

Celebrating 30 Years of Multilingualism and Multiculturalism in Japan

- Monographs on Bilingualism, No. 19 -

Diane Lamb-Obara

Christie Provenzano

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Supervising Editor: Stephen M. Ryan

Bilingualism



6.20.2021

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Published by JALT Bilingualism SIG

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ISSN: 2433-6920

Illustration: Yuki Sigler

Foreword:

Happy Birthday to US!

Stephen M. Ryan

Director of Publications

It started with the kids, the two-year-olds. We were working our way around the table (Chinese restaurant, so it really was a round table) introducing ourselves, and it turned out we each had a two-year-old with more than one language in their life. We had all been attending one of the annual “Forums on Bilingualism” organized by Yamamoto Masayo and her husband Jim Swan, at the annual JALT conference, and somebody said “Let’s go out to dinner.” So, it was our children, and their emergent bilingualism, that brought us together.

There was also a vision. Masayo and Jim, aware of the relative dearth of bilingualism research involving languages as different from each other as Japanese and English, saw the need for a symbiotic group of researchers and parents (and some researcher/parents). The parents would make their families available to the researchers for the collection of data. The researchers would analyse the data and make results available to guide the parents in their child-raising endeavours.

There was also tension. Every time Jim, who usually chaired the forums, asked for questions, at the end of the sessions, there was a forest of hands and a rush to speak. What followed, though, were not so much questions as personal testimonies, some of them heart-rending, others triumphant, about the travails of bilingual child-raising in Japan. Sometimes the “questions” went on longer than the research presentations themselves. Clearly, there was a social need here for a place to talk about our children, to boast, to commiserate, to share with others who would understand. The gathering in the Chinese restaurant was the start of scratching that itch and became just as regular and just as anticipated as the annual forums.

There were fireworks, too, not the good kind. Not everybody in JALT was convinced that the association should grow a set of Special Interest Groups, and there were some who were absolutely convinced that it should not, that such a move would weaken its geographically-based chapter structure. Arguments were made. Voices were raised. The dispute dragged on. But, in the end, our SIG emerged as one of the first three, along with Video and Global Issues, to be sanctioned by JALT to operate on a national level.

From then on, the growth of the SIG was staggering, rather like the growth of a two-year-old, you might say. We soon had over 300 members, as the strap-line of our newsletter, published every two months and always full, proudly announced. There were both parents and researchers, just as Masayo and Jim intended. Alongside the newsletter, there was a Reading List for new members, a scheme for sharing books on bilingualism, a series of monographs as we became more confident in our knowledge of certain areas, and a journal. In time, there was also a listserv,

then a website, a Facebook group, and on into the Twitter-sphere and beyond.

Like our youngsters, we were not only growing but developing. Our collective understanding of bilingualism matured as more and more of us read (and wrote) our way into the subject. Our group began to attract people with wider interests: societal bilingualism, minority language education, psycholinguistics, returnee issues, loanwords, minority rights, trilingualism, immersion education, and so on. Our members were not only read about these issues, they researched them, wrote books about them, became leaders in their respective fields, and informed the coming generations.

We became self-reflexive, too. We realised that bilingualism was about us, for we, too, were living with more than one language, making language choices all the time, seeing our languages draw strength from each other and intertwine. It was also about our students, their linguistic aspirations, our daily encounters in the classroom, our policies and practices as language teachers. Our presentations, publications, discussions, and chats over dinner took us well beyond our focus on our own children, but they were never left behind. It was always good to hear about others' children and to talk about our own.

Well, our two-year-olds have turned 32 now, and many of them have two-year-olds of their own. They have moved beyond the need for any planning or guidance from us to establish themselves as independent individuals with a rich linguistic heritage. So, too, has our group. It has grown and diversified. It has matured, seen general change, and become self-sustaining. It has found its way in the world.

What better way to celebrate the 30th anniversary of that Chinese meal and all that has been achieved since, than with this special commemorative monograph highlighting bilingual situations in Japan? I hope you, new-comer, old-comer, researcher or parent, will enjoy reading it as much as we have enjoyed putting it together.

Okayama
April, 2021

Message from the Editors

As we lingered on Zoom after last year's BSIG forum during the 2020 PanSIG Conference, Alex reminded Diane and Christie that 2021 would mark the BSIG's 30th anniversary. Excited by topics that had just arisen in the various presentations and in discussion with the audience, we agreed that our SIG's focus continues to be relevant and of high interest to families and researchers alike. We decided then that a special commemorative monograph would be the perfect way to celebrate the BSIG's milestone.

The format was quickly decided: it should reflect all facets of the SIG, including personal narratives and interviews as well as research concerning multilinguals in myriad situations and at all stages of life, from the youngest to our elders. The contributors you will find in these pages responded to our call for papers with exactly what we had hoped for: a wonderful cross-section of stories and research from the diverse people who make up BSIG.

From the voices of families just starting on their multilingual journeys to deeply personal stories of struggle and resilience to fascinating analyses of multilinguals and multilingualism, the articles in this monograph are a reflection of the dynamic nature of our SIG. Mirroring the front cover's graphic, which depicts multilingualism as a backdrop for people at all stages of life, readers will find the articles flow from an exploration of multilingualism in the Japanese context through stories of multilinguals at all of those stages, from youngest to oldest.

This monograph embodies the spirit of BSIG not only in its content but in the way it came together, with all team members contributing their unique skills and knowledge in building a truly commemorative volume. The team met virtually, across time zones and amid pandemic chaos, each important member volunteering to take on tasks as they arose in a collaborative effort that has been a pleasure for all those involved.

There are many team members to acknowledge as we bring this volume to press. First and foremost, we extend our great thanks to our authors, who worked tirelessly with section editors through the writing and revision process. The research and narratives contained here are the heart of this monograph. The editors would also like to specifically acknowledge the contributions of some important team members. Thanks go to Stephen Ryan for a steady hand in guiding us through the details of publication and, as a veteran BSIG member, for penning the excellent foreword. For the custom artwork on the cover, we are grateful to Yuki Sigler, who generously volunteered her time and artistic skill in giving shape to our rough ideas. Finally, our thanks to Tim Pritchard, stalwart BSIG treasurer, for managing the business end of publishing.

Please celebrate this 30th anniversary with us as you browse these pages. We are sure you will find something to connect with in this true cross-section of what our SIG has grown to be.

Diane Lamb-Obara

Christie Provenzano

Alexandra Shaitan

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Bilingualism in Japan: Recognition for an Uncelebrated Concept

Blake Turnbull
Doshisha University

Japan has long been thought of as a homogenous and therefore monolingual society, particularly by the very nationals who live there. This claim has been issued even at the highest political levels. In 1986, for example, the Japanese Prime Minister at the time, Nakasone Yasuhiro, famously proclaimed that Japan has “one ethnicity, one state, and one language” (see Lie, 2001), and in 2005, the Japanese Internal Affairs and Communications Minister, Aso Taro, similarly expressed the controversial view that Japan has just “one nation, one civilization, one language, one culture and one race” (Japan Times, 2005, para. 2). Although some scholars have challenged the notion of Japan as a linguistically and culturally homogenous society (e.g.: Htun, 2012; Kibe, 2006; Lie, 2001; Siddle, 2003; Weiner, 1997), amongst the general population “the notion of contemporary Japan as somehow ‘multilingual’ still remains radically controversial and contested” (Maher, 1997, p. 115). Consequently, despite evidence in the literature, very few Japanese people consider themselves to be bilingual (Turnbull, 2020).

Although a distinction can be made between “bilingualism” as the use of *two* languages, and “multilingualism” as the use of *three or more*, for the sake of argument, throughout this article I will follow García (2009a) and others in using the term “bilingualism” to encapsulate the essence of both concepts in reference to all language practices within an autonomous linguistic system and the associated linguistic, cultural, and cognitive aspects involved in using more than one language. Furthermore, while this monograph is entitled “*Celebrating 30 years of multilingualism and multiculturalism in Japan*,” as we will see in this article, it is important to note that the concept of bi-/multilingualism has existed in Japan for much longer, and is, in fact, much more prominent than is often perceived. This article aims to bring about awareness of bilingualism in Japan as viewed from linguistic, social, and political viewpoints. It will start by examining the reasons why so few Japanese people consider themselves to be bilingual, before defining bilingualism for a Japanese context, and explaining how and why Japan is a society deserving of, at the very least, a bilingual status.

Why the Lack of Recognition in Japan?

There are a number of potential reasons for the lack of acknowledgement thus far of the bilingual status of the Japanese people. From a language ideology perspective, Japan’s political history can be viewed as a significant factor having resulted in today’s perceived monolingual society. Prior to the country’s annexation of the surrounding island territories, Japan had an abundance of unique and distinct minority cultures and languages, such as the Ryūkyūans and Ainu languages. However, following movements in the late 19th century, in which the government worked to create a single, centralised Japanese language, these minority languages were forced to assimilate as “the default solution addressing the ‘disorder’ represented by ethnolinguistic communities” (Heinrich, 2012, p. 123). This resulted in the ideology of Japan as a monocultural and linguistically homogenous nation, which continues to be widely upheld to this day. Some scholars have suggested that language homogeneity (i.e., monolingualism) has, in fact, become a central element in the make-up of Japan’s national identity (see Heinrich, 2012). This idea is connected to the *nihonjinron* discourse: an ethnocentric collection of theories popular in the 1980s arguing for the uniqueness of Japan as a monolingual and monocultural society (Sugimoto, 2003). While the *nihonjinron* discourse may be seen by some nowadays as a nationalistic social science, the survival (and indeed continued influence) of the discourse makes it worthy of discussion. Based

on this essentialist ideology, it has been suggested that “not being able to speak English signifies one’s Japaneseness” (McVeigh, 2004, p. 223). In other words, the mindset still remains that if a Japanese person is seen as anything other than monolingual, they are no longer considered to be “Japanese” (also see Turnbull, 2017).

Another possible reason behind why the Japanese people may be reluctant to consider (or want to recognise) themselves as being bilingual could lie in their own personality characteristic as a nation reluctant to self-praise (see Brown, 2006). Balboni (2018) suggests that each culture has “its own ideas on what ‘knowing a language’ and ‘learning a language’ mean” (p. 2). Therefore, Japanese people will hold a certain perspective on what it means to be bilingual which may not match that of speakers in other contexts (such as minority speakers in a target language environment). This notion is backed up by self-perception survey results conducted by research institutions in Japan. For example, GMO Research (2017) surveyed 10,000 Japanese men and women (5,000 aged between 15~19, and 5,000 between 20~59) regarding their own attitudes and awareness of their English abilities. The survey found that an average of just 22% of the participants thought their English abilities to be “strong” (either “very strong” or “somewhat strong.”) On the other hand, an average of 64.7% felt as though their English was “poor” (either “very poor” or “somewhat poor”). Similar results were shown in a Rakuten Research (2016) survey, which examined the attitudes of 1,000 Japanese people aged 20~69 regarding their own English abilities. Here, an average of 70% believed they had “poor” or “very poor” English abilities overall, with only 8.7% suggesting they were “good” or “very good.” Nearly three quarters (74.2%) believed that Japanese people, in general, have “low” or “very low” English proficiencies, with only 3.6% thinking it to be “high” or “very high.” Such low self-perceptions of their English abilities are likely to contribute towards the Japanese people’s belief that they are not deserving of a bilingual status overall.

One further reason behind the Japanese people’s assertion of their own monolingualism could be based on a (commonly-occurring) misunderstanding of what it means to be bilingual. The widely-held “maximalist position,” that is, that bilingualism is “a native-like control of two languages” (Bloomfield, 1985, p. 56), is certainly not the only definition of bilingualism, nor is it the most appropriate for the reality of most bilingual speakers and communities around the world. The following section will look at defining bilingualism and its applicability within the Japanese society.

Defining Bilingualism

In defining bilingualism as a prevalent concept in Japan, there are a number of key definitions that must be considered. First, what are the limits of bilingualism? Mackey (1987) defines bilingualism as “the knowledge and use of two or more languages” (p. 700), offering interpretative space regarding the required level of proficiency, instead emphasising some extent of *knowledge* of at least two languages. On the other hand, Grosjean (1989) defines bilingualism as “those people who use two or more languages in their everyday lives” (p. 4), placing emphasis on the regular *use* of two or more languages. Grosjean (2013) further also adds that “bilinguals use their languages for different purposes, in different domains of life, to accomplish different things” (p. 7). That is to say, bilingualism is not necessarily the alternate use of two or more languages on a regular basis to equally fluent degrees. The reasons for which bilingual speakers engage with their languages is dependent on various personal and social functions within the lives of the individual speaker. This idea is reflected in what Cook (1992) first termed “multicompetence,” and later refined as “the knowledge of more than one language in the same mind or the same community” (Cook, 2012, p. 3768). He explains this to be “everything a single person or a single community knows about the languages they use,” both consciously and unconsciously. That is, multicompetence refers to the complex mental functions of bilingual speakers unrelated to the standards of monolingual native speakers, and the assortment of ways in which these bilinguals engage their unique linguistic systems to

make meaning, to express themselves, and to act as complete individuals in their bilingual worlds.

Another key factor within the concept of bilingualism is what García (2009b) terms “emergent bilingualism,” or those “students who are in the beginning stages of moving along a bilingual continuum” (p. 397, chapter 2, note 2). In other words, emergent bilingualism refers to those individuals in the process of acquiring a language in addition to that of their mother tongue. Turnbull (2018) expanded this term to specifically include foreign language (FL) learners in their own right, placing emphasis on the active development of one’s bi-linguaging skills in the classroom and the use of both languages relevant to the individual needs of the learner. To be bilingual is a fluid and dynamic practice (see García, 2009b). Having knowledge of an “additional language” and using that in one’s everyday life, both actively and receptively to whatever extent, is the fundamental building blocks of a bilingual society. And so, while the majority of Japanese people may not consider themselves to be bilingual, the reality of the Japanese society would suggest otherwise. Taking the definitions presented here into consideration, in combination with an understanding of emergent bilingualism, I believe bilingualism can best be defined as the active knowledge and use of two (or more) languages in situations relevant to the individual needs of the speaker. The question, then, is whether Japan fits this definition; the answer is, of course, *most definitely*.

Japan as a Bilingual Nation

Sixteen years ago, Torikai (2005) suggested that “even though not many people are aware of it, or ready to admit it, Japan is not the homogeneous country that is sometimes projected” (p. 255). Since then, ever-increasing cultural diversification as a result of globalisation has led to an even bigger change in the modern Japanese society. This is easy to see in the nation’s growing immigration demographic. With over two million foreign residents currently living in Japan, and various groups of bilinguals, including ethnic minorities, Japanese returnees, expatriates, children of international couples, and children studying at international schools, it is difficult to disregard the multiculturalism and multilingualism that exists in Japan today. But what of the bilingual status of the Japanese society and people themselves?

Firstly, the concept of linguistic diversity, seen through the basic construct of bilingualism as the frequent switching of equally-fluent codes, is not enough to capture the reality of the linguistic repertoires in contemporary societies (Pennycook & Otsuji, 2015). Turnbull (2020) argues that the essence of the Japanese society transcends well beyond monolingualism, and even past bilingualism into the realms of *translingualism*. That is, the Japanese society is rife with instances of inter-linguistic communicative practices that transcend between and beyond the autonomous boundaries of named languages. Turnbull takes a visual ethnographic approach to examine concrete photographic evidence of the intersentential, intrasentential, interlexical, intralexical, and semiotic-reliant translanguaging practices commonly seen (albeit largely unnoticed) in the Japanese society. Such research shows how Japan is rife with the complex and integrated use of multiple languages and multi-modal semiotics that specifically work to convey meaning to the Japanese people. These translingual practices are found in common street signs, posters, billboards, public transportation, advertisements, shop signs, menus, branding and labelling, pamphlets, brochures, and more, all working together to create a linguistically-rich landscape beyond that of monolingualism. In other words, evidence of bi- and trans-lingual practices are found all throughout the Japanese society that allow its speakers to transcend the culturally- and sociopolitically-defined language boundaries for effective communication (Wei, 2018) and for audience contextualisation (Borrero, 2011).

It stands to reason, then, that the people living and functioning in this linguistically-rich society are deserving of a bilingual status. This becomes even clearer when reconsidering the definition of bilingualism presented above: “the active knowledge and use of two or more

languages in situations relevant to the individual needs of the speaker.” Here, we understand that it is not necessary for Japanese people to speak English (or any other language) with equal competency, or to an equal extent, as they do Japanese in their everyday lives. The very fact that they possess the ability to exist and function in their own translingual society is surely evidence enough of their unique bilingual competence. However, add to that the concept of emergent bilingualism and foreign language learners, and we find another level to Japan’s hidden bilingualism. Turnbull (2018) argued that there is no reason to separate language education in multilingual contexts and FL learning contexts, as students in both cases are emergent bilinguals. Indeed, Fotos (2001) referred specifically to Japanese students studying English as a foreign language as “a large but unacknowledged group of bilinguals” (p. 329). English, as the *de facto* foreign language, is learnt throughout all levels of education in Japan. From April 2020, English became a mandatory subject from the third grade of elementary school, meaning that students from 8 to 18 years old (and often in the first two years of university) must study English as a compulsory subject in Japan.

