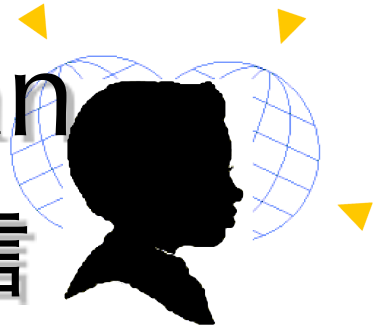


Bilingual Japan

バイリンガル通信



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The Newsletter of the JALT
Special Interest Group on Bilingualism

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Contribute to *Bilingual Japan*

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

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

Regular Columns

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

Feature Articles

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

DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT ISSUE: September 31st

From the Coordinator

Dear valued Bilingualism SIG members,

Hope this message finds you well despite the busiest time of the academic year. I would like to thank all of you for your support and membership of the Bilingualism SIG.

Hope you will all enjoy reading the spring issue of the BSIG newsletter where you can find contributions from Chris Pope, Graham Mackenzie, and Tenesha Kanai who share their invaluable experiences of raising bilingual kids in Japan.

I would like to take this opportunity and thank Tim Greer for organizing BSIG Forum at the PanSIG 2017 Conference that was held May 19-21 at Akita International University (AIU) in Akita City, Japan. Also, a massive thank-you goes to Brian Gaynor, Martin Spivey and Chrisite Provenzano, BSIG Forum panelists, who shared their experiences and expertise on bilingual parenting in Japan, issues that they have come across along the journey, and how they tackled those with their spouse's support/involvement. It was an engaging discussion generating insightful questions and answers.

If you have some spare time and would like to get involved in the BSIG more actively, please do send an e-mail at alexshaitan@yahoo.com and we will get back with you as soon as possible.

While the DMT members (Decision Making Team) are trying to run things smoothly, it does not always work the way we plan. We apologize for any inconvenience that it may have caused you. We appreciate your understanding and support.

We just wanted to remind you once again, that without your dedicated membership and active participation in the SIG's events (conferences/publications), the BSIG would not have existed. So hats off to all of you! Enjoy the upcoming summer break and see you all the JALT 2017 Conference in Tsukuba (November 17-20) at the BSIG AGM and/or BSIG Forum.

Kind Regards,

Alexandra Shaitan
JALT Bilingualism SIG Coordinator



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会長便り

拝啓 皆様

バイリンガリズムSIG会員の皆様、

新学期の忙しい時期ですが、お読みいただきありがとうございます。皆さまのバイリンガリズムSIGへのご支援に感謝いたします。

春号では、Chris Pope, Graham Mackenzie, and Tenesha Kanaiの、日本でのバイリンガルな子どもの育て方の経験について、記事を楽しんでいただければと思います。

5月19-21日、秋田国際大学(AIU)で行われたPanSIG 2017のBSIG Forumを取りまとめたTim Greerに感謝したいと思います。さらに、日本でのバイリンガルな子育てについての経験、遭遇した困難、そして夫婦や環境でどのようにそれを乗り越えたかをシェアしてくれた、パネリストの皆さん、Brian Gaynor, Martin Spivey and Chrisite Provenzano、ありがとうございます。

BSIGでもっと活動したい方は、alexshaitan@yahoo.com にメールをお送りください、すぐにご連絡します。DMT (Decision Making Team)では、スムーズな運営を

心がけていますが、計画通りに行かないこともよくあります。ご迷惑おかけして、お詫びいたします。皆さまのご理解、ご支援お願いいたします。

皆さまのSIGのイベントへの参加(学会/論文の執筆)、ご支援なくしては、BSIGは成り立ちませんので、皆さん、本当にありがとうございました！

皆さん、どうぞ夏休みをお楽しみください。11月17~20日につくばで開催されるJALT2017のBSIG AGM/BSIGフォーラムで心よりお待ちしております。

どうぞよろしく申し上げます。

JALTバイリンガリズム研究会 会長
Translation by Shino Sakamoto (坂本志乃)

Call for SIG Positions

Thank you Shino Sakamoto for all your time and effort translating over all these years. We are all indebted to you for your hard work. We are currently looking for an active member to help out translate documents into Japanese. Workload is minimal, on average 3-4 times per year. If interested, please contact Alexandra Shaitan at alexshaitan@yahoo.com

Join the SIG's

**email
discussion
list**

The SIG's email list is open to any member who wishes to join. Use it to communicate with other members about your research or ask a question about raising your children bilingually.

List members will also get up-to-date information about SIG activities and be able to have a say in the many of our new initiatives. At present the list has a fairly low number of messages each month, so it will not overflow your inbox. Contact Stephen Ryan at ryanyama@hcc5.bai.ne.jp.



Feature Article

This newsletter's feature article contains the first part of an ongoing series of 'hafu' related projects around the globe. If you have any interesting stories to share, or would like to be interviewed directly, please contact the editor, Lance Stilp, at lancestilp@gmail.com.

Paying it Forward: Half-Japanese and the Hafu2Hafu Project

by Lance Stilp

Hāfu2Hāfu is a personal project in which half Japanese photographer Tetsuro Miyazaki investigates what it means to be *hāfu*, or half Japanese. In this process, every portrayed hāfu was asked: "What is the one question you would like to ask other half Japanese?"

