Bilingual Japan
バイリンガル通信

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バイリンガル通信
Bilingual Japan

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Winter 2023 Volume 32, Number 3

JALT バイリンガリズム分科会ニュースレター
The Newsletter of the JALT
Special Interest Group on Bilingualism

In this issue…

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Call for volunteers! Vacancies are always open for editor positions - duties involved liaising with case study contributors, and conducting open peer review/feedback for articles. Volunteers should be JALT members, and ideally B-SIG members. Interested parties, please contact either the Newsletter Editor, Daniel R. Pearce, at pearce@shitennoji.ac.jp, or the B-SIG coordinator, Alexandra Shaitan, at alexshaitan@yahoo.com.

ボランティア募集中！編集委員を常に募集しています。特に和文投稿のフィードバック・投稿募集ができる方は大歓迎です。B-SIG 会員であることは望ましいが、バイリンガル通信に貢献できると思ったらニュースレター編集者のピアース・ダニエル（pearce@shitennoji.ac.jp）あるいは、分科会コーディネーターAlex Shaitan（alexshaitan@yahoo.com）まで連絡をください。

Contribute to *Bilingual Japan*・バイリンガル通信への投稿募集

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 life and/or child-raising in Japan. *Bilingual Japan* also provides information about recent B-SIG activities. While submissions are only currently accepted in either English or Japanese, the content of submissions is *not* limited to Japanese-English bilingualism – **all topics related to bilingualism in Japan, regardless of the specified language, are more than welcome**.

「バイリンガル通信」は、全国語学教育学科（JALT）バイリンガリズム分科会（B-SIG）の公式ニュースレターです。本誌は、日本におけるバイリンガル研究およびバイリンガルの生活または育児に関する記事やレポートを、B-SIG 会員に提供することを目的としています。また、B-SIG の最近の活動についても紹介しています。投稿言語については、現時点では日本語と英語による投稿しか受け付けていませんが、**内容に関しては日英以外のバイリンガリズムに関する投稿は歓迎**です。

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.

「バイリンガル通信」は、**読者の皆様からの投稿に支えられています。**どんな立場であろうと、読者から寄稿を常に募集しております。学術雑誌ではないので、ご自身やご家族の体験、バイリンガル育児や教育について、関心のあることや疑問を持つことがあれば、とりあえず書いてみて、気軽に投稿してください！些細なことでも、興味を持ってくれる人は必ずいます。寄稿をお待ちしています。

Manuscript Guidelines・原稿要領

Please consult the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, 7th edition, as a style guide. Refer to recent issues of the JALT Bilingualism SIG Newsletter for instances of layout and referencing. (Editors and co-editors are here to help with this process – we welcome all voices, so please do not feel intimidated by academic conventions of if you are not used to them).

和文投稿に関して、決まった様式がありません。投稿の問い合わせは、編集者のピアース・ダニエル（pearce@shitennoji.ac.jp）まで。

Bilingual Japan・バイリンガル通信 invites a wide variety of submissions to columns that are not necessarily included in every newsletter. Columns are listed below, and contributors with ideas for submissions should feel free to consult with the editor(s) about proposals – we welcome any and all voices that contribute to the bilingual community.

投稿コラムについては、毎回出版するわけではなく、投稿がある際に、筆者と編集者の相談の上に載せています。コラム内容については以下をご参照ください。

Regular Columns・レギュラーコラム

(1,000~3,000 words または 1500 字～5000 字程度)

・**Case Studies・事例（ケーススタディ）**

See a detailed description on page 5. （和文詳細が準備中ですが、和文寄稿は歓迎します）。

・**Children's Resources (& Young Adult Book Reviews)・児童（またはヤングアダルト）向けリソース紹介／書評等**

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 column editor, Daniel Pearce at pearce@shitennoji.ac.jp.

日本のバイリンガル児童（またはヤングアダルト）向けの本や雑誌、その他のリソースについて、レビュー（書評）やおすすめ情報を紹介するためのコラムです（ただし、販売はご遠慮ください）。また、リソース制作企画等の協力募集も受け付けます。投稿当は、コラム編集者の Daniel Pearce（pearce@shitennoji.ac.jp）までお送りください。

・**Resources Column・一般リソース／書評等**

Readers are encouraged to submit book reviews and introductions to materials that have relevance to bilingualism. Word count is not prioritized – submissions should include introductions of resources that could be beneficial to the bilingual (and emergent bilingual) community.

バイリンガリズムに関連する書評や資料の紹介の寄稿をも歓迎します。特に投稿基準は設けていませんが、バイリンガルコミュニティにとって有益な資料の紹介の投稿を期待しています。

・*Voices*・バイリンガルの聲

Readers are encouraged to submit both interviews and first-hand accounts of bilingualism in Japan. *Voices* includes (but is not limited to) experiences of individual bilinguals in Japan, novice researchers, graduate students, educational practitioners, and bilingual professionals. Submissions should have a clear message that should contribute to the community and should be relatively short (around 1,000 words). Frustrations are also voices – articles that reasonably point out the struggles of bilinguals are also welcome! Voices surrounding **Japanese+language-other-than-English are welcome**. Submissions to Daniel R. Pearce: pearce@shitennoji.ac.jp.

日本におけるバイリンガリズムについて、インタビューや生の声をお寄せください。「バイリンガルの聲」には、一般人のバイリンガル体験、大学院生、教育実践者、バイリンガル専門家のつぶやきなどの、幅広い投稿を募集しています。投稿は、バイリンガルコミュニティに貢献する目標の、比較的短いもの（1500～2000 字程度）を想定しています。バイリンガル（あるいはバイリンガル関係者）の葛藤・苦労等のつぶやきも受け付けます。**日英だけでなく、日＋英語以外の言語の投稿は大歓迎です。** 投稿は、ピアース・ダニエル（pearce@shitennoji.ac.jp）まで。

・**Current Research & Interests**

A venue to keep readers up-to-date with links, news, and/or new research in bilingualism. Submissions should generally be summaries of relatively new trends in bilingualism, preferably kept

to under 1,000 words, and accessible to general members. Any relevant topics to bilingualism (with particular consideration to the Japanese context) will be considered. Please send submissions to the column editor, Shaitan Alexandra at alexshaitan@yahoo.com

バイリンガルに関するリンク、ニュース、研究などの最新情報を読者に提供するためのコラムです。投稿は、バイリンガリズムに関する比較的新しい動向の要約や紹介を、2,000 字以内とし、一般会員がアクセスできるものとします。投稿は、コラム編集者のシャイタン・アレキサンドラ（alexshaitan@yahoo.com）までお送りください。

Feature Articles・論文/短報/記事

These articles are longer and/or deal with topics not covered by the Regular Columns. No specific word limit, but submissions should adhere to a semi-academic standard. Questions regarding submissions should be directed to the newsletter editor.
レギュラーコラムに該当しない準学術論文的な記事の投稿です。字数制限は設けませんが、寄稿に関してはニュースレター編集者まで問い合わせください。

DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT ISSUE: May 15th
次号の投稿期限：5 月 15 日

Guidelines for Case Study Articles・事例（ケーススタディ）の投稿要領

（以下が英文論文の要領。和文投稿に関しては、編集者のピアース・ダニエルが問い合わせを常時受けつけております。和文要領は、今後のニュースレターに詳述を記載する予定）。

The goal of a case study is to show how the process of teaching* and acquiring a minority language & culture is carried out in individual cases. Writers should clearly explain to the reader the relevant information regarding the main characters of the story, the situation that these characters came from and/or are presently in, and the strategies and methods used to advance toward the stated goal. While a case study is usually written by a parent about that parent's child or children, any contributor who is suitably informed about a particular situation is eligible to submit an article for publication.

Obviously, contributors should keep in mind their audience. Most Bilingualism SIG members (numbering over 200, all of whom receive three online issues annually) have various years of experience in this field. Many joined the SIG when their children were young, hoping to learn how to raise their children to be bilingual, bi-literate, and bicultural. A contributor should strive to contribute to our readers' desire to know and learn, keeping in mind that our members have a wide range of personal backgrounds, current family circumstances, and material and social resources.

* (Terms such as 'teaching', 'teachers', 'learning', etc. are used broadly in these guidelines and can/do include people, practices, and experiences beyond a traditional school environment.)

Submission guidelines:

It is advisable to check with the editors before writing your article. It is best to propose an idea or an abstract and then proceed upon the editors' feedback. Reading past case studies is advisable.

Deadlines are the middle of January, April, and September. Articles should be 1500-3000 words, though exceeding the upper cap, within reason, can usually be accommodated. In certain circumstances, much longer articles are accepted but may be split into two parts, appearing in successive issues. Check with the editors on this.

Editorial guidelines:

Case studies in this newsletter are generally not academic in nature. Rather, they are a focused narrative on the real experiences of people in specific situations. References to research and theory, if used at all, should be used sparingly. Many case studies are fine without such references. However, meandering narratives will be rejected or sent back for revision. Articles should convey a clear story that reveals the efforts and outcomes towards teaching and learning of the target language and/or culture, whether successful or not.

Article structure:
- Introduction

This first part of your article should provide the relevant information about the 'teachers' and 'learners' (often the parents and children) – demographics, past and current residencies, education history, language abilities, teaching strategies and methods, lifestyle and social circumstances, etc. Pseudonyms are acceptable but should be acknowledged. A thesis statement of sorts should be included to alert the reader to the direction and scope of the article.