According to MEXT (2019), there were 6,368,550 students studying at 19,738 elementary schools, 3,218,137 students studying at 10,222 junior high schools, and 3,168,369 students studying at 4,887 senior high schools throughout Japan in 2019. That amounts to a total of 12,755,056 emergent bilinguals below the age of 18 actively engaging in their own unique bi-linguaging strategies on a regular basis throughout their daily lives. Add to that the three-million-plus university students (MEXT, 2019), and those who have graduated and are active members of the workforce, and the true reality of Japan’s bilingual society becomes even clearer. What is particularly important about this cohort of emergent bilinguals is their age, as it is often amongst the youth in which we find the biggest changes in linguistic landscapes (also see Canagarajah & Dovchin (2019) for a discussion of online-based youth code-meshing in Japan). This is because, Japanese youth in particular are beginning to reject traditional ascriptions of their cultural identity and are instead exploring “a reconstruction of ethnicity” (Maher, 2005, p. 83) through language use in search of “cultural hybridity, cultural/ethnic tolerance and a multicultural lifestyle in friendships, music, the arts, eating and dress” (p. 83). The emerging bilingual practices that said speakers engage with as they orient themselves towards new culturally and linguistically hybrid lifestyles have begun to shape the very linguistic landscape of the nation as a whole. As Pennycook (2007) states: “Languages will flow and change around us, new combinations of languages and cultures will be put together, texts will be sampled and mixed in ever new juxtapositions” (p. 158). Subsequently, in Japan, it is now the case that its citizens are (perhaps even unconsciously) integrating and meshing various linguistic and semiotic codes as part of their daily lifestyle. To deny the Japanese people of a bilingual status, then, is to deny the existence of their creative set of bilingual communication strategies. The fact that Japan is so affluent with this unique combination of languaging practices that transcend linguistic boundaries provides irrefutable evidence for the ever-changing linguistic landscape and bilingual nature of the modern Japanese society.

Conclusion

Whether or not people are ready or willing to accept it, the notion of Japan as a monolingual nation is an archaic and erroneous misinterpretation of the country’s modern society. Whereas Japan’s political history, national identity, and citizens’ modest personality traits may have prevented the Japanese people from acknowledging their own bilingualism thus far, the reality is that ever-increasing globalisation, immigration, changing linguistic landscapes, and emergent bilingualism has led Japan into a bilingual era.

While Japan may appear “monolingual” on the surface level, the unique bilingual trends that run prevalent beneath this facade is where the true reality of the nation is hidden. New reconstructions of hybrid identity, cultural and ethnic tolerance, and a multicultural lifestyle have led the Japanese people, particularly the emergent bilingual youths, to seek new patterns of

linguistic diversity that transcend beyond the monolingual dogma that has, for so long now, subjugated Japan and its people. No matter where one looks, the evidence is right in front of us: Japan is a bilingual nation. Japanese people possess multicompetence and employ bilingual communication practices across linguistic codes and language barriers, borrowing and blending linguistic and semiotic features into new modes of communication. It is time to challenge the primitive monolingual mindset that has reigned prevalent here, and instead acknowledge and spread awareness of the bilingual status that the contemporary Japanese society is so rightly deserving of.

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Children's Voices: Growing up Bilingual, 2020

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As parents embark on the journey of attempting to raise their children in two or more languages, there are a variety of resources they will turn to for consultation. I can clearly remember much of the advice and many of the stories that I heard from members of the Bilingual SIG when my children were young and my family was about to set sail. Their reflections included information on education, biliteracy, resources and media, approaches, social and emotional issues, challenges, strategies, attitudes, identity, environment, and relationships. The list goes on and on. There are multiple affective factors and countless individual differences.

In addition to this, the resources available in this day and age are astounding, even overwhelming. From social media sites and online groups, both global and local, to entire step-by-step handbooks for parents (Baker, 2014; Harding-Esch & Riley, 2003; Zurer Pearson, 2008), to a collection of publications related to local issues in the Japanese context (Goebel-Noguchi et al., 2019) found on Bilingual Japan's own website (<https://www.bsig.org/>), the most challenging part for any new family might possibly be narrowing down the information, not feeling overwhelmed, making decisions, and just doing it!

That being said, as this section pertains to our youngest generation of learners, born in the 21st century, it seems only right that we include their views, too. The following interviews are short snapshots of conversations between parents, children, and family friends who have contributed to our publications throughout the past ten years and graciously shared their adventures. Parents were provided a short list of questions to work from, but also allowed the freedom to expand on those as they would in a natural conversation. Finally, they were requested to keep the time limit to under ten minutes and send the recordings to the author, who then transcribed them. They are written in script form. All names have been changed to pseudonyms. Except for a brief reflection from the Japanese mother raising her children in the United States, none of the other interviews include reflections from the parents. The conversations have been left in raw form, and ellipses used in places where the conversation diverged from the topic or where repetitive language was intentionally drawn out in the interviewer's questioning. The original recordings have been kept on file by the author, who can be contacted via the Bilingualism SIG if readers would like access to them. To conclude, the author provides a few brief impressions and suggestions regarding some of the points from the interviews that struck her as being significant and/or seem to mirror some commonly-observed patterns among bilingual families. The hope is that in ten years' time, these contributors will still feel open to sharing their stories with us, and we can talk to them again to see what kinds of choices they've made and the next paths their language-learning journeys have taken.

Lily (13 years old)

Family Background

Lily's family lives in Tokyo. Her mother is Japanese (NJS), while her Father is Scottish (NES). Lily has attended public Japanese school (preschool, elementary, and junior high) since she was three years old. Her family's language policy is, with a few exceptions, minority language (English) at home (ML@H).

Interview

November 21, 2020.

(Scottish father interviewing daughter.)

Father (F): Okay, so eh. Let's do a little interview about your English and Japanese skills. First of all, can you tell the recording your name and how old you are.

Daughter (L): I'm Lily. I'm thirteen years old.

F: Okay. And, eh. How many languages do you speak?

L: I can speak Japanese and English.

F: How do you feel about speaking two languages?

L: Fun.

F: It's fun!

L: Maybe.

F: Maybe. (laugh) Which do you think is stronger for you? English or Japanese?

L: Japanese.

F: Why?

L: Because I'm living in Japan.

F: Um-hum. Any other reason? You're living in Japan, but I speak English to you at home, right? So why do you think your Japanese is stronger?

L: I have more Japanese friends.

F: Um-hum. Do you have any friends that can speak English?

L: Yes. But I have more Japanese friends than friends that speak English.

F: Where are your friends that speak English?

L: India. Germany.

F: Germany, yeah. So they're just like pen pals, right?

L: Yes.

F: Okay, so let's maybe talk about different skills in English and Japanese. Okay, so let's talk about English first. What do you think you're good at in English and what do you think you're not so good at?

L: I'm good at talking, maybe. I'm not good at writing English.

F: Um-hum. Why do you think you're not good at writing English?

L: Spelling is difficult.

F: Um-hum.

L: I need to think of the vocabulary of the word spelling, and writing.

F: Um-hum.

L: at the same time.

F: Right. You don't like writing.

L: Yes.

F: What kinds of things do you write in English?

L: a diary.

F: You don't write your diary any more though, do you?

L: *ii-eh* (いゝえ, No)

F: Do you want to start writing it again?

L: *Unh* (うん, Yes)

F: You should.

L: I tried to write it, one week ago.

F: Did you?

L: Yes.

F: Oh. I haven't seen that. And, eh, but you write emails to your family. Do you enjoy that?

L: *Unh.*

F: Why?

L: Because we can connect on emails.

F: Um hum. Okay, but you think you can speak English well.

L: Yes.

F: Why do you think that?

L: I don't really think something when I'm speaking.

F: But you only really speak to me, don't you? Nobody else.

L: Nobody.

F: Okay, because you don't really like speaking to your family on the computer do you? Or on the phone. You get too shy, don't you?

L: Yes.

F: Okay, that's me speaking. I shouldn't be speaking. You should be speaking. Okay, so we talked about writing and speaking. How about reading?

L: Um. Reading.

F: Un hunh. How do you feel about reading in English?

L: Um. I think reading is quite fun.

F: What kinds of things do you like to read?

L: Um. like. like. um. A book about school and the same age, like me.

F: So, things like your *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* and things like that.

L: Yes.

F: Okay. How about reading for tests, like Eiken and stuff like that?

L: I don't like it.

F: [laugh] Why not?

L: Because there's so many difficult words.

F: Um-hum.

L: And it takes a long time to read all.

F: Um-hum. How about listening? Do you understand everything in English?

L: Yes.

F: Really?

L: Listening is the most easy one.

F: Um-hum. But you don't understand, like, because sometimes we're, we'll watch the news in English. How do you feel? You don't understand a lot, do you?

L: Not all. But, some words.

F: Some words. Okay, so do you like.... Oh, okay. So let's talk about your Japanese. How do you feel about your Japanese? Do you think you're good at everything in Japanese, or is there anything you're not good at?

L: Umm, I think I can do well at Japanese, but *kanji* (漢字, Chinese characters).

F: Right. Well, what do you think about *kanji*?

L: Umm, it's difficult to remember.

F: Ummm. Sure. So, we've done some different things to try to learn or try to improve your English. What things do you think have worked? What are the things that have been successful for you?

L: In English?

F: In terms of learning English.

L: English lessons in Japanese school is easy, so that is something.

F: Um-hum. You are grateful for that. But what's been a good experience for you in terms of learning English? I mean you went to New Zealand, and you've been to Scotland lots of times. You've read a book. You've watched TV. What's been the thing that's helped you learn English?

L: Like, um. New Zealand.

F: New Zealand, yeah. Why?

L: Because I almost didn't speak in Japanese at New Zealand, and I concentrate to English.

F: Okay. Yeah. You didn't speak much Japanese, did you, at all, for about a month. So, do you like being able, even though Japanese is stronger, do you like being able to, well, do you like having two languages, or being able to communicate in two languages?

L: *Unh.*

F: Why do you think it's good?

L: Because when I get older

F: Umm Hmm.

L: and do more communicate with other country's people,

F: Um-hum.

L: We all talk English. That's very helpful. For the future.

F: Eh hh, so, that's what you would like to do in the future?

L: Hmmm. Yes.

F: Eh hh, is there anything I can do to help you? Do you have any advice for me to help you learn English?

L: Not really.

F: Not really? Is there anything else you want to say about English and Japanese?

L: Hmmm.... No.

F: No?

L: English and Japanese.

F: Would you like to learn another language as well? Would you like to be multilingual?

L: Um. No.

F: No? Why not? I thought you were interested in Korean?

L: Um.

Father: Not anymore? Okay. All right. Thank you.

Lily: Thank you.

Sunshine (11 years old)

Family Background

Sunshine's family lives in Ohio in the United States. Her mother is Japanese (NJS) and her father is American (NES). She has attended public school in the U.S. (preschool, kindergarten, and elementary school) since she was 3 years old. She's also gone to the supplementary Japanese school (MEXT-recognized) in northeast Ohio, from the ages of three to eleven. According to her mother, their family didn't have a language policy, except for the fact that when she attends the Saturday Japanese school, she must speak/use Japanese there (time and place).

Interview

December 9, 2020.

(Family friend interviewing daughter. Mother (J) present.)

Family Friend (FF): Okay. And you know two languages, right?

Sunshine (S): Yes.

FF: How did that happen?

S: My mom.

Mother (M): Come on. You can't just say one word. You have to say....

FF: Yoko, I'm gonna have to cut out all of your talking.

S: Um. Well. Mom's Japanese, so I had to learn it I guess.

FF: Yeah, okay, but you also live in Ohio, so of course you will speak English.

S: Yeah.

FF: Okay, so then tell me about your local school that you go to. What kind of school do you go to in your neighborhood? In your town, or wherever.

S: Like a public school?

FF: Yeah. And what grade are you in?

S: Oh. 5th.

FF: 5th grade. Okay. And you'll go there for one more year, or....

S: What? No. So, we're getting a new school. A new school is getting built, and it's gonna be ready, next year around Christmastime. And it's all grades in one building, so it's kindergarten through 12th in one building.

FF: Wow. Cool. So, it's gonna be more like a campus.

S: Yeah, and so then in 6th grade, I would go to the new building when I am done with 5th grade.

FF: Wow. That's so interesting. Cool. All right, so you've got something to look forward to. That'll be fun. Okay then, so how about for learning Japanese? Can you tell me about the school you go to to learn Japanese?

S: Oh. Is it R_____? Is that it? It's in B_____, and it's like, it's a Jewish School. So like we rent it, or something like that.

M: [whispering] How many times did you go there?

FF: Yeah, or when did you go there? When did you start going there?

S: Oh, I went there when I was three. So, I started when I was in, like, preschool.

FF: Yeah, that's right.

M: Yeah.

S: Until. Um, now I'm in 5th grade.

FF: Wow. So, 3 years old until eleven, right?

S: Yeah.

FF: Eight years.

S: Yeah.

FF: You've been going there for eight years. Okay. All right. Okay. So then, what are the classes like? You go there every Saturday? Basically, every Saturday?

S: Yeah, and so then, it's like one class for each grade. So, like, we're all in one class, and it's all one teacher. It's like, you have an hour of like, math. And then you get a five-minute break. And then you get an hour of reading, and you get a five-minute break. And then you just keep doing it, until it gets to like, six hours, or something like that.

FF: Oh, wow. It's all day.

S: Yeah.

FF: Not a half day. When you were younger it was a half day.

S: Yeah, it was three hours. But now, I'm online, so it's three hours.

FF: Okay, so it's more condensed. Then, um, all right. Then, let's see. So, how about. How about—can you tell me what your, well, in your Japanese class, so you said that you have math. What are you doing in the math class? Do you know what kind of? Do you know what you're doing?

S: Like, what is it? We're doing, like....

M: [whispering] I don't know how to say it in English.

FF: Story problems?

M: Yeah, they do.

S: It's like....

M: It's kilometers and kilometers per hour. That kind of thing.

FF: Oh, yeah. Are you doing rates and percentages?

S: Like grams and stuff. What is that?

FF: Oh, measurements? Okay, all right. Do you know how to do all of that in English?

S: Um, we haven't learned that yet.

FF: In, in.... Like in your elementary school.

S: Yeah, we're very behind than the Japanese school.

FF: For math.

S: Yeah. For everything.

FF: (Because of COVID?) Oh really. People always say that. They always say that the math is more advanced in Japanese than it is in the American school system, but I'm not, haven't gotten there yet.

S: We're doing y2 multiplication in American school now, and we did that in like 3rd grade at Japanese school.

FF: Oh, that's wild. That's really interesting. Okay, so then how about. How about reading? Do you know what you've been reading in Japanese school recently?

S: No. I can't really read.

FF: Can't really read it. What about....

S: I mean, I can read, like *hiragana* (平仮名, one of the Japanese systems of syllabic writing).

FF: What about, so when you're in the class, when the teacher is, like, guiding the reading and asking questions about it, can you follow the teacher's explanations?

S: No.

FF: Oh. Okay. So, does the teacher. Okay, so they don't adjust. Like it's, oh, that's really interesting. Yeah, that would be, oh. There're no levels? Everyone is in the same level?

S: Yeah. It's like, we all learn the same thing.

FF: Right. There's not enough people to adjust it. How many people do you have in your class?

S: I don't know. Twelve or something.

FF: Okay. Well....

S: But like 7th grade, or wait a minute, it's like 9th grade or something, there's only like three people. It gets lower and lower each grade.

FF: Yeah, I mean. I have friends who are my age who went to the Japanese Saturday schools growing up in Colorado in Denver in the 80s, and they said the same thing.... How about writing? What do you do in writing in Japanese class? Do you guys spend time on writing in class?

S: Um, I mean, we have this thing. What is it called? *Utsushimarukun* (写し丸くん, name of the notebook for writing drill practice).

M: Uh-huh.

S: It's like where you have, it already writes out the words for you, and then you just have to copy it.

FF: Oh, like tracing?

S: Yeah, but you put it on a different piece of paper.

FF: Okay. That could be helpful. Yeah, but it's the problem of if, do you guys spend time on vocabulary at all? I feel like if you don't have enough vocabulary, because I do not.

S: Yeah. We do that.

M: We have to look it up and write the meaning and stuff.

S: It's like, it's like, dictionary stuff.

FF: Oh. Okay. Okay. Um. Okay. That's interesting. I'm so. I have so many more questions about the Japanese school that I never thought I would have, but I'm not gonna ask them now. Okay. So let's move on then. Okay, so what are your favorite things? What are you? What do you? What are your hobbies? What do you like to do in English right now? Which is probably everything—but what are you in to? I know you like TikTok. But, besides that.

S: In like, real life?

FF: Yes.

S: Oh.

FF: I mean, like anything. You can tell me about TV shows you like or games you like to play on the computer, or music you're into. All of the cultural things. All of that culture is really important.

S: Um well, so, on TikTok, there's like this..., and there's this famous TikToker, like Bryce Hall, and like....

FF: What is that? Bryce Hall?

S: Bryce Hall. Everyone in my family knows that I'm, like, obsessed with him, and like....

FF: Okay. Okay. That's good. Do you play video games at all, or do you...?

S: No.

FF: Oh. Okay. Your brother's into that.

S: Yeah.

FF: That's right. Okay. So, you're more into the phone.

S: Yeah.

FF: Anything else besides TikTok.

S: Ummm, schoolwise, it's social studies. That's my best subject.

FF: Oh, in school, okay, that's good. In school, you like social studies. Well that's good. What about Japanese, then? Are you interested in any, like anything culturally in Japanese? Like any *anime* (アニメ, a style of Japanese film and television animation) or movies? Do you have a favorite movie that you like?