The combination of portraits and questions gives a unique look into the hearts and souls of half Japanese people and starts a dialogue about advantages, privileges, opportunities, difficulties, belonging and wanting to belong to two different societies. Please have a look at their question and share your stories with us.

-Tetsuro Miyazaki

Visit his page at hafu2hafu.org

L: Welcome, and thank you for taking time to talk with me today. Before we talk about your project, could you introduce yourself?

T: My father is Japanese, and my mother is Belgian, and they met in Belgium because my father had to go there for his work. He passed away 24 years ago when I was 14, but we used to go on summer holiday every year to Japan, and he was pretty much our connection to Japan. We went even after his death with my younger sister. But, I always tried to figure out what my position was, whether it was in Belgium or Japan. I don't think there was any problem here (in Belgium), but people always do refer to my half Japanese-ness, and it's also something that I use to describe my own identity if people ask me what I am, or where my name comes from. So, I feel like I need to

explain things, and tend to oversimplify things for the sake of conversation.

People ask me a lot of questions, like "do you feel more Belgium or Japanese?" and I realize that every time I talk about these things, I really don't know how to answer. I don't know how often anyone feels Belgium, or Japanese. I mean, how often in a day do you feel a certain way? How can you express that in percentages? If it ever happens, it's a fraction of a moment, but still people want to know if it's 50/50 or whatever. So I have a hard time giving a "correct" answer to the question, because it's too elaborate to go into all of the time.

L: Do you get asked this question in Japan as well?

People want to justify why I have a Japanese name, so I feel like I have to explain, then I explain, and things are ok, kind of. But they do find it interesting all the time. And what I find fascinating is that here in Belgium, I tell people I am half-Japanese, which people understand because they want to know the unknown part of me. But when I'm in Japan, I also tell people I am half-Japanese, instead of telling them I am half-Belgium. One question I got one time was "why are there communities of half-Japanese people, but not half-Belgian, or Swiss people?" I find that very interesting and hard to answer. So, I'm always questioning my position and trying to justify how I should act towards people. I try to be quite considerate about what people expect from me.

L: That's interesting, and a really hard question to answer I think. So talking a bit about your project, where do these questions come from?

The question's don't come from me actually. How the project works is that I find half-Japanese people and we do an interview for approximately one hour. We talk about how we feel what connects us, what sets us apart, and they want to know things from me because I've been talking to many half-Japanese. At the very end of the interview, the person gets to ask one question back, which is usually related to one of the topics we have been talking about. We try to filter out a question that reflects a part of our conversation. It's their question to me, but also to all other half-Japanese people, or parents, or friends. The question is a thing that lives with them.

One reason why I did it this way is because I am a photographer, and not much of a reader. I read only parts of stories because I'm dyslexic. So instead of sharing stories between people, I just wanted to know one thing they wanted to know about me. I try to summarize the whole hour in one question and try to see what it means. And, I always take these questions with me to the next interview to see how people would react to it and we would share the reactions there as well. Instead of 'sending a message' by sharing whole stories, this format helps to spark a dialogue. Portrayed people don't point fingers and don't judge people, but simply put their question out there.



L: So, it seems like when you take your conversations to the next person, that conversation continues, and a new question manifests itself. What a great idea to push the dialogue of "HAFU" forward.

I started out the first interview with my own questions, but my "set" of questions evolved over time. By doing this, my tools for a good conversation are just expanding all of the time.

L: It looks like you've talked to a lot of these people. Could you share one of the conversations that you remember?

Yeah, sure. One of the conversations that I found most interesting was with a girl who lived in Japan until she was 16. Her sister was still living in Japan, and her father was Dutch, so she moved back with him. She had never felt free in her life, until she moved to the Netherlands. She felt like she was always picked on in school. One

of the things that I found heartbreaking was that she wasn't allowed to stand out in anything. On example is because she is half-dutch, her English was pretty good, but she wasn't allowed to stand out in class during English courses. Her teacher would always pick on her for being able to speak English. Instead of using her as an asset to help the other students, she was pushed aside. What struck me most about this was that the school had a rule that wouldn't allow people to dye their hair. But what it really meant was that people had to have black hair, but nobody could say that directly because it is racist. She actually had to break the "rule" and dye her

hair black to blend in. Otherwise, others would think that it was ok to have a different hair color. This is very sad that a 15 year old has to hide her true hair color for the rest of the school, instead of being able to just be herself. So that's one of the conversations that I take with me all the time.

L: I think this is interesting and hearing this helps me to prepare myself for the future of my own kids.

That's one reason why I'm doing this project. One reason is very personal and selfish, of course: I wanted to figure out my own identity. But in the process if I am able help others, then that would make me very happy about what I am doing. So the second group of people that I am helping are the people who want to participate in the project, and the third group are also just visitors or viewers of the project. They are not really participating in making it. The viewer is very broad, and could be a person who is half-Japanese, or parents, school teachers, friends, and their colleagues. I want them to look at the set of the people and the questions and think about them. I want people to ask each other these questions to have these conversations on their own. I want the participant's children's school friends to think about them. I hope to start a dialogue between people so they understand each other. You simply don't know that something is a question or an issue until you face it for the first time. That's why I find it very confronting about the way I am doing this- I also get questions that I've never

thought of. I never thought they would be possible questions until they get asked.

