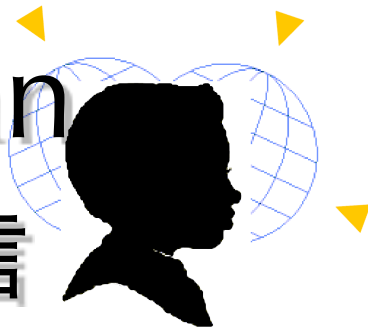


Bilingual Japan

バイリンガル通信



Winter 2017 / 2018 • Volume 26, Number 3

The Newsletter of the JALT
Special Interest Group on Bilingualism

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Bilingualism SIG Decision-Making Team

Coordinator
会長

Alexandra Shaitan
alexshaitan@yahoo.com

Treasurer
会計

Tim Pritchard
timnosuke@hotmail.com

Director of Membership
会員書記

Blake Turnbull
blaketurnbull@hotmail.com

Director of Program
計画推進委員

Mandy Klein
mklein@jcmu.org

Publicity Officer
広報担当

Lauren Landsberry
laurenlandsberry@gmail.com

Director of Publications
広報委員長

Tim Greer
tim@kobe-u.ac.jp

Journal Editor
ジャーナル編集者

Tim Greer
tim@kobe-u.ac.jp

Newsletter Editor
ニュースレター編集者

Lance Stilp
lancestilp@gmail.com

Additional SIG Officers

Member-at-large
庶務委員

Vacant

International Liaison
国際仲介委員

Masae Takeuchi
masae.takeuchi@vu.edu.au

Directors of Newsletter
Distribution / 通信配

Sorrell Yue
yue079650@gmail.com

**Regular Column Editors/
通信編集員**

Alec McAulay, Ron Murphy,
Christie Provenzano, Diane
Lamb

Website Editor
ウェブサイト編集者

Tim Greer
tim@kobe-u.ac.jp

Bilingjp Listowner
Bilingjp リストオーナー

Stephen M. Ryan
stephen05summer
@yahoo.com

York Weatherford
yorkweatherford@gmail.com

Proofreading: Josh Norman

Contribute to *Bilingual Japan*

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

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

Regular Columns

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

Feature Articles

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

DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT ISSUE: April 15th

From the Coordinator

Dear valued Bilingualism SIG members,

First of all, let me extend my thanks to all of you for your support, dedication and time in continuing your membership with us. We all really appreciate it and hope to represent you at the JALT-sponsored events and activities. We are constantly looking for potential members who are willing to help our SIG perform successfully. Please feel free to send an e-mail to Alexandra Shaitan at alexshaitan@yahoo.com if you wish to get involved in the BSIG activities more actively. While the BSIG Officers have worked hard to ensure all, if any, issue is resolved in a timely and amicable manner, due to the unforeseen circumstances, sometimes, we need more time than previously thought. We ask for your understanding, support and patience.

This spring issue contains rather interesting contributions which will surely kindle minds and provide food for thought. In particular, Alexander McAulay shares his experience of using Greek Myth stories as a window of opportunities in developing your child's English language skills. Adrian Heinel highlights the factors that could either promote or hinder bilingualism. Angela Sunaga's personal bilingual journey is just fascinating. Thank you very much to the

contributors for their articles which I personally enjoyed perusing.

We are happy to announce that this year BSIG will participate in the PansSIG 2018 which will be held on MAY 19-20, 2018 at Toyo Gakuen University (Hongo), Tokyo (<http://pansig.org/>) Of course, the SIG will participate at the JALT Conference taking place at the Shizuoka Convention & Arts Center (Granship) Shizuoka City, Shizuoka, Japan on Friday, November 23, to Monday, November, 26, 2018.

We are looking for BSIG Members who would be willing to take part in the BSIG Forums. Interested individuals are kindly welcome to send in their proposals to our Program Chair Mandy Klein at:

mandydklein@gmail.com

Wishing you all a lovely spring break!
Enjoy the upcoming cherry blossom!

Kind Regards,

Alexandra Shaitan
JALT Bilingualism SIG Coordinator

会長便り

拝啓 皆様

バイリンガルリズムSIG会員の皆様、

はじめに、引続きバイリンガルリズムSIGへの温かいご支援を頂き感謝いたします。これからも代表としてJALTの活動に励み、またBSIGが一層充実したものになるように支援をしてくれる会員も増えることを望んでいます。また、積極的にBSICに携わってくれる方は、是非、会長のAlexandra Shaitan (アレキサンドラ・シャイタン)へご連絡ください。メールアドレスは、alexshaitan@yahoo.comです。日頃よりBSIGの事務員はスムーズな運営を心がけていますが、万が
26.3 • Winter 2017 / 2018

一の際には、計画通りに行かないこともありますので皆様のご理解いただければと思っています。

この春号にはハッとさせられる驚きと閃きを与えてくれる面白い内容になっています。特に、Alexander McAulayは幼児の英語力向上の糸口としてギリシア神話を取り入れた教授方法経験を述べています。また、Adrian Heinelは何がバイリンガルを向上させるか、また逆に妨げになるかその原因について論じています。さらにAngela Sunagaのご自身のバイリンガル体験を語った作品はただ素晴らしいとしか言えないものです。この

ように素晴らしい作品に出会えたことは私にとって感謝で一杯です。

最後にいいお知らせがあります。今年BSIGは、5月19、20日に東京の東海学園大学 本郷キャンパスで開催されるPanSIG大会(<http://pansig.org/>)と、11月23日(金)から26日(月)までの静岡市静岡コンベンションアーツセンター(グランシップ)での全国語学教育学会の国際年次大会に参加することになりました。BSIGの公開討論会へ参加されたい会員メンバーを募集しています。ご希望の方は、発表申し込みをMandy Klein (mandydklein@gmail.com) まで

お送りください。

花見のいい季節となりましたので、皆様もいい春休みをお過ごしください。

敬具

アレキサンドラ・シャイタン
全国語学教育学会
バイリンガルSIGコーディネーター
JALTバイリンガリズム研究会会長
Translated by Tomoko Oda Nuske

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 stephen05summer@yahoo.com.