S: I don't really watch Japanese movies.

FF: You don't really watch them at all. My kids don't either, even though we live here. Only because I try to have them watch stuff in the house in English. Except for recently, they like *Kimetsunoyaiba* (鬼滅の刃, *Demon Slayer*), because everybody's into that here. They kind of feel like, well, they want to know what's going on, because that's what everybody talks about, so...yeah, they feel kind of left out if they don't know it. Well, anyways, okay then, let's see. How about, ummm, is there anything, is there anything that you want to be able to do in Japanese?

S: Um, like, speak it.

FF: Yeah, you just want to be able to talk more. Right. Okay....

S: Okay.

FF: Okay, so what's the best part of knowing two languages? So, even if you don't feel that you can use Japanese as well as you want to be able to, do you like that you know two languages and cultures?

S: Yeah, well in Japanese school they're ahead of it, so in American school, I already know it, so I don't have to do it, really. Like in Japanese school, we already learned it, so in American school, it's like super easy.

FF: Oh, with math.

S: Like anything.

FF: Oh, anything. What do you mean anything?

S:

FF: Have you ever had to use Japanese to help anyone?

S: No. Not really.

FF: Really, don't you ever have to help your mom?

M: You did. With Summer, in Tokyo.

S: Oh yeah, so like, when Summer and me went to Japan.

FF: Oh, yeah. Cool. Who's Summer?

S: Um, remember when me and the girl went to Japan by ourselves?

M: You picked her up.

FF: I picked you guys up, yep. She, is she, she's your aunt?

S: No, my cousin.

FF: Cousin, okay. Okay, so then the last. Okay, so then how about your mom? You don't ever help your mom? My kids help me all the time. I can't do anything.

S: But, aren't you, like, "How do you spell this, and stuff?" I mean, I usually don't know the word.

FF: Okay, well, gradually, you'll get better.

M: Not yet, not quite yet.

FF: [personal anecdote of an experience with her 8-year-old daughter helping her translate conversations with local grocery store staff.]

FF: Okay, the last one. Do you have any advice for your parents?

S: Oh, um. What do you mean?

FF: I don't know. I guess about, about like, about school. About learning anything in English? About learning anything in Japanese? So, your mom said that you're gonna take a break from Japanese school. Do you think that you'd want to do something else in Japanese, besides going to that school?

S: No. I mean, maybe still like talking and hear, but....

FF: Yeah. Well, who do you want to talk to? People your own age?

S: Well, just with my mom, in regular conversations, like she does now.

FF: Fluency. So, you just want to be able to communicate and talk about life. Everyday life. Maybe not studying, but yeah, getting to know people, and communicating, and making friends, or something like that. Cool. All right. Well, that's good. That's what everyone always says, is that they just want to make friends and talk. Okay. I think that's good. I'm gonna stop recording now. Thank you.

Mother's Reflection

I guess my daughter couldn't see why she needed to learn Japanese or why I wanted her to learn Japanese objectively. She took everything personal. So everything about Japanese or Japan (or even me) is hard on her. She said that math is very helpful because she learned math in Japanese school about two years ahead so she understood very well in American school. She might notice by herself for sure, but it is not good enough motivation to learn Japanese languages.

Another thing, she doesn't have a good friend in Japanese school either.

Also, learning Japanese as foreign language and learning Japanese as mother languages (国語, *kokugo*) are very different approaches by 5th grade. There are very vague lines by kindergarten, but by 1st grade, learning Japanese language is not equal to learning *kokugo*. If Japanese school focuses on learning guitar or something by using Japanese, it is very interesting for her, but they have to learn school subjects: *kokugo*, *sansuu* (算数, math), *syakai* (社会, social studies). For example, (with) *kokugo*, how do you feel about the main character's attitude in the reading (of

kokugo)? How can she answer that even if she cannot think in English? But math, she can do it because the medium is not language but numbers. (One interesting thing: she says numbers in Japanese.)

Japanese school moms said that their kids will love to learn Japanese when they think they are not losers. In Japanese schools, they were losers because they cannot speak Japanese very well. However, when they need to take languages in university and they can take Japanese, they can speak better than other students. So that makes them more confident to start learning Japanese again. Obviously they can see why they need to learn languages or Japanese objectively. I couldn't make learning Japanese fun like I do in the university for my students. Because my kids are half of Japanese, I thought they should have learned Japanese like Japanese do, homework, exams, or tests, etc.

That's the biggest reason I failed to teach my own kids Japanese.

Mark (9) and Rose (8 years old)

Family Background

Mark and Rose live with their family in Chiba, Japan. Their mother is American (NES) and their father is Japanese (NJS). They have both attended the local *hoikuen* (保育園, daycare) and elementary school (semi-private and public Japanese schools) since they were six months old. Their family policy is dominantly the ML@H.

Interview

October 9, 2020.

(American mother, interviewing two oldest children.)

Mom: Okay, so what's your name and how old are you?

Mark (M): My name is Mark, and I am nine years old.

R (R): My name is Rose, and I'm seven years old.

Mom: Okay, so you guys can speak two languages, huh? How can you do that?

M & R: Um, because my mom is American and my dad is Japanese.

Mom: Okay, all right. What kind of school do you go to?

M: Uh, we go to a Japanese school, that has a little English.

Mom: Um, okay. Is it a public school?

M: Um, yes.

Mom: Okay, and um, what grade are you in?

M: I'm in third grade.

Mom: Okay, what grade are you in?

M: I'm in second grade.

Mom: And, um, do you go to any other schools for learning English?

M: Yes, we go to M.A.

Mom: You go to that school. What's that? It's an after-school program?

M: Yes, it's an after-school program.

Mom: Okay, and so what kind of English do you learn there?

M: I'm right now learning about, [talking to self] Oh, what was it called?

Mom: Hercules? Hermes?

M: No. Umm. Umm. Umm. Umm. I'm right now learning about The Ancient World.

Mom: The Ancient World, oh, ok, that's right. And what about you? What are you learning? Are you guys reading any stories in there?

R: I'm learning about TV.

Mom: TV? Oh, okay.

R: Um, yeah.

Mom: That sounds interesting.

R: The old-time's TV. The last time's TV was smaller than this time's.

Mom: Oh, so it sounds like some kind of invention or something?

R: Yeah—invention. It's an invention.

Mom: Okay. The invention of TV. Okay, so, tell me. Tell me about. What are some of the things you can DO in two languages.

M: Um, we can. Um, we usually speak English in the house only. At school we only speak Japanese.

Mom: Okay, what about you. What are some things you can do in two languages?

R: Um, in class at school, you can, um, you usually speak Japanese, but when you are learning English, um, sometimes the teacher will ask you to, um, say something, or do something.

Mom: Oh, give an example, or ask a question.

R: In English.

Mom: Do you remember what it was that you learned the last time an English teacher came?

R: Uh. I did a speech or something.

Mom: Oh really! A self introduction?

M: [interjection] Oh, I know. Because the teacher is leaving?

R: No, that's not what I'm talking about.

Mom: Oh, that's true. The teacher is leaving. But that's not what you did. You were talking about something else.

R: Um, I did. Everyone in my class did a speech in front of the class.

Mom: What was the speech about?

R: What's your favorite color?

Mom: Oh, okay. Cool. What's your favorite color?

R: My favorite color is white and black.

Mom: Black and white. All right. Yes, you do love black, huh? All right, how about this? What are your favorite things? Do you have a favorite thing to do in English?

M & R: Ummm...ummm...ummmm....

Mom: Watching TV?

R: Yeah.

M: Yeah. Watch English TV.

Mom: Watching TV, is that your favorite thing to do?

M & R: Yeah.

Mom: All right. How about in Japanese? Do you have a favorite thing to do in Japanese?

M: Umm, I like, speaking Japanese with my friends.

Mom: Speaking Japanese with your friends, of course.

R: Me too.

Mom: Yeah, you like speaking Japanese with your friends. Talking to your friends. Of course!

R: Yeah.

Mom: All right. Let's see. Oh, well then that was my next question then. Who do you like to talk to in your two languages? In Japanese?

R: My friends.

Mom: Your friends. Anyone else in Japanese?

M: My teachers.

R: My teachers.

Mom: Anyone else in Japanese?

M: No.

Mom: Really? Who's here now?

M: Oh, yeah! Our grandma!

R: Yeah, our grandma and grandpa.

Mom: Yeah. Your grandma and grandpa. Your Jiji and BaBa. How about in English, who do you like talking to in English?

M: Our Grammy and Grandpap.

R: Grammy and Grandpap and our M.A. teachers. And, um, to Mom.

Mom: Mom?

R: Mom. Because mom can't speak Japanese that much.

Mom: Hahaha. Yeah. Do you speak to your dad in Japanese or English?

R: Um, most of the time I speak Japanese, but when I don't know a word in English. Um, no. Most of the time I speak IN English,

Mom: That's right. In the house.

R: ...but if I don't know the word, I just say it in Japanese.

Mom: Yeah, when you're doing homework or something. That's right. Um, okay, how about. How about reading? What are you reading right now?

R: A book.

Mom: Yeah, what about in English. What do you like to read right now?

R: Um, *The Babysitter's Club*.

Mom: Yeah, you just got that book, right? And it's a show on Netflix too.

M: *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* and *Dogman*.

Mom: Yes, you still like reading those. *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*, that's right. And then, of course some things for school that are in your books. Um, in Japanese, what do you like to read in Japanese?

R: Uh, homework.

Mom: Homework? haha. What about you M?

M: Sports.

Mom: Sports. You like reading sports in Japanese? Oh, that's interesting. Okay. Um. Let's see. What's my next question? Oh, how about writing? Have you written anything interesting lately?

M: Yes, I wrote a baseball story at M.A.

Mom: You did. You wrote about your baseball game, right? A play-by-play.

M: Yeah.

Mom: Yeah, it's fun when you have an exciting story to write about.

M: Yeah.

Mom: Do you remember what you wrote about?

M: Uh, a little.

Mom: What was it?

M: Um, I hit. Um, no. I had four balls and I got on the base. And then took a lead. And then I got to second base. And then the next batter, he hit a double. No, he hit a ball to left field. And the left fielder dropped it. And when I was at third base, the left fielder dropped it. So, I went to home plate.

Mom: Wow. You have some sports stories! What about you? Are you writing anything interesting in Japanese?

R: Japanese? Um. Homework.

Mom: Homework. Yeah. You like writing homework though. We haven't gotten into the writing so much yet. You're still doing other things. Okay, how about games? Do you play any games?

M: Yeah, I like to play the MLB game on my iPad.

Mom: You like to play what?

M: My MLB game.

Mom: Is it in English or Japanese?

M: English.

Mom: Do you have any games in Japanese?

M: Um, no.

Mom: All right. What about you? Do you have any games you like to play?

R: Ummm...

Mom: You like watching YouTube of other people playing games.

R: No, M turns that on. I like crafts.

Mom: What about what's hard? Is there anything that's hard to do?

M: Tests. Tests in Japanese.

Mom: Well yes, tests are hard.

M: Yeah, but my class doesn't practice.

Mom: You mean review?

M: Yes. So we only have to do it. It's very hard....

Mom: But you do okay.

[Break]

Mom: Okay, how about this. What's the best part of knowing two languages?

M: Um, that I can speak in two languages.

Mom: What's the best part?

M: Um, that I can speak to my friends in Japanese, and that I can speak to my American friends in English.

Mom: Why is that fun?

M: Because I can talk a lot, to everyone.

Natalie (5 years old)

Family Background

Natalie's family lives in the center of Tokyo. Her mother is Scottish (NES), and her father is Japanese (NJS). She has attended the local kindergarten since she was four years old. The family policy is basically to use the ML@H.

Interview

December 27, 2020.

(Family friend interviewing daughter. Mother (NES) present.)

Family Friend (FF): Okay. All right. Hello! How are you? Okay, please tell me your name.

Mum: [in a quiet voice] What's your name?

Natalie (N): _____.

FF: What's your last name?

N: _____.

Mum: [giggle]

FF: Yeah, that's right. How old are you?

N: Five.

FF: Five. Perfect. And you know two languages, right? You know Japanese and English.

N: Uh-huh.

FF: How do you know two languages?

Mum: Natalie. Hang on a minute. Natalie. Stop playing with the stickers. Can you speak a bit louder, please?

FF: How is it possible to know two languages?

N: Going to school.

FF: Oooh! Cool! What do you mean? So what kind of school do you go to?

N: Japanese school.

FF: Really? All right. And, what grade are you in?

N: Third. Third grade.

Mum: *Nencho* (年長, third year/senior student).

FF: Third grade! Wait! Oh, my goodness! Are you already? So you're in third grade? That means you're nine years old? How old are you?

N: Five.

FF: Right. So, you're in the third grade of what? Preschool or kindergarten?

N: It's kindergarten.

FF: Oh cool. All right. Okay then, I have some other questions. Okay, so you speak Japanese at school.

N: Uh-huh.

FF: Where do you speak English?

N: When I talk to my mummy.

Mum: [giggle]

FF: [giggle] Yeah, that's what everyone says. Ok. All right. And who else do you speak Japanese to besides school.

N: Piano teacher.

FF: Oh yeah, your teachers, of course. Anyone else you like to talk to in Japanese?

Mum: [interjection] Papa.

N: Daddy.

FF: Yeah. Oh wow! You talk to your dad in Japanese? That's good. And what about in English? Do you talk to anyone else in English?

N: Mummy and also Ellen and Eddy.

FF: Who's that?

N: Ellen and Eddy.

FF: Your aunt? Oh, your friends. All right then, let's see. I have another question. What do you like to do? Is there anything you like to do besides school in Japanese? Do you like to anything?

N: I like to do *pianica* (ピアノカ, piano/harmonica).

FF: *Pianica*. Oh cool. That sounds fun. Do you do that at the *youchien* (幼稚園, kindergarten)?

N: There's like a big straw through the piano, but it's just like half through the piano.

FF: Yeah, through the piano.

N: It's like a big case to carry and you need to blow.

FF: Yeah, you have to blow the straw.

N: Yeah, you have to blow it to make the sound. And then foo. Phew phew foo foo foo foo.

FF: *Pianica* is awesome. *Pianica* is so fun. All right. And then, how about in English? Anything you like to do in English? What do you like to do in English? Do you watch TV in English? Do you read stories in English? Do you go to the park with your friends and play in English?

Mum: Well, you watch YouTube. What do you like to watch? In English or in Japanese? Huh? They can't hear you.

FF: Are you eating snacks? I feel like we're playing charades.

Younger Sister (YS): My teddy bear. This is my teddy bear.

Mum: What do you like to watch?

YS: Teddy bear. Teddy bear.

Mum: Yes, teddy bear. Okay. Right.

FF: Okay. We'll go to the next question. All right. Let's see. Do you study at all? Do you do any kind of studying? Do you study Japanese?

N: No.

FF: No? Never? You never study *hiragana* or *katakana* (片仮名, Japanese syllabary mainly used for writing loan words and those that can't be written in *kanji*)?

Mum: [whispering] You do Smile-Zemi, don't you?

N: I do Smile-Zemi.

Mum: Uh-huh.

N: I do Smile-Zemi.

FF: What's Smile-Zemi? Is it a TV show?

Mum: What's Smile-Zemi? Can you explain?

N: It's an iPad, and there's a magic pen.

FF: A magic pen. That sounds cool.

Mum: Yeah, but we broke the magic pen.

FF: That sounds cool. We love the iPad That's our favorite thing. In the world. Awesome. Ok. Then I just have a couple more questions. Okay, well, what do you DO in Smile-Zemi? Anything interesting? How does it work? You take the magic pen and you...?

N: You push the buttons.

FF: Do you have to read? Or, do you just write?

Mum: There's some *hiragana* writing, isn't there?

N: Uh-huh. And then, we have to finish the puzzle. So then we can do the.... And also we can. And also. Also, we can dress up like a girl or you can turn into a boy.

Mum: *Sou, ne* (そうね, yeah.) After you've done the puzzle, you get a reward, and then you get to....

FF: So there are rewards. And transformations.

N: And then there's like a hat or jeans or leggings or a bag or a hat.

Mum: And you can dress the doll. That's your reward.

FF: Oh cool. So, you get to put all the things on it, and then you can advance.

N: I'm on the swing right now.

FF: Oh wait, so last two questions. Wait. So, Smile-Zemi is mostly Japanese.

Mum: All Japanese. Yes.

N: All Japanese, but there's a....

Mum: There's a small English section which is really silly, and so yeah.

FF: Okay. Last two questions.

YS: Papa.

FF: Do you ever help anyone? Do you ever help anyone when you're talking? Do you ever help your...I don't know, do you help anybody? What did you do today? Your mom told me you rode the bus.

Mum: Do you help anybody?

N: Where did we go?

Mum: We went to Harumi, didn't we? On the bus?

N: Uh-huh.

Mum: Do you mean help with language, or help, as in anything?

FF: I guess, in anything, because that would be both. So yeah, with anything?

Mum: So not like translation, that's what I mean.

FF: Oh no, not yet.

Mum: So, you help your grandpa go somewhere sometimes. Sometimes she helps him walk.

FF: Oh, that's cool. That's really nice. Yeah, that's great. Okay, so then my last question is, um, when you get older, is there anything you wanna do in Japanese or English?

N: I wanna be a nail polish salon lady.

FF: A nail polisher. Oh, you wanna have a good job.

Mum: She wants to be a nail salon owner.