The first time I was asked "do you feel at home in two different countries" it was a very nice conversation with an 11 year old. So I asked at the end what was one question you would like to ask me. And she said "How many friends do you have in Japan?" Not counting my family, I was very surprised. I've always called Japan my second home, but if I don't have any friends, it's hard to call Japan my home.



Another thing I found fascinating was when I was invited to the Hapa Japan festival in Los Angeles to present my pictures and questions. I was surprised at the number of not only the participants but the academics who have been working on these topics for decades. Each person takes out of the project a different question which is really important to them, which tells a lot about how people interpret the questions and find meaning in them.

L: It reminds me of when people interpret literature that has been around for hundreds of years, but each person's interpretation and meaning can be very different Suddenly the meaning takes on a new form, even years later.

Yes, I think so to, though I don't know if I can compare myself to Shakespeare...

L: I also find the project very easy to understand, because having these questions narrows the topic down very well and strikes at the heart of the

issue, in some ways. Rather than reading mountains of texts and interpretations of them. The project, the people, and the issues are very approachable.

Yes, I wanted it to be very accessible to everyone. It only takes a few seconds to figure out if the question is important to a person or not. I'm not much of a reader myself, but it takes me so much time to get through it. Not everyone has that time on their hands, and not everyone buys books. The whole project is online, which makes it very easy to access, and free for everyone.

L: You feature some children on your website. They of course cannot read these articles or books about the topics, but they are able to answer questions very easily and honestly.

Their questions were surprisingly interesting to me. There is one question which is more fun, like "What is your favorite food?" which is light, and I like that. Others adults even might have a hard time to answer, like "How do you grow up not being Dutch in the Netherlands, and not being Japanese in Japan?" Another one is, "How many languages do you speak at home?" and you grow up learning at least two languages, sometimes three. But answering this question can be complicating and enriching as well. Older people tend to look for interesting questions, instead of being more straightforward.

L: Before I finish the interview, can I ask a little bit about your upcoming project in Japan? Is that connect to your photography and questions project?

During the Hapa Japan festival, I was introduced to more HAFU especially those from many other countries, not just the Netherlands. All of them had very different stories. I wanted to get to know them more, rather than just focusing on the Netherlands



and Japan. I got this crazy idea of photographing 192 half-Japanese people, and the number comes from the number of recognized countries, according to the United Nations. I can get a more complete image of being half-Japanese if I reach out to all the countries. Not just half-European, but also African, Latin American, Asian- all of them have very different experiences of being HAFU. I was talking to Duncan Williams from the Hapa Japan Festival and the Database Project at USC in LA, and he was very supportive of my idea.

They are funding part of this new project of photographing 192 half-Japanese people, and allowing me to go to Japan for my first photography trip in Tokyo. 192 is the number of recognised UN countries (minus Japan). By photographing every possible 'mix' this project can cover issues from all over the world and will allow Hāfu from all over the world to connect and can allow Japan to see that it is connected to the whole world through these 'human bridges' I'm obviously very thankful for this, because so far I've been doing this on my own with my own time and money. I wouldn't be able to do this part

without their support, both financially and motivationally. I'm very happy to see they are supporting a non-academic project such as mine.

I'm still looking for people to interview more half-Japanese people. We're still looking for lots of people.

L: I'm glad to hear it. I think our reader base would be very interested, and I hope someone can contact you.

Bilingual Case-Study

ある家庭におけるバイリンガリズム

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

OPOL Succeeds in Texas and Shikoku. But How to Maintain Grade-level Competency in the Minority Language?

by Christopher Pope

My seven-year old son, George, understands and uses the Japanese and English languages. Not only does he speak and understand them, he is an emerging reader and writer in both. In this bilingual case-study, I discuss his life, language development, and our family language strategies.

Family and early life

Our family lives in Tokushima Prefecture. We have lived here for nearly five years. I am a university lecturer, and a native of the USA. My wife, Kaori, is also a university lecturer. Our son, George, is a seven-year-old first grader. Music, swimming, art, calligraphy, gymnastics, and basketball are some of the ways he spends his free time.

George was born in San Antonio, Texas, USA. Before his birth, we thought a lot about

It's been a real pleasure, and I hope to hear more about the project as it continues on in the future.

Thank you too, again, if you would like to contact me, send me an email anytime, or check out the project's development on the website.

his name and identity. We wondered if a Japanese or English name would be beneficial, we looked at kanji and counted strokes for proper balance, and we tried to decide how strangers might pronounce a name. In the end, we choose the dual name George/Jyouji. We believed this name would provide personal autonomy for George while navigating two cultures. Additionally, we used Kaori's family name on documents in Japan and my family name in the USA setting. Since Kaori kept her family name after marriage, we were able to do this. Japanese wives in an international marriage have a right to keep their surname, and doing so allows this type of agency for their children.

After his birth, we decided on the one-parent one-language (OPOL) approach. A mentor encouraged the approach and claimed it would be best for George if we wanted him to

learn Japanese. Since we lived in the USA, my part was easy. For Kaori the approach was more demanding. Whenever and wherever she went with him, she spoke only Japanese. At around a year old, when he began to speak, his first words were in Japanese. She kept detailed records of his early utterances: *(o)pai-pai, dakko, unchi, ka(san), mo owari* were some of his first examples of speech.