Officer Reports

Bilingualism SIG

2017 Annual General Meeting Minutes
Saturday, November 26, 3:30 pm - 4:15 pm
Room 201A, Tsukuba, Ibaraki, JAPAN

A) Call to Order

All Bilingualism SIG (B-SIG) members in good standing may vote, make motions, make nominations, and stand for office. Non-B-SIG members are welcome to observe and speak. The B-SIG members present at the AGM constitute a quorum. The Meeting was called to order at 15:30pm. It was chaired by Alexandra Shaitan.

B) Appointment of Recording Secretary

The Member-at-Large has the duty to take the minutes and to conduct elections at the AGM. If the Member-at-Large is not present, another B-SIG member shall be chosen to perform these duties. Alexandra asked/appointed Mandy Klein to serve as the temporary Recording Secretary as the Member-at-Large was not able to attend the meeting.

C) 2017 Decision Making Team Officer Reports

Due to the short time allotted for this meeting, we briefly went over the reports from the BSIG officers. In addition, the Officers took part in discussions related to the 2017-2018 BSIG activities.

D) The AGM was attended by 13 BSIG Members along with four potential members interested in bilingualism. The voting members voted for Blake Turnbull (Membership Chair), Mandy Klein (Program Chair), Lauren Landsberry (Publicity Chair), and Tim Greer (Director of Publications). Shaitan Alexandra and Tim Pritchard were reelected as the BSIG Coordinator and BSIG Treasurer.

E) The attendants of the AGM discussed possible overarching themes/topics for upcoming PanSIG 2018 and JALT 2018. It was agreed that a database/pool of people who could be contacted to as potential panelists on the BSIG Forum (s) needs to be created by the DMT (Membership Chair/Publicity Chair). Perhaps, contacting existing members and asking them if they would be interested in participating in the BSIG Forums.

F) Okinawa JALT 2017 event in September went well. Most likely, potential speakers representing BSIG will be sought for again in the year of 2018 (could be September 2018).

Coordinator / 会長 Alexandra Shaitan

A special thank you goes out to outgoing officers Marybeth Kamibeppu, and Kent Hatashita for their enormous support over the past years. They both kindly agreed to provide support to incoming elected officers which I think is very generous and considerate of them. Also, I would like to extend a special thank you to all volunteers who have contributed to the BSIG activities. During the past year, along with other BSIG officers I have responded to inquiries and questions about the SIG and bilingualism and oversaw and helped coordinate activities.

As a representative for B-SIG, in 2017, I made sure all required submissions were executed on time so that the BSIG could get a fair amount of funds distributed among all the participating SIGs. As a result, our SIG got 6 out of 7 points on a scoring rubric. Overall, BSIG performed very well at the PanSIG 2017 held in Akita. I, myself, was responsible for making sure the BSIG Poster was created and submitted on time.

In January 2017, Blake Turnbull and I gave a talk at a Kyoto Chapter joint event where we were able to meet some potential BSIG Members living in the Kansai area of Japan.

As a member of the EBM, I attended two out of three EBM meetings throughout the year. At the JALT 2017, held in Tsukuba, I manned our BSIG table for two days and was able to sell a few publications to potential members and also was able to recruit new members who joined the SIG onsite. However, the most successful result of manning the table was to ask Mandy Klein and Blake Turnbull if they were interested in joining the BSIG DMT Team. They both kindly accepted my “cry for help” and have been contributing their time and support since November, 2017. In addition, I kindly had asked Lauren Landsberry to join our team at the AGM, and fortunately, she agreed and was voted in as a result. I would like to thank and welcome them to the BSIG DMT team.

Thank you very much to all outgoing and incoming officers for all your support. I really appreciate your patience and dedication to the Bilingualism SIG successful activities.

Membership Chair- Kent Hatashita

On the first of every month, a new membership list is generated. It lists all members, including those who have let their membership lapse by up to 3 months. Based on this list, at the beginning of each month I have sent out Email reminders to those whose membership had already expired expressing our hope that they would renew and to those whose membership would expire at the end of the month as a reminder to keep their membership current. Emails also contained any information I thought would be of interest to our members such as Pan SIG details. For the most part, very few people replied, but those who did were thankful for the friendly reminder.

Over the past two years it has been my pleasure to serve as Membership Chair. With the support of the SIG, I have learned a lot and it has been an invaluable experience. Unfortunately, because of other responsibilities, I am no longer able to continue and have decided to step down as Membership Chair. I will continue to be a member and look forward to reading its publications and hopefully attending some of its sponsored events in the Kansai region. Thank you all for this opportunity!