- Body

This section should clearly deal with the main events of the article. Convey the steps taken to address the problems stated in the (so-called) 'thesis statement' and the results of those steps. This is sometimes the most personal part of an article, and conveying the thoughts, feelings, and behavior of the participants towards successes or failures can be powerful. Be fair, be accurate, and be honest.

Typically, there is a third party involved in a case study -- a teacher, principal, a school, family member, a 'Saturday School' board member' etc. It is beneficial to the reader to explain this party's position and behavior adequately and honestly.

Details matter. Explain the methods you use in enough detail to give the reader a sense of how that method worked in those circumstances. For example, methods might include reading English books at bedtime, Skype sessions with cousins back home, Saturday school projects, daily 'English-only' periods,

or home-school routines. Helpful detail would include any 'spin-off' activity *vis a vis* bedtime reading; particulars of Skype sessions, i.e., do the kids just 'wing it' or are talking points set up beforehand? What is the proficiency or 'success' of the exchanges? What excites kids in Saturday Schools to do mid-week English homework in preparation for the Saturday lesson? What are the social benefits of such an arrangement? For periods where 'English-only' is in effect, how does the child respond? Do all siblings, or spouse, participate? To what affect?

- Conclusion

Wrap up your article by briefly summarizing the wins and losses, what you have learned, and the path forward in the long and winding road ahead.

In the end, as a case study contributor, you are a storyteller. As always, good stories have drama, suspense, protagonists who struggle, antagonists who thwart, success, failure, humor, irony, courage, uncertainty, etc.   Most importantly, good stories always connect with the reader. Your reader will be much like you -- having much on the line, such as a precious child who they dearly want to succeed in life. Your story will resonate with them. Tell it well.

Contacts:

Case study editor:
Ian Downer - downerian@gmail.com

Newsletter editor (ニュースレター編集者：和文投稿は以下のアドレスまで):
Daniel R. Pearce (ピアース・ダニエル) – pearce@shitennoji.ac.jp

DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT ISSUE: May 15th 次号の投稿期限：5月15日

Coordinator's Message・コーディネーターより

Dear **Bilingualism** Special Interest Group Members!

Hope this message finds you well! We look forward to meeting you at the **PanSIG 2024 Conference** which will be held from **Friday, May 24 to Sunday, May 26, 2024 at Fukui University of Technology**. I have been attending Monday weekly meetings dedicated solely to the planning of events and this year conference organizers scheduled plenty of activities for everyone to enjoy. Please join us for the PanSIG BSIG Forum, which looks to be an engaging discussion related to bilingualism and employability.

We welcome all members' thoughts and proposals related to the SIG's activities and events. Please *do send* us an email and we would be happy to respond as soon as we can.

We also thank **JJMM editor Stephen Ryan** and all members who have been contributing to BSIG publications and/or events related to bi-/multilingualism and bi-/multiculturalism, and submitting articles and book reviews to the **JJMM Journal (**https://www.bsig.org/jjmm**).**

We would also like to thank our **Newsletter Editor, Daniel Pearce**, and all contributors to the current issue of the Newsletter for their time and support, hard work, and contributing their work and/or experiences to this issue. I hope you will enjoy reading everyone's work.

We thank **YOU all** for your support and look forward to hearing from you! Please e-mail Alexandra Shaitan at alexshaitan@yahoo.com if you would like to join the DMT and get involved in the SIG's activities more actively.

Happy Spring Holidays to you and your loved ones. Stay healthy and safe, and have loads of fun throughout the spring break!

Best wishes,
Bilingualism SIG President,
Shaitan Alexandra.

A Foreign Mother's Approaches, Observations and Reflections in Raising Two Japanese-English Bilingual Children: The Foundation Years

Fiona Shirasawa

"Mummy, I'm the tallest in my class," my daughter beams.
"Yes, you're tall, just like daddy," I replied. "You must share his genes."
"*Sou da yo!*" exclaims my daughter, "and his t-shirt too!"

Lively conversations like this fill the walls of our home. Something up until now I only dreamed of; the sounds of my own children chatting and playing. We live as a family of four in a quiet suburb of Tokyo (which seems like an oxymoron really) and bring to the table a blend of British, Australian, and Japanese mannerisms, cultural etiquette, and language. Born in England, and later raised in Australia, I came to Japan ten years ago to teach, having discovered interests in both Japanese culture and language acquisition. After completing a Bachelor of Arts, I took on an assistant teaching position in a Japanese senior high school through the JET Programme. I met my husband during this time. He had just started out at a large Japanese firm in the sales department. While he never took his English studies seriously in school, he enjoyed his university days at an international university in Japan, and was especially encouraged by an exchange trip to the Philippines to keep up his language studies. He now uses English frequently both at home and in the workplace. (Now he is an assistant manager in the human resources department, so English is a requirement in order to organise overseas visas.) After we got married, I balanced part-time teaching work, both online and at a private international preschool, with studies for a Master of Arts in TESOL. I graduated with distinction in 2019, having submitted my thesis just days before my daughter was born. In 2023, we welcomed the arrival of our son.

It has now been ten months since my daughter Emily (4) started Japanese kindergarten, and since the birth of her brother, George (0). As life has begun to settle down and the cold weather marks the beginning of a new year, I wanted to put aside some time for reflection. Particularly thinking about my eldest's language growth, it seems we are shifting beyond the foundation years into the next stage; one lending itself towards the development of literacy skills. So now seems a pertinent time to reflect upon her journey thus far towards bilingualism. Are we where I had hoped to be with the development of both languages simultaneously? Is there anything I'd like to do differently with my son, I wonder? I never wanted to be strict with our children about which language to use when and where, but rather provide an environment in which the two languages are used regularly in the hope that our children grow to see it as nothing but normal. In saying that, we did need to consider our approach, especially in the early years, since the development of Japanese (language of the community and formal education system) seemed easier in the long-term than English (the minority language).

The Very Foundations of Language Learning (0-2 Years)
I had always planned to be a stay-at-home parent, and though I hope it is seen as valuable work in other ways too, one of the more measurable benefits is the constant authentic exposure to a minority language I could

provide throughout my daughter's early years. Since she was born in May, she stayed home with me until just before her fourth birthday. Like my son now, she began to babble in sound clusters from about six months old, and around the same time, I noticed she began to understand some of my utterances with her responses to her name or suggestions to search for a toy, before going on to produce her first words. Fairly standard infant development (exciting nonetheless!), except everyone around us was doing it in a different language, of course. I realised it was crucial for me at this time to ignore my feelings of anxiety about using English, especially in front of passive listeners at the park or shops. Although this has no doubt played a role in my rather stagnant Japanese (oops!), I suggest my consistent use of my mother tongue has played the most influential role in my daughter's bilingualism.

By age two, Emily had built up a vocabulary of just over two hundred words. Out of curiosity, and a personal interest in language development, I kept a note on my phone and recorded new utterances as they came about, later carrying the data over to a spreadsheet. Approximately 75% of her utterances were in English, 15% in Japanese, and the final 10% made up of words that are the same in both languages. While her first words in English were typically nouns [*mama, dada, banana, duck, dog…*], her first words in Japanese tended to include more greetings and expressions [*souka, gochisou, un, douzo…*]. This isn't particularly surprising to me - we used English for play, but there were times when English translations of Japanese expressions are a bit wordy, so my husband and I both preferred to say *gochisousama deshita*, instead of 'thank you for the food', for example. With both my children I have avoided "baby speak", even in the earliest years, preferring instead the tools of repetition and natural emphasis (and not reducing my output to only simple forms and an unnatural accent) in the hope of providing them with as much authentic language input as possible, as well as an enriched lexis.

Fostering Early Literacy (2-4 Years)
After an explosion in language production, we began to build on routines in the home and bedtime stories (in English) became an absolute necessity for a good night's sleep. Toothbrushing was made more pleasant with two-minute songs thanks to *The Wiggles*, *Peppa Pig*, and *Daniel Tiger*. Bath time was fun with colourful alphabet charts on the walls and we'd talk about the letters and pictures together. I remember trying to keep my daughter awake on short bicycle rides by singing nursery rhymes together or playing a simplified version of I Spy focusing on colours. Around this time, we moved to our new home, and I sought to make friends with other multicultural families so that our kids would grow up to see English as important outside of the home, too. I tried initially to make connections with the help of social media, and through this approach we became very close with a multilingual family nearby who have children the same ages as us (and with whom we enjoy socialising very much, so it's not just for the kids!). I also found a good friend in an American mother after we connected via Facebook during our pregnancies, and since then, we have enjoyed numerous playdates, and love watching our girls grow up together. But I found it was more luck than anything - being in the right place at the right time - that has brought us some of our closest friends. Taking a walk near our home and noticing another foreign mother rocking an infant to sleep by the window, then meeting her at the children's hall later that same day. Playing at various local playgrounds and meeting children who have one parent who is French, or Canadian, or American. Heading to the park and stumbling across a huge meetup of international families and their children. Building friendships with Japanese mothers who wish to hang out using English. I am very grateful for our friends for myriad other reasons of course, but in reflecting on language development, they too have all played an important role in normalising the use of other languages, as well as encouraging my daughter with her language growth through fun conversations, praise, working together to negotiate misunderstandings, and

so on.

