

Bilingual Japan

バイリンガル通信

2025年春季・夏期通信34巻1号
Spring-Summer 2025, Volume 34,
Number 1

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



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JALT Bilingualism SIG Website: <https://www.bsig.org/>

DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSIONS TO THE NEXT ISSUE: September 15th

次号の投稿期限：9月15日

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

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

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

Bilingual Japan is the official newsletter of the Bilingualism Special Interest Group (B-SIG) of the Japan Association for Language Teaching (JALT). The purpose of this publication is to provide B-SIG members with articles and reports about bilingualism research and bilingual life and/or child-raising in Japan. *Bilingual Japan* also provides information about recent B-SIG activities. While submissions are only currently accepted in either English or Japanese, the content of submissions is *not* limited to Japanese-English bilingualism – **all topics related to bilingualism in Japan, regardless of the specified language, are more than welcome.**

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

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

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

Manuscript Guidelines ・原稿要領

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

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

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

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

Regular Columns ・ レギュラーコラム

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

• Case Studies ・ 事例 (ケーススタディ)

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

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

A column about books, magazines, and other resources for bilingual children in Japan, including: reviews and recommendations, information about where to get the resources, offers of resources to exchange, or give free to a good home (no sales, please) and calls for help from B-SIG members interested in producing their own children's resources. Please send submissions to the column editor, Daniel Pearce at pearce@shitennoji.ac.jp.

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

• Resources Column ・ 一般リソース/書評等

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

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

• Voices ・ バイリンガルの聲

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

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

• Current Research & Interests

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

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

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

Feature Articles ・ 論文/短報/記事

These articles are longer and/or deal with topics not covered by the Regular Columns. No specific word limit, but submissions should adhere to a semi-academic standard. Questions regarding submissions should be directed to the newsletter editor.

レギュラーコラムに該当しない準学術論文的な記事の投稿です。字数制限は設けませんが、寄稿に関してはニュースレター編集者まで問い合わせください。

DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT ISSUE: September 15th

次号の投稿期限：9月15日

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

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

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

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

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

Submission guidelines:

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

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

Editorial guidelines:

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

Article structure:

- Introduction

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

- Body

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

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

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

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

- Conclusion

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

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

Contacts:

Case study editor:

Ian Downer - downerian@gmail.com

Newsletter editor (ニュースレター編集者：和文投稿は以下のアドレスまで):

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DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT ISSUE: September 15th

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President's Message • 会長挨拶

Dear **Bilingualism** Special Interest Group Members!

I hope you are enjoying a well-deserved summer break!

Time flies and I hope you are all excited about the upcoming JALT 2025 International Conference scheduled to run from October 31st to November 2nd, 2025! We are pleased to invite you to join us for the Bilingualism SIG Forum, scheduled to take place from October 31 to November 2, 2025.

As part of this event, we are organizing a panel discussion on the challenges and experiences surrounding heritage language maintenance within the Japanese context.

In alignment with the theme of the JALT2025 International Conference—*Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessing – JALT 50 Years – Challenges and Perspectives*—our goal is to represent a diverse range of heritage language backgrounds, extending beyond English to encompass various spoken and sign languages, foreign and indigenous tongues, as well as regional dialects.

We warmly invite individuals who meet the following criteria to participate as panelists:

- Current members of the Bilingualism SIG, or those willing to join
- Individuals with firsthand experiences related to heritage language maintenance in Japan, whether as:
 - Heritage language learners
 - Parents or guardians striving to preserve and pass down their linguistic heritage
 - Educators involved in heritage language instruction
- Those willing to engage in an open discussion about their experiences, whether successful or unsuccessful, shedding light on the factors that facilitated or hindered language retention across generations.

This panel offers a meaningful opportunity to share insights, reflections, and strategies regarding heritage language preservation, fostering a richer dialogue among educators, learners, and advocates. If you are interested in participating or would like further details, please contact Niko Schultz at: dblhappiness@gmail.com

So, please do attend the event as we are eager to hear more about your own experiences. The event provides a platform for **all** members to share their lived experiences across a variety of contexts, including Japan and elsewhere.