Program Chair- (none submitted)

Treasurer- Tim Pritchard

As of 17th November 2017, BIL SIG has total reserves of 268,957yen. We received a healthy Program Fee from PanSIG 2017 (Akita) of over 52,000yen which has boosted our balance, although last week we just paid 134,000yen for our latest journal and newsletter publication.

As in previous years, I encourage prudent spending on any BIL events in 2017 deemed worthwhile by the BIL SIG Decision Making Team. This is needed in order for current members to become more active, help attract new members and promote the BIL SIG and subsequent sales of BIL publications.

Journal Editor- Tim Greer

In 2017 I returned for a second as the SIG's journal editor. Our team has been working hard on the Japan Journal of Multilingualism and Multiculturalism again this year, and Volume 23 came out in November 2017. It comprises four feature articles and three book reviews. The topics include: *Bilingual narratives and identity*, *Dual-lingual interaction*, *Narrative development*, *Heritage language learning among Korean-Japanese families*.

All current SIG members receive a complimentary copy of the journal, which ensures that the journal is widely read in a timely fashion. This is largely funded via our institutional subscriptions. If you have funds to include a copy of the journal in your university's library, please contact our treasurer Tim Pritchard to discuss becoming an institutional subscriber.

Our editorial board continues to provide all authors with constructive feedback on their work, regardless of whether or not their manuscripts are eventually included in the volume. The full list of members who assist in the journal's production is available in the journal. I have particularly benefited this year from the support from the Japanese language editor, Dr. Emi Otsuji (University of Technology, Sydney), and new and returning proof-readers, Kathleen Yamane, Christie Provenzano, Taura Hideyuki, Peter Longcope, and Ivan Brown. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Dr. Lachlan Jackson, the outgoing editor, for all his work on the journal over the past five years.

Our current policy is to place pdf copies of the journal articles online twelve months after publication, so the 2016 volume will be available on the SIG website from December. The Call for Papers for the 2018 volume is currently out and we would encourage all members who are working on research in the field to submit a manuscript by the due date of February 15, 2018.

Newsletter Editor- Lance Stilp

First, a big thank you to all the column editors, proofreaders, translators, and publication officers! It really takes a whole team to bring it together. Current column editors who are the only editor are advised to begin searching for a partner, or an intern to "shadow" your position. In the interest of the newsletter, it would be best if there are always 2 column editors for each column to ensure quality and quantity of submissions. We are also on the look out for editors for new possible columns in the future. Please contact me if you have any ideas, or wish to get involved. Becoming an editor of a column requires a very manageable amount of commitment 3 times a year. It's a good way to contribute, network with people, and boost your own skills.

Though the majority of submissions deal with families or children, I encourage members to submit all bilingual related endeavors to the newsletter for consideration. A few changes have been made:

Newsletter content:

Winter 2016/2017 29 pages, 4 article submissions, officer Bios included, JALT AGM report

Spring 2017 20 pages, 4 article submissions, feature article on Hafu2Hafu Project

Summer 2017, 21 pages, 4 article submissions



Search for Bilingualism SIG (JALT)
or go directly to the following URL:

[https://www.facebook.com/groups/
191385544260107/](https://www.facebook.com/groups/191385544260107/)



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

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

by Adrian Heinel

1. Introduction

In this paper I will provide a snapshot of the social and cultural context of my family as well as discuss the circumstances that both contributed to and hindered the English language development of our oldest daughter, Maya. I will share the approach, goals, and the kinds of efforts my wife and I have made with Maya both before and after our twin daughters were born. It is my hope that the reader will become more aware of how the factors of time, money, living situation, and parental employment situation play a powerful role in raising children bilingually.

2. Context and Goals

At the time I write this our daughters are eight (Maya), four (Mana), and four (Runa) years old. Mana and Runa are identical twins. Maya is in the third grade of elementary school, and Mana and Runa have just entered kindergarten. All three girls are being raised Japanese in terms of education, habits, and customs.

I live in a household with seven other people: my wife, my mother-in-law, my sister-in-law, my nephew, and my three daughters. With the exception of myself, everyone was born and raised in Japan. I am from the United States, but I have lived in Japan for more than twenty years. I am fluent in Japanese, and my wife is fluent in English.

In March, 2017, we moved back ‘home’. Home is a small city about thirty minutes away from Matsuyama, the largest city on the island of Shikoku. This is not the first time we have lived in this area. In fact, we lived here when Maya was born. However, soon after (before Maya turned two), I pursued an employment opportunity in a medium-sized city in Shizuoka Prefecture, where we then lived for the next six years before returning ‘home’ last year to be closer to family.

Currently I am working as an Assistant Professor at a local university and my wife is a stay-at-home mother. In Shizuoka, I worked as an Assistant Language Teacher (ALT). While both jobs have afforded me the flexibility to be involved in my children’s lives to some degree, the ALT position was somewhat more advantageous for raising children because there were fewer work hours and responsibilities.

When our first daughter was born, my wife and I made the decision to raise her bilingually. As I speak Japanese, the decision to do this was never based on any concern that I would not be able to communicate with my daughter as she grew up in Japan. We simply felt bilingualism would be beneficial for her life. In the long run, we felt it would give her more options for education and employment. We also wanted her to have a basic understanding of her bicultural

background and be able to communicate with her extended family in America. To achieve this, our goal was to give Maya experiences that would allow her to be able to speak, read, and write in English at near-native level proficiency by the time she graduated from high school.