FF: Oh, wonderful. That sounds great. I would love to have somebody take care of me in that way.

Mum and FF: [giggling]

FF: Yes, and make me look beautiful. Oh, please help me.

Mum: It's funny, because before that, she wanted to do *syouboushi* (消防士, firefighter).

FF: What's *syouboushi*?

Mum: What's *syouboushi* Natalie?

N: A firefighter.

FF: A firefighter. Oh. Wow.

Mum: It's funny, because both jobs, she's done in KidZania. That, and nail polisher.

FF: Oh. [giggling]

N: Maybe I should do the same job.

FF: Maybe you could be a firefighter, and on your down time when you're waiting for a fire, you could have a nail salon downstairs.

Mum: That's a perfect idea.

N: I would love that.

[Mum and FF chatting]

Mum: It's funny because she does Smile-Zemi in the English section and they teach you something that you've got to say like "strawberry" or something, but then you've got to say "strawberry," but then it's like, "Oh, you've said it wrong." And we'll yell, "STRAWBERRY." And it's like, "wrong." And we're like "STRAAAWWWBERRYYY!"

All: [giggling]

FF: So, you're arguing with Smile-Zemi, is that what I'm getting here? Great. Well, we just got one of those smart speakers, so we're looking forward to....

N: Yes, and the lady says in a small voice, "apple." And then we're like "APPLE!" And then we're not right. It's like a question mark.

Mum: *So, ne.* So, we can't speak English properly according to Smile-Zemi.

[Mum, FF, and N chatting, giggling, and wrapping up the conversation.]

Conclusion

Raising multilingual/multiliterate children is work. It takes effort and planning. In line with the guidance we can find within the multitude of literature and resources available, these interviews bring to life the fact that there are various approaches, countless individual differences, and an assortment of influential affective factors. We can gather from the stories above that some of the significant elements involved in this process, especially in the early years when the foundation is being laid, include: the role of one's partner and/or grandparents, the home environment, educational support, social factors (friendship, sports teams, etc.), and quite simply, motivation. Interview one reminds us of the importance of diligently keeping up with minority language literacy (diaries, emails to family members, ...) in upper elementary school. This can help learners advance beyond basic communication skills (BICS), in the minority language, especially (as they mentioned) if it is generally

only spoken with one parent and there are no siblings. Going beyond BICS is essential for keeping the door open to the possibility for academic growth in the minority language. In addition, we can see how some sort of enrichment, such as the short-term study abroad program in New Zealand, can be extremely motivating in terms of forming new relationships and sparking an interest in continued communication with international friends.

Interview two also reminds us of the importance of friendship, and the value of community, yet from the flipped perspective of attempting to maintain Japanese as the heritage language abroad. Sunshine's story of friends gradually returning to Japan is typical, as many Japanese families who attend the overseas MEXT-supported Saturday schools tend to come back by the end of elementary school, and thus the ability to form long-lasting relationships in those programs begins to diminish during this time. We can hope that another trip back to her mother's country to visit relatives in the next couple of years can possibly provide some kind of stimulation to rekindle a spark of motivation. This story also sheds light on the shortcomings of the antiquated Japanese curriculum adhered to in these programs, which needs to be redesigned to meet the needs of overseas Japanese learners like Sunshine. One idea would be reaching out to other like-minded families across the region to form some kind of online learning circle for communicative Japanese that would be both fun and more suitable to their needs, as Sunshine's mother mentioned she is able to do with her Japanese as a foreign language (JFL) college students. Another idea could be to focus on one content area that they enjoy, such as math.

In interview three, the children seem to be very aware of the logic behind their family's approach to raising them bilingually and can clearly distinguish that there are certain people with whom they speak and/or places where they use one language or the other. From within both the Japanese and English contexts, they reference school, sports, test-taking, an after-school program, and their home. We can imagine that, as they have grown up, these consistent routines and activities have been important for establishing paths for natural communication and developing an innate understanding for their self-directed language use, in addition to fostering academic skills, intercultural awareness, and possibly even unconscious metacognition regarding different styles and approaches to teaching and coaching. Various social groups (global and local) and family relationships (multiple generations) come up in the children's responses as well, and their descriptions of those people and their activities suggests that they are comfortable communicating in these environments, and enjoy them. As a result, they seem socially flexible and have been exposed to various perspectives and ways of thinking. As they are still in lower half of elementary school, currently establishing the base of their formal education, they speak rather matter-of-factly about their homework and reading. What seems to be emphasized the most is that they enjoy being able to speak two languages because they can talk to many different kinds of people. We can imagine that if their bilingualism had not been established before beginning elementary school, that their attitudes towards these social situations and educational environments might be different, and the learning process more demanding, even overwhelming.

At last, with interview four, Natalie may still be too young to completely grasp the method to her family's madness, but she also references various social groups and relationships, such as her grandfather and their local international ES friends. This alludes to the fact that their living environment might have those groups more conveniently nearby, thus being able to frequently meet and interact with them. She mentions that she knows Japanese because she goes to school, so she associates Japanese with learning and that educational setting. Lastly, they bring up various activities for playing in the minority language, such as online educational programs or their experience at KidZania. Their comments seem to align with the opinions regarding the highs and lows about educational technology that bilingual parents have written about in the past for our BSIG publications. In addition, they also support the opinions of our contributors about how powerful and

memorable the experiences of embodying the minority language can be and their lasting effects. We can also hear her sister babbling away during the interview—another playmate.

Finally, one aspect both parents and researchers seem to agree on historically is that consistency is critical, as well as having a plan for language development, such as a family language policy. We can see that supported in these stories. Hopefully the above interviews have been beneficial for readers and have provided a window into what's happening here and now, with our BSIG families and these young learners, along the first phase of their journeys.

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Tongue Tied: Successes and Challenges of a Multilingual Family in Japan

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Family Background and Language Policy

Our family is a good example of a growing number of racially, culturally, and linguistically-mixed families that include parents from different ethnic-racial, cultural and linguistic backgrounds. My husband is from the Caribbean, and grew up with two languages—Bajan and English. I am from the former Soviet Union, and at present, proficient in Russian and English. I was born and spent my childhood in Lithuania when it was still a part of the former Soviet Union, so I grew up speaking Russian and Lithuanian. When we later moved to the Russian Federation to my mother's hometown, I lost the Lithuanian language as I did not have to use it. With this language background, we, bilingual parents, are raising a biracial, trilingual child in Japan.

From the beginning, my husband and I knew that we wanted to pass our respective heritage languages on to our child. Since we are living in Japan, we knew that we wanted to raise her trilingual. As both of us are bilingual, it was not even a question of whether we would raise our daughter with more than one language. Rather, we had to decide which languages we would pass down. My husband could pass on English and Bajan, an English-based creole spoken in Barbados, and I could pass on Russian. Finally, we decided to pass on Russian and English (referred to as heritage languages), as Bajan is only spoken in Barbados, and it is not a language that will be as useful to our daughter, Victoria, in the future. Additionally, before our daughter was born, we also decided that Victoria would be raised with three languages simultaneously from birth - our two heritage languages, English and Russian, and Japanese, as the language of the community. We also agreed on our family communication system. Drawing on my knowledge of the research on raising bilingual and multilingual children (Bialystok & Barac, 2013; Hoffman & Ytsman, 2004; Wang, 2008), we decided to use the One-Parent-One-Language (OPOL) method in communication with our daughter while using English when speaking to each other, as it is our *lingua franca*. We also knew our motives in wanting to raise Victoria in more than one language. The most important reason for our desire to raise her as a trilingual was our wish to preserve our heritage cultures and family ties. It was of paramount importance to us that Victoria would be able to communicate with her extended families on both sides in those respective languages.

Another reason for wanting to bring up our daughter as a trilingual was our awareness of and belief in numerous benefits of multilingualism. Knowing several languages could not only afford our daughter more opportunities in the future but could also boost brainpower and lead to an earlier cognitive development (Bialystok, 2005; Bialystok & Barac, 2013). Due to these reasons, we decided to embark on the journey of raising our child trilingual. The decision was not made lightly, as from the beginning, we were aware of not only the benefits of trilingualism, but also of challenges that we would likely face in the future, as well as personal sacrifices we would have to make.

Goals and Expectations for Child's Trilingualism

From the beginning, we decided that the goal of our child's trilingual development would be for her to develop the four basic language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) in all three chosen languages. We are not expecting our daughter to have equal competence and performance in all three of them. We are aware that it is unrealistic to expect a trilingual to have

equal performance in them as the child's language learning experiences are not parallel, but different (Olshtain & Nissim-Amitai, 2004). Moreover, the three languages she is acquiring are also very different, especially in terms of syntax and writing systems. This language difference is another reason why Victoria is unlikely to develop equal competence and performance in all three. Our goal is for her to be able to speak all three languages well enough to function in them and become literate. We are aware that Victoria will exhibit different types of competence in listening, speaking, reading, and writing in all three languages.

Establishing the Trilingual Environment: Quality and Quantity of Language Input

One-Parent-One-Language Policy

Since Victoria's birth, we have adhered to the OPOL principle. This means that my husband speaks to Victoria only in English, and I speak to her only in Russian, whereas the two of us speak English to each other as our *lingua franca*. The language policy of our family of "speak English to Papa," "speak Russian to Mama," and "speak Japanese to others," has become a very natural mode of communication to Victoria since she was born into and has been socialized in this language environment and community. Victoria has been exposed to all three languages from her infancy as we spoke English and Russian at home, and she was exposed to Japanese on a regular basis since the age of 3.5 months when she started at the *hoikuen* (保育園, daycare). Thus, English and Russian are the languages we use at home, while Japanese is the language used outside of home, the language of the environment. At 5 years old, Victoria easily switches from one language to another. For example, she can naturally switch from Russian to English and vice versa when talking to both of us. She may say something to me in Russian and turn and say the same to her father in English. It is also natural for Victoria to switch between the three languages if necessary. For instance, when she is playing with her friends using Japanese, she will switch to either English or Russian when addressing one of her parents. Since this communication system has been established from birth, Victoria naturally responds to different parents in different languages (Wang, 2008).

As I am proficient in Russian and English, I can always understand what is said in the family. My husband, however, does not know Russian, so he at times feels left out when I speak to Victoria, which presents a challenge. To make sure that he understands what I say to Victoria, I often tell him what I have said to her. To some, this mode of communication in the family seem cumbersome, but it works for us and, most importantly, appears to be effective in our daughter's trilingual language acquisition. Some may think that it would be easier for me to use English when addressing Victoria when the father is present, but this will decrease the amount of language input in Russian, which is undesirable. As time goes on, my husband has picked up quite a bit of Russian from hearing it all the time when I speak to Victoria. In fact, now, at times, he can even understand what is being said.

Deliberate Effort in Providing Heritage-Language Input

From reading literature on raising children with more than one language (Grosjean, 2010; Grosjean & Li, 2013; Wang, 2008), we knew that adequate input and exposure were crucial in the early years of multilingual development. Therefore, we had to make sure that we did our absolute best in providing a maximum quantity of language input. To do that, we employed several strategies.

As research suggests, a child needs to be exposed to a language for a substantial amount of time to become proficient. As parents, we realized that we would have to spend enough time with our daughter to provide her with sufficient heritage-language input. Neither of us could stay home all the time with our daughter as both of us had to work. However, we both tried to spend as much time with her as we could.

Traveling

No matter how much time we try to spend with our daughter ensuring sufficient heritage-language input, the amount of the language input is not sufficient since she is growing in an environment that is linguistically and culturally different from the environment where the heritage languages are used. To fill this gap and provide her with opportunities to be immersed in a culture where Russian and English are used, we regard traveling to our heritage countries and language regions as an essential part of the process of bringing up our trilingual daughter. Throughout Victoria's school years, we plan to continue traveling to Russia and Barbados regularly to be able to immerse her in those heritage languages and cultural environments.

Traveling also serves another purpose—maximizing contact time with our daughter. From her birth, we have made it a point to take her everywhere we go. Just in her first two years of life, we took her to several conferences in Japan and abroad. All the time we spent with our daughter in her early years was crucial in establishing communication patterns. Victoria, who is five years old now, is very comfortable speaking three languages, regardless of the time and place.

Reading Books

To facilitate the learning of heritage languages, we began collecting home-language materials, starting with books in both Russian and English. We both believe in the power of reading to children to develop their love for reading. Besides nurturing a child's passion for books, reading to a child is also an effective strategy when raising a child with more than one language as it provides additional heritage-language input. Thus, it was natural for us to decide from the beginning that reading would be an integral part and an effective strategy in our process. We started reading to our daughter when she was about a year old. My husband and I took turns reading to Victoria daily, usually at bedtime. Reading is an essential part of our bedtime routine, so much so that Victoria would not go to sleep without being read one. In fact, she always asks for it.

When reading, we draw Victoria's attention to illustrations and ask questions about the reading. Often, when we read a familiar story that we have read several times before, we pause and let Victoria finish a sentence. Often, when she remembers exact phrases and even sentences from a story, she insists on "reading" the parts she remembers herself. Sometimes, Victoria will even take a book and try to "read" it. Of course, she is not reading a book; rather, she is trying to retell the story in her own words. I always encourage this activity to develop Victoria's language skills in other ways and along different paths.

In the beginning, we applied the OPOL method to reading as well, not just speaking. That meant that my husband read in English, and I read only in Russian. Nowadays, however, we do not adhere to this policy strictly due to scheduling and time constraints of my husband; I often read to Victoria in both Russian and English depending on her desire. We strive to provide a balanced input in both languages when reading.

Play

We also know that play is another excellent opportunity for home-language input and teaching language in context. Victoria likes to reenact some of her favorite fairytales using her stuffed toys by asking us, her parents, to play certain characters. She also likes to employ pretend play by asking us to participate in that pretend play. Role-playing in various situations has allowed us to provide input she does not have opportunities for in heritage languages here in Japan. For example, Victoria likes to pretend to be a teacher or a shop assistant. These role-playing opportunities do not feel to Victoria as if she is being drilled; thus, they allow for natural language input to foster further language development. Playing these games in Russian allows Victoria to not only develop her vocabulary but also practice using correct case endings as a case ending shows what role a noun plays in the sentence. We also play various board and card games that serve as an excellent opportunity for vocabulary development and additional heritage-language

input. One of Victoria's favorite games is a Russian version of an English *Snakes and Ladders*. We have several versions of that game, and each version is based on either Russian fairytale's characters or well-known Russian cartoon characters. One game, in order to advance a playing piece, requires a player to recite a popular verse from a fairytale.

Media and Technology

Finally, another resource that we use for additional language input is videos on YouTube and YouTube Kids. I carefully select the shows she can watch in Russian and English, making sure that there is sufficient language input. When Victoria was smaller, she listened to many nursery rhymes in English and watched some developmental cartoons in Russian, specifically designed for toddlers, such as *Малышарик* (*Malyshariki*, known as *BabyRiki* in English).

We have observed that watching children's cartoons and videos has greatly benefitted her. We found these to be excellent occasions for vocabulary enrichment in heritage languages. We are frequently pleasantly surprised when Victoria uses heritage-language vocabulary that she has learned from watching children's cartoons on YouTube.

It is not only the quantity of input that is vital in heritage-language development but the input quality as well. As parents, we carefully choose which cartoons our daughter watches to ensure that the plot and language used are appropriate for her age.

Language Competence and Challenges

At 5 years old, our daughter freely communicates in all three languages. We attribute this to our consistent implementation of the communication / language policy we follow at home and the other strategies outlined above.

Victoria is aware that she knows three languages. She does not name the languages by their name (English, Russian and Japanese). She associates the languages with a situation in which she has to use them. Russian is referred to as a language that is "like Mama," English—"like Papa," and Japanese—"like in *hoikuen*." She is also acutely aware of what languages other people know and in what capacity (Wang, 2008). For example, she knows that her best friend can speak Japanese fluently, but with English, can only understand it without being able to use it freely.

Undoubtedly, Victoria's developing language competence and performance are influenced by the exposure she's had to these specific types of languages. Children have to deal with various learning tasks when learning different languages. For example, while learning Russian, Victoria has to learn how to use the case system, while learning English requires her to learn how to use tenses. At 5 years old, these are the two main areas where Victoria faces challenges, especially with the case system in Russian. With Japanese, Victoria's biggest challenge lies in vocabulary and socio-linguistic competence.

Besides experiencing difficulties in acquiring certain grammatical forms, Victoria also has problems pronouncing certain sounds in both Russian and English. For example, due to the influence of Japanese, Victoria finds it challenging to produce [l] and [r] sounds in both Russian and English. We have been aware that Victoria would need some professional help from a speech therapist, so approximately three months ago, we decided to employ the services of a professional we found online. We decided to start with a Russian speech therapist, as Russian phonology is where Victoria needs the most improvement. The speech therapist suggested a holistic approach that includes work on sounds and focuses on vocabulary, grammar work, and early literacy practice that emphasizes developing phonological awareness as a precursor to developing reading skills. This early literacy practice includes work on separate letters and their sounds and the development of phonological awareness when the child learns to identify the position of sounds in a word. Besides beginning the early literacy in Russian, we have also embarked on early literacy in English (Baker, 2014). We hope that maybe in a year, at around six years old, Victoria will be ready to start learning how to read in both Russian and English. Thus

far, we are proud of our success in trilingualism and are now prepared to begin the path towards tri-literacy.