We were excited to hear our child whom had never been to Japan use Japanese, but we were concerned about his chances to become bilingual. Was speaking Japanese with George enough? We looked for additional language input and began to import media from Japan. Kaori's mother helped with this by sending over books and music from Japan. Thanks to my mother-in-law and those items, George encountered songs, stories, word play and other Japanese cultural nuances from his first years of life.

Kaori would read Japanese books to him each day. There was not a special time of day or amount for reading, it was only important that she read to him in Japanese each day. The best of those books were *Shiro Kuma-chan no Hotto Keiki* and the Daruma-san series. As for music, Disney standards in Japanese and Minna no Uta-songs from NHK children programming were favorites. Similar to our strategy with reading, we tried to play Japanese songs for him every day. Also, a book series called *Doyo Uta no Ehon* was helpful. Those books teach classical children songs and play the music out of a small speaker built into the book cover. Each book included ten songs, lyrics, and sheet music. George was very interested in these books and played the songs even when left alone.

George traveled to Japan for the first time at around a year old. He went alone with Kaori. They visited her parents and relatives for two weeks. He met his three living great-grandparents, two of whom passed away later that year. The trip marked the first

of what has become an annual trek for George, back and forth across the Pacific to visit family and friends.

Daycare was another area of language and cultural development for George in those early years. His first experience was in the USA at around 18 months. He made friends for the first time in his life. He started to demonstrate recognition for English spoken by someone outside of his immediate family and close friends. That is, he could follow the English language commands from caregivers at the school. Another part of this experience was exposure to languages other than English and Japanese. We lived in San Antonio, a city with a long history as a crossroad between Texan and Mexican culture, which meant that many of his teachers and classmates were bilingual Spanish speakers. We would even occasionally hear George use Spanish words, such as *agua, uno, dos, and tres*, at home.

Transition to Japan

After George turned two, we began to discuss a move to Japan. There were several reasons why we wanted to do it. Kaori is from Japan and her family was there, and we thought this relationship was important. Employment opportunities had become available, so that made it feasible. We wanted George to experience Japanese culture; we felt like nuances such as *keigo* and *aisatsu* are better experienced while immersed in daily Japanese life. Most of all, we wanted to support George's chances to become fluent in Japanese. We felt the environment in the USA was not conducive for supporting that. From what we had seen first-hand, in families with a Japanese parent of a child born and raised in the USA, that child's Japanese was not as strong as their English. We did not encounter USA-born children who had a great command of Japanese. No doubt, exceptions exist; however, in our experiences, which included my wife's employment at a Saturday Japanese supplementary school and

involvement in the Japanese community, we did not see it. We were not willing to wait and see if George was an exception and decided to make the move to Japan. It might surprise some that we would move to Japan for this reason. However, I think parents do this type of thing all the time. It might be to a more reputable school district or safer town, but parents make these same choices with their children's future in mind. For us, that would mean crossing the Pacific.

As George turned two, we sold our car, said goodbye to families and friends, and left the only home he had ever known. Before leaving the USA, there was a short period where we stayed with my parents. We stayed a few months and made final preparations. George spent time with his American grandparents and had a heavy dose of English speaking and American culture. Kaori continued the one-parent approach and used only Japanese. Therefore, as he first began to speak in fuller sentences and convey complex thoughts, he did it in Japanese.

Events in Japan

We moved to Tokushima Prefecture in the summer of 2012. After settling in, we made a change to our family language strategy. We decided that the change in environment would mean that both parents would use English inside our home. George began to hear his mother use English.

We enrolled George in daycare. Right away, there were some concerns. The daycare was part of a traditional community along the Shikoku pilgrimage temple route. Most of his classmates came from older, local families and had deep Japanese heritage. For example, while many could use chopsticks and bowed while greeting, we had just started to consider these skills for him. His first days at daycare coincided with community preparation for an annual sports festival. Teachers were blowing whistles, shouting commands, and teaching

large organized marches. He was upset most days about the new environment. Despite these early hurdles, after a few months, he got used to the routines and culture.

When George turned four, he became eligible to enter a kindergarten. We chose a school that utilized Montessori pedagogy. Before entrance, an interview with the headmaster was required. The headmaster was Japanese but a speaker of English. At the interview, the two of them spoke English and Japanese. This communication trend continued throughout his two years at the school. He felt comfortable and excelled there. He made friends and visited those friends outside of school. He showed interest in Japanese characters, those ubiquitous faces from Japanese children programs like *Shin-chan* and *Yo-kai Watch*, for the first time. These characters and programs had never been particularly interesting to him before, and were nothing we had promoted with him, but they were becoming a larger part of his life through his peers. With new friends, this character culture became part of his world and language.

George adjusted well to the routines of school life; he made friends, but none of them were bilingual or bicultural. While we were not too concerned about that, we did feel it was important for him to meet others with diverse backgrounds; in particular, we felt it was important for him to meet bilinguals and bicultural people whenever he had a chance. Steve, a member of my recreational basketball team was one such person. Steve took immediate interest in George, and the two became friends, or perhaps it would better to say, Steve became a role model for George. We began to hear comments from George about Steve: 'he is cool', 'I love Steve', and 'Steve is like me'. I think, most importantly, Steve provided a path to discussion with George about identity.