3. Approach and Resources

After some discussion, my wife and I consciously decided to try the ‘one parent one language’ (OPOL) approach. Throughout Maya’s life I have spoken to her almost entirely in English while my wife speaks with her in Japanese 95% of the time. Maya was responsive to this from a very young age and soon it became normal to hear ‘Papa’ speaking English, ‘Mama’ speaking Japanese, and herself speaking both. It is common in our household to hear both languages used in conversation. For example, my wife will often speak to me in Japanese and I will respond to her in English. This has never seemed to confuse or be a source of any problems for Maya.

In addition to the one parent one language approach, as many others in my situation have likely used, I tried to better inform myself by delving into literature. Two books I found useful were: *7 Steps to Raising a Bilingual Child* and *Raising a Bilingual Child*. Initially I found these books useful for defining motivations and setting goals for Maya. I have also found them to be good reference books when obstacles to Maya’s L2 development come up. As the child-raising and bilingualism situation is constantly changing, I feel having both of these books on the shelf to refer to every so often is a must.

For the first few years of Maya’s life I often visited the website bilingualmonkeys.com, and I have used quite a few of the resources that can be found there. One of the ideas we adopted from this website is the use of whiteboards to promote reading and writing.

In the article “Why You Must Put a Whiteboard in the Bathroom” author Adam Beck outlines a “captive reading idea.” The basic idea is to attach a whiteboard to the wall in the toilet at near eye level. On this whiteboard you can essentially write whatever you want. In our case, every day we wrote the day and the date, the weather, and a short message to Maya. Sometimes the message was as simple as ‘Have a good day at school today’ in the mornings. Other times we wrote riddles or questions and she came to us with the answers. I have found this kind of captive reading useful and have put up whiteboards in other locations around the house to increase exposure. Maya often uses them to practice writing freely in an unstructured way as well.

Another useful resource was an online discussion group connected to the educationinjapan.wordpress.com blog. For the first several years of Maya’s life, I often benefited from the wisdom of other group members who have raised or were in the process of raising their children bilingually in Japan. Specifically, I learned about books others were reading to their kids at different ages, which gave me ideas for what books to buy for Maya. Members of the discussion group also posted useful articles and links to news and research about bilingualism which also helped keep me informed and motivated.

Now, at eight years old, Maya has made significant progress. She can carry on conversations with other native speakers without them commenting on the fact that English is not her ‘strongest’ language. With a little assistance she is able to write simple sentences, birthday cards, and notes. She is also able to read simple children’s books and graded readers (she has completed reading the first three sets of ‘Bob Books’ on her own).

4. Factors that Contributed to Maya’s English Ability

In the early years, and especially when we lived in Shizuoka, Maya received a great deal of exposure to English whenever she was with me. When it was just the three of us living in an apartment, Maya spent at least five hours a day with me. In addition to talking with her in English, I also read English picture and story books to her. On average I read five English books to her every day. Mostly, we read books just before bedtime. But we also had set up a small library for her, so anytime she grabbed a book off the shelf and brought it to me, I would read it to her.

When she started attending kindergarten, we also began scheduling time to use primer activity books and play games which my mother had sent us from the U.S. From kindergarten through the second grade of elementary school, for 20 to 30 minutes three or four times a week, she enjoyed practicing the alphabet and doing the activities in these books. We played -- and continue to play -- all kinds of board games and card games. Many of the games are useful for reading and vocabulary building. Some of the games we played were: Junior Scrabble, Busytown Eye Found It!, Goodnight Moon Game, Harvest Time, Friends and Neighbors, Tell Tale, and many others. Over the years our board and card game collection had grown to a respectable size and, depending on how much time we had available, we tried to have a 'game night' at least once a week.

The time that my extended family has spent with her is another factor that has helped with Maya's bilingualism. Since Maya was born, my mother has visited Japan four times, staying with us for up to a month each time. These visits and the ongoing connection with her grandma have helped Maya's language skills immensely. When my mother was not here visiting, we had semi-regular FaceTime sessions with her on weekends. Maya sometimes talked to her in English an hour or more. She has always loved the time spent with grandma, whether it be physically or

virtually. We have also used FaceTime to talk with other U.S. relatives, but much less frequently. Finally, my father also lives in Japan. Unfortunately, our visits with her grandpa have been somewhat rare, but when he has been around, the time spent has always been fun and an excellent source of exposure to English for Maya.

One more factor that has influenced Maya's English ability is our family's financial situation. Before the twins were born, with only one child and with my ALT salary, it was affordable to visit the States once every couple of years. When Maya was just four years old, we took our first trip to the U.S. and stayed for one month. This allowed her to spend quality time with my family and friends there. Since then she has visited America two other times. These visits have allowed her to become close with the other children in her extended family and join in family events such as Christmas. I feel these trips played a major role in solidifying her English speaking ability and bicultural identity. Despite the expense of such trips, the experiences Maya received were well worth the cost.

Another way in which money has influenced Maya's English development is in the investment of English language learning resources. For one, it is quite expensive to put together a children's library and make sure that it is stocked with books that are, and will continue to be, of interest to her in the future. We also pay for a Netflix account and allow her to watch approximately five hours of English programming a week. The cost of English primers, graded readers, new board games and card games, videos, CDs, and English language learning electronic devices, such as the Leapfrog Letter Discovery, all add up, but I believe they are necessary for her bilingualism.