After Emily's third birthday, I began to worry that we might have pushed English too hard at the expense of Japanese. She couldn't converse well with her Japanese grandparents yet, and we could witness much more code-switching amongst her multilingual peers, so I became concerned that the transition to kindergarten would be challenging, and that I should have made more effort with introducing basic vocabulary in Japanese. Looking back though, this didn't really have any implications - socially, play at this age is still very much playing alongside or near friends, and not so much playing together, so thankfully it didn't impede upon her ability to foster friendships. Her grandparents were patient and knew Japanese would come with time, and the government health workers assessing her development at three years old were pleased she could meet the general milestones, despite performing the health check entirely in English. At her kindergarten interview, she also exclusively uttered English, and while the principal was intrigued, he was also completely unconcerned. Also around this time, Emily began to develop a greater awareness of different languages. She began to understand which of her utterances were Japanese, and which were English, as well as notice which language others around us were using. She likes, even now, to be able to control some things related to this, so TV programming is requested frequently to be put in English, and she expresses dislike when I use Japanese!

During my teaching days, I discovered ways to approach error-correction with learners, and have carried this over into daily life, using strategies including sentence modelling, rephrasing, and repeating in an effort to support accurate language development. My daughter has responded to these strategies very well, almost always choosing to repeat after me in the correct form. I also hear her self-correcting, particularly verb forms to match the tense, and she has also begun to correct my husband and I if we slip up in our second languages! My thinking has been to

encourage self-correction and accurate language in the early years so I don't have to do it so much in the later years when I fear she will respond with a scowl!

I wonder if these are the years in which we see a different pattern emerge with our son. He already has a more regular exposure to Japanese, will start kindergarten almost a year earlier than my daughter, and I have found myself using more Japanese with him. (He wakes up frequently in the night, so perhaps my tired brain is struggling with code-switching during the day!) It will be imperative to continue using English when I am together with both of my children, I think, and I hope that Emily will still prefer to express things in English for a little while since she can provide George with an additional source of authentic language.

The Reading and Writing Years (4 Years -)
Now Emily is four and a half years old, and the cogs in her brain must be turning so rapidly. She will use English with me in the mornings while we prepare for school, and we'll often discuss over breakfast what she might get up to during the day at school. She'll then have a half day of school entirely in Japanese, and then at some point on the walk home, she tends to switch from telling me about her day in Japanese to English. In the afternoons at home, I can hear her using both languages during pretend play or speaking to her brother. It's all very fascinating.

The transition to an all-Japanese-language environment was smoother than expected, although certainly more exhausting and confusing for Emily than me. It seems the harder parts of adjusting to kindergarten were consistently having to share toys, being told what she could and couldn't do, having to eat all of her lunch box at once, and so on, and language concerns took a back seat. I guess Emily had encountered Japanese enough not to be completely uncomfortable, despite her initial limited spoken output. There are still plenty of gaps in her Japanese vocabulary, however, and she fills these with English, creating mixed language sentences. While this

isn't a problem, it certainly fascinates her peers, who relay such instances to their parents. I'll hear about how her different pronunciation for *ball* briefly confused her friends, or how everyone called out *ringo*, but Emily opted for *apple*. On the upside, it seems Emily's ability to communicate in both languages is frequently praised by her peers and the other parents at kindergarten, and thus she must feel admired. It feels a relief as I have heard complaints from other mothers of multilingual children who have been told by teachers or government healthcare workers (when assessing a child's home environment and/or health) to do more to speak the community language at home, instead of the mother's first language. Perhaps we are lucky; perhaps this reflects more on the power of English in this changing world. I am fully expecting Emily's own attitudes towards her languages to change many times over the course of her childhood, with many of these shifts probably heavily influenced by whether her future classmates embrace or reject her cultural differences and how this affects her level of self-esteem.

Something that I expect has also been encouraged by her kindergarten peers is Emily's desire to write letters, in both languages, so that has been an exciting development lately. Sometimes I worry that I have begun to focus on literacy too early (let kids be kids!), but it does seem that Emily enjoys learning letters just as much as drawing pictures, playing with blocks, and starting a game of chase outside. Our work with phonics is progressing in a similar way - we can't quite blend sounds so well yet, but Emily has fun spotting letters out and about, and looks forward very much to story time. As a parent, it is easy to get caught up these days in the online (heated) discussions surrounding parent-led vs. child-led (and just about all other approaches to parenting including feeding methods, sleeping methods, and so on), pushing a singular approach consistently instead of encouraging parents to try different approaches regularly. With time, my confidence as a parent has grown, and I have come to prefer to limit my online activity, and just focus on going with Emily's flow - noticing what she's into, introducing anything else similar, and not getting caught up as her interests change. This may change as we move towards elementary school though, and there will become a need to introduce regular reading and writing practice at home in order to attain full proficiency in English.

This journey has been something quite exciting to both play a role in, but also somehow sit back and watch unfold. My studies in language acquisition helped me to shape an environment that allowed for an enriched development of a minority language, and being a stay-at-home parent has provided ample time for direct authentic exposure to this language. However, there's been a lot of help along the way - from family who call to chat, friends who visit, educational children's television programming, resources like Jolly Phonics and the Oxford Reading Tree stories, as well as my daughter's teachers and peers at kindergarten. I want to recognise my husband's wonderful efforts here, since he has been comfortable enough to use English, a foreign language for him, in our home all these years. As a result, our key strategy ended up as English as the family language, Japanese with others. I admire his ability to work such long hours for a Japanese company, yet come home and speak and think in a completely different language. His efforts have made the journey to bilingualism seem less like a mountain in which to hike, but more like a series of gentle, enjoyable slopes.

It is at the end of these initial stages that I feel a sense of peace of mind. It has all come together, for now. My daughter has achieved full-competency in English (at the same level as same-age peers) and competency in Japanese (nearly at the same level as her same-age peers). Whether we face resistance to English in the future, or our home language begins to change its form, I don't know. Will our children prefer to converse together in Japanese or English? In an ideal world, our kids will feel comfortable expressing themselves in either language, so English can always play a role in our home language.

Naturally, though, things don't often go to plan, and I can't help but feel we've only very much done the easy work – the fun part; that is, the acquisition of spoken language. On a journey of biliteracy, we are only a part of the way there.

Going forward, I am somewhat worried about the rigid scheduling and coursework necessary to grow and maintain proficiency in reading and writing. I feel we will be pressured by time - in our daily routines, and within my own available time, balancing work both inside and outside of the home. At what point do I outsource assistance, and is it feasible? How can we keep up with the demands of regular school coursework, extracurricular activities like music and sports, and English, in a world where our kids ultimately prefer to run and play (or... well, immerse themselves in media and games).

How does this affect the relationship I have with my own children, and the way that my children feel about their identities? No matter the path we take, there are myriad choices from this point on, and like many other parents, I'll constantly be wondering if what we're doing is enough. But, to stay optimistic, there are so many exciting things to look forward to: trips to my home countries, navigating humour and jokes in both languages, teaching each other new words or cultural phenomenon, sharing my old favourite stories, and so on. And if all else fails with the development of biliteracy, I must remember where we have gotten so far; that bilingualism in spoken English and Japanese is a feat worth celebrating. As my son begins to babble his first recognisable sounds, I hope to include his story, and my daughter's further development, in future updates.

Table 1. Family Characteristics, Factors Influencing Language Development, and Implemented Strategies

FAMILY CHARACTERISTICS	MAIN FACTORS AFFECTING LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT	STRATEGIES USED TO ACHIEVE BILINGUALISM IN THE EARLY YEARS
Residence: Tokyo, Japan **Mother**: British-Australian Stay-at-Home Parent English Teacher Japanese: N2 **Father**: Japanese Company Worker English: CEFR B2 **Child 1:** Female, 4 years old Attends Japanese kindergarten **Child 2:** Male, 0 years old	Mother's role as a stay-at-home-parent Father's desire to also speak the minority language at home Mother's language-teaching background and education Both parents able to communicate well in each other's languages Positive attitudes towards bilingualism from government workers, doctors, and peers at Child 1's kindergarten Older sibling for Child 2	English as the main language used at home Children have English-speaking friends, and friends who switch between English and Japanese Availability of English-language books and media; limited availability of Japanese-language books and media Child 1 attends Japanese kindergarten Semi-regular video phone calls with family members in both languages Modelling language through constant authentic exposure, error-correction, and a wide range of lexical choices Increasing phonemic awareness with songs, games, bedtime stories, and simple phonics worksheets and readers

Table 2. Timeline of Child 1's Language Development Milestones

The Foundation Years	**THE FOUNDATIONS OF LANGUAGE YEARS**	
	0-6 months	Noticing Sounds and Body Language
	6-12 months	Understanding Simple Language in English, Japanese Producing First Sounds and Words
	18-24 months	Rapid Vocabulary Building (Input and Output)
	THE EARLY LITERACY YEARS	
	2 years	Constructing Simple Sentences in English Understanding Complex Language in English Reproducing Alphabet Letter Names Building Friendship Circles with International Families Enjoying Media Content in English Enjoying Bedtime Stories in English Awareness of Multiple Languages
	3 years	Reproducing Alphabet Letter Sounds Constructing Complex Sentences in English Constructing Simple Sentences in Japanese Fully Distinguishing Between Japanese and English Acquired Full Competency in Spoken English
	THE READING AND WRITING YEARS	
	4 years	Reproducing Some Hiragana Letter Names/Sounds Forming Some Letters in English and Japanese Understanding Complex Language in Japanese Constructing Complex Sentences in Japanese Enjoying Media Content in English and Japanese Enjoying Bedtime Stories in English and Japanese Able to Converse with Family on Video Chats in English and Japanese Acquired Competency in Spoken Japanese
The Literacy Years	**5 years onwards**	Will Blend Sounds to Read CVC Words in English? Will Acquire Full Competency in Spoken Japanese? Will Form All Letters in English and All Hiragana in Japanese?