At five years old, George started to become more cognizant of his biculturalism and his bilingualism. One incident in particular demonstrated it for me. As he was playing one day in a park, a group of Japanese university students approached him and tried to speak to him in English. They greeted him, and tried basic conversation with him. He listened and then answered back in Japanese. I asked him later why he used Japanese when he could obviously understand their speech. He told me that he did not like to speak English with Japanese. That trend has continued. He reacts this way with interlocutors that use a second language with him, whether Japanese university students or his American grandfather using a Japanese phrase he found on the internet, he sticks to the first language of the other.

During both summers that he attended kindergarten, George traveled to the USA. He made noticeable improvements in listening and speaking during those trips. He also started to comment more on the differences between the two cultures: Americans were big; Japanese ate many vegetables; Americans drove fast; Japanese greetings were longer. There were also some unexpected cultural hangovers from those trips: urinating on trees (like he did at Uncle Billy's house), spitting (like he had on the fishing trip with Mr. Kevin), and swearing (like Grandpa). Nevertheless, the worldview and English language exposure he gained were invaluable. In total, he has taken four trips to the USA since moving to Japan, one each summer since moving. As long as we can afford it, we hope to continue to make them.

George started the first grade in the spring of 2016. We noticed an increase in his code switching. He had always mixed his two languages in speech. However, as he started spending more time in the Japanese public world, remaining there and interacting for greater periods, and then returning to his English speaking home, we noticed an

increase in code switching. At the end of a school day or after practice, the movement from speaking Japanese to English produced those interesting speech patterns.

Another situation with the start of school is our concern with the imbalance of time spent on Japanese compared with English. Trying to maintain an equal amount of time for English language seemed impossible. At school, he copied Japanese letters, memorized stories, and wrote sentences. He followed this with writing and reading homework, and was required to keep a weekly diary. The onslaught of Japanese language had arrived; hours of the day focused on that language with little room for English. A few strategies we have tried for balancing this are doing his addition/subtraction card practice for math class in English. We do this each night during the week. Another strategy is writing his basketball notebook for his basketball club team in English. His coaches require him to come home each night after practice and write about what he did well and where he can improve. We write that journal in English, and we do it four times a week.

Writing in English has become a major focus in our home this past year. We hope that George develops English writing at an equal pace to his Japanese. We have tried multiple writing strategies. We bought a large white board to practice writing letters and words when he first began to show interest in letters. We used the writing program Leap Frog Learn to Write with Mr. Pencil Stylus for iPad as he went through his iPad overload phase. We had him write letters to his grandparents and cousins in the USA after trips to the USA. We have also used word ladders, dictation activities, and of course those readily available children writing workbooks from the USA. We have tried many things and have still not settled on what works best. We have not been able to realize the same level of writing as with his Japanese. His motivation is more often external. We try to make writing fun and interesting for him, but most techniques

last a few weeks or months before he finds them tedious and we try something new.

For reading, we never stopped the system that we started after his birth, reading with him each day. Of course, in Japan we shifted to an effort to read in English. We imported English books and tried to establish English reading in everyday life at home. I read in English with him a few times each week. Usually at night, before bed, I use my most over-the-top version of English and read stories that he is interested in; Star Wars, Sponge Bob, and monster truck books are some examples we have worn out. When he turned five, I began to encourage him to do the reading along with me. We highlighted sight words in books and paused when we came across them so that he could read the word. Besides that, over the past two years, we have created a large collection of word cards that George uses to memorize sight words. The OSMO program for the i-Pad has been helpful for making the activity of reviewing these words fun. I also keep abreast of Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for English Language Arts and Reading. These are the standards for public schools in Texas, and they are helpful for matching skill sets for children of the same age as George. In other words, if a first grader in Texas should be able to recognize consonant blends, we aim for that same skill in his reading.

We use TV for English input. George can watch around thirty minutes or so a day, and more on the weekends. There is an unspoken rule in the house, if the program is in English he can sometimes watch for longer. He shadows and repeats what he hears from characters. He even developed a sense of American humor from watching shows like the Simpsons. It is not only entertainment programming; we encouraged him to view educational programs such as Sesame Street, Curious George and the Word World series. The first few years in Japan, we imported many DVDs with this in mind, but the recent

availability of the Netflix streaming service has made English programs readily available in Japan.

Difficulties and Concerns

Time and cost of raising a bilingual child in Japan are a growing concern for us. It is expensive to raise a bilingual child in Japan. The cost of airline tickets is substantial. They increase each year, making it difficult to travel back and forth. Another cost is literature and media, particularly overseas shipping. Then there is the issue of finding time. As George becomes more involved in school and clubs it appears it will become harder to find the time to work on English and travel for long periods back to the USA.

Keeping current and relevant English books in front of George is a major task. That is, there are never enough English books available; even with those that we purchase or find at local libraries, we struggle to keep the right book in his hands at the right time. Whether it is an appropriate level or an area of interest, we are constantly searching for material.

Location is another problem. We live in Shikoku, a beautiful and very safe place to raise children; however, it is not the ideal place to foster bilingualism. As I mentioned earlier, we do not know other bicultural couples in the area with 7-year old children. There are no bicultural children attending his elementary school. While this environment has been wonderful for learning Japanese, he could be at risk of developing a narrow view of his diversity, overconfidence in his language ability, or worse, not maintaining his English. We are happy that George is able to attend public school in Japan in such an authentic environment. His school is an adequate place for learning basic skills and knowledge. We are excited about all of the Japanese language he has learned.