5. Factors that Hindered Maya's English Ability and Countermeasures

At first, until Maya turned four, my wife and I had sufficient time to be diligent and disciplined with her English education. However, once our twins were born, that time became fractured. For example, whereas previously I was able to read five or more English bedtime stories to her a night, now I only had time to read one or two. My assistant professor position and a two-hour round trip commute also keeps me out of the house for longer than the ALT position did, so Maya's exposure to English in the house has been reduced significantly by this.

In the past, Maya was only occasionally exposed to an overload of Japanese when we visited my wife's family in Ehime during the holidays. During these times she used much more Japanese than usual. After returning to Shizuoka, Maya inevitably continued to use a lot of Japanese for a few days, but would soon return to speaking with me in English. However, now that we are living full time with my in-laws in Ehime, Maya speaks much more Japanese with me. Previously, in Shizuoka, she spoke with me in English about 80- 90% of the time. Now that number is down to about 50-60%. When she does speak English, I haven't noticed any regression in her ability, but I haven't noticed any significant increase over the last few months either.

To overcome the obstacles of our new living situation and the lack of time to focus on her bilingualism, we have taken a few countermeasures. For one, my wife began reading more English story books to Maya. I have also arranged play dates with my English-speaking friends and their kids as often as possible. We have started allowing her to watch an English language NHK TV program almost daily. Also, we now have her read one story book and then write the story out in a notebook for 20-30 minutes once or twice a week. In addition, we have continued regular weekly FaceTime sessions with her grandma and other family members in the

U.S. Lastly, to counteract Maya's increased use of Japanese, I've begun repeating what she says in Japanese again in English and asking her to talk to me in English more often. These measures have seemed to, at least partially, 'plug the holes' and keep us somewhat on track towards our goals for Maya's bilingualism.

Finally, with three daughters, our disposable income has also become limited. Plane tickets to the States on a regular basis for the whole family have now become almost completely unaffordable. This means that we will not be able to take Maya to the U.S. as often as we would like. As the children get older, the costs of raising them will rise. At this point, we are lucky because we have an extremely generous and supportive grandma in the U.S. But unless we can start bringing in a larger income, we will not be able to continue to invest in as many of the types of things that have assisted with Maya's English development thus far (i.e., Netflix, books, board games, and trips abroad).

6. Conclusion

When our first daughter was born, my wife and I were unaware of just how much living and working situations, financial resources, and time contribute to the bilingual development of children. Of course, I believe it is possible to raise a child bilingually despite these obstacles, but the challenges can often slow the progress. Now that our living and working situation has changed and Maya is no longer an only child, my wife and I have had to step back and reassess our goals concerning her English oral and literacy development. We have scaled back our expectations for how much time and money we are going to be able to devote to her bilingual journey. We also, regrettably, have scaled back our expectations as to the levels of English proficiency that she might achieve. Whereas previously we had hoped for near native fluency and literacy by the time she graduated high school, now we

hope that she will simply be able to continue to communicate in English with us and her relatives in the U.S., and at the very least, be ahead of the game academically in her English studies in elementary school, junior high school, and beyond. I think the important thing is not to give up when you come across obstacles or have setbacks. In the end, parents must determine their own realistic expectations for themselves and their children's bilingualism based on their individual situation.

References

Beck, A. (2012). 'Why you must put a whiteboard in the bathroom.' *Bilingual*

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>.

Bilingual in Review: Resources from the 90s!

by Angela Sunaga

I'm a mother of three children, married to a Japanese man, and a pastor at a large international church in Tokyo. My family moved to Japan from Oregon when I was six years old for my father to start our church. Growing up, we spoke only English at home, even though my dad was raised in Kyushu and can speak fluent Japanese. I was homeschooled throughout the 90s, alongside my five siblings, in the decade just before the boom of the Internet and smartphones, so Japanese was something that I picked up in other ways over those years.

I've been living in Japan for the majority of my life now, and with each new season (childhood, taking the GED, getting married, returning from my internship in the U.S., and raising kids) my language skills have gone

Monkeys. Retrieved on January 1st 2018 from:
<http://bilingualmonkeys.com/put-a-whiteboard-in-the-bathroom/>

Steiner, N., Hayes, S. L., & Parker, S. (2009). *7 Steps to raising a bilingual child*. New York, NY: AMACOM, American Management Association.

Zurer Pearson, B. (2008). *A step-by-step guide for parents: Raising a bilingual child*. New York, NY: Living Language.

through many different growth spurts and developments. Even though I still think that I have a lot to learn, others might classify me as being a balanced bilingual because I'm completely integrated into my community and can speak fluently to successfully function in my daily life and work. All of my children have attended the local elementary school, and I have even served as the "International" P.T.A. vice president. Every Sunday, I talk in front of hundreds of native Japanese speakers at our church, be it making announcements and helping run operations, or simultaneously translating the 40-minute message.

A friend of mine recently asked me what kinds of resources I used when I was growing up to get to the point where I am today. It was hard to think of "resources" considering

that now when I want to know something, I quickly search on my smartphone! In any case, here are some of the ones I remember contributing a lot to my language development during my childhood and young adult years, up until I got married.

1) Playing with Local Children

When we moved to Japan, I was already six years old. At that time, I didn't know any Japanese at all. I spoke English at home with my parents and to play with my sisters. I picked up Japanese by playing with kids in my neighborhood and at church. I remember that when kids would say something I didn't know, I would run home and ask my dad what they were saying and how to answer. We lived in Kyushu for the first couple of years after moving to Japan, and there were no other English speakers around except for my family, so I was naturally surrounded by Japanese wherever I went. Being blonde and blue-eyed, my sisters and I stood out and people talked to us and wanted to play with us a lot. We mostly played with neighborhood kids at our nearby park. My sisters and I loved to play Tag, Cops and Robbers, Hide and Seek, and Kick-the-Can (kankeri).