Feature Articles・論文/短報/記事

On the Importance of Sharing Lived Bilingualism in Foreign Language Education

Daniel Roy Pearce
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Editor's Note: As it has been a while since we have had a feature article submission, I have made a contribution as editor. Although submissions are typically semi-academic (as described in the submission guidelines above), and thus not blinded peer-review articles such as those of the BSIG's journal, Japan Journal of Multilingualism and Multiculturalism*, in the interest of fairness, I asked our Case Study editor, Ian Downer, to review the submission. Thank you, Ian, for agreeing to take on the review in addition to your case study work.*

Although a lengthy submission, shorter submissions from future contributors are always welcome.

Although rarely addressed explicitly in classes, achieving bilingualism is an often-assumed goal of second/foreign language education, at the very least on the part of learners. Perceived failure in this implicit goal can lead to dissatisfaction and abandoning the pursuit of language acquisition. For instance, in the (nationally bilingual) Canadian context, it has been pointed out that frustration with language programs has led to a "general feeling among anglophones that they 'can't learn French'" (Netten & Germain, 2012, p. 87). In the more monolingual Japanese context, similar sentiments are often shared by learners of English,[1] resulting in feelings that achieving bilingualism is an impossibility – including by the participants in the practice explored below.

Within the Japanese context, the author has previously explored how the assistant language teacher (ALT) system, which invites foreign-national (typically) English speakers to assist in foreign language education at the primary and secondary levels, possibly exacerbates notions of the 'impossibility' of achieving bilingualism, in part through policies that sometimes require ALTs to hide away their Japanese ability (or their other languages; see Pearce, 2021). Such practices can potentially reinforce representations of 'Japanese language for the Japanese' and 'English language for others,' with the unfortunate side effect of also delegitimizing other-language bilingualism.

The authors' prior research, amongst others', framed the practice explored in this

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[1] Although bilingualism is by no means limited to English-other language bilingualism, in the Japanese context, English is typically the only foreign language that the majority of learners are exposed to, at least before the tertiary level (Oyama & Yamamoto, 2020).

article, centered around a lecture in which the author was invited to share his own bilingualism-as-lived to a class of primarily first-year university students at a large-scale university in the Kansai region. The lecture in question was conducted in the penultimate hour of a 15-week introductory course on languages and cultures, prior to which the students had engaged with historical conceptualizations of linguistic ability, bilingualism, translanguaging and plurilingualism, which included visual and textual explorations of bilingualism as lived in the Japanese context (e.g, 大山他, 2022).

This article considers the importance of directly sharing experiences of bilingualism-as-lived in foreign language contexts, particularly in the highly monolingual context of Japan, where engagement with bilinguals remains an opportunity afforded to few.

Foreign Language Education and Bilingualism

Although bilingualism is not a stated goal of foreign language education at the primary and secondary school levels in Japan, the oft-cited Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) document, the *Action Plan to Cultivate 'Japanese with English Abilities'* (文部科学省, 2002), implies that Japanese-English bilingualism has been a desirable outcome of English foreign language education in the 21st century. Furthermore, while the formalization of foreign language education as a fully-evaluated subject at elementary schools in 2020 was not intended to be English-only (斎藤, 2017), it is often treated as such – the Course of Study, for instance, explicitly states that the target language for acquisition is to be "in principle, English" (文部科学省, p. 137). Much of the public discourse surrounding the subject has been grounded in the idea that an early start to foreign language education necessarily leads to better outcomes, a myth centered around the critical period hypothesis, one that has been debunked by research in the Japanese context since well before the rollout of the subject (Uematsu, 2015).

If bilingualism is a goal of foreign language education (explicit or otherwise), the root of the issue is not in *when* learners are first exposed to foreign language instruction, but *how*;

> students in regular L2/FL [=second/foreign language] classrooms are not exposed to the L2/FL for long enough periods of time each day, or cumulatively during a school year, to create the internal grammar necessary for spontaneous communication. […] Spontaneous communication, or the development of an internal grammar, can only be achieved by relatively intense use of the second language. Language programs […] which proceed by a drip-feed approach (30-50 minutes a day), simply do not provide the continuous use of a second language needed to develop the language habits that form internal grammar. (Netten & Germain, 2012, p. 96)

While the above argument is again taken from the Canadian context, it rings true in Japan, where learners are typically only exposed to a 'drip-feed' of 45-55 minutes of English lessons per day, ranging between three to five class hours per week at the secondary level, and only two hours in the upper years of elementary school. Nevertheless, the myth of the critical period hypothesis persists, and remains influential not only in the broader public, but also in the minds of many language teachers and learners. Take, for instance, one reflection of a student who experienced the author's storied bilingualism, representative of similar reflections that will be explored below:

> 幼い頃からではなく大学から日本語を学び始めたのに、違和感なくすらすらと話せていて本当にすごいと思った。自分は今まで ずっと日本語だけで生きてき

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たので、今さら新しい言語を習得してネイティブ並みにしゃべるなんてできないと思っていた。

I was really impressed that he could speak Japanese so fluently and naturally, *even though he had started learning Japanese at university and not since his childhood*. I have lived my entire life using only Japanese, and *I had thought that I would never be able to learn a new language and speak it like a native*. (Student reflection, January 2024; translation and emphases by the author)

This student touched upon two intertwined myths surrounding language acquisition and bilingualism; that bilingualism can only be achieved if languages are encountered early in childhood, and native-speakerism, the idea that native speakers are owners of, and the ultimate authorities on, their first languages (see Holliday, 2006). The problem with these prevalent myths is demonstrated in the impact they have had on this student, and echoes the experiences of Anglophones in French language classes mentioned in the introduction.

Myths Surrounding Bilingualism and Language Acquisition

Defining bilingualism is a notoriously difficult endeavor. As bilinguals tend to acquire their languages for different reasons at different stages throughout their lives, and employ their languages in different situations and with different interlocutors, attaching notions of linguistic proficiency or competence to bilingualism is likely a futile endeavor. Precisely for this reason, for the purposes of this article, the author borrows Grosjean's (2010) definition: "Bilinguals are those who use two or more languages (or dialects) in their everyday lives" (Grosjean,

2010, p. 4).

While space precludes a full discussion of bilingualism itself,[2] part of Grosjean's impetus in developing the above definition was an exploration of commonly held myths surrounding bilingualism, including that "real bilinguals have acquired their two or more languages in childhood," and that "bilinguals are rare and have equal and perfect knowledge of their languages" (2010, p. xv). In second/foreign language education, these two myths have historically driven demand for early foreign language education (regardless of the nature of that education, whether it be intensive, immersive, or 'drip-feed'), and pedagogic ideologies such as target language-only instruction, which have reinforced the image of the native speaker (often imagined and nebulous; see Davies, 2003) as the ultimate goal of language acquisition.

More recent notions of linguistic competence, particularly in second/foreign language education, such as plurilingual and pluricultural competence (see Coste et al., 2009), are cognizant of the fallacious nature of defining bilinguals as those who have 'equal and perfect knowledge' of their languages. Lüdi and Py's treatise on linguistic competence, one that may be equally applied to bilinguals and monolinguals alike, offers further insight on this point:

> A language competence will never be 'reached': it develops throughout life. Its development is characterised by the diversity and complexity of the contexts in which it is mobilized, by the specialization of the resources used, and by the increasingly demanding expectations it engenders. (2009, p. 157)

Although it is hoped that readers will be able to grasp the core of the argument being

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[2] Interested readers are pointed to Grosjean's *Bilingual: Life and Reality* (2010), which explores several myths surrounding

bilingualism, grounded in research into the topic carried out over the last century.

made here, such ideas of language competence are rarely addressed in second/foreign language education contexts, and as such, the aforementioned (ill-defined and potentially damaging) myths persist.

In the Japanese context specifically, in addition to the above-mentioned issues with the ALT system, which may also serve to propagate these myths, is the historical nature of foreign language (English) education. Despite a 'communicative turn' in foreign language education policy that emerged in the 1980s, which sought to increase emphasis on oral communicative ability – and which coincided with the large-scale introduction of ALTs – as well as later policy such as the aforementioned *Action Plan*, the subject has historically been a gateway to higher education; as a university entrance exam subject, schools have had an obligation to their learners to teach for such examinations (see, for instance, 寺沢, 2014).

As entrance examinations remain a large part of the education system, students are often taught for accuracy in producing English (as tested), because such examinations serve as gate-keepers to eliminate candidates. Thus, learners are rarely afforded opportunity (any opportunities?) to consider language proficiency as 'characterised by the diversity and complexity of the contexts in which it is mobilized' (see also ピアース他, 2024). Students in Japan, particularly those in the monolingual majority, are typically not exposed to a variety of contexts for second/foreign language use, and, not being exposed "for long enough periods of time […] to create the internal grammar necessary for spontaneous communication" (Netten & Germain, 2012, p. 96), lack personally relevant experiences of 'the increasingly demanding expectations [that language competence] engenders.'

Admittedly based on the assumption that the majority of foreign language learners in the Japanese context often lack exposure to bilingualism, and that such lack of exposure could potentially hamper their own language acquisition, this study sought to consider the following two broad research questions:

1) How does interaction with 'bilingualism-as-lived' influence (primarily monolingual) foreign language learner's conceptions of linguistic competence?
2) How might such exposure impact their understanding and/or evaluation of their own linguistic ability?

It should be mentioned that the above questions were not established *a priori* to the practice, but rather emerged from pre-practice discussions between the author and the lecturer in charge of the course.