However, looking beyond primary school, we are considering a return to the USA a real possibility. In short, the ability of Japanese secondary public schools to support and foster bilingual children is not clear. While it is clear that the Ministry of Education in Japan desires greater English ability for its student population, I can see little evidence that there is concern with development of bilingualism with students that come to Japanese schools from around the world. The JET program is a bright spot in those assimilation-style schools. However, it is those same ALTs who work in English classes which are in fact one of my greatest concerns with George. That he be required to attend English classes alongside students with little or no background in English is a waste of hundreds of hours of his scholastic days. I do not see a workable solution around this issue. International schools are not an option, as they do not exist in Tokushima. Staying too long in Japan, may see him lose the dual language skills we have worked hard to gain. However, will he have learned enough Japanese by age twelve to leave and maintain those language skills? Is it better to stay and continue to push English at home? Will he be too far behind English speaking peers in the USA if we do return? How will we all feel about leaving friends and others in Shikoku? These questions keep me up at night.

For now, we will continue doing as much as we can at home and support him. I am quite proud of what he has accomplished. At seven

years old, he speaks and understands two languages.

Conclusion

I hope this case study contributes to the bilingual Japan discussion. I also hope it provides some written history for George to look back on and help him understand how he accomplished early success in two languages. That way he is better equipped to answer the inevitable question of how he was able to do it.

I feel the two most important contributions to George's early success with language have been his mother and our move to Japan. She was determined that he use both languages and worked tirelessly towards that goal. Our move to Japan provided separate linguistic and cultural settings to develop his languages.

Finally, a word of warning to others who write a case study. I found it a challenge to put together. Although it is just around 3,000 words, it has taken me several years to complete it. It can be stressful to write publicly about something so personal as your own family and child. I spent many hours looking over and re-writing parts of this narrative. Obviously, things change quickly with young children. Each time I put this paper down for a few weeks, it seemed some details had changed. I suspect that pattern will continue.



Bilingual Child-Raising in Japan

日本でバイリンガルの子供をどう育てる

This column welcomes serious and/or humorous articles about incidents, decisions, resources, strategies, and other issues concerning the practical aspects of raising bilingual and bicultural children. If you are interested in contributing contact Christie Provenzano, email: pcprov@mac.com.

Defending ml@h

by Tenesha Kanai

Bilingualism has always been fascinating and appealing to me. There is something unique about someone who is able to switch seamlessly from one language to another. Therefore, I always thought if I were to have children they would be raised to be bilingual regardless of my location. This decision wasn't entirely based on my admiration of bilinguals to converse in two or more languages but also on the added benefits that bilingualism offers. Kinzler (2016) notes that children raised as bilinguals can enjoy certain cognitive benefits as well as enhanced social skills.

In 2014, I had my son Elijah (now 2:6) in Japan, and my husband and I decided we would raise him to be a bilingual English-Japanese speaker following the minority language at home approach (ml@h). I am Jamaican – a native English speaker – and my husband Zen is a native Japanese speaker who also speaks English. Zen lived in New York during his twenties, which has had a great impact on the interaction between us as a couple as well as the decision to raise our child as a bilingual using the ml@h approach. It is important to mention that before our son was born, the common language between Zen and me was English with a mix of Japanese. Since Elijah was born, we have used English almost exclusively. From the outset, Zen and I shared a similar commitment to our goals for Elijah's language skills and development; therefore, the ml@h approach seemed to be the most effective and most comfortable way for our family.

Saunders (1998) believes that on a psychological level, it is vital for bilingual children to understand from an early age that language can be used effectively for all functions in or outside their homes. Therefore, the idea in following the ml@h approach was to develop a clear goal for Elijah, aiming for him to develop skills to fully understand the appropriate language to use, when, where, and with whom. Moreover, having worked in Japanese public schools, I'm fully aware of the limited level of English input and output opportunities offered by Japanese EFL education; as a result, I felt I had to take a proactive step from the time of Elijah's birth to create a high-quality, consistent language environment in which he could communicate. A further consideration that was important to us was that Elijah should understand both his cultures and be able to communicate with my family members, who live outside of Japan. Lastly, we wanted him to have the option of where to live and work once he was at an age to decide such things.

Deciding to use English at home with Elijah was natural for me, as it's my native tongue. Zen, although he speaks English as second language, was also quite confident in this decision. For him, being competent in English offered him the chance to see the world beyond what he learnt growing up in Japan. It allowed him to make new friends and create professional opportunities that arose from being proficient in a foreign language, so he wanted the same for his son. However, when we first talked about establishing a ml@h

environment for Elijah, Zen worried whether, as a second language speaker, he would be teaching our child the “correct” English. To ease his concerns, I showed him a number of research articles discussing the issue and anecdotal blogs where parents documented their experiences with the ml@h approach. There is plenty of evidence that second language speakers of the minority language have been successful. This helped him to believe that he would be providing Elijah with the interaction needed to develop his English speaking skills. Additionally, his parents were encouraging and understanding of our ml@h approach, which has made things that much easier for us.