Conclusion

At present, Victoria can understand and communicate in all three languages—Russian, English, and Japanese. Of course, her vocabulary in each language is not equivalent to that of monolingual children in their respective languages. Still, she can express her thoughts in all three languages and understand what is said (Bialystok & Barac, 2013). Victoria has just started her path towards literacy as we started teaching her letters in both Russian and English. We are planning for Victoria to go to a Japanese elementary school, so she will acquire literacy in Japanese there.

It is possible to raise a multilingual child and pass on the parents' heritage languages despite all odds of two foreign parents raising a trilingual child in Japan. It is vital to start at birth and be consistent with the chosen strategies so that speaking more than one language becomes natural to the child. When making a choice to raise a bilingual / multilingual child, parents need to be aware that the road ahead will not be easy and will require sacrifices and investment of resources and time. However, despite all the difficulties, raising children with more than one language is ultimately rewarding and beneficial as knowing more than one language has potential advantages. So we keep marching on!

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Beyond the Childhood English Learning Circle: Where Are They Now?

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As a regular contributor to BSIG's *Bilingual Japan* newsletter and participant at various national and international conferences, I have written and presented over the years about various aspects of leading an English literacy learning circle, which I did for about fourteen years (see where it all began as reported in Provenzano, 2007). Participants in our learning circle—known to its members as Kidz Group—came and went over the years, but the core members, including my own children, stayed involved for many years. The group folded when the majority of participants (including myself!) became too busy to meet regularly, and life carried each of us off on our own path. In this commemorative BSIG monograph, I revisit the group that played such a large part in my family's life, to check in with some of the participants to see where they are now, and to ask them to reflect on the old days.

I conducted interviews with three former learning circle members: Cam¹, Anna¹, and my own daughter, Sophia (who co-wrote an article with me for another monograph—see Provenzano & Provenzano, 2013). I chose these three because they represent different versions of a group that can collectively be called Cross-Culture Kids (CCKs), following the terminology of Pollock and Van Reken (2009) in their book about Third Culture Kids (TCKs). Cam has mixed roots, having been born to a Canadian father and Japanese mother and raised in Japan. Anna is a *kikokushijo* (帰国子女, returnee), whose family spent two years in Canada when Anna was in elementary school. Sophia is a TCK, born and raised in Japan by her Canadian father and me.

Now all young adults in their third or fourth year of university, these three shared with me their memories of Kidz Group, and described where their journeys led them in the years after the group folded. Following are the highlights of those interviews, conducted via Zoom in November and December, 2020.

Do you remember how or why you got involved in Kidz Group?

The group started as a playgroup when Sophia and Cam were barely toddlers, so as the children of Kidz Group's founding families, both of them say that they cannot remember a time when they did not gather with the group every week on Saturday. They both report understanding from an early age that the basic purpose of Kidz Group was to spend time in English with other English-speaking friends. Anna was older—grade four—when her family met Cam's at a local ice rink. After falling into conversation with Anna's parents and doing a rudimentary language level check with Anna, Cam's father invited her to join the group. Off-screen during our Zoom interview, Anna's mother interjected, saying she was concerned that the language gains Anna had made while living in Canada were being lost. She saw the group as a chance for Anna to retain what she had learned and, hopefully, make further progress.

How did you feel about spending your Saturdays at Kidz Group?

For context, a typical Kidz Group meeting started with structured English literacy activities, such as workbook pages, spelling contests, pair reading activities, songs, or art projects. Once finished, most families stayed on so the children could play together, and several families would usually have lunch together before parting ways. All three interviewees sheepishly admitted that they liked going to Kidz Group not because they necessarily enjoyed the English literacy activities, but

¹ Names have been changed to preserve privacy.

because it was fun to spend time with their friends there. When he answered my question, Cam shrugged and said the Saturday morning meetings were “just what we did on Saturdays.” Sophia commented that the English literacy activities were “something we had to do before we got to play,” while Anna laughed and said, “I don’t remember much about the English activities. Mostly I was happy to go there to see Sophie, Cam, and all my Kidz Group friends!” Indeed, legendary floor hockey and sumo matches took place on the well-worn tatami mats of the old community center where we used to meet. In our later venue, after time spent on Internet projects and group work, there was free time for the participants to share stories and experiences from their respective schools, watch funny YouTube videos together, or play board games while parents chatted.

It seems clear that the weekly gatherings, while ostensibly for the explicit purpose of English language and literacy instruction, served a deeper purpose. The network of English-speaking families became an important English-speaking community with which the children could identify. While at school some children were shy to reveal their English abilities because of the pressure of undue attention from monolingual classmates and teachers, at Kidz Group they were expected to play with their peers in English, and it was “cool” to be good at the various skills that were being taught. The strong social bonds and the opportunity to play week after week with these close friends became intrinsically motivating for the members to continue to make progress. The social bonds were important to the parents, too, who shared resources, knowledge, and support with each other.

Tell me some memories that you have from Kidz Group days—the good, bad, even the ugly!

While I—a Kidz Group leader—have clear memories of lesson planning, materials, projects, field trips and learning objectives, I was curious to know which activities and experiences were memorable and rewarding for the participants.

Cam and Sophia—veteran Kidz Group members—remember a time in the early days of the group when we hired a musician to join our weekly gatherings. He played a guitar and sang various children’s songs, which got everybody on their feet, singing at the top of their lungs. Cam and Sophia both remember loving “Knees up, Mother Brown” and being fascinated by the guitar and the musician’s ability to make it sing. The focus had turned to literacy by the time Anna joined, and all the interviewees remember thick, colorful elementary level workbooks, beginning readers, and learning cursive script as their writing skills made progress. Sophia remarks, “I remember thinking cursive was so cool, and thinking I was a lot better at it than I was!”

Cam, Anna and Sophia remember enjoying activities seemingly unrelated to literacy as the lesson planning began to swing to project-based activities. They recalled burrito-making and tie-dying, as well as field trips to the library and swimming at local waterholes in the hot season. Kidz Group’s epic Halloween parties are also a favorite memory for everyone, and we continued to gather for them for a few years even after the group folded.

All three interviewees remember being excited about the chance to use computers for some of our projects. For example, they learned the basics of MS Word when creating a guidebook to the local area for Cam’s cousins, who were visiting from Canada. They also used the Internet to research various topics for presentations, in addition to creating PowerPoint slides. They sometimes used these to present live to other group members, or narrated them in Voicethread. Another ongoing project they enjoyed was creating online diaries using Blogger and commenting on each other’s posts.

As one of the group’s leaders, it was rewarding to hear this retrospective feedback. As noted in Provenzano (2015), learning circles like Kidz Group offer the chance for educational enrichment. My children attended local public elementary and junior high schools, and they told me that they had the opportunity to go to the junior high’s computer room just once or twice in the whole school year. With basic IT skills being of vital importance in today’s higher education

(and daily life in general), it was clear to my learning circle co-leader and I that introducing our members to the basics of word processing and presentation software, as well as Internet safety and critical thinking in evaluating sources, would address an obvious gap in their public school education. Hearing that the participants also viewed it as fun and valuable affirmed that we made a good choice.

As for the “ugly,” the interviewees did not have many stories to share. It may be that none of them felt comfortable speaking critically about the group to me, a parent and leader of the group. I did learn, however, that there may have been an occasional sense of dashed expectations when some projects failed to get off the ground. For example, buoyed by the great success of the guidebook we all collaborated on, we set out to make an accompanying set of YouTube videos. Anna remembers wondering why, after a few initial pilot video shoots, the project didn’t make progress. Sophia also reports feeling, in the waning days of the group, that it had lost focus. Indeed, as many of the members became busier with schoolwork and club activities, it became more difficult to see projects through because of absenteeism. We also lost members, as Cam and his family moved away and others dropped out because of their increasingly busy schedules. The takeaway for people currently involved in their own learning circle or thinking of starting one might be to establish firm attendance policies and clearer aims for project outcomes. I admit to a seat-of-your-pants, project-by-project curriculum development strategy that certainly left a lot of room for improvement! In hindsight, shifting to shorter-term, bite-size projects rather than weeks- or months-long marathons might have better suited the changing schedules of participants as their own school lives became busier.

What have you been doing since Kidz Group ended?

Kidz Group folded around the time that Cam and Anna entered high school and Sophia was in her last year of junior high. They each recounted some of the events that followed for them as individuals, and gave a glimpse into what the future may hold for them.

Anna

Anna entered her ward’s top-ranked public high school on *suisen* (推薦, recommendation) based partly on the strength of her English skills. In her self-introduction at the *suisen* interview, she explained her participation in Kidz Group and described some of the projects she had been involved in. Her Kidz Group experience again proved advantageous a year or two later when she was one of just twelve high school students in the city chosen for a study abroad program in Oxford. The committee awarded her a scholarship for the program after reviewing her application, in which she wrote in detail about projects like the guidebook, blogging, and presentation activities.

Anna set her sights on studying medicine at university after graduating from high school. She did not pass the entrance test the first time, so she spent a year preparing to re-take it, passing it the second year. She is now engrossed in her university life. I asked her what role English has in her life these days and she reports that her university English classes are, “Too easy for me!” She says that the oral skills classes in particular fail to challenge her, so she is a little worried about losing her speaking skills. However, she hopes to continue her studies in medicine overseas in the future.

Sophia

Sophia finished junior high after the group folded, and was planning to take the entrance test for our ward’s top-ranked public high school when we found a tempting notice on our city’s international school’s web page—the opportunity to apply for a substantial entrance scholarship. For financial reasons we had not really considered the international school up to that point, but Sophia had plans to apply to a Canadian university after high school, and thought that studying in English would be a great way to prepare for that. The application required her to answer a

number of short essay questions—in English, of course—and then she sat through an hour-long interview. Happily, she was granted the scholarship and went on to earn an International Baccalaureate (IB) bilingual diploma at the international school. (The IB bilingual diploma is awarded to students who take English and one other language at “A,” or native, level.)

Pursuing the IB Diploma turned out to be a good choice for Sophia, who was offered a place at her favored university in Canada. She is now in her third year of sciences and, like Anna, is considering a career in medicine. Taking up residence in the country of her citizenship for the first time has been a challenging new experience for her. She has embraced life in Canada, but has also sought opportunities to connect with Japanese language and culture. Fortunately, her university has a Japan Association that she has become involved with, and she is lucky that this year one of her roommates is also from Japan—a CCK like Cam, with one Canadian and one Japanese parent. The roommates’ shared language and life experiences have been comforting for both of them, especially during the strangeness of the Covid-19 pandemic.

When asked if she felt participating in the learning circle played any part in taking her down the international school/IB path that led her to her current situation, Sophia reflected:

I don’t think I would have been able to write the application [for the international school entrance scholarship] if it wasn’t for Kidz Group, because where would I have learned to write in English? I would have had no skills... It’s like, you don’t learn to write *kanji* (漢字, Chinese characters) without practicing it, and so Kidz Group was the place where I got that kind of practice [for writing in English]. ... I think without developing English literacy at Kidz Group, I could even have been placed in [IB] English B [rather than native-level English A] if I had tried to go to the international school without any prior English writing experience.

Aside from gaining the advantage of literacy in English, Sophia also said this about her experience in Kidz Group activities: “It probably influenced the way I participate in discussions, and how I voice my opinion—or how *much* I voice my opinion.”

Cam

Cam and his siblings continued to take part in Kidz Group sporadically even after they moved away. We would set them up on Skype so they could listen in and take part, but that ended when the group folded. Like Anna, Cam entered his favored high school on *suisen*, thanks in large part to his strong English skills. After graduation, he went on to an English-medium program at a university in Tokyo, which included a life-changing year abroad in Spain, where he got a good start on his third language. A senior now, he has decided not to go through the job-hunting process just yet. Instead, he is preparing to take the Foreign Service Exam. If he passes, it will allow him to enter diplomatic service for Japan.

I asked Cam if he feels that participating in the learning circle impacted his post-Kidz Group life in any way. This was his reply:

I talk about Kidz Group to my friends when I try to explain my background. [They ask,] “How did you learn to speak English like that?” Every time I’d explain to them, I wouldn’t just tell them, “Yeah, my Dad spoke to me in English.” I’d explain to them this whole idea of Kidz Group and you teaching us, like, the literacy stuff later on. But at first it was just, you know, kids getting together, and spending time with our parents, using English... that sort of thing. And I’d always explain to them about how I had all these non-Japanese friends or *haafu* (ハーフ, mixed roots) friends, and that it was basically a really big part of my childhood. That’s how I explain it to my friends. You know, I think about it more than I think about elementary school as a childhood experience. It’s one of the biggest parts of my childhood.

Conclusion

These former Kidz Group members each walked a different path in developing their bi- and multi-lingualism, with myriad influences and learning opportunities aside from the learning circle that contributed to their growth as bilinguals and as ambitious, open-minded global citizens. However, their reflections on the role Kidz Group played suggest that it acted both as a support to their ongoing English language development and as a kind of catalyst giving them access to some of the opportunities that came to each of them later. For Anna, the chance to build on the English skills she originally gained in Canada led to further international experiences, growing confidence, and greater options for her bright future in medicine. For Sophia, the communication skills and confidence in English literacy she gained by being a part of the learning circle opened doors to educational options and experiences that have led to both academic and personal growth. And for Cam, the Kidz Group community that played such a large role in his childhood seems to have contributed to his subsequent academic successes, which have in turn inspired his ambitious goal to enter the foreign service. So, in answering the question, “Where are they now?” I can happily say that Kidz Group has sent them off, each en route to a unique and exciting destination. Stay tuned...

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On the Importance of Having a Bi-ethnic Japanese (*Haafu*) Role Model

Danielle Legault Kurihara

In this narrative, I highlight the importance of a bi-ethnic Japanese (*haafu*) celebrity as a role model in the lives of two young bi-ethnic Japanese men raised in Japan. One of them, Leo, has a French-Canadian mother (me) and a Japanese father. As for Kentaro, Leo's friend, I interviewed him and his Brazilian mother for the purpose of this article.

First, I draw parallels between their backgrounds and that of their role model. Second, I give examples of both their experiences forging their identities in the secondary Japanese school system as bi-ethnic Japanese among their Japanese peers. Finally, I discuss how their bi-ethnic Japanese role model helped them pull through to the point where both interviewees made personal contact with this celebrity, and his impact on their future choices. (Please note: the terms "bi-ethnic Japanese" and *haafu* will be used interchangeably in this article.)

"Your child will take you on unexpected adventures!"
(my mother, reassuring me in my moments of doubt)

Backgrounds

Leo

In our home, we consistently adhered to the one parent, one language (OPOL) approach. I am a French/English bilingual French-Canadian and I am also a high beginner in Japanese (speaking and listening) and Spanish. Leo's father is a native speaker of Japanese with high beginner French and English abilities. Leo speaks to me exclusively in French, using English only if we are in the company of English speakers. He has only ever spoken to his father in Japanese. Leo's father and I speak our own language to each other; that is, I use French and he uses Japanese, and we both use English occasionally depending on the topic *du jour*. In fact, throughout Leo's childhood, we declared Wednesday to be "English Day" and the three of us had great fun using it as a lingua franca. In the beginning, when Leo was about three years old, we were amused when he took on the role of family interpreter, but we soon encouraged him by pretending that each parent had no clue what the other was saying. Being a mini language and intercultural expert served Leo well later on.

The same could be said of Masato David Hayakawa, the bi-ethnic Japanese lead singer of Coldrain, an internationally-acclaimed Japanese rock band founded in 2007, who became a positive role model for Leo. Lloyd (2015) writes:

[Coldrain's] music is looking to connect with people in their homelands by embracing their own culture while also looking to the influences of the US and UK metal scenes to help it grow. ... It sees them combine an Eastern charm with Western sensibilities, writing music to resonate with everyone, regardless of the country they may be from. (para. 13)

Because I lacked the Japanese skills to help with Leo's homework except English, I admit that I shamelessly bribed him and coached him into attaining a high score on the TOEIC test. He thanks me now. His idol, professionally known as Masato, also learned English from his mother according to Cuttheropeandlivefree (n. d.), who interviewed Masato during a tour in England and was told that although Masato hated being "forced" to learn English, he is grateful for it now.

Once Leo became mired in the cesspool of junior high school homework and club activities, my efforts to continue French reading and writing petered out, but not before preparing (and bribing) him at 14 to pass the basic level of the French test Diplôme d'Aptitude Pratique au Français (DAPF), known in Japanese as *Futsuken* (for more information, please see *Futsuken no tokuchou to meritto* [Merits of the French Test], n.d.). Staying with his French-Speaking relatives and friends in Quebec (some born in other countries, such as Tunisia and

Colombia) for two months a year and spending time with my mother during her yearly two-month stay in Japan helped cement his French language, membership to my culture (cultural identity) and intercultural skills.

Masato seems to have had the same experience of spending vacation months in the United States as a child. Lloyd (2015) writes:

“I grew up listening to Michael Jackson, Mariah Carey, artists like that” explains the singer. “Then when I was in Junior High, 1999 I think, that was the first time I saw Limp Bizkit on MTV. I was on vacation with my parents in the US and I saw the video for *Nookie*. I instantly thought, [expletive], that is what I want to do.” (para. 5)

Masato became a fixture in our house around 2012, when our son Leo was 14 years old. We tried our best to show interest in the posters and the music, the dyed blond hair and the tattoos, without realizing the positive impact Masato would eventually have on our struggling teenager. Leo was keen to discuss Masato’s English lyrics with me. Indeed, Masato performs his songs in English, which is Leo’s additional language. Lloyd (2015) notes that Masato wants to embrace multiculturalism through his music: “With Masato being half-American, he made the decision to sing in English, something quite unique in Japan, as he set out to make music that encapsulates both sides of his personal heritage” (para. 13).