The Study
The Practice
The specific practice occurred in the 14th week of a 15-week introduction course into languages and cultures in the fall semester of the 2023 academic year. In the weeks immediately prior, the students had experienced classes based around two chapters of the assigned textbook, which explicitly addressed bilingualism in the Japanese context – both in educational contexts, and in wider society (大山他, 2022).

The first chapter was centered on a visual linguistic autobiography,[3] through which the language acquisition and acculturating experiences of a 1.5 generation immigrant to Japan, who also achieved bilingualism in relative adulthood, was explored (オチャンテ・大山, 2022). Based upon the reading of this chapter, the students created and shared their own visual biographies, as tools to "reflect on one's own relationship with language(s), linguistic norms, and otherness, [and as a means to] reconstruct one's own

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[3] Essentially, a pictorial reflection of one's life history, centered on linguistic and cultural experiences. See Melo-Pfeifer & Chik (2022) as well as Moore et al., (2020) and ピアース他 (2024).

history through a variety of semiotic means, including language." (オチャンテ・大山, 2022, p. 75) – a task that afforded the students an opportunity to explore their own notions of language and culture that traditional language teaching often does not, while also priming them for explorations of the author's bilingualism.

The second chapter, penned by the author, was an analysis of English foreign language classes conducted with non-native English-speaking ALTs, which primarily addressed the hiding away of their languages in favor of English-only approaches (ピアース, 2022). Student reflections on this chapter formed part of the impetus for the practice, including the following comment on a footnote about the author's own experiences as an ALT from the original chapter:

> 高校の ALT であったピアース氏が生徒から「アメリカを外国という意味で使っている」ことを聞かされた時、どれほど大きい衝撃を受けたものであっただろうと思いました。もし私がピアース氏の立場であったならば、自分の母国は国として認知されていないのかとショックを受けてしまうと思います。

> I wondered how great a shock it must have been for Mr. Pearce, a high school ALT, when he was told by a student that [the student] was using the word 'America' as a synonym for 'foreign country.' If I had been in Mr. Pearce's shoes, I would have been shocked that my home country was not recognized. (Student reflection, January 2024; translation and emphases by the author)

Inspired by this comment, amongst other reflections, the instructor of the course reached out to the author and requested he give a lecture. After a joint planning session, it was decided that the content would center around the author's experiences of bilingualism, based on an exploration of his own visual linguistic autobiography.

Sharing the Author's Bilingualism as Lived
As the author's biography is explored in detail elsewhere (Pearce, 2024, forthcoming), it will suffice here to give a brief overview of the content, which was delivered in Japanese to the students.

The author began his lecture with a reflection of his early childhood and schooling, defined primarily by interpersonal communication issues resulting from his being on the autistic spectrum. This included references to difficulties in navigating ambiguity in spoken language, even in the mother tongue, and a propensity to become obsessed with certain forms of media – including reflections that much of his (native) language acquisition came through visual or written media, as opposed to interpersonal interaction.[4]

This was followed by the author's exploration of his first engagement with foreign language (Japanese) learning at the tertiary level, and how, upon graduating and finding himself ostensibly in the position of 'language teacher' as an ALT in semi-rural Japan, he felt his own language ability did not warrant this level of (perceived) authority. The author then explored how he spent at least his first few years in Japan in dedicated study of the language – spending around four hours per day on study outside of work hours – and eventually obtaining level pre-one of the *kanji kentei* (日本漢字能力検定準一級),[5] essentially achieving

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[4] An apparently common phenomenon in Japan as well, resulting in children on the autistic spectrum often not acquiring their local spoken dialects, which they are typically only exposed to in oral communication; see 松本 (2020).

[5] A test of *kanji* characters aimed at the Japanese-speaking populace. While level two of the examination tests only from the 常用漢字 (*jōyō kanji*: slightly over 2,000 characters, which are expected to be acquired by the end of the

what he considered bilingualism in his adult years.

The discussion was concluded by the author's reflections on how his experiences as an ALT, and of his own personal language acquisition, paved the way for his entering graduate school in Japan, primarily with the intention of obtaining his own teacher's license, but also how he subsequently grappled with traditional approaches to foreign language education in light of his own experiences and developing academic knowledge on bilingualism and linguistic competence.

Although the author primarily delivered his content in a lecture-style, the storying of his journey to bilingualism was constantly punctuated by interjections and questions from the main teacher, resulting in the class content being delivered as a 'team' – a teaching style that has been argued increases multiperspectivity (including in prior practice by the author; Pearce & Oyama, 2019). This team-teaching style was essential not only in tying the author's experiences into the overall course content, but also in ensuring that the lecture did not become a simple unidirectional conveying of his bilingualism-as-lived, but rather become a lens through which the students could engage reflexively with their own prior experiences of language acquisition.

Data Collection & Methodology

The data for the following analysis was collected from post-class reflections, a practice in which the instructor has the students engage in each of their lessons. As mentioned above, the research questions were not developed prior to the development of the lecture content, and thus the reflections were not tailored for specific research purposes, but rather followed the typical pattern of reflection sheets conducted throughout the semester. The reflections were semi-structured, and included the following (in Japanese; all subsequent translations are by the author):

> 1) Share what you learned during this lesson, and your thoughts (Note: Do not write a summary of the class content, or simply state 'it was fun.' Rather, please explore in detail your own thoughts).
> 2) Give an example of how knowing that a concept is expressed differently in different languages can help understand the concept itself better.
> 3) Free comments – 'anything else?'

A total of 78 students (N=78) submitted responses. Primacy was given to 1) and 3), in the analysis, as they directly related to the research questions. Thematic analysis was adopted as a methodology, broadly following the outline described on Table 1. Coding was conducted using MAXQDA2020 (VERBI Software, 2020), initially generating several hundred discrete codes that were subsequently refined to 138 codes and sub-codes relevant to the research questions, eventually categorized under four broad themes: 'Learning experience' 47 codes); 'impressions' (39 codes); 'language acquisition' (36 codes); and 'multimodal engagement' (16 codes).

Table 1. Thematic analysis procedure (Adapted from Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 87)

Step	Description
1. Familiarizing yourself with your data	Transcribing data, reading and re-reading data, noting down initial ideas.
2. Generating initial codes	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each other.
3. Searching for themes	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data

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secondary school curriculum), level pre-one tests 3,500 characters, as well as their application in proverbs and archaic texts, as well as in several thousand 四字熟語 (*yojijukugo*: four-character idioms).

	relevant to each potential theme.
4. Reviewing themes	Checking the themes work in relation to the coded extracts, and the entire data set.
5. Defining and naming themes	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.
6. Producing the report*	Final analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of extracts, relating back to research questions and literature.

*Note: This step was informed by the checklist for evaluating (reflexive) thematic analysis as presented in Braun & Clarke (2021).

Analysis & Discussion
Learning Experiences

'Learning experiences' entailed the greatest number of codes overall, and were somewhat homogenous (see Table 2). For the codes which fell under 'English-only approaches,' a majority (19) were explicitly related to experiences with ALTs. This prevalence of references to ALTs is not surprising, given that the lecture followed a reading of the author's textbook chapter on ALTs which considered some of the negative ramifications of hiding away ALTs' bilingualism (ピアース，2022).

Table 2. Major codes of the *Learning Experiences* theme

Code (no.)	Description	Representative Examples
English-only approaches (24)	Previous experiences of foreign language education.	・I remember when high school English tests were topped by those who memorized the entire texts and translations from the textbooks. ・I recalled that the AET [Assistant English Teacher] who sometimes came to English class was assigned only to play the role of speaker and correct English compositions in the parts of the textbook that were in English, under the direction of the English teacher.
Limited exposure (23)	Limited exposure to bilingualism and/or bilinguals.	・Since I grew up not interacting with bilinguals, it was very interesting to hear a bilingual teacher's language biography. ・The idea that foreign language = English had become ingrained in me.

A common thread was that, for many of the learners, interaction with ALTs was apparently their only prior experience in engaging with (non-Japanese) foreign language speakers. In addition to the representative examples on Table 2, were the following:

> ALT がアメリカ人（もしくは英語圏の人）であると私たちが思い込んでいるだけで、実際のルーツは見た目だけではわからないという指摘にハっとした。

> I felt a sense of shock when I realized that we just assume that ALTs are American (or from the Anglosphere), and that their actual roots cannot be determined by their appearance alone.

This type of reflection was common, and

might partly be explained by many of the students having had similar experiences with ALTs. The fact that ALTs might have had access to, or experiences of other languages – and therefore potentially be able to share their experiences of them – came as a revelation to many students, a revelation that engendered expressions of disappointment at superficial, target-language only interactions:

> 何ヶ国語も話せるのにそれを隠して ALT として働いている人がいるという話を聞いて、勿体無いなと思った。何ヶ国語も話せる人は子供たちから見てもかっこよく、何ヶ国語も話せるところを見たら他の言語に対して興味を持つ子や言語習得に意欲を持つ子も出てくるはずなのにその機会を奪ってしまっていると思った。

> When I heard that there are people who can speak several languages but hide it to work as ALTs, I thought it was a shame. People who can speak several languages are cool in the eyes of children, and if they see that they can speak several languages, some children will become interested in other languages and will be motivated to learn them, but I thought we were depriving them of such opportunities.