We look forward to making next year's election and nomination process more transparent so that all members can nominate themselves or others for the positions of a SIG Officer or for any other role. At the same time, we thank **YOU all** for your support and look forward to hearing from you! Please e-mail Alexandra Shaitan at alexshaitan@yahoo.com if you would like to join the Decision-Making Team and get involved in the SIG's activities more actively.

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

We thank newsletter contributors Ann Elizabeth Williams and Daniel Pearce for their contributions to the current issue. I hope you find their shared experiences interesting and delightful to read. Thank you very much to everyone involved in bringing this issue of the BSIG Newsletter to life.

Happy Summer to you and your loved ones!

Bilingualism SIG President,
Shaitan Alexandra.

二つの言語と吃音の間で：親として考えたこと

Between two languages and stuttering: A parent's perspective

Elisabeth Ann Williams

世界人口の半数以上がバイリンガルであると言われている (Grosjean, 2021)。一方、日本におけるバイリンガルの割合は約 13%にとどまっている (Margolis, 2024)。とはいえ、日本でも多様化が年々進んでおり、今後も国内のバイリンガル人口が増加することが予想できる。日本で出産する外国人女性の割合も徐々に増えているため (Nishino et al., 2023)、将来的にバイリンガルの子どもが珍しい存在ではなくなるだろう。

B-SIG の多くのメンバーと同様に、私も家庭でバイリンガル子育てを行っている。幼い息子が 3 人おり、そのうちの 1 人は吃音がある。吃音がどのようなものであるかを知らない人も多いだろう。私自身も、息子が 2 歳半の頃に初めて吃音の症状が現れるときまで、吃音についてほとんど知識がなかった。症状が出たときに関連情報を調べてみたところ、日本国内では吃音に詳しい専門家や、吃音の支援を行っているものが極めて少ないことに驚いた。息子のために知識を深めようとしても、サポートの不足を今も頻繁に感じている。

バイリンガル子育てを行う親の多くが、「2 つの言語を話す子どもは言語発達が遅れる」という誤解を頻繁に耳にする。特に吃音のあるバイリンガルの子どもに対しては、「日本語だけにすれば吃音が減るかもしれない」や「バイリンガルの子どもは混乱するから吃音が出やすい」などの意見が、言語聴覚士からさえ聞く場合がある。しかし、Choo and Smith (2020) が行った 50 本の論文のメタ分析によれば、吃音とバイリンガリズム(複数言語を含め、2 言語以上を併用すること)との間に明確な関連性は確認されなかった。また、バイリンガリズムが吃音の原因の一つであるという証拠は非常に乏しく、その仮説を立証するのに根拠が不十分であると指摘する研究者もいる(例: Byrd, 2018)。むしろ、その仮説を否定する根拠として、Souza Mumy (2023) も、バイリンガル人口の多い国において吃音の割合が特別高いわけではないと述べている。

私自身の経験からも、日本ではバイリンガリズムと吃音の関係についてまだ不明な点が多いにもかかわらず、「2 つの言語を話すことが吃音のり

スクを高める」という誤解が根強く残っていると感じる。また、日本では吃音に関する情報や、支援が不足しているため、バイカルチュラルやバイリンガル家庭に過度の負担や悩みを与えている可能性がある。加えて、このような誤解によって子どもが自信を失い、自らのバイリンガル・アイデンティティを否定したくなるような状況を生みかねない。

バイリンガルであることには教育面・社会面・家庭面における多くの利点があるにもかかわらず、吃音のあるバイリンガル子どもを支援するために、親がモノリンガルな環境を無理につくらなければならないというプレッシャーを感じることも少なくないだろう。このような状況は「強制的なモノリンガリズム (forced monolingualism)」と呼ばれ、必要性も効果もないとされている (Souza Mummy, 2023)。