Kentaro

Kentaro, like Leo, found Masato and Coldrain’s music videos online at the age of 14. He says they had such a powerful impact on him that he immediately gained a new perspective on his identity struggles as a *haafu*. Thanks to his Brazilian mother teaching him English from the age of six to thirteen, he was able to understand English lyrics. Indeed, his mother, a non-native English teacher for small children, knew that English would be an asset for her son’s future in Japan. At first, like me, she bristled at Masato’s music and at his tattoos. We have both lived in Japan for a long time and perhaps we have become accustomed to tattoos and piercings as evidence of “delinquent youth” because they are still really frowned upon here. On the other hand, also like me, she was impressed by Masato’s life story and achievements as a bi-ethnic Japanese raised in Japan, just like our sons.

Kentaro, born and raised in Japan, is a native speaker of Japanese like Leo, and he can also communicate in Portuguese and English. His mother is fluent in Portuguese, Japanese and English. She speaks to her son mostly in Portuguese, while he answers her in Portuguese about 30% of the time, but usually uses Japanese with her. While Kentaro’s father is also multilingual in English, Portuguese and Japanese, father and son speak only Japanese together. His parents use Japanese as their common language. Kentaro spent a few months in Brazil at the ages of 3 and 9 years old. He reports that he started deciphering written Portuguese after learning how to read in English.

Thinking about her son’s place in Japan, Kentaro’s mother affirms that she never gave much thought to the meaning of the word *haafu*. Looking back on it now, the only moment when she felt a difference because her son was raised by her, a foreigner, was when she enrolled him in kindergarten. The school required that her son be able to speak Japanese. At that time, he was only speaking in Portuguese with her at home.

Kentaro’s mother says she has never considered labels such as *haafu* or *gaijin* (外人, foreigner; literally “outsider”) as a barrier to life in Japan. She believes that when one accepts their own identity as it is, in its true form, it won’t matter what others say about it. The label won’t carry any weight, nor will it be an important factor for the person concerned. As for me, I never gave much thought to these labels either, until they took on negative meaning when Leo was bullied and ostracised in junior high school. Recently I asked Leo if the word *haafu* bothered him and if he would prefer *double*. In his opinion, I was making a mountain out of a mole hill! Kentaro said that the label *haafu* gradually lost any meaning for him because he knows who he is and that will never change.

Fitting into the Japanese Secondary School System

Leo

Our son Leo attended a combined junior and senior high school where he was the only *haafu* among 960 Japanese peers. During his first year, he made friends and was able to follow the study pace. Then the wheels fell off the bus, the main problems being teasing and ostracism by Japanese peers and the soccer coach, and the ensuing feeling of not belonging anywhere. He developed severe stomach aches and a debilitating school phobia. He left school shortly after starting the second grade of junior high and was tutored at home for the remainder of junior high school, a time when identity develops and when Japanese children are expected to conform to their peers.

This period was very trying for our family. It brought up differences in education styles and cultural expectations between Leo's father and me, and between myself and the school, not to mention Leo's own fear, worry, depression and pain caused by the bullying and not going to school. As parents, we both hit a very hard cultural wall. Although a well-meaning homeroom teacher, a kind and understanding head teacher and a retired teacher-turned-school counsellor tried to help us, the help was, in our view, quite amateurish. We felt very alone and misunderstood. We both fought the school tooth and nail about the ostracism and bullying but the onus to find a solution fell squarely on us, especially Leo. This time, however, the usual suggestions from the school like spending the day doing school work in the nurse's office, or meaningless advice like *gambatte* (頑張つて, try your best) and *daijobu* (大丈夫, it's ok) did not cut it. In fact, during this same period, three Japanese families in our circle of friends withdrew their children from junior high school for the same reasons. Two families sent their children to schools abroad and one family homeschooled their child.

Music played a significant role in our son's wellbeing as it so often does in the life of teenagers. We bought him an electric guitar and drove him and his school friends (they kept in touch) to studio practice twice a week. At 16, he started attending high school two days a week. He was glad to be with his friends although he was still "inadvertently" shoved in the halls by some. Regrettably but understandably, he still suffered from a debilitating school phobia, which would hound him to university. Leo's experience is not unique. A Mainichi Shimbun article (Mito, 2019) reports on a 2018 survey on bullying conducted by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology:

A record high of 602 serious cases in which some kind of grave harm is believed to have been done to a student mentally, physically or financially, or in which a student has not been present at school for a long period of time, were reported. Broken down by school, 188 serious incidents were reported at elementary schools, 288 at junior high schools, 122 at high schools, and four at special education schools. (para. 8)

In spite of the pressure, Leo found the courage to be himself at his high school's *bunkasai* (文化祭, school culture festival). In his own words: "In my senior year, I was ready to walk on stage and play my music in front of the whole school, teachers included. I was proud of myself. I showed them who I am. That's what Masato does. He's *haafu* and he's successful." After the performance, many classmates talked to him for the first time, including some who had relentlessly called him an outsider and others who had shunned him—"Sorry, no room for YOU in the soccer changing room." Suddenly, he was a cool *haafu*, the other side of the being-a-*haafu* coin. Leo's self-confidence soared. When I asked Leo why he dyed his hair for the school reunion on Japan's Coming of Age Day he was amused: "I was made to feel like a *gaijin*. Well, here I am, in all my glory!"

Kentaro

Kentaro was practically the only bi-ethnic Japanese in his primary and junior high schools in Saitama. Early on, from the age of six, he developed a complex about having a foreign mother and being "of double blood," as he puts it. Like Leo, he was marginalised by his Japanese peers

and called a *gaijin*. He was sick and tired of being examined like an animal in a zoo and of other children making constant remarks about his naturally curly hair. Although he tried to ignore it, he felt tremendous anger. Leo and Kentaro are not alone in suffering this kind of abuse at school. The 2018 government survey reported on by Mito (2019) mentions that “in the 2018 academic year results, verbal abuse and teasing was the highest registered behavior, accounting for 62.7% of such cases, at 341,270” (para. 6).

Fortunately, Masato’s music and successful stage presence as a bi-ethnic Japanese elevated Kentaro’s self-image and moved him forward. Thanks to Masato, who seemed to be using his circumstances as a bilingual, bi-ethnic Japanese to his advantage, Kentaro felt positive about his own background for the first time. As a result, Kentaro, like Leo, emulated Masato by playing the guitar, composing and performing onstage with his band. Instead of hiding, both Kentaro and Leo started embracing their bi-ethnic Japanese identity. Kentaro says, “Masato changed my mindset about myself and my life. He boosted my confidence.”

For both Leo and Kentaro the turning point came in high school, when suddenly it was cool to be a bi-ethnic Japanese. Performing music on stage added a layer of glamour but it required a process of appreciating themselves for who they were. Masato, a famous bi-ethnic Japanese role model for Leo and Kentaro—if an unconventional one for us parents—certainly paved the way.

Meeting Your *Haafu* Role Model When You’re Down And Out

In his final year of high school, 2017, Leo submitted an interview and a song cover video to an NHK television special organized by a Japanese rock band (NHK, n. d.). To his astonishment, Masato tweeted about his performance. During this period, Leo took in a few Coldrain concerts around Japan. During the filming of a music video commemorating Coldrain’s 10th anniversary, Leo says that Masato spotted him among 200 extras. Masato shook his hand and said, “I was sure you were coming.” At the same event, Kentaro recognized Leo from the NHK program. Not only did they share the same taste in music, they also came from similar backgrounds. Later on, they often met in Tokyo and talked about, among other things, their challenges as bi-ethnic Japanese in the school system.

A third meeting with their role model took place in a Tokyo live concert venue where Leo was a part-time bartender. Leo and Kentaro told me that one night Masato came in to see a show. He recognized Leo, who thanked him for being such an inspiration. He also invited Kentaro and Leo to share the stage with him one day. Furthermore, in response to Kentaro thanking him for his positive influence on him as a bi-ethnic Japanese, Masato related having had similar experiences as a child. Apparently, he also generously shared voice training tips!

Future Choices

Leo, now 22, lives in Yokohama. He writes and sings in English, like Masato. He performs in Tokyo with a well-established band and—until the coronavirus pandemic started—they were booked to tour Japan and Asia. The four musicians come from diverse backgrounds: Leo is *haafu*, French-Canadian and Japanese and an English-speaker; the founder/vocalist (also an English-speaker) and the drummer are Japanese; and the guitarist is a trilingual Taiwanese. In addition to creating music, Leo is pursuing a TESOL teaching certificate. He is also making excellent use of his multilingualism by working as an interpreter (French and English) for visiting foreign bands. Furthermore, Leo has found work translating lyrics and coaching Japanese artists seeking to perform in English. His clients include both established bands and up-and-comers, all of whom want their lyrics to include comprehensible, colloquial English.

Kentaro, now 23, remembers what Masato, a bi-ethnic Japanese like himself, said on stage during a performance: “Do what you want to do.” (Read more about Masato’s life philosophy in Ghilarducci [2015].) Following his role model’s advice, Kentaro pursued a degree in IT because he loves computers. He likes his workplace and his colleagues. Kentaro also performs his music

on stage in Tokyo. He comments that he is proud of his strong points as a *haafu*. He can speak Portuguese better than any Japanese person he knows of and he can understand different cultures.

Conclusion

In closing, Kentaro repeated to me the old cliché of, “No music, no life,” but he says it is true for him. Leo, after the darkness of junior high school, declared, “Mom, without music I would not have survived.” As a matter of fact, some don’t. Reporting on a survey by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, Chiwaki and Narita (2019) write:

According to the latest survey results, in the 2018 academic year there were five suicides by elementary school students, 100 at junior high school level and 227 among high school students. The total for high school students has risen by 67 over the previous academic year. (para. 4)

As parents, we worried constantly about our son fitting in and functioning well in Japanese society, but his determination to forge his own path was much stronger than our expectations. Once we really *listened* to him, let go of our version of what “fitting in” means (although he was made to feel like he didn’t fit in), we recognized and appreciated his efforts to reach his goals. Needless to say, there were times in that process when we felt helpless, guilty and afraid that not following Japanese paths to success would mean further alienation for our son.

His current reality is completely the opposite. Our well-adjusted, bi-ethnic Japanese son holds valuable assets: his languages, his intrinsic and compassionate understanding of cultural differences and his ease with people of different ages and backgrounds. The best decision we ever made was to let go of internal and external expectations and support our son in his choices. He found his niche, his *ikigai* (生きがい, reason for being), and he is thriving and fitting in on his own terms.

Kentaro's mother believes that despite all the challenges the children faced, they have managed to overcome them and grow up to become strong and empathetic individuals. She appreciates Masato for positively inspiring our children. She feels that, nowadays, Japan is, fortunately, coming to view *haafu* through different eyes. She says, “I hope that our children, Leo and Kentaro, also influence other young people in this country.”

We’ve never met Masato in person, but we owe him. And his mother.

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Keys to Becoming Both Bilingual and Bicultural: An Interview

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This interview was conducted on November 17, 2020. Erika¹ is a 20-year-old Japanese woman residing in Kumamoto City. She was born and raised in Japan, but studied abroad in Canada for one year during high school.

For a Japanese person who has Japanese parents and has lived in Japan almost their whole life, becoming both bilingual and bicultural is quite a lofty goal. But for Erika, her short time studying abroad became a catalyst that not only dramatically raised her English ability but also changed her overall outlook on life. Her story shows that for some young people study abroad experiences can lead to self-realizations that go far beyond language development. This article summarizes the highlights of an oral interview the author had with Erika as she discusses her own journey to bilingualism/biculturalism, her views on Japanese versus Western educational styles, and the advice she wants to impart to other young Japanese people.

Tell me about your childhood and what motivated you to study English as a child, especially since both your parents are Japanese?

OK. So when I was a little, my parents couldn't speak English at all. So they wanted me and my sister to learn and be able to speak English. I was just having fun to learn English, and I didn't think about being "motivated"; it was just fun.

How young was that when you first started? Do you remember?

I think I was three years old.

Was this at an *eikaiwa* (英会話, English conversation) school?

Yeah, an English conversation school. Do you know ECC?

But ECC is more private lessons, right? You had a private Japanese teacher to learn English with near your house? And you continued those lessons for how long?

Yeah, that's right. I continued for about 10 years, until junior high school.

Why did you stop doing those lessons in junior high school? Was it because you became too busy?

I think my teacher had just quit ECC, so I just stopped at that time and didn't search for a new teacher.

Did you ever go on trips abroad or have foreigners do homestays at your home when you were a small child? Were there any other influences on you or was it just ECC?

Actually, my parents are really busy, so when I was a child, we didn't go on any trips abroad, or even in Japan. But when I was in junior high school in 7th grade, I went to Australia for two weeks for a special school trip, so at that time I found English to be even more interesting than before. And also, after I came back from Australia, my family accepted a study-abroad student from Australia, who was from the host family I had while I had stayed there.

That must have been a great experience for you. Was that with your whole school?

No, I had to take a [language] test and interview, and only six people could go. Our town paid a little for us. It was a type of scholarship program.

That's very good. So moving on... you wanted to study abroad a lot in high school, right? Tell me about why you didn't wait until university? Not everyone, but I think most Japanese students who study abroad do that in university with an exchange program.

Yeah, I think study abroad at university is more common in Japan. But for me, I decided not to go to university because I wanted to become a police officer. I wanted to go to police school first right after high school.

So you thought if you wanted to study abroad that you needed to do it in high school?

Yeah, that's right.

And so, your high school had many programs? Or did you search for one by yourself?

Actually, I think there was a poster about an exchange program and I just applied for it.

So it was a nation-wide program and any [high school] student could apply for it?

Yes.

So that makes sense. You weren't planning to go to university, so that's why you wanted to do the program. After being accepted, you went abroad to Canada, right? Was it your only choice?

No, there were a few other countries. But I had to take an English test first and my score determined which countries I could choose from. My choices were Canada, Australia, and Ireland.

So why Canada then? Why not Australia, a country you had been to before?

I wanted to go to a different country than I had already been to. And I had heard some people say that Ireland has a strong accent, so I thought Canada would be a good place to go.

Tell me about your experience in the Canadian high school. What were your best memories and maybe some that you would rather forget?

The experience was really good for me. It was really fun. But at the same time, it was a hard time for me, too. At first, I couldn't speak English at all, so no one could understand me. It was a kind of culture shock, especially for the first month.

Wait, I thought your English level because of ECC lessons was already good?

Yeah, I had confidence before I went, but when I arrived there my pronunciation was not good. So I tried to fix it. I wanted people to understand me more. Then I could make friends and I could communicate with others. My best memory was my host family because they were so nice and took me to many places in Canada and the USA also.

And school life was good?

Yeah, I joined some sports clubs. But the place where I was [was] really rural, so there were just white people and they had never seen Asian people. They weren't racist, but they had stereotypes of Asian people, so that wasn't very nice.

What stereotype did they have that you didn't like or thought was very strange?

They think Japanese people are very smart and nerdy. Japanese say *otaku* (おたく, nerd). And then I couldn't speak English very well at first, so I couldn't tell them who I really was as a person. So they just saw me and judged me.

Were these high school students or the community?

The kids at school, not the community.

So that was the most negative experience then? Dealing with stereotypes at the beginning? No other bad experiences?

No, not really.

You have already talked a little bit about pronunciation. What did you do while in Canada to improve your pronunciation?

I think before I went to Canada that my accent was a bit British. Japanese people often speak English more with a British accent than American accent. But in Canada nobody could understand my accent, so I had to change it. I did a lot of practice with YouTube videos, listened to podcasts, and did a lot of shadowing. I did those things over and over again.

How long did it take you before people really could understand you well? Was it a few months or faster? Only a few weeks?

No, it took a long time. I think my pronunciation finally got better after about six months. I think in the one year I really improved my English skills. But it was not enough, and I feel like after I came back from Canada, I improved even more. Because I could know how to learn English and practice my pronunciation.

So, after you came back to Japan, you kept studying, but basically on your own?

Yes.

I remember that you told me before that you enjoy using English more than Japanese, even though you are a native Japanese speaker. Why is that?

Umm... I feel that when I speak with Japanese people, I feel some distance.

Are you talking about the *uchi* (内, insider) versus *soto* (外, outsider) concept?

Yeah, it's a cultural thing. Even if the person I am talking to is about the same age as me, I have to use *keigo* (敬語, honorific language). So we don't get that close. But in English, we can just be friends easily.

Yeah, we [Westerners] don't worry about that as much. Of course, it is good to be polite, but it's different than Japanese politeness. So, is that the main reason then... you feel more relaxed in English?

Yeah, I can say my feelings directly to people when I'm speaking English, but not in Japanese.

You mentioned culture... how bi-cultural do you consider yourself? Do you relate better with Western culture even though you are 100% Japanese?

Before I went to Canada, I had lived in Japan my whole life, so I didn't know any other culture. I was 100% Japanese. But after I went to Canada, I learned a lot about Western culture and it fits me well.

Let me go back to topic of studying because you said that when you came back from Canada, you were still studying and doing it mostly on your own. What are your methods? I think some readers would like to hear some advice about how to become bilingual and/or bicultural. Do you have any general advice?

I think the most important thing is having fun because sometimes Japanese people think studying English is just writing, or that it's hard work, but it's actually fun if you can talk with

native speakers. For me personally, I really love English, so I can enjoy myself. If you want to learn English you have to study English, but at the same time, we can communicate with a lot of different people.