Many of these reflections were undoubtedly grounded in the textbook chapter reading, but the frequency of allusions to ALTs was likely further stimulated by the fact that the author's experiences as an ALT himself formed a large part of his biography, primarily because it was during these years that he began to feel comfortable in his bilingualism. Interestingly, despite the author being a native speaker of English himself, the following student commented on the importance in engaging with speakers of various cultural and linguistic backgrounds:

> 近年、小学校でも英語教育が導入され、ますます英語の需要が高まっているが、グローバル化が進んでいる。だからこそ、英語を母語とする者だけを ALT として採用するのではなく、バックグラウンドが多種多様である方が現在の世界の有り様を表せるのではないだろうか。

> In recent years, English education has been introduced in elementary schools and *the demand for English has been increasing, but globalization is also progressing.* This is why we should not employ only native English speakers as ALTs, *but also those with a wide variety of backgrounds to better represent the state of the world today.*

In the Japanese context, and particularly in discourse on foreign language education, 'globalization' has often been equated with 'English,' and in turn, with the need to learn English as represented by native speakers.[6] Although the author represents a variety of native-spoken English, and this was explicit in his storied biography, this student seems to eschew a focus on native-speakerism in her use of globalization as antonymous to 'English(-only).' It is important to note that neither this student, nor the author, denies the pragmaticism in adopting English as the primary target language, but rather recognize the importance in engaging with speakers of a variety of linguistic and cultural backgrounds, particularly relevant

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[6] For instance, the elementary school Course of Study explicitly states that teachers of foreign languages should "devise lessons with the help of native speakers" (文部科学省, 2017, p. 162/177; emphasis by the author).

in a globalized age in which while English may serve as a lingua franca for many, the majority of its speakers are not native.

Similar reflections that were not directly tied to prior experiences with ALTs were coded under 'limited exposure to bilinguals.' Resonating with the above student, another reflects more specifically on the importance of exposure to both cultures and languages beyond the traditional Anglosphere:

> 子どもたちが英語圏以外の文化
> や言葉に触れ、興味の幅を広げ
> たり英語だけが外国語ではない
> と知れたりすることができれば、
> より一層日本の文化や言語にも
> 興味を示すのではないかと考え
> た。

> I thought that if children could be exposed to non-English speaking cultures and languages, broaden their interests and learn that English is not the only foreign language, they would be more interested in Japanese culture and language.

This comment is significant in that the student displays an understanding of the importance of reflecting on one's entire linguistic repertoire, including the mother tongue, in developing greater metalinguistic and intercultural knowledge. In the literature on foreign language and intercultural education, this type of reflection is regarded as extremely significant; for instance, it is demonstrative of several key competences as described on the *Framework of Reference for Pluralistic Approaches* (FREPA), [7] including "profiting from one's own inter-cultural/inter-language experiences" (Candelier et al., 2012, p.20), and the competence of decentering (i.e., the process of moving beyond understanding phenomena exclusively in terms of subjective experience, and beginning to

develop more objective understandings based on multiple possible viewpoints). Discussed in detail in FREPA and related documents, these are essential skills in the developing of an ability to learn and engage with other languages autonomously. It is particularly important to foster the skills required for autonomous exploration in contexts where learners are not afforded the opportunity for "continuous use of a second language needed to develop the language habits that form internal grammar" (Netten & Germain, 2012, p. 96).

The following comments, coded under 'limited exposure,' are both tied into prior learning experiences, but also demonstrate aspects of decentering, in that they remark on the reflexive opportunities that the lecture (and likely the course as a whole) afforded for reevaluating prior-held concepts of foreign language education, and how these have influenced their understandings of foreign language acquisition and of bilingualism:

> 「英語」の授業であり、英語を話
> すのはアメリカだと思っていた
> ので、文化を学ぶとしてもアメ
> リカの文化しか見ようとしてい
> なかった。

> As [my prior learning] was in *English* classes, and because I thought it was the U.S. that spoke English, in learning about culture, I had only considered American culture.

The above reflection centers on the student's prior experiences as (or at least perceived as) being limited to American English, and by extension, American culture. The final reflection in this section generalizes a similar sentiment:

> 今もそうだが、子どものときは、

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[7] A framework developed both in alignment with, and in response to, the more well known CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001; 投野, 2013),

with an explicit focus on metalinguistic capabilities that support communication within and across named languages and cultures (Candelier et al, 2012).

自分の体験が世界の全てだと思い込みがちだ[った]。

I'm still subject to this, but when I was a child, I believed that my experience was all that there was in the world.

This generalized comment is suggestive of the importance of exposure to bilingualism. The students' lack of such exposure becomes apparent in the following theme, characterized by a collective surprise at the author's bilingualism, as well as how exploration of bilingualism-as-lived exposure afforded opportunities for the students to question pre-conceived notions of bilingualism (explored in 'language acquisition,' below), both of which relate directly to the research questions.

Impressions
Of the 39 codes collated under the 'impressions' theme, 17 were general reactions related to the author's mode of speech, such as 'his Kansai dialect was fun,' or expressions of interest in specific aspects of his biography that were tangentially related to bilingualism, and thus were initially coded 'impressions,' later falling under the broader theme without being given more specific codes of their own. Codes (displayed on Table 3) were tied to the author's individual bilingualism, and for that reason were collated under 'impressions,' rather than into the above 'learning experiences,' or the more generalized 'language acquisition' theme, explored below.

Table 3. Major codes of the *Impressions* theme

Code (no.)	Description	Representative Examples
Surprise (14)	General expressions of surprise at the author's bilingualism.	・In this class, I was surprised at the high level of Daniel's Japanese language ability. ・I was surprised at the way he spoke, as he understood what Japanese people find interesting and easy to understand.
Team teaching (8)	Engagement with the dialectic nature of the class.	・I enjoyed the interaction between the two teachers, which was different from my usual classes.

The most prominent code under this theme was general surprise at the author's bilingualism, which included the following:

ダニエルさんは日本語ネイティブではないが、我々でも難しい専門的な話についても自信を持って自分の意見や考えを述べていてかっこいいと思った。

Although Daniel *is not a native Japanese speaker*, I thought it was cool that he confidently expressed his opinions and thoughts on technical topics that are difficult even for us.

外国の方が勉強すればこんなにも自然な日本語を話せるということに驚いた。

I was surprised to learn that foreigners can speak Japanese so naturally if they study.

Such reflections suggest at least an implicit belief in one of the two myths surrounding bilingual language acquisition problematized earlier: 'Although Daniel is not a native Japanese speaker […]' is suggestive of the notion dispelled by Grosjean's research that "real bilinguals have acquired their two or more languages in childhood" (2010, p. xv), or at least that a

high level of language proficiency is inherently tied to being a native speaker. Given responses that were coded under the 'learning experiences' theme above, it is not unlikely that such responses were the result of experiences of monolingually-informed language learning, including approaches such as English-only and the hiding away of ALTs' bilingualism in classrooms.

In a follow-up session, conducted a week later, the following student explicitly referred to the critical period hypothesis:

> 幼い頃から英語に触れておいたほうがよいというような話を聞いたことがあるし、「臨界期仮説」は本当のことなのかもしれないと半ば信じていたが、これはあくまで「仮説」であることをこの授業を通して理解できた。何より、ダニエル先生や[コース担当]のご経験が「臨界期仮説」が間違っていることのひとつの証拠になっているのかもしれないと思った。

> I had heard that it is better to be exposed to English from an early age and half believed that the critical period hypothesis might be true, but through this lesson I understood that it is after all only a 'hypothesis.' Above all, I thought that the experiences of [Daniel] and [the class instructor] might be evidence that the critical period hypothesis is wrong.

This more comprehensive reflection also ties into updated notions of language acquisition, explored in the next section. Important here is that the student in question referred not only to the author's bilingualism, but also that of the course instructor, suggesting that the team-taught nature of the class indeed helped the students to consider bilingualism in a more generalized sense, rather than adopting a view of the author's bilingualism as inherently anomalous – the students' understanding of the author's bilingualism

was grounded in the course instructor's previous lectures on conceptualizations of linguistic ability and bilingualism. While the students may have held a vague notion of the course instructor's own bilingualism through the overall course content, the interaction between the two teachers likely offered the students an ability to see such bilingualism 'being lived' through her interactions with the author during the lecture. The importance of such interaction is explored briefly in the final theme, 'multimodal engagement,' below.

In the prior literature, team teaching between different bilinguals at the tertiary level has been argued to be conducive to creating an "atmosphere that facilitated question-answering," and that students enjoy "linguistic explanations from both the native-English speaking and native-Japanese speaking teachers" (Pearce & Oyama, 2019, p. 226), essentially offering opportunities for multiperspectival consideration of linguistic ability that is not necessarily afforded by target language-only approaches. This sentiment was shared by a number of students under the code 'team teaching,' adequately summarized in the following student's reflection:

> 今回先生二人での授業を受けて、とてもいいなと思いました。先生方の掛け合いや対話の中で新たに気づかされることや、似たような専門を持つ先生方の中でも意見の相違があることをしれて、多角的な授業の味方につながりました。知識や思想が偏る可能性が下がっていい授業形態だと思います。

> I thought it was great to take a class with two teachers this time. I was able to realize new things in the cross-talk and dialogue between the teachers, and to see that there are differences of opinion even among teachers with similar specialties, which led to a multifaceted approach to the class. I think it is a

good form of teaching because it reduces the possibility of knowledge and ideas being biased.

This form of decentered exposure to bilingualism likely informed much of the students' reevaluations of bilingualism and linguistic competence, reflections that were collated under the 'language acquisition'

theme.

Language Acquisition
'Language acquisition' was assigned the third largest number of codes (36), but is perhaps the most important theme in respect to the research questions raised in this article. Codes and descriptions are displayed in Table 4.