確かに吃音については専門家の間でも未解明なことが多く (Choo & Smith, 2020)、実際、私は関連文献に目を通すたびに新たな疑問が浮かび上がるのが現状である。しかし、バイリンガル子育てと吃音の関連性を示す十分な証拠はなく、むしろ根拠が不足していることを考えると、日本で増えつつある多様なコミュニティのためにも、吃音とバイリンガリズムに関しての誤解を解消することが重要な課題である。専門家や言語聴覚士に

は、最新の研究成果を学び、子どもたちの多様なアイデンティティを尊重する姿勢で支援を行ってほしい。こうした取り組みによって、吃音とバイリンガル子育てに対する誤解は次第に解消されていくことが期待される。

吃音のある子どもが必要な支援を十分に受けられないのが現状である。そのため、専門家のみならず、保護者や教育関係者が協力し、吃音やバイリンガル子育てに関する正確な情報を共有し、相互に支え合う体制の構築が求められる。全ての子どもが安心して自分らしさを認め、多様性を大切にできる社会になるよう、さらなる研究や支援の充実を強く願っている。その願いを伝えるために、この「Voices・バイリンガルの聲」の執筆に至った。さらに、B-SIG 内で私と同様の悩みを抱える方々との情報交換や交流にも繋げていきたいと考えている。

B-SIG 内で同様の悩みを抱える方々と情報を共有し、交流を深めていきたいと考えている。これらのテーマに関心のある方がいれば、ぜひ筆者までご連絡いただければ幸いである。

連絡先：
elisabethannwilliams@gmail.com

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<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jfludis.2019.105741>

B-SIG Member Interviews • B-SIG メンバーインタビュー

Our President, Alex Shaitan, has begun to embark on a series interviewing B-SIG members. We are open to more submissions, which should be directed to Daniel R.

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インタビューの投稿は上記のメールアドレスまで。

An Interview with Daniel R. Pearce

Alexandra Shaitan

Interviewer's introduction: Our newsletter editor, Daniel Pearce, has recently published his first academic volume, *Plurilingual Education in a Monolingualised Nation: Exploring New Frontiers in Language Teaching in Japan* (Multilingual Matters, 2025). In recognition of his work, and on the occasion of beginning a new interview column, I sat down with Daniel to discuss his work.



Our editor, Daniel Pearce

Alex (A): Daniel, thank you so much for all the work that you have been doing, and for your support throughout years as our newsletter editor. We all really appreciate it. Could you please just tell us about your background, where you came from and your research interests?

Dan (D): Sure. I think I'm in my third or fourth year of editing the newsletter now, and I was kind of happy to take on the responsibility, because I have a keen interest in bilingualism. And I kind of felt, in a way, my voice might be important, because a lot of what the SIG has done previously – and this is important work – has been about bilingual families in Japan and raising children, whereas I came in with a different perspective. I was raised monolingually, and I only achieved bilingualism in adulthood, right? And this might come across as a bit flowery, but while bilingualism is such a key issue to everyone involved in the SIG, it's not limited to just childhood bilingualism – naturally, I think all of us are

appreciative and very welcoming of adult and later-life bilingualism as well. So, I thought I might be able to contribute in that way. Also, because I don't yet have a family of my own, I'm not intimately familiar with childhood bilingualism. But that's where I thought maybe I could contribute.

A: You're absolutely right, because even though our SIG is the Bilingualism SIG, as you're well aware, our journal is *The Japan Journal of Multilingualism and Multiculturalism*, so you are absolutely right about previous studies and previous events more or less focused on raising bilingual kids, or, you know, bilingual education; stories of success raising bilingual children. But from now onwards, we're kind of moving in multiple directions. For example, at the JALT Forum at this year's international conference, we will talk about maintaining heritage languages other than English because there are so many multiethnic and multicultural, multilingual people who live in Japan. So, we wanted to focus on that. So hopefully we'll have a very good BSIG Forum in November of 2025.