To support the minority language input at home, we make a concerted effort to enrich our home’s English environment. We have Apple TV, which gives us access to overseas news, sports and an endless number of English programs. Books are also big part of our household. We read to our son every night, and use flashcards, workbooks, and music. He also has a chance to interact with students in the neighbourhood who learn English at my house, so he is able to join them during the class when we sing and dance. We also watch a lot of English educational videos on YouTube, as well as talk with his grandparents back in Jamaica. This year his Jamaican grandmother visited Japan for three months. This was quite helpful for Elijah, as he stayed home for the duration of her stay, bonding and getting all-day input in English. His English vocabulary noticeably spiked during that time.

While things have gone well at home with the ml@h approach, it hasn’t translated well with some Japanese friends and acquaintances. This choice has led to my family being faced with numerous questions, concerns and – to an extent – criticisms about stifling his Japanese skills. In Japan, the attitude towards English isn’t always positive. Many people who have no experience dealing with bicultural

families in Japan seem a little bit skeptical of this approach. Yamamoto (2001) interviewed a number of bilinguals in Japan and the feedback suggested that bilingualism was perceived negatively by some Japanese people. Given Yamamoto’s findings, it is not surprising to see that people in some instances have questioned our family’s language approach. These are some of the comments we have received:

*Why are you only speaking to him in English at home?
Don’t you want him to be bilingual?*

How will he learn Japanese?

Are you planning to live outside of Japan?

It will be difficult for him in elementary school if you don’t use Japanese because kanji is difficult.

When he gets to elementary school the other students will know many more kanji than he does.

It will be hard for him to make friends because he won’t know Japanese.

Will you be sending him to international school?

Does he understand Japanese? Because you are only speaking to him in English...

Based on my reading and experience, I know that these are common misconceptions about bilingualism, so when faced with these questions and concerns about ml@h I try to be understanding, respectful and concise. First, I explain that learning Japanese is as important to our family as learning English. I follow this by saying that Elijah gets a great deal of Japanese input from school, his grandparents, and his environment, so his Japanese level is naturally at a native level. Then, I usually mention that children have the capacity to adapt and grasp languages when they are immersed in that environment, so we feel confident that his Japanese skills are being nourished. However, most people who

aren't familiar with bilingualism see this as meaningless for the child at best, and at worst, terribly confusing.

If people are interested in talking more about it, I tell them why we have decided to raise him to be bilingual, citing cognitive benefits, economic and social benefits. If criticisms persist, however, I tend to smile, nod, and ultimately ignore further commentary! Zen, being Japanese, gets the brunt of these questions and concerns, which forces him to explain our choice. He is usually very modest, agrees with their comments and gives them a sense of winning by saying he will be using more Japanese at home from now on (which is obviously not what we do). Although there have been some questions and concerns about our ml@h choice, there are many people, both Japanese and non-Japanese, who praise our efforts and at times ask for advice on how to support their children speaking English at home.

For now, Elijah goes to Japanese daycare for eight to nine hours every day. He is completely immersed in Japanese during that time. Although his English skills are currently much more advanced than his Japanese ability, we know this will change. As he continues in the Japanese school system, his relationships with teachers and peers will play a more and more significant role in his life and the number of hours spent in the Japanese environment will accumulate. Therefore, he will use more Japanese and he may see it as more important to him. At that time I expect it will be even more important for us to continue using and enforcing the use of English at home, as well as working to support his English skills by taking him on trips abroad to English-speaking countries and forming a playgroup where he is able to communicate in the minority language. We know it will be challenging but we are educating and preparing ourselves for this process. To be honest, sometimes trepidation and anxiety creep in, so on a daily basis I read

and research the best way to deal with the different stages of bilingual development. Adam Beck's blog *Bilingual Monkeys* has helped me a lot, as I am able to see someone living and experiencing raising bilinguals in Japan and the strides that he has been making with his two children.

Sometimes not having support and understanding from people around us can be demotivating, but we take comfort in the fact that multilingual and bilingual families all over world have not only survived, but flourished. From the beginning, Zen and I made an end goal for our child's English ability as well as his Japanese: to be able to speak, read, write and listen in both languages at the highest level of proficiency, which will enable him to have access to all opportunities available to him in both of his cultures. For parents of bicultural families in Japan who would like to follow or who are currently pursuing the ml@h approach, we need to understand that there will be naysayers, but we shouldn't allow them to be a deterrent. We have to remind ourselves that multilingualism and multiculturalism are not yet fully understood in Japan. Children such as Elijah and forward thinking parents like Zen will be agents of change for Japan until the time comes when a greater number of people from all over the world have settled here and multilingualism and multiculturalism are normalized.

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Children's Resources

子供の教材

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

English Language Learning Apps for Young Learners: A 9-year-old's Journey

by Graham Mackenzie

Like many families in Japan striving to bring up a child bilingually, we have certainly had our ups and downs. Our daughter H, nine years old, has had phases in which she is motivated to speak in English and is happy to look at books together with me. At other times, particularly when we have been away from the UK or haven't seen any relatives for a while, motivation can really dip and H needs to be cajoled to do anything in English. However, one thing which H is willing to do during these periods is play with English apps. As H doesn't possess a phone or tablet yet, my iPhone still appears to have some allure and the occasional 30 minutes to play with it in an idle moment in a waiting room or on a train is usually welcomed. Especially during times when there is a reluctance to look at spelling/phonics workbooks or graded readers, apps can at least provide some basic work on literacy. Perhaps too, as a third-grade student in a Japanese state (public) school, she is exposed less to technology in education than children of equivalent age in the US or Europe and so to have a break from pen and paper work still has some novelty. Here I look at H's top 5 apps which have managed to

Yamamoto, M. (2001). *Language use in interlingual families: Japanese-English sociolinguistic study*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

avoid being deleted from my phone over the past few years along with H's comments on how they have kept her attention.