Table 4. Major codes of the *Language Acquisition* theme

Code (no.)	Description	Representative Examples
Metalinguistic understanding (17)	Reflections on how non-linguistic knowledge supports language acquisition.	・Japanese language as used by Japanese people, including myself, contains more metaphors and conceptual expressions than I had realized, and I thought this might make the Japanese language difficult for people from overseas. ・I was particularly interested in the fact that [at the author's university] the subject was 'Japanology,' not 'Japanese language.'
Aspirations (11)	Renewed motivation and/or optimism regarding foreign language acquisition.	・When Daniel told me that he had achieved the pre-first level of the *kanji kentei*, I became hopeful that if I worked hard, I too could become more proficient in English and other languages. ・Listening to the stories in this class made me feel more aware that it is possible to be bilingual, even as an acquired skill. But the will and concentration required to study is extraordinary...
Divergent experiences (7)	Direct references to the author's non-typical language learner experiences.	・Daniel mentioned that he was autistic as a child and had a special experience of language acquisition, but since he didn't mention it after he grew up, I was curious if the symptoms had gone away or what happened. ・Dr. Daniel was autistic, and I was curious if people with autism have good language skills.

Metalinguistic Understanding
The 17 reflections that were coded 'metalinguistic understanding' referenced aspects of the author's biography in which he explicitly addressed how non-linguistic knowledge supported his bilingualism. A key reflection was that the process of studying for the *kanji kentei* examination included his memorization of several thousand four-character idioms (四字熟語), most of which are essentially abbreviated proverbs from ancient Japanese and Chinese literature. The author reflected that the access this study afforded to myths and

metaphors central to the Japanese language were fundamental to his bilingualism in the sense it was later described by a student as, 'he understood what Japanese people find interesting and easy to understand' (Table 3, above). In a more removed reflection, a similar sentiment is expressed in a representative example on Table 4; 'Japanese language […] contains more metaphors and conceptual expressions than I had realized.' This opportunity for reflexivity, inclusive of the mother tongue and the (rarely conscious) non-linguistic aspects that support communication between

users of a shared language, is not often afforded by traditional foreign language education – and is essentially erased in target-language only approaches – which also likely led to the conclusion of the reflection, 'I thought this might make the Japanese language difficult for people from overseas.' A more generalized version of this sentiment would be, 'that is what makes acquiring another language difficult.'

The necessity of this type of metalinguistic understanding is explored in more detail in the aforementioned FREPA (Candelier et al., 2012), but in terms of how it supports communication, the following reflection, based on the author's suggestion that perhaps more than language classes, the sociology and history classes included in his undergraduate Japan Studies major likely facilitated his later bilingualism:

> 私は社会や歴史など、さまざまな分野の学習を通じて、言語の応用に対する総合的な意識を構築できると考えている。言語の文化的背景を理解することで、言語の使用において「リズム」が身につけられると思う。つまり、異なる場面に応じてニュアンスや表現方法を制御し、効果的なフィードバックを得ることができると考える。

> I believe that through the study of different disciplines, such as society and history, a holistic awareness of the application of language can be built. I believe that by understanding the cultural context of a language, one can develop a 'rhythm' in the use of the language. In other words, developing the ability to navigate nuances and modes of expression required by different situations, and obtaining effective feedback.

Such a reflection aligns with recent academic conceptions of language ability such as plurilingualism, and how it cannot be arbitrarily separated from the cultural

contexts in which it is employed (see, for instance, Galante, 2022). The reflection nevertheless stands in contrast to the actual learning experiences of the students, explored above, which have likely been a result of gate-keeping entrance examinations. As university students, now with greater freedom to explore linguistic competence without the pressure of entrance examinations, engagement with bilingualism-as-lived likely afforded them opportunities to reevaluate their own language learning aspirations, and reflections were coded as such.

Aspirations
This code reflected expressions of renewed hope for the possibilities of language acquisition and bilingualism – reflections that stood in contrast to the experiences of students who had previously considered achieving bilingualism futile. Many were in response to the author's storying of his first engagement with Japanese as a foreign language at university, and that much of his Japanese language ability (the bilingualism as experienced by the students during the lecture), was later concretized through intensive study when he was an ALT:

> 今まで他言語を習得するには幼少期からの勉強が必須であると思っていたが、大学に入ってからダニエルさんや先生のように、幼少期に全く触れていない言語でも自分の努力次第で高いレベルまで上達出来ることを知り、勉強する意欲が出た。

> I used to think that studying from an early age was essential to learn another language, but when hearing that Daniel and [the course instructor] achieved this after entering university, I realized that I might be able to achieve a high level with effort, even in a language I was not exposed to at all in my childhood, and this has motivated me to study more.

大学に入ってから始めた日本語（しかもあみだくじ的方法で）をネイティブのように話されているのをみて、自分の 3 か国語・4 か国語への道も遅くないのかなと思うことができました。

When I saw that he spoke Japanese like a native, which he started after entering university (and after choosing Japanese randomly), I thought perhaps my path to three or four languages was not too late.

These reflections might be considered holistic reactions to the themes already explored in this article. It is also important, however, to consider that these renewed aspirations come not from an overly simplistic rejection of concepts such as the critical period, but were also grounded in the author's explicit stating that his achievement of bilingualism (as the students experienced during the lecture) was grounded in thousands of hours of concerted engagement – recall that the author spent around four hours per day on study outside of work hours over a period of roughly two years. What thus might have brought 'renewed hope' towards achieving bilingualism was not an overly optimistic view that 'anyone can do it,' but rather an understanding that the problematized myths surrounding bilingualism are neither deterministic nor fatalistic. This is reflected in the second representative example of 'aspirations' in Table 4:

今回の授業での話を聞いて、後天的にもバイリンガルになり得ることをより感じることができた。というか勉強に対する意欲と集中力が尋常じゃない…。

Listening to the stories in this class made me feel more aware that it is possible to be bilingual, even as an acquired skill. But the will and concentration required to study is

extraordinary...

This reference to the author's experiences and/or effort as extraordinary was reflected in responses to the author's non-typical language learning.

Divergent Experiences
In the storying of his biography, the author was explicit about his experiences with acquiring the mother tongue as being non-typical, with specific references to his autism being a barrier to interpersonal (oral) communication, and that much of his later experience of achieving bilingualism was likely grounded in this – including an affinity with written language, described above as 'a propensity to become obsessed with certain forms of media,' reflected in his memorizing of a dictionary of four-character *yojijukugo* idioms.

This 'outlier' experience engendered a few reactions, marked by those on Table 4:

ダニエルさんは子供の頃自閉症で、特殊な言語習得をしたと仰っていたが、その話が成長した時にはもうなくなっていたので、症状がなくなったのか、どうなったのかが気になった。

Daniel discussed how he was autistic as a child, and had a non-typical language acquisition, but references to autism disappeared in his adulthood, so I wondered if the symptoms had gone or what had happened to him.

ダニエル先生は自閉症とのことだったが、自閉症を持つ人は言語能力が高いのか気になった。

Daniel was autistic, so I was curious whether people with autism have good language skills.

While a concerted discussion of autism, or its relation to foreign language acquisition, is well beyond the scope of this article, these

reflections demonstrate a curiosity about language experiences that had seemingly not occurred to the students previously (and that some of their peers might have experienced, unbeknown to them; 松本, 2020).

In a similar vein to reevaluations of native-speakerism or critical period hypothesis notions, it appears that the author's sharing of lived bilingualism raised new questions about bilingualism and linguistic ability that would not naturally arise in traditional foreign language instruction.

Multimodal Engagement

In addressing this final theme, it is pertinent to return to the two ad-hoc research questions that framed the overall analysis:

1) How does interaction with 'bilingualism-as-lived' influence (primarily monolingual) FLE learner's conceptions of linguistic competence?
2) How might such exposure impact their understanding and/or evaluation of their own linguistic ability?

While the above analyses and discussions have likely addressed at least the second question, and hopefully in part, the first, the key word of 'interaction' in the first research question remains to be addressed. The 19 codes collated under the final theme, 'multimodal engagement,' address this (Table 5).

Table 5. Major codes for the *Multimodal Engagement* theme

Theme (no.)	Code (no.)	Representative Examples
Multimodal engagement (16)	Visual linguistic autobiographies (13)	・Listening to Pearce's visual language autobiography, I was able to learn a lot about how he became involved in bilingualism, which made me realize that visual language autobiographies are very effective for learning about a person's language background.
	In-person engagement (3)	・The content of this lecture was more concrete and interesting than what I had read in the textbook.

The most prevalent codes were direct references to the visual linguistic autobiography, which the author used as a tool to frame the sharing of his bilingualism. A mixture of text and drawn images, the medium not only helped "reconstruct [his] own history through a variety of semiotic means, including language" (オチャンテ・大山, 2022, p. 75), which also included representations of emotions and experiences that might not have arisen through purely oral or written retellings, but also likely helped to ground his retelling for the students, and make it easier for the students to follow.

今回ピアースさんの視覚的言語自伝を聞き、[...]よく知ることができたため、やはり視覚的言語

自伝はその人の言語背景を知るのにとても有効だなと改めて思いました。

Listening to Mr. Pearce's visual language autobiography, I was able to learn a lot […], which made me realise that visual language autobiographies are very effective for learning about a person's language background.

バイリンガルの先生の言語自伝を聞くことはとても興味深かった。幼少期に見た映像など視覚的言語は比較的印象に残りやすいと感じた。

It was very interesting to hear the

linguistic autobiography of a bilingual teacher. I felt that visual language, such as the media he watched in childhood, was relatively memorable.