D: On that point, something I'd been trying to do since I came on board as editor, I revamped the submission guidelines to try and make it clearer that we welcome diversity in submissions on

bilingualism, obviously related to Japan – Japanese naturally tends to become central – but not just Japanese and English bilingualism, but other language-related submissions are really welcome. Unfortunately, we haven't had many submissions like that yet. But – and this is not a criticism of people who have submitted so far – in Japan, well, I've talked about this in several papers, there's kind of been a *double monolingualism*, in which, you know, Japanese is the language of domestic communication, and for international communication, it's English. Just English. You, Alex, being very multilingual, are also very well aware that international languages are not just English. And there's such a need in the country for non-English bilingual speakers, because Japan doesn't only interact with the English-speaking world. So, I'm hoping to get more submissions along those lines. Again, I'm certainly not criticizing previous submissions, because all stories are welcome.

A: Yeah, exactly. And Daniel, I think we skipped the question, where do you come from?

D: I come from Aotearoa – the Māori name for New Zealand.

A: Which part of New Zealand?

D: I come from Auckland myself.

A: I've only been to Christchurch, sorry!

D: We get left off maps enough, so I'm stoked you've even visited! Christchurch is a lovely city, but most of my extended family comes from further south of Christchurch, so I have very little family in Christchurch itself.

A: I fell in love with the city. It's a beautiful city, isn't it? And the people as well. You grew up, as you mentioned, monolingually, and then you came to Japan, and you began learning Japanese... at what age?

D: Okay, so I have a bit of a non-typical background, but I entered university quite early. I began university when I was 16.

A: Oh, wow, so you're a *wunderkind*, yeah?

D: Well, there are some things I could do well, but there are many other things I'm still terrible at!

A: Yeah. I think all of us are in the same boat, in some way.

D: I was problematic in a lot of ways, but in terms of study, I did relatively well. So, I entered university at 16, and through

high school, I did what was called, in Aotearoa, the 'medical five.' So, when I graduated, the subjects I had studied were biology, physics, chemistry, calculus, and statistics.

A: Oh, is it like A-levels in the UK?

D: Essentially, yes. So, when I entered university, I was always planning to come back to the sciences, but I thought, well, I'm young, let's take a year and do something different. I'd always had a vague interest in learning a foreign language, so I kind of actually rolled the dice and just chose the Japanese language randomly.

A: Well, that's very interesting. Quite an amazing story. Now we can call you bilingual, like in the real sense of the phrase, because I'm rather aware of your research and publications. You publish academic papers in both English and Japanese. That's a massive achievement, and I'm very proud of you. I haven't done it yet, but that's my next challenge, someday.

D: It's hard, but important, and I'm glad to have done that.

A: And how do you feel, now that you have your foot in both camps, in an English and Japanese environment. I'm very interested in identity and how

people, you know, feel and think in different languages. So how do you yourself feel when you are in the Japanese mode, and in, of course, your native language mode? How do you feel when you express yourself?

D: That's a fantastic question, and I'm sure you know, not one that has an easy answer, right? In my case, it ties in a little bit to my background. I do talk about this a little in my book, and it might be a bit of information overload, but I'm also on the autistic spectrum – I'm quite open about it these days, but it's also not necessarily a central part of my identity. I just share it when I need to. Anyway, I achieved bilingualism in adulthood to a degree in which occasionally, if you don't see my face, I have been mistaken for a native Japanese speaker. I don't say that to brag.

A: Wow, that's amazing. I'd like to hear more about that maybe one day.

D: Definitely, but that has engendered a lot of questions of, how did I get there? And for me, the reason I brought up being on the autistic spectrum is because I had severe communication problems as a child, and so even learning my mother tongue was not an easy process.

A: I would never have guessed it. Thank you so much for sharing. I'm sure it will

help our readers to connect and relate to your lived experiences and challenges that you faced in the past.

D: I'm glad I've been able to be more open about it in recent years. I tried to hide it away a lot when I was younger, but anyway, when people ask me, "Wasn't learning Japanese difficult?" Well, of course it was. But also, learning my mother tongue was, too. So, to me, it felt like something I'd already been through before. I felt like I was equipped to deal with it.