Being homeschooled, I didn't get an official Japanese education, but I learned how to read and write hiragana and katakana on my own. Within a few years after moving to Japan, I could have basic conversations in Japanese, although I spoke a lot of childish/slang Japanese that I learned from other kids.

2) Church and My Dad

Since my family's whole mission for returning to Japan was to build a church, it goes without saying that much of my childhood was filled with church-related activities. Another resource I had was my father because he speaks fluent Japanese. Even though when I was growing up we spoke English together, he conducted most of his church-related business in Japanese. This is how I learned much of

the language for my profession and life's work. Every Sunday I would either listen to my Dad preach his message, or attend the Sunday School class, which was all in Japanese. Every Sunday after church, many of the church members would stay and have lunch together, so my Japanese language skill got better by listening and conversing every week in Japanese.

3) Homeschooling and Studying for the GED

I was homeschooled from elementary school through high school. My parents ordered the curriculum from the States and my mom helped teach me. I used many different kinds of homeschooling resources throughout my education. Unfortunately proof of my education was lost and I was unable to get a diploma. I ordered a GED study manual and studied in Japan until I was able to go the U.S. and take the GED test at a community college. One thing I do know that helped me with my English grammar skills and preparation for the test is that I have always been a bookworm and love a good story. I read all the time as a child, even getting in trouble many times for reading, when I should have been doing my school work.

4) News (for Keigo) and My Husband:

After I returned from my one-year internship in Seattle when I was 19, the biggest challenge I had was learning to speak keigo and increase my vocabulary. I grew up speaking Japanese that I had learned from other kids, so it was more slang and blunt. Also, I was very fluent in "church" vocabulary, but I realized I couldn't understand much business Japanese, or even the news. My husband helped me a lot. We watched the news almost every day, and I asked questions non-stop. He was very patient (most of the time!).

Final Thoughts

Up until that point when I got married, I

think I would have considered myself to be bilingual and bicultural, but not necessarily biliterate. Since the rise of smartphones, the Internet, social networking, and other “21st century” digital resources, in addition to raising three children here, my literacy has made dramatic improvements.

One final point is that regardless of whether or not my resources are those from the past or the present, my language learning style and approach has always been consistent:

-I try to make friends in each stage of my life so that I can grow.

-When I learn a new word or phrase, I try to be intentional in using it as much as possible so that I can retain it.

-I ask questions such as “Can you explain this?” or “What does this mean?” when I don’t understand something.

I feel very blessed to have such strong support from my family. Without that primary resource, it goes without saying that my language abilities would be nowhere near what they are today.

Classic Myths to Read Aloud: The Great Stories of Greek & Roman Mythology, William F. Russell (1989), New York: Three Rivers Press, 264pp.

***Greek Myths for Young Children*, Heather Amery (1999), London: Usborne, 128pp.**

Reviewed by Alexander McAulay

For non-Japanese parents raising children in Japan, there is often a strong desire to familiarize our children with the classic tales of Greek mythology. There are simple reasons of language for this. Knowing the origin of everyday expressions, such as Trojan horse, the Midas touch, or Pandora’s box, enhances English proficiency. Furthermore, as children get older and take on more complex academic challenges, knowing the Greek myths is vital in order to fully understand the origins and workings of Western civilization. More fundamentally, the stories are dramatic and populated with fascinating characters that stimulate the imagination.

An abundance of Greek myth books are available, so making a discerning choice is a stiff challenge. Many blogs and websites exist, offering reviews and ranked lists of these publications, but parents should be aware that these writers can receive commission from vendors like Amazon if purchases are made through the links they provide. That perhaps slightly compromises their objectivity.

This review covers two texts I have used with my two Japanese-Scottish ‘hafu,’ now 16 and 14, over the last decade or so of family life in Yokohama. Both children have been educated in public schools in Japan and have received no formal education about Greek mythology. In my search for an introductory text, Amery (1999) seemed like a good place to start in the early primary school years. The tales are in sections of 2-4 pages each, making them ideal as bedtime read-aloud stories. The large text and bold, eye-catching illustrations might tempt young children to take the book off the shelf for independent reading. Russell (1989) offers longer, more complex versions of the same tales. The book has no illustrations. Although both books specifically mention children in the back-page blurb, neither really identifies a specific demographic. Russell splits his book into two levels of difficulty, namely for “age 5 and up,” and “age 8 and up.” (The extract below is from the former.) Any difference in degree of difficulty or complexity between Russell’s two levels was not obvious to me. Personally, I would suggest Amery is for the Children’s Literature (under-14) age

group, while both levels of Russell are more suitable for Young Adult (14+) readers. As an example of the difference between the two authors, consider these extracts from their respective accounts of the tale of Daedalus and Icarus:

Father and son then set about gathering as many feathers as they could find, feathers that had been dropped by the gulls along the shore. Daedalus then placed these feathers in a row, beginning with the smallest, with a shorter one just below each longer one, and with such care and precision that you could almost believe that the feathers had once come from just such a row. Each succeeding row was fashioned in the same delicate way, the feathers secured into a framework with thread and wax.