Having fun is of course very important. But in Japan usually it's all about the tests, right? So, there's no fun. When you were growing up in junior high or high school, did you think English was not fun? Before you studied abroad, what did you think about it?

To be honest, I liked it!

Perhaps because you had studied it from three years old, you could enjoy English from a young age? You didn't care about your (English) test scores?

No, I cared, a lot! Because I studied hard. But my pronunciation was not good. I want other people to study pronunciation more, and not just writing. I think a good way to do that is YouTube and listening to podcasts.

Well at schools they might not use YouTube much, but if students did pronunciation practice together as a group, it wouldn't be that embarrassing, I think. Not just one person on their own. You can have some fun, and perhaps use a song to practice.

Yeah, I agree.

Talking about education in general, and from your own experiences, what are your thoughts on Japanese versus Western-style education?

I think Japanese education is old style because elementary to high school we have to learn every subject. So, I think we students are very late in understanding what our strengths and weaknesses are. But in Western schools—for example, my high school in Canada—we can choose the subjects we want to learn. So, students there can know what their strengths are and can learn more specifically about certain subjects.

That's a very good point. In America, too, we can choose some of the subjects we want to take; for example, art, band, or choir. We also divide classes based on level, such as upper English or lower English, etc. So you know what your strengths and weaknesses are early on.

In Japan everyone is just the same. So it's not really fun.

And Japanese students must choose their major before they enroll in university, even though some students don't know what they want to do. And then later they might think they don't like their major, but it's difficult to change at that point. In America, the first year or two is general education—*kyoyo kyoiku* (教養教育)—and then we choose our major after that. So that's another big difference between Japan and Western universities.

Right.

Now let's talk a little bit about your future. What are your future plans and how do you hope to use English in the future?

I want to use English for the rest of my life from now on. For me personally, I don't want to speak Japanese anymore.

You are thinking about moving to Canada or America?

Yes. I have a dream that before I die, I want to be able to speak English perfectly, like a native speaker.

That's a tough goal! I think you are very good already, but it's so difficult to become like a native speaker as an adult. I'll never be a native speaker of Japanese, obviously, but I can live in Japan

just fine of course. But that's an interesting dream... maybe if you live abroad your English could become essentially perfect eventually.

Yeah, I hope so.

How about work? What do you think? You're still very young... only 20 years old now. Will you get a job if you move abroad?

I'm thinking about teaching English abroad, or teaching Japanese to foreigners abroad.

Right... in a school somewhere. There are many, many choices available to you. Teaching English would probably be better in Japan, but you already said you don't want to stay here.

No, I really don't.

Speaking of the future, when did you decide that that was the path you wanted to take? Was it after Canada that you had already decided you wanted to go back? Or was it after living in Japan again for a little bit?

Actually, I decided when I was in Canada because I feel life abroad fits me well. But actually, before I went to Canada, I made a promise with my family that if I were to go to Canada, I would have to be a police officer right after I came back because at that time they had agreed to pay for me to study abroad. So instead of going to university, they wanted me to go to police school right after high school.

So they made you make that promise to them, but the reality is that when you came back from Canada, you went back to high school again and didn't end up going to police officer school. So how did you change your parents' minds? Because essentially you broke your promise to them.

Well, actually, after I came back from Canada, my personality had totally changed and I was able to say my feelings and my opinions directly to my parents. So we could talk and have a really serious conversation. And then they could really understand me. And they understood that I had changed a lot [while abroad], and my opinion about what I wanted to do with my life changed as well, and they respected that.

They respected your new way of thinking. That's good, then. So before Canada you were kind of a typical Japanese who couldn't express their feelings directly? But after you came back you could speak from your heart?

Yes. Before, I wanted to be a police officer, but it wasn't just that. My parents gave me the road (to become a police officer) and I had to follow it. But I felt sometimes that I wasn't sure it was the right thing to do. I had something inside of me that was fighting against it at the same time. After I went to Canada everything changed.

But aren't you worried about leaving Japan and your family behind?

Actually, I'm not worried at all about that because I think everyone has their own dream; to achieve or to do something. But sometimes they worry too much about it and they give up. I think that isn't good. So I try not to worry about anything and just do what I want to do.

Sure. And of course in this day and age, we can use the Internet to easily communicate, like video chat, and you can come back to Japan anytime you want. So I guess maybe there isn't anything to worry about. It's going to be OK, right?

Yeah, I think it'll be OK.

Is there anything else you would like to share with the readers of this article that we haven't talked about yet?

Yes. When I went to Canada, at first I couldn't speak English at all, right? So at the time, I realized that language is really important for us. In Japan, we speak Japanese, so it's no problem for us to have a conversation with each other. We can understand each other easily. But when I went to Canada, I realized that if I can't speak their language, we can't communicate or understand each other, right? So, I discovered that language is the most important thing for living. And I think Japanese have to be able to speak English to be able to understand people all over the world and get another point of view. Japan is a small country and we have our own thoughts [and ways of doing things], but it's just the Japanese way. I think we Japanese need to learn Western culture and then we will be able to see both sides. I think it's really important.

English is the most used language in the world, but we could say that any language is important to understand the other person. For example, if you go to Italy, you need to know Italian to really understand the Italian way of thinking. The point you made makes a lot of sense. Language is how you start to understand the other person, but of course culture is important as well.

Thank you for your time today.

Yeah, thank you as well.

「なにネイティブ？」

An Analytic Autoethnography of a Plurilingual Language Teacher in Japan

Pearce Daniel Roy
Kyoto Notre Dame University

“What the hell am I supposed to do?” I think to myself, sitting under the extractor fan in my apartment, whisky in one hand, cigarette in the other—falling back into some unhealthy habits. I feel paralyzed, wanting to move forward, but feeling pulled in all other directions. And I feel afraid. I take another sip. The haze creeping forward from the base of my skull begins to envelop me, and I know I’m not going to find any answers tonight.

This was my second semester of my first full-time teaching position at a university.

“We are concerned with the amount of Japanese you are using in class,” a superior had told me a few days earlier. “We are trying to make courses that emulate what it is like overseas, so you should use as much English as possible.” It’s still my first year, and I certainly don’t want to make a bad impression. I need this job. But something didn’t sit right with me. My experiences as a bilingual teacher and researcher, as well as a student of education, had irrevocably changed me. I wasn’t sure that I could play “the monolingual” anymore.

Troubled by my colleagues’ perceptions of me, that same day I had spoken with another superior, who told me, “oh yeah, we’re aware of your Japanese use. We don’t think it’s a problem, though.” Somewhat encouraged, but nevertheless still confused, I puffed away at my cigarette while the melting ice clinked against the side of the glass.

Well, no one ever said that this job would be easy.

A Liminal Autoethnography

The perception of the native speaker as the ideal language model, and therefore, the ideal language teacher, has come under fire in the last few decades, and plurilingual (or translingual) practices are becoming more prevalent, even in traditional TESOL discourse (e.g., Galante et al., 2020; Marshall & Moore, 2018). However, native-speakerism continues to exert influence on foreign language education (FLE) through practice such as English-only. This is also true in the Japanese context, in which, while pluri-/translingual theory and practice are beginning to gain traction (see, for instance, Moore et al., 2020a; Nishiyama, 2017; Oyama, 2016; Turnbull, 2018), native-speakerism still continues to impact not only FLE practice in the classroom, but also teacher hiring, and how bilingual practitioners represent themselves as professionals (Houghton & Hashimoto, 2018; Pearce, 2021).

While there has been a growing body of literature on issues of native-speakerism in Japan, and autoethnographical accounts of practitioners’ experiences within this paradigm are becoming more prevalent (see, for instance, Part 1 of Houghton & Hashimoto, 2018), they are, perhaps unsurprisingly, dominated by accounts of non-native speaking teachers. It is my intention with this short autoethnography to further challenge the discourse of native-speakerism through a slightly less common lens: that of the native speaker of English.

As a teacher/researcher in FLE in the Japanese context, my aim with this paper is to link my personal experiences to the issue of native-speakerism in Japanese FLE, in order to critique native-

speakerism as potentially damaging not only to non-native practitioners, but also native speakers, who appear ostensibly to be “benefactors” of the ideology.

Raised as a monolingual speaker of English, who achieved bilingualism during adulthood, and now publishes in both Japanese and English, educated both in my home country of New Zealand, and Japan, but trained as a teacher and researcher in the latter, I constantly occupy a liminal zone between, perhaps not the native/non-native¹, but certainly the Japanese/non-Japanese. It is this liminality that weaves through my autoethnography and drives my critique of native-speakerism.

A strength of autoethnography lies in bringing a researcher’s lived experiences and emotions into the discourse, and those are what I will primarily refer to in this paper. It has been pointed out, however, that “autoethnography loses its sociological promise when it devolves into self-absorption” (Anderson, 2006, p. 385). Thus, I will attempt to restrict my recollections (and emotions) to those that I feel can contribute to the ongoing probing for a “post-native-speakerist future” (Houghton & Hashimoto, 2018), and will attempt to do so in an “engaged but dispassionate way” (Wall, 2016, p. 6).

Emergent Bilingualism

In order to contextualize the brief episodes that will follow, it is necessary here to give a short autobiography. My first encounter with the Japanese language was far back in 2004, as my chosen major at the University of Auckland. A while after graduating, I found myself landing at Shonai Airport in Yamagata prefecture, a newly hired assistant language teacher (ALT) on the JET Programme (CLAIR, 2020).

This was my first experience of (knowingly) being in a privileged position—I had little background in language teaching (although I did have a minor in linguistics), but here I was, in a foreign country, with a well-paid job, simply because I was a native-English speaker. I also remember feeling embarrassed that my own language learning had not been what I considered successful, and that my Japanese was woefully insufficient.

In a language teaching position, and with a major in Japanese, I felt I needed to address this lack of linguistic ability. Outside of my ALT hours, I devoted myself to study, often spending upwards of four hours a day, and obtained level 1 of the Japanese Language Proficiency Test in 2009. Not yet satisfied that I “knew enough Japanese,” I continued to apply myself, sitting the Japan Kanji Aptitude Test alongside my students, eventually achieving level pre-1 in 2011.

As my ALT term was drawing to a close, I began to reflect on my experiences with Japanese learning and English teaching, and relationships with my students and colleagues. It was at this late stage that I decided to pursue a long-term career in language education. I applied to a masters’ programme at Kyoto University, during which time I was intent on obtaining my teacher’s license.

Becoming a Plurilingual Practitioner

Bilingual Now?

“So, as a bilingual, what unique contribution do you think you can make to language education in Japan?” Late in the afternoon, sometime in September 2014, I was sitting on the bank of Kamogawa River in Kyoto, sipping a beer and reflecting on the interview section of my entrance examination, which had finished not an hour earlier.

¹ The concept of the native speaker is an empty idea, pedagogically speaking, as Davies (2003) points out that the only criteria for being a native speaker is temporal, with no standards for competence. *Native-speakerism*, on the other hand, is defined by Holliday as the “belief that ‘native-speaker’ teachers represent a ‘Western culture’ from which spring the ideals both of the English language and of English language teaching methodology” (2006, p. 385).

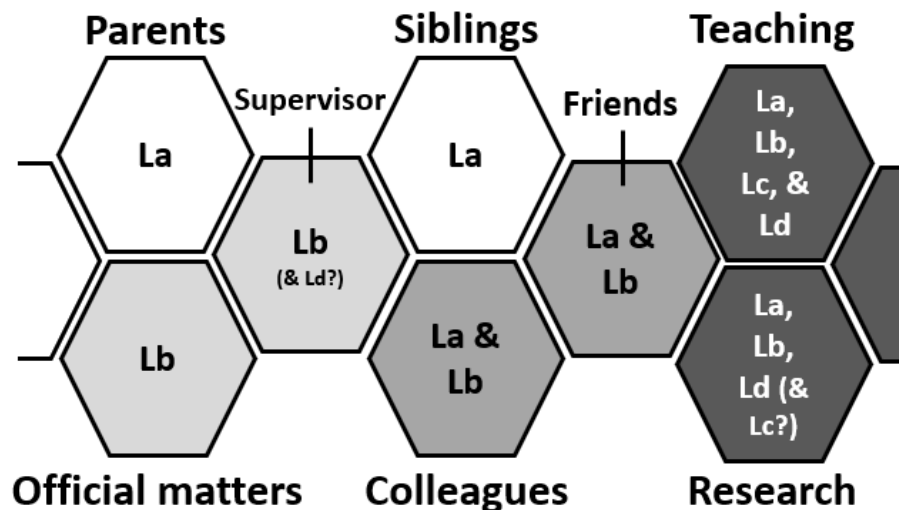
“He called me bilingual...” I thought to myself, reflecting on a question put to me by one of the Japanese professors. “Have I done it? Am I bilingual now?” I didn’t feel “complete,” as I thought I would, but here I was, recognized by a *native speaker of Japanese*, and a professor of educational linguistics to boot, as “bilingual.” I wouldn’t come to realize it until a few years later, but I was evaluating my bilingualism through a monolingual lens; looking at myself as a monolingual English speaker, still adding to a second, incomplete, Japanese monolingual self. I did not feel at liberty to define my own bilingualism, and constantly compared myself to a nebulous, imagined native-Japanese speaker.

Although I was unaware at the time, the idea of bilingualism as two-monolinguals-in-one had already been challenged in bilingual research since before I was born (see Grosjean, 1989). The reality of bilingualism is much more complex, and well beyond the scope of this short paper, although is adequately summarized by what bilingual researcher François Grosjean calls the “complementarity principle,” i.e., that “bilinguals usually acquire and use their languages for different purposes, in different domains of life, with different people. Different aspects of life often require different languages” (Grosjean, 2010, p. 29).

In fact, my subsequent study for my teacher’s license², as well as work towards my master’s degree, would entail classes and discussions conducted entirely in Japanese (although with writing in both languages). This would see me developing certain domains, particularly academic domains, with stronger Japanese than my native English. This rings true today, as a research colleague pointed out to me while I discussed this very article with her (my present-day language domains are also shown in Figure 1):

Figure 1

A Snapshot of My Bilingual Domains (inspired by Grosjean, 2010, p. 30).



La: English; Lb: Japanese; Lc: Te Reo Māori; Ld: French

It was funny seeing you present in English last year—you were so much more nervous than when you present in Japanese...less of a “what native are you?” feeling, but that you really

² For which I have completed all of the required credits, course work, and practicums, but as I am reminded writing this paper, I haven’t yet made my way to the local Board of Education to apply for the license itself.

operate in different *domains*... in that domain, your Japanese is much stronger. Not a question of being native, but just, you're bilingual. (Research colleague, personal phone call, November 2020)

In 2014 however, and for several years afterwards, I would continue to hold that imagined native-Japanese speaker as a standard, and negatively evaluate my own bilingualism. Part of this was due, of course, to the fact that I was pursuing a degree in a field heavily influenced by the discourse of the linguistic-cognitive view in mainstream TESOL, which regards language as homogenous and static. Under the linguistic-cognitive view, the target language is seen as that used by an idealized monolingual native-speaker, and other languages as interferences; a view sometimes labelled “the monolingual bias.” In other words, “bi/multilingualism [is treated] as a form of individual aberration and bi/multilingual learners as deficient in relation to monolinguals” (May, 2014, p. 20). “Yet,” I thought, “isn't bilingualism what we are trying to foster in our learners?”

Reflection on my reality as a bilingual was beginning to contradict this view (recall the conversation above, in which my second language was stronger than my first). Having now spent the majority of my adult life in Japan, and much of my private life in Japanese, I identified as not only bilingual, but also bicultural³. Still, the question from my entrance exam remained; as a bilingual, what could *I* offer?

Through Bilingualism to Plurilingualism

In early 2019, I began writing a PhD on a topic I would eventually abandon, although the draft gives some insight into my thoughts on the native/non-native divide at the time:

...in my life [through both studying and working] at Japanese universities, something odd struck me. *Having the personal belief that the purpose of language learning is to communicate with those of different linguistic and cultural backgrounds*, what struck me was not only odd, but somewhat alarming. [...] Wherever I went, the same phenomenon was occurring amongst language teachers [...]. On breaks, in hallways, leaving campus... in their downtime, the Japanese teachers of language and those of foreign heritage kept mostly to themselves. In break rooms for part-timers, there was always a clear divide—foreign teachers sat and talked with foreign teachers, Japanese with Japanese (exceptions existed, of course!). And I wondered to myself, “*what makes it so difficult for us, those who are professionals in language teaching, in the same language, to talk to each other?*” (abandoned PhD dissertation introduction, February 2019, emphasis added)

Clearly, there was more going on than just language. Wishing to discover more about what had made me a “successful” language learner, and the underlying competences necessary for communication, I was increasingly drawn to the concept of plurilingual and pluricultural competence, defined as follows:

Plurilingual and pluricultural competence refers to the ability to use languages for the purposes of communication and to take part in intercultural interaction, where a person, viewed as a social actor has proficiency, of varying degrees, in several languages and experience of several cultures. This is not seen as the superposition or juxtaposition of distinct competences, but rather as the existence of a complex or even composite competence on which the social actor may draw. (Coste et al., 2009, p. 11)

Sometime after this, I had a conversation about Grosjean's work on bilingualism with a former ALT colleague, who adroitly pointed out that “Grosjean recognizes that bilingualism is typically an environmental problem, not an educational one.” I was cognizant of the fact my learners had varying

³ Space precludes a thorough consideration of my identity as bicultural. Nevertheless, it impacts my experiences as a practitioner and is thus important to mention.

trajectories, and that many would not, in fact, become bilinguals.⁴ At any rate, they would certainly never become English monolinguals! I began to think about how the concept of plurilingualism might be applied to my classroom, and the competences I might help foster in my learners, how I might contribute to their learning, whether they would eventually become bilingual or not.