Also, although only three students made reflections on in-person engagement with bilingualism, it appeared to be an important factor in deepening understanding of bilingualism, and in promoting the themes explored above. This is because, despite the small number of explicit references to the in-person nature of the lecture specifically, the students' engagement with the lecture was not their first experience of bilingualism, even with his class – recall that the students had engaged with the visual linguistic autobiography of another bilingual in the textbook, and had created and shared their own, before the lecture. Perhaps also because of the team-taught nature, in which the author's retelling was dialogic, rather than unidirectional, the experiences seemed to have been more impactful than previous engagements with the textbook, a point made explicit by one student:

> 今回の講義の内容は、教科書で呼んだ内容よりも実際に話をきいたほうが具体的なイメージをもつことができたし、興味深かった。

> The content of this lecture was more concrete and interesting than what I had read in the textbook.

Conclusion
Achieving bilingualism, particularly in foreign language education contexts, is a laborious and time-consuming endeavor, and, as bilinguals tend to acquire their languages in different ways and at different times, and use those languages in various ways across different contexts, exploring bilingualism in depth within already time-constrained foreign language classes is not an easy endeavor. However, as has been explored in this article, particularly for learners who have little exposure to

bilingualism – the majority of learners in Japan – this lack of exposure can have negative effects on their perceptions of bilingualism and language acquisition.

Before experiencing in-person, multimodal, and dialogic explorations of the author's bilingualism, the students in this study shared similar views towards foreign language education as Anglophone learners of French in the Canadian context, i.e., that they simply cannot acquire foreign languages to a high degree of proficiency. It was argued that this may be in part not only due to the 'drip-feed' approach that is typical in the Japanese context, but also because the bilingualism of practitioners in the classroom is often hidden away (e.g. Pearce, 2021; ピアース, 2022). It was further argued that the nature of English as an entrance examination subject, in which accuracy in producing forms is prioritized (寺沢, 2014), likely compounds the problem. If students' only exposure to language learning is in such drip-feed classroom contexts, burdened further by the pressure of entrance examinations, yet nevertheless in a context where achieving bilingualism is at least an implicit goal (e.g. 文部科学省, 2002), it is only natural that students might assumed that a) such instruction represents the most rational approach to language acquisition, and b) based on their (perceived) lack of success, that therefore achieving bilingualism is impossible. As one student adroitly summarized: "I'm still subject to this, but when I was a child, I believed that my experience was all that there was in the world."

The aim of this article is not to disparage pre-tertiary foreign language education in the Japanese context, nor the many practitioners engaged in foreign language teaching, who must juggle many more responsibilities and obligations in addition to hoping to promote bilingualism, but rather to point out the importance of sharing experiences of bilingualism during the learning process, particularly in dispelling persistent myths surrounding bilingualism and language acquisition that can be harmful to learners' prospects.

The one-hour lecture explored in this article appeared to have promising results in this respect, particularly in the fact that several students remarked that while they had indeed thought achieving a high level of proficiency in another language was futile, that now knowing that it is indeed possible, held renewed aspirations towards language acquisition. This was also likely promoted by the fact that both the author and the course instructor – both of whom achieved bilingualism in adulthood – explored the author's bilingualism dialogically, exchanging questions and thoughts on various aspects of language learning and bilingualism. This was reflected on later by one student, who made explicit reference to the critical period hypothesis: "Above all, I thought that the experiences of [Daniel] and [the class instructor] might be one proof that the critical period hypothesis is wrong." Regardless of the veracity of the hypothesis, in this student's case at least, it is now less likely to become a mental barrier to their own efforts.

Finally, although not a major theme in this paper, bilingualism is not solely a Japanese-English language phenomenon. This is a point that several students also addressed in the analyses above. While the majority of these reflections addressed the importance to exposure of a variety of bilingualisms in connection to the increased reflexivity toward, and interest in, the mother tongue and culture, or in increasing motivation to learn languages that such experiences might afford, awareness of other-language bilingualism is also important given the pluralistic reality of bilingualism in Japan:

> Due to its geographical proximity, Japan has always had a large number of Chinese and Korean speakers, and a certain number of speakers of other languages such as Spanish, Portuguese, Vietnamese, Filipino, Indonesian, Nepali, and Burmese, which were all introduced by immigrants. Many cities have signage in Russian, and French and Italian can be found in the names of commercial premises and buildings in urban areas. (大山 , 2024 forthcoming, translation by the author)

It has been argued that exposure to, and in-depth explorations of bilingualism may be conducive towards rejuvenating students' enthusiasm for their own language acquisition. It is also hoped that greater exposure to a wider variety of bilingualism may lead to a greater understanding and acceptance of the bilingualism that exists in Japan already, regardless of whether the majority of learners achieve bilingualism for themselves or not.

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Beyond Words: From Japanese Pastries to the 3D World

Joseph Kelley

This is an abridged interview with a participant from my master's dissertation on multilingual learners with dyslexia and specific learning difficulties. In many ways they are an exemplar of how someone with dyslexia can thrive in a multilingual setting through perseverance and making the situation work towards their strengths. I shared this with their permission with hopes it can inspire others.

Early Years and First Language Experience
I'm a French Canadian. Born in Quebec, French is my first language. I learned English during high school. I learned that I was born dyslexic when I was in kindergarten. I was reading and writing stuff with sounds that were not the right words, but similar words, like similar tone or similar letters. I was put in a special class in fifth grade. The fifth grade of elementary school for French. It helped me a bit. But still, I'm still dyslexic and have problems reading.

During sixth grade, they made us read a book in front of younger kids. I was struggling reading, and the kids were kind of laughing at me because I was struggling. I was kind of discouraged from reading out loud. So, I'm not very comfortable reading, I try to learn it if I have to speak in front of a group of people. But that was an experience that stuck with me for a long time because it was humiliating.

Learning English and the Opening up of the World
I started learning English in high school. I used my English more at home because I was watching English TV. In Canada, there are English channels so I watched a lot of English cartoons and I felt that it helped me more. I was more comfortable outside of class speaking English.

When I started learning English, it was easier to read English than French. In French, a lot of words look alike. A lot of the phrase structure is more complicated; more words to say something simple. I felt that English was more straightforward. I struggled less than French reading English. But at the same time, I read something and in my head the word popped up, but it was not the right word. So, I had to reread it because the phrase didn't make any sense after reading it. I felt a bit more comfortable learning English than French class because other people were struggling. I felt more like "Okay, I'm not the only one struggling."

The opening of the world (motivated me). I was curious about what was outside of my French bubble, which is an awesome bubble, but it's human nature to be a bit curious of what's outside. I was told by one of my teachers that "If you want to travel, learn English." My English improved a lot during traveling. When I moved outside of Quebec, I was forced to use it.

Japanese and working
In 2011, I started learning Japanese when I arrived in Japan. I got my N5 and I didn't get any higher rank of Japanese certificate. It was a bit of a struggle learning Japanese. But it was fun. I was functional in Japanese at the end of my stay in Japan. I was a pastry chef working in a small pastry shop, so my Japanese mostly centered around pastries and the business, so I improved a lot on that side. But my social skills and talking about politics, I could not elaborate well. Casual talk, like asking simple

questions such as where to go, I'm very comfortable with. I suppose at some point I was very good at recognizing hiragana and katakana characters. But words in romaji… I struggled reading romaji.

My listening is fine. It's mostly when words are alike that there is a problem. When I said similar words in Japanese, like katana and katakana, sometimes I struggled. (Others were) trying to understand and I realized that I changed the word to something similar. So, it happened sometimes, but it's not as difficult as reading.

Finding the 3D World
When I came back to Montreal, I went back to school (to study 3D Design), and I truly realized that I'm comfortable with the 3D space. And I was told that usually dyslexic people are more aware of the 3D space. I learned at some point that dyslexia sometimes give you a plus, if you have a minus on reading and writing. It makes sense. It gave me a boost for my career change, because I changed careers at 31 years old and getting in this industry is very difficult as an 3D artist, but I feel that my dyslexia helped me with that. It was not related to reading or anything, so I could be more myself. That's why I decided to not go to university when I was younger. It was because I was struggling at school because of dyslexia. And I chose the work because I wanted to work with my hands more than with my brain. But now I'm working with my brain and it's working because I'm a 3D artist.

Working in a Multilingual Environment with Dyslexia
Now I'm working on a video game, and I speak English every day. I'm very comfortable in English. You can tell I'm bilingual. I have an accent, but most of the time I speak English with my colleagues from Spain, China, and other countries all over the world. Everybody communicates in English. I can relate to them. And even if their English is broken, I can understand the important parts and context.

For writing emails sometimes, I have to reread and rewrite them just to be sure that I stay professional. Usually, I feel comfortable writing an email. I'm comfortable because I have the flexibility to rewrite or reread my stuff and make sure I'm sending the right things.

Advice for Dyslexic Learners
Don't give up. It's dyslexia. You can learn with it. It's just a slower process. That's it. You just take it easy and take your time. Don't be too hard on yourself because in the end, you will learn it.

Those with learning difficulties face considerable challenges when tackling a second language. My master's dissertation findings underscored that their successes stem from not just perseverance but also from their creativity, deep self-understanding, and their skill in turning around situations to support their strengths and needs. The interviewee is a prime example of how these elements come together to forge success. Moreover, their insights highlight vital implications for both offices and classrooms, emphasizing the importance of a supportive, judgment-free zone where individuals can candidly share in their struggles and pool their strengths for collective advancement.