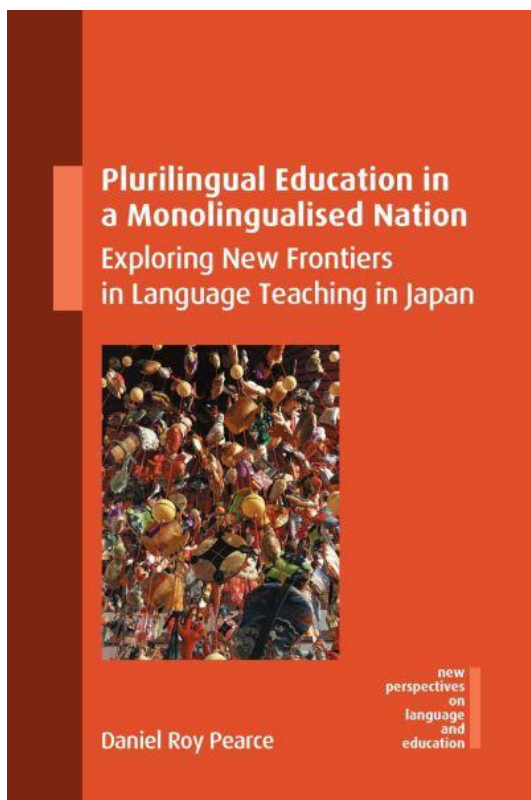
A: Perhaps obviously, you mentioned at the very beginning of this interview that you are really interested in bilingualism, and in your research – I attended a few of your talks, presentations on plurilingualism, in particular – and you're active in different domains of bilingualism research. I recently learned of your new book. So, if you could share with our readers what the book is about, what's a key thread running through the book, and the takeaway message for potential readers?

D: Again, not necessarily easy to do, because, you know, I had to write a whole book on it, right?

A: You are my hero, Daniel, kudos to you. Yeah, it's a massive, huge achievement.

D: Before I get to the book specifically – this is related – I remember submitting a chapter to a book a few years ago on the topic of multi/plurilingualism, and the editors changed the subtitle of the book partway through. I thought that was kind of disappointing as the original subtitle regarding bi/multilinguals was something like ‘I see what you don’t see,’ and was targeted, I guess, at a monolingual audience. You, Alex, being incredibly multilingual yourself, you’ll understand that subtitle without further explanation.

A: Right.



Dan’s book

D: Yeah, in that vein, my book being titled *Plurilingualism in a Monolingualised Nation* is somewhat related to that original subtitle. You must be aware, living in Japan, that it is at least widely considered to be monolingual, by locals and others, too. And like I said, I grew up monolingually in a what was actually a very plurilingual environment in Aotearoa New Zealand. Being an English-speaking monolingual there, there are so many aspects of language itself that you don’t need to think about, and you can just get by with, and you can lose a lot of richness in the human experience for that. That’s not a criticism of monolinguals. That’s just how things are. And so, my book – I thought it was important to put it out in English, because not a lot of scholars have written on plurilingualism in Japan in English for a wider audience – it touches upon a lot of the discourse in Japan when it comes to bilingualism or language education, which is often centered on, well, ‘Japanese people’s English ability is terrible.’

A: It’s a myth. Because I never thought so. I try to always debunk this myth, because Japanese people *can*, and they *do* speak English. Not only speak. They can read, write, speak, yes, and listen. Of course, these four skills to a different degree. However, they are completely

capable of doing all four, of course.

D: Bilingualism, in a nutshell, isn't it? I do talk about it in the book as well, but a lot of people – quite naturally – have a vague conception of bilingualism; that it's equal ability in two languages. But if you are bilingual, you know that doesn't really exist, right? And that sort of awareness, and the importance of that awareness for language education, is part of what I've been trying to deal with in my volume.

A: What is your key argument in the book? Like, what's the takeaway message? What message do you want to convey through the book, what should the readers expect, or what should the readers engage in? What kind of discourse? So, what is the kind of running key thread through your book?