#5 Montessori Crosswords

360yen, Available for Apple and Android

Dad's Description: This app claims to use the "proven Montessori learning method". I am not quite sure how this works, but H really enjoys doing crosswords, and for her this appears to be a painless way of practicing spelling and phonics. It's also a good vocabulary builder for slightly less frequent words (such as pearl or elf). The crossword's clues are images which also produce audio when pressed, and the crosswords are completed by dragging letters from the moveable phonetic alphabet below. There are three levels, but unfortunately the app does not track the users' progress. The interface also seems a bit old-fashioned and the level of challenge is not particularly high, as nearly all the words seem to be of one syllable, but we found this app worth paying a little for because of the extensive practice it has given. One nice feature is that you can select groups

of words with particular sounds that are proving difficult for specific spelling practice.

H's verdict: I love crosswords, so it is my favourite way to do spelling.

#4 My High Frequency Words Free with in-app purchases, Apple

Dad's Description: Spelling has been a bit of a struggle for H, and a bit of a barrier to her writing in English as spelling mistakes can lead to great frustration. This app has been quite useful as a way to help with memorizing the spelling of high frequency sight words, which is something we have recently started to work on again. It covers the highest frequency 400 sight words (the first 100 are free). The words are presented in blocks of ten and there are three games (listen and choose the word, add the missing letters and unscramble the word) to help H remember the spelling before she tests herself. It has a nice sense of progression about it, and you can go back and review words after they have been "remembered".

H's verdict: I like this as it looks good and I like the games. I always forget the spelling before the test though.

#3 abc PocketPhonics 840yen, Apple

Dad's Description: This is probably the app that has been most useful for H and she used it consistently for about five years from when she was about three or four years old. Although it hasn't been touched in a while we had to list it as it has been really helpful for learning basic phonics through constant repetition of the sounds. Users are introduced to the sounds, including consonant blends and vowel digraphs (in either a UK or US accent). They then trace the corresponding letters and spell out basic words. There is plenty of praise in the form of applause and cheers when a word is correctly spelt as well encouragement

when progressing through the levels.

H's verdict: I really liked this app and I think it helped me to read a lot. It is fun and colourful.

#2 Tocomail Free, Available for Apple and Android.

Dad: This is a "safe" email app for kids which can also be used on the web. Parents set up the account, control who is on the contact list, and can get notification to their own email address when an email has been sent to their child. Tocomail is set up so that it will block email from anyone not in the contact list, including spam of course. It is fairly easy for children from around seven years old to use, and of course provides plenty of opportunity for "authentic" reading and writing, especially as in our case everyone in the contact list is about 9,000 miles away. In a way, I think H prefers this mode of communication with her Grandpa and aunts and uncles in the UK. She can take her time in constructing an e-mail and can ask me about spelling and vocabulary choices, whereas she sometimes feel a bit of pressure with the immediacy of speaking on a phone or Skype call.

H's verdict: It's my second favourite app. I was really happy to get my own email address and I like that it is just for kids.

#1 Netflix One month free trial, \950 per month standard subscription thereafter, Available for Apple and Android.

Dad: OK, so it's not just an app and we also watch it on the TV and the computer, but H says it has to be "Number 1". You can set up a profile for your child so they will only see programs aimed at kids, of which there seems to be a vast amount, mostly from the US. There are a lot of films too, although they don't tend to be particularly recent. I have set a rule that everything watched on Netflix is in English, as H has plenty of other

opportunities to watch Japanese programming on regular TV. Most of the shows have English subtitles, so H sometimes uses this as an aid to comprehension. One particular hit has been the English version of the French animation “Mouk”, about an animated cat and his friend who cycle around the globe experiencing different cultures.

H's verdict: I love to browse and look at all the TV shows. Many of them are for little kids, so sometimes it is difficult to find a good show, but I still like Netflix better than normal TV. My favourite shows are “Mouk” and “Justin Time”, also the films I liked recently were “Charlie and the Chocolate Factory” and “Hugo”.

Conclusion

There are undoubtedly a lot of very poor English language learning apps aimed at young learners out there and it can take a lot

of work to trawl through them all and find something that is both educational, intuitive and fun. We have avoided the bigger apps that present themselves as all-around English learning solutions such as those from Lingokids or the British Council. They tend to be poorly animated with songs and stories that are, in Hana’s words, “a bit silly” (I think she means unappealing or lame!), and too expensive for what you get. What is important is that an app has long-term appeal so that a child will keep going back to it, be it to get extensive phonics and spelling practice or exposure to TV in English. We have found it is often worthwhile paying a little bit of money for those kinds of apps when you find them. Unfortunately, though, there will likely never be a magic app solution for all the more challenging aspects of literacy, so don’t throw away those workbooks just yet.

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