Russell 1989:16

Every day he put out food for the birds which came to the window and every day he collected some of their feathers. After many months, he set to work secretly so the guards never saw what he was doing. One morning, Daedalus woke Icarus very early. "Everything is ready," he whispered. "We are leaving." Icarus stared as his father pulled out from under his bed four huge wings he had made from feathers held together with wax.

Amery 1999:51

Both Russell and Amery are describing the wing-making process. Russell gives you 88 words spread over three sentences. Amery, on the other hand, gives 78 words spread over six sentences, and manages to pack in more information: she takes us further ahead in the story, to the day that Daedalus announces to Icarus that they will make their escape. In Russell's version, it takes another 110 words to reach that point in the plot.

Taking an overall view, Amery covers 17 different stories in 128 pages. These stories sit

between a very short, one-page introduction about the context of the myths, and a one-page glossary on how to pronounce Greek names. As the extract above indicates, the language is plain and accessible. The stories are short and pacy. In contrast, Russell includes 24 stories over 255 pages. Each story is preceded by three short sections. First, 'About the story' is a one-paragraph introduction that provides background and context for the tale. Next, we are given an approximate reading (i.e. reading aloud) time. The longest is 24 minutes and the shortest is 6 minutes, but the majority of stories are in the 8 to 10-minute range. Finally there is a vocabulary and pronunciation guide. For example, the reader is told how to pronounce Pythias [PITH-ee-us] and Dionysius [die-oh-NISH-us]. At the end of the story, 'A Few Words More' relates the contents of the story to the etymology of some contemporary vocabulary and language usage.

I bought both books together, intending to start with Amery and move on to Russell when I felt my children had reached a suitable level of maturity. Reading Amery to my children when they were under ten years old worked very well. The language is accessible and the length just right for young attention spans. My one caveat on Amery was how to deal with the mention of Heracles killing his own children in 'The Many Tasks of Heracles.' In fact, for all of the Greek myths, negotiating the violence and brutality of their stories is an over-arching task, and I first came up against it on page 21 of Amery's book. Some parents might want to prepare themselves for dealing with this aspect of the tales.

Russell is much more detailed and gives more context and explanation for the stories. His explicit mission, stated in the six-page introduction, is to encourage an awareness of these tales in future generations, as he feels their presence has diminished in popular culture. To that end, the contextualization and

pronunciation guides are very useful. However, the book does contain one serious flaw; namely that it is at times verbose and overwrought. In the Introduction, Russell states: “The language I have used in telling these tales may seem somewhat old-fashioned, though I hope not archaic.” My personal opinion is that it is not archaic, but florid. When reading the tales aloud to my 14-year-old son, he would often lose his grip on the story and the long flow of words caused frustration. On occasion, we would go back to Amery for her simple explanations

and quick pace.

In general, Amery functions as a good introduction to the Greek Myths for young readers, and a useful reference book to quickly dip into. Russell, on the other hand, serves a more specialized market. I would recommend the book to high school pupils or university students who are studying Humanities or Liberal Arts. More general readers looking for a Greek Myths book targeted at young adults/late teens might want to consider a less challenging alternative.

Event Review: Two Worlds: Japanese and American Cultural Identities

Date: February 25, 2018

Location: Beppu City, Oita Prefecture, B-Con Plaza, Room 31, 3rd Floor

by Shantel Dickerson

On February 25, 2018, Japan Exchange and Teaching Program (JET) Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs), Shantel Dickerson and Heidi Adams, held a cultural event in Beppu City, Oita Prefecture, Japan, with the purpose of opening a dialogue and facilitating discussion about the Hafu experience. The event, titled *Two Worlds: American and Japanese Cultural Identities*, aimed to bring community members together in a discussion-oriented workshop that highlighted experiences of mixed-race individuals in Japan, as well as the experiences of raising mixed/multicultural families.

The audience, itself, truly reflected the event’s emphasis on embracing and celebrating diversity, as there were people from all different backgrounds, ages, nationalities and language abilities. In attendance, were local community members, high school students from across Oita prefecture, public high school and junior high school teachers, ALTs from varying countries, Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University faculty, and even a group of 10 children who accompanied their parents to the event. Most attendees heard of the event by word of mouth, but several came after having seen the facebook event or event flyer.

All in all, 50 people signed in for the workshop.

Once everyone was seated in groups of 4-5 people (including one volunteer bilingual moderator per group), the MC opened the event and began by inviting the organizers to share a word on how and why it was organized. Ms. Adams and Ms. Dickerson highlighted a recent news story at the Olympics when American figure skater Mirai Nagasu became the first American woman to land a triple axel in an Olympic competition. An op-ed writer from the New York Times received criticism after referring to Ms. Nagasu as an immigrant, while in fact she was born to Japanese parents in the US, making her a US citizen, not an immigrant. From this example, it became clear that some people still assume who someone is, and where they come from, solely based on physical appearance. For reasons like this, Ms. Adams and Ms. Dickerson felt it was important to make time to understand our own preconceived notions of what it means to be American, what it means to be Japanese — or both. It is important to learn about the whole person and celebrate our differences, so that we can become more understanding and empathetic

people.