D: I think, in a sense, it has been targeted at people who have primarily monolingual backgrounds, because we just talked about that in Japan, right? A lot of our Japanese learners will consider themselves monolingual despite actually having quite high levels of bilingual capability. But, there's a tendency, particularly when you have grown up with one language, to negatively evaluate your second language ability, right? Perhaps the key message from my book, or what I want both learners and

practitioners to take away is a more *realistic* evaluation of second language capabilities, and that most speakers, learners, and users actually already have a greater understanding of language and a greater ability than they give themselves credit for.

A: Very good point, which makes me wonder... do you think it's related, this kind of underestimation... do you think it's connected to the cultural code of Japanese people, because they tend to be modest, you know, in the sense of “能ある鷹は爪を隠す” (*Nō aru taka wa tsume wo kakusu*: a wise hawk hides his talons) So, modesty and being 謙虚 (*kenkyo*: humble). Yeah, so being *kenkyo*, rather than showing off. Don't you think it's connected to this element, this cultural element?

D: Absolutely! And I'm so glad you brought that up, because I mean these days – you mean you work with multiculturalism and multilingualism, too – cultures, I know you know, are not that simple. The way we represent ourselves culturally depends on who we're interacting with as well. But there are broad outlines of national cultures that certainly do exist, and the reason why I'm glad you brought that up, especially, is that I have felt for many years that the English-speaking world and Japan are naturally quite different,

but of course both are quite diverse. What I have thought for years was that within the English-speaking world, within the Anglosphere, Aotearoa New Zealand and Japan share some cultural similarities.

A: How so?

D: Well, I can give you the Kiwi English example of *nō aru taka*. In New Zealand, we have what's called 'tall poppy syndrome.'

A: Oh, yes, I know about that. Thank you for mentioning it. I learned about it, you know, whilst teaching, you know, cultural identity in one of my classes. Like, the poppy that stands out gets cut down; tall poppy culture. In Japan, they also have 'the nail that sticks out, gets hammered.'

D: Hammered down. Yeah. It's the same thing, isn't it? And, far be it for me to overstep my bounds and talk about the North American Anglosphere, because I don't have much experience there, but at least the image I hold is the complete opposite, right? It's all about putting yourself out there.

A: It's more individualistic, right? Rather than collectivist.

D: Perhaps, or if not, more about putting

yourself out there regardless.

A: Daniel, may I ask you, because it's rather interesting. It's very new to me that you mentioned that New Zealand, the cultural identity, New Zealanders, they also have this kind of tall poppy syndrome. Do you think it still exists?

D: That's an excellent question, but another one that's difficult to answer. I'm going to do a roundabout way of answering again. But, and I'm sure you're aware of this, as well as non-Japanese people involved with language education in Japan, sometimes there's a pressure to be a 'representative' of the language, and the related culture, right? Well, I'm 38 years old now. I came to Japan when I was 20.

A: Oh, my gosh, almost half of your life.

D: Exactly. I grew up as an adult in Japan. I haven't lived in New Zealand for 18 years. So, the New Zealand I knew doesn't exist anymore. So, to finish my thought, and this is partly related to what I try to convey in the book, that as often as not, as non-Japanese, we're expected to convey that image. And so, you asked me, does tall poppy syndrome still exist in New Zealand? I couldn't answer that now with any confidence, because New Zealand has changed drastically since I've been away.

A: So interesting. Thank you so much, Daniel, and I am sure our readers will enjoy reading your book. I heard there are some reviewers who are writing a book review, apparently. So that's fantastic. I look forward to reading your book.

References:

Pearce, D. R. (2025). *Plurilingual education in a monolingualised nation:*

Exploring new frontiers in language teaching in Japan. Multilingual Matters.

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See also:

Broad, C. (2024). *The Reality of Teaching English in Japan (feat. Chris's former boss) | @AbroadinJapan #131.*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xjmUNxL5dAA&t=1128s>

