario that we could not make sense of in the given context. Inevitably, some of the stories work better than others, but the worst ones are always passable, and the best ones simply soar. In short, if I had to recommend only one author to readers of Bilingual Japan, Paul Jennings would come out on top by a country mile.