Lance Stilp, JET Program Alum, editor for Bilingual Japan newsletter and Lecturer at Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University, delivered the keynote speech and introduced three myths: Japan has only one language (Japanese), Japan has one culture (ie: kimonos, Shintoism, Buddhism, etc.), and that Japanese value uniformity to such an extent that diversity is not valued by Japanese society, and furthermore, does not exist within it. He dissected each of these myths to illustrate just the opposite — how rich in diversity Japan is. Using maps of Japan, he showed which languages are unique to different regions of Japan and explained how important these different languages are for the people of those places as they express what it means to be ‘from Oita’, ‘from Kansai’, and so on. He went on to illustrate how each region also has its own culinary culture, way of making arts and crafts, and even arranging flowers. Lastly, he shared the results of a survey he gave to his students at APU. The current trend amongst many Japanese students is their belief that Japan is changing and should embrace diversity even more.

Mr. Stilp’s lecture was followed by a discussion session where he posed questions such as, “What is unique about how you speak English/Japanese?” and “Do you think that Japan is changing?”. This gave the audience a chance to introduce themselves to their group members and begin thinking about different topics related to diversity in Japan.

Christine Pearson Ishii, President of the Association of Foreign Wives of Japanese who is also a JET Alum, was next to deliver her speech. She presented in both Japanese and English, and discussed her experience being married to a Japanese and having two half-Japanese, half-American children at home. Mrs. Pearson Ishii stunned many audience members when she described one of her biggest challenges in her multicultural

home was to come — that at 22 years old, her children would have to choose, and therefore, renounce, one of their nationalities — a dilemma most households never find themselves in. While right now her daughter identifies more with being American, her son identifies more with being Japanese. There is no telling how they will feel at 22.

After going more in depth about the cultural differences in parenting styles, expression of self (or lack thereof) according to which language is used, and even the preconceived expectations of hafu individuals, Mrs. Pearson Ishii projected a slide of discussion questions to the audience. A quite popular question was, “What kind of assumptions do people sometimes make about half/double/multicultural children/people?” Perhaps the most common assumption was that hafu individuals automatically spoke multiple languages. However, several students in attendance also explained that in elementary school, they would refrain from talking to ethnically diverse students in their class because they assumed they couldn’t speak Japanese. Another question asked what support services and resources are available to multicultural families. One audience member commented on the number of pre-schools, junior high schools, and high schools in Oita Prefecture which offer international programs to multicultural children, but also pointed out that there was no such elementary school equivalent.

Lastly, Ms. Alexandra Furukawa, who is currently a JET Program ALT, gave a speech in which she discussed her mixed roots as a fourth generation Japanese-American. During her childhood, she was raised by her Japanese-American mother who was a single parent. Not knowing any Japanese herself, Ms. Furukawa’s mother taught her only three Japanese words: hashi, shoyu, and jouzu. Though Ms. Furukawa often heard her nisei grandparents speaking Japanese, they consistently denied having such an ability and

refused to speak Japanese to her. Especially interesting for Japanese audience members, was learning that her grandparents were held in US internment camps during the War — a part of history not commonly taught in Japan.

Ms. Furukawa continued on about the differences between her experiences being a mixed individual in the US, and in Japan. Growing up in the US, she never felt teased or bullied for her physical appearance; in fact, many people mistook her for being Mexican rather than Japanese. In Japan, she mentioned that ‘assimilation’ does not feel possible, especially due to the language barrier. Some minor actions, such as the government writing her name in katakana, instead of using the original kanji on all important paperwork, create a major dissonance and gap between feeling truly accepted as a Japanese, and feeling ostracized as a foreigner.

During the discussion following her speech, audience members were asked to dig deeper and respond to very thought-provoking questions such as, “Do you believe the word “hafu” has negative connotations?” and “Do you believe it is acceptable to identify with a racial group you ethnically belong to, if you don’t have cultural ties to that group?” Several audience members shared their opinions, and one even posed a question back citing a friend’s family as an example. “What do children, born in Japan to white-American parents, and raised for their entire lives in Japan without ever living in America, call themselves? Culturally they grow up Japanese, but are told by their parents they are American.” Of course, there were no simple answers for such complex questions and situations, but everyone was putting their heads together to find ways to be more inclusive and accommodating of such situations.

As the event came to a close, there was a screening of Tetsuro Miyaki’s crowdfunding campaign for his internationally renowned

photography project, Hafu2Hafu. Mr. Miyazaki had given his permission to use his beautiful portraits of hafu individuals from around the world for the Two Worlds flyer.

The conversations that had ensued just a couple hours before, carried on into the corridor outside the meeting room. It was a wonderful sight to see — audience members making new friends and connecting over important topics and issues that impact the people all around us. It is events like this, and the conversations it spawned, that turn on the light bulb and get our wheels turning. These types of dialogues will increase our capacity to be more compassionate and empathetic friends, neighbors, co-workers, family members, and community members.

In conclusion, the Two Worlds event challenged conventional identity norms regarding what it means to be Japanese, American, or multicultural. We found that identity is strongly linked to region, language, and culture, but each category affects an individual’s identity to varying degrees. One thing was certain, however, that in both the United States and Japan, there is still a long road ahead when it comes to recognizing and supporting diversity on a personal, national, and systemic level. That being said, audience members themselves identified several places to start, including changing our own expectations that mixed race individuals speak multiple languages fluently. Nationally, there should be more K-12 support for multicultural families by having educational programs that cater to the needs of mixed race individuals. On a systemic level, it was proposed to change, or abolish completely, the age at which a multinational child must choose their nationality. The Japanese and foreign community are thinking deeply about diversity and identity issues, and recognize that they must continue making changes if they want to set a leading example for the world.