When Plurilingualism meets the Monolingual Bias

Just beginning to establish a professional identity as a “plurilingual practitioner,” I began work at my present institution full-time in April 2019. Around this time, I was also becoming aware that trans/plurilingual theory and practice were beginning to burgeon within the Japanese literature. It was appearing in public school practice (Iwasaka & Yoshimura, 2011; Moore et al., 2020b), some of which I was involved in personally (Oyama & Pearce, 2019), in teacher training (Oyama, 2019; Yoshimura & Young, 2016), and even in tertiary-level instruction (Nishiyama, 2017; Oyama & Yamamoto, 2020; Turnbull, 2018). I felt bolstered by this trend, and slightly surer of the approach I would be taking to the classroom.

Nevertheless, I was keenly aware of the persistence of native-speakerism in education in Japan. Native-speakerism was still prevalent in the ALT system of which I was formerly a part, which, if not explicitly discriminatory in hiring practices, at least continues to describe ALTs as monolingual native English speakers (Pearce, 2021), in hiring practices at the tertiary level⁵, and in the minds of some colleagues and students (Houghton & Hashimoto, 2018). Native-speakerism would end up causing me some headaches.

“Us Natives”

One lunchtime in late July 2019, I had just finished teaching a reading class, and was meeting a colleague for lunch in the cafeteria. After a brief discussion of the morning’s classes, I was aghast at what he said next... “It’s better if us native teachers do our own thing, and not involve the Japanese. Things just go smoother that way.”

I cannot recall the response I gave, although it was certainly non-committal. I was not going to argue; I had only been at the university for less than a semester, and I was not about to rock the boat. But I did not agree. How could I? I had spent most of my adult life in Japan, and most of that with Japanese colleagues. I had been educated in a Japanese university, and considered myself both bilingual and bicultural. In many ways, I shared more commonalities with my Japanese colleagues than I did with other native-speaking teachers of different backgrounds. And yet, here I was, despite my background and experience, assumed to belong ideologically to a group simply because I shared a (different variety) of native tongue. Whatever other experiences made up my identity were apparently inconsequential.

Here was native-speakerism at work. The “belief that ‘native-speaker’ teachers represent a ‘Western culture’ from which spring the ideals both of the English language and of English language teaching methodology” (Holliday, 2006, p. 385), I was assumed to embody. Yet I did not share the same “Western culture” as my colleagues (the *pounamu* adorning my chest attested to that), my English was of a different variety, and my language teaching methodology was informed not only by TESOL literature, but by Japanese scholarship, my teacher training, and by plurilingual literature and practice primarily from the Francosphere. At any rate, I still believed that “the purpose of language

⁴ Here again, borrowing Grosjean’s (2010) definition of bilinguals: “those who use two or more languages (or dialects) in their everyday lives” (p. 4).

⁵ I had one experience of the “other side” of native-speakerism, in which a colleague recommended me to take over for a part-time class on English presentations, to which I was turned down because the institution wanted a native Japanese speaking teacher. C’est la vie!

learning is to communicate with those of different linguistic and cultural backgrounds,” and I was certainly not willing to impose an apartheid on myself into a monolingualized “native” group.

That evening I found myself under my extractor fan. The mix of peaty whisky and tobacco smoke giving me a nice burn at the back of my throat, although it somehow lacked the familiar warmth.

“Was I going to fit in at this university? Was I going to have to portray myself as monolingual?” But I wasn’t monolingual. I felt that I had much more to share if I was able to make use of my entire repertoire—English, Japanese, and the experiences I had garnered through some study of Te Reo Māori, and in reading French literature for my research. I was still afraid, however. Having used up what meagre savings I had over the last few years as a graduate student, I needed this job, and thought it probably safer to toe the line.

Native-speakerism, an ideology that on the surface should have benefited me, would continue to cause me stress for the foreseeable future. However, I also felt that hiding away my linguistic ability would be disingenuous, and a detriment to my students. “After all,” I thought, “isn’t it a good thing to show that bilingualism goes both ways?”

Conclusion and Implications

In this autoethnography I have attempted to use my personal experience to develop a better understanding of conflicts that can emerge when a binary labelling of native/non-native is applied to bilingual (or plurilingual) language teaching professionals.

Much of the early debate on nativism was dominated by representations presented to learners, or inherent teacher traits, from a binary native/non-native perspective (e.g., Medgyes, 1992). More recent work has rejected this binary view, and is cognizant of the diversity in linguistic experience and repertoires of language teaching professionals (for instance, Houghton & Hashimoto, 2018). Much of this expanded literature remains told through the voices of non-native speaking practitioners—an unsurprising (albeit welcome) phenomenon, given that native-speakerism tends to disproportionately disenfranchise non-native speakers. I hope that this autoethnography has in some way helped to show that native-speakerism can disenfranchise native speakers as well.

While post-native-speakerism is steadily growing both in research and in practice, through plurilingual (e.g., Marshall & Moore, 2018) and translingual (e.g., Turnbull, 2018) discourse, native-speakerism will likely remain with us for some time. Part of this may be due to its long history in second language acquisition and TESOL research—it is difficult to upturn “established knowledge” in a field (May, 2014). Nevertheless, it is important to continue to point out the futility of the binary native/non-native label, and continue to probe for a post-native-speakerist future, both for the benefit of ourselves as bilingual practitioners, and for our learners, who have increasingly uncertain and varied trajectories in an increasingly diversifying world.

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“Mixed-Race Identity Project”¹: A Case Study Mirroring Kich’s Three Stages of Biracial Identity Development.

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This paper discusses findings pertaining to mixed-race adults’ identity construction told in ethnographically-informed, semi-structured interviews. It begins with a brief review of the research literature related to mixed-race individuals born and raised in Japan, initially reviewing studies conducted in the past two decades. This is followed by an overview of Kich’s (1982) theoretical framework of bicultural/biracial identity development appropriated in this study. Further, readers are introduced to a case study of a 45-year-old male participant, focusing on his lived experiences as a mixed-race individual in Japan. The article concludes with a brief discussion of findings and recommendations for further research. In particular, it highlights the necessity for further work on discursive construction of *haafu* identity of Japanese mixed-race adults (born between 1960-1980), which has been found to be under-researched.

Focal Studies on Mixed-Race Individuals in Japan

Over the last thirty years or so, the issues of Japan’s multi-ethnic² identity and mixed-race population have gained an increased interest in non-academic genre (Haefelin, 2012; Joh, 2020; Kinoshita, 2019; Yoshitaka, 2018), as well as academic literature, resulting in studies on multi-ethnic children and adolescents (Greer, 2003; Jabar, 2013; Kamada, 2005; Nakamura, 2020; Seiger, 2017), youth (Murphy-Shigematsu, 2012; Oshima, 2014; Yoshida & Oikawa, 2012), and adults (e.g., Murphy-Shigematsu, 2017; Shaitan & McEntee-Atalianis, 2017); as well as explored issues of raising multiracial³ children (e.g., Kuramoto et al., 2017; Takeshita, 2019).

Despite the growing research on this community as evidenced above, one of the persistent dilemmas, however, concerns the appropriacy of the socio-ethnic referent used to refer to biracial/bi-ethnic individuals, that has been circulating in Japanese society for many years (Kamada, 2010). In Japan, the term *haafu* or “half” in English⁴, has become commonly used as a generic referent for persons of mixed-race heritage despite differences in self-ascription⁵ (Okamura, 2017).

¹ Identity “project” is used throughout the paper to showcase identity development as a never-ending project of “becoming” (McEntee-Atalianis, 2019, p. 10).

² Race is generally considered to be a biological construct based on observable physical characteristics including skin color or body habitus. Ethnicity has come to represent a social construct that could be defined as an individual’s sense of culture (Kaneshiro et al., 2011).

³ Race is often an ascribed and assigned category, while ethnicity, compared to race, is often acquired and self-claimed by the individuals in the group (Osanami-Törngren, 2018, p. 6).

⁴ *Haafu* comes from the English term “half” and refers to individuals with one Japanese parent and one parent from a different ethnicity. The public’s image of a *haafu*, however is typically someone who has one Japanese parent and one Caucasian parent. The stereotype of the *haafu* is that they are fluent in English and Japanese and that they are good looking (Oikawa & Yoshida, 2007, p. 30).

⁵ Okamura (2017) traces the history of the labels used in Japan to refer to “mixed race” individuals and explores the *Haafu-gao* makeup fad. Focusing on the late 19th century to the present, Okamura’s study traces

However, some parents feel that this term has a negative and derogatory connotation and prefer using the term *daburu*, or “double” in English⁶, to emphasize their children’s bicultural access to two or more cultures (Kittaka, 2013; Surdick 2013) or “a bridge between the minority and the majority with cultural, racial and ethnic literacy” (Osanami-Törnngren, 2018, p. 3). Moreover, while addressing the problematic issue of what to call multiracial children in Japan, Greer (2001) warns, “binary notions such as half and double are inadequate to describe the multiple selves that make up their multifaceted identities” (p. 14). For example, in his earlier study of multi-ethnic Japanese identity, Greer (2003) reports that adolescent participants reacted differently to the term *haafu*. The word *haafu* is “tolerated and ignored, assumed and ascribed, accepted and contested” (Greer, 2003, p. 20) depending on the situation in which participants find themselves. He further comments that the term is also associated with other negative ascriptions in English such as “half-breed” and “half-caste.” The results of this study also reveal that not all multi-ethnic teenagers necessarily position themselves using the referent—“*daburu*”—either. In his 2005 study, Greer found that participants reported being negatively positioned by Japanese people who often ascribed non-Japanese or novice attributes to them, which in turn implied their outsider status and *haafu*’s lack of—“authentic”—Japanese cultural proficiencies. Applying the Yin Yang Metaphor⁷ to the study of multi-ethnic identity development of twelve multi-ethnic teenagers in Japan, Greer (2005) theorizes its dualities by demonstrating that, “being multi-ethnic is not an either/or choice but a both/and experience” (p. 16). The results of this study reveal that one’s identity projection and navigation are reflected and (co) constructed in “everyday talk and mutually accomplished, assumed and ascribed through social interaction with others” (p. 15). That is to say, being simultaneously viewed as privileged and marginalized, and being ethnified as Japanese or non-Japanese or as a cultural expert or a novice (Greer, 2005).

In the same year, Kamada (2005) examines how multi-ethnic girls (all attending Japanese public schools, thus being fully immersed in and socialized in Japanese culture and social mores), discursively construct their ethnic identities. The findings reveal that instead of positioning themselves as powerless victims within limited discourses, the girls co-constructively position themselves as powerful, by having access to resources of “intercultural savvy, greater access to foreign cultures and foreign languages, and—‘embodied’—ethnic attractiveness and exoticness” (p. 39).

In a further investigation of linguistic traces of these girls’ movement towards more empowering discourses of gender and femininity, Kamada (2008) identifies seven discourses of ethnicity in the girls’ data. These include discourses of 1) homogeneity, 2) conformity, 3) *gaijin* (foreigner) otherness, 4) halfness, 5) diversity, 6) interculturalism, and 7) doubleness.

Ethnic embodiment was also found to be a contributing factor in how these girls constructed their gender and ethnic identities. And similar to the findings in Kamada’s (2005) study, rather than positioning themselves as powerless victims, the girls “celebrate their diversity and position

the terms used to refer to racial mixture and how “haafu” has become the most common label today.

Okamura’s cautions that labeling racializes “Japanese” and “foreigners” and results in the categorization of racially mixed people in Japan as not fully Japanese.

⁶ That term “double” was coined in the 1990s after the mother of a mixed heritage child wrote to a Japanese newspaper to promote the positive connotations of a word implying two roots (Okamura, 2017).

⁷ Yin and yang (or yin-yang) is a complex relational concept in Chinese culture that has developed over thousands of years. The connotation of yin and yang is that the universe is governed by a cosmic duality, sets of two opposing and complementing principles or cosmic energies that can be observed in nature (Editors, 2021).

themselves and each other within a privileging discourse of foreign/ethnic attractiveness” (Kamada, 2008, p. 190), at the same time positioning Japanese “as ordinary and as being without access to this special cultural capital” (Kamada, 2005, p. 39).

Using Feminist-Poststructuralist Discourse Analysis (FPDA) as a theoretical framework for her study, Kamada (2010) examines how multi-ethnic Japanese girls position themselves within the discourse of gender embodiment and how it affects what they say about their own and other participants’ bodies. This longitudinal study explores how six adolescent girls discursively construct their mixed-race identities. It shows how they take up, represent or reject racialized, ethnicized and gendered practices in their daily interactions with others. In addition, the author highlights how multi-ethnic people use a variety of discursive strategies to enhance their identities. The findings illustrate that over a span of three years, these girls were not only able to resist ethnic marginalization within a limited discourse of homogeneity, but also to position themselves within a wider repertoire of “empowering discourses of diversity, interculturalism and ethnic attractiveness thus co-constructing and co-accomplishing positive cultural capital based on their ethnicity” (Kamada, 2010, p. 224).

Yoshida and Oikawa (2012), however, note that earlier qualitative studies on mixed-race individuals in Japan preclude generalization due to their small samples. Therefore, their study sought to “augment such studies by examining the results of a questionnaire administered to over one hundred participants” (p. 16). Specifically, this exploratory study aimed to identify what the outcomes of being bi-ethnic in Japan were, and which background variables would predict these outcomes. The average age of the participants was 22 years old, more than half of them being university students. Out of 108 selected participants, 82 were born in Japan and the rest were born in thirteen other countries. The results of the study reveal that bi-ethnic identity is not simply warranted by an individual’s choice, rather it is continuously negotiated within a society. In addition, similar to earlier studies (Kich, 1982; Oikawa & Yoshida, 2007), this study found that identity issues that many of the participants have had throughout their lives, was a result of “the dissonance between society’s construction of identity and their own” and that “bi-ethnic individuals did not notice that they were different until the society told them so” (pp. 28-29).

Oshima’s (2014) study of Japanese mixed-race youth, however, yielded unexpected findings. The author conducted group sessions with thirteen university students aimed at exploring issues that the students might have experienced due to their multi-ethnicity, to provide a platform for students to talk about their lived experiences of being viewed and/or different from mainstream (not racially mixed) Japanese individuals, and to identify how they are treated by Japanese society. Contrary to previous studies (discussed above) that reveal an outsider status of mixed-race individuals in Japan, the results of the interviews and group discussion of this study produced mixed findings. Namely, the participants in this study had *positive* feelings of being mixed-race in Japan thus feeling more comfortable with their bicultural and biracial/ethnic identity, thereby yielding different results from what the author had expected.

More recently, a study by Osanami-Törngren (2018) examines ethnic options and practices of *passing* and *covering* (Goffman, 1990)⁸ among multiracial and multiethnic youth in Japan. Eighteen semi-structured interviews were conducted by the researcher where participants aged between 18- and 25-years old shared their lived experiences in Japan as a multiracial/multiethnic. By applying

⁸ Racial passing is an act in which a person of one race identifies and presents oneself as something else, usually as the race of the majority population in the social context. Passing as the majority population will be more difficult for someone who is multiracial compared to multiethnic (Osanami-Törngren, 2018).

Goffman's concepts of *passing* and *covering*⁹, an analysis of 18 semi-structured interviews shows that multiethnic and multiracial individuals have an access to different kinds of ethnic options and practice passing and covering differently (e.g., Japanese, *haafu*, human being, mixed roots, *more* American than Japanese, Asian *and* white). Namely, whereas multiethnic interviewees revealed that they could pass as Japanese, multiracial interviewees reported that they are mostly treated as “*gaijin*” (foreigner). The results of the study show that physical appearance, family structure, living environment and whether these individuals are multiethnic or multiracial were the key factors in the ability to pass as Japanese.

It can thus be concluded that, for biracial people whose phenotypical features and language skills did not mark them as—“different,”—the options of *covering* and *passing* into the—“safe”—category of race were to their avail much easier than for those whose appearance marked them as—“*gaijin*”—(foreigner) (Osanami-Törnngren & Sato, 2019). In both cases, such individuals had to make choices to fit in and avoid a risk of being otherized and/or marginalized. A—“choice”—in this situation may not be necessarily experienced as determinedly conscious, but instead as a lived, emphatic style of life and self-presentation. It may best be seen as “the person's lived position on the question of ethnicity” (Kich, 1982, p. 3).

Similarly, Takeshita (2019) explores the experiences of mixed-race children in Japan through the lens of Goffman's (1990) *passing* concept. This longitudinal study is predominantly based on 139 interviews of mixed-families of diverse nationalities and religions residing in Japan's urban areas. The study explores whether mixed-children perceived their mixed-heritage background as problematic, and if the act of—“*passing*”—caused any insecurities or feelings of guilt. The analysis of the interviews reveal that the children's lived experiences and choices are dependent on whether or not the child is—“*visibly*”—different from other children in Japanese society, parental support, as well as the teachers' perceptions of their situations.

Thus, whilst research on *haafu* children, adolescents, and youth has been undertaken in Japan, as evidenced in the literature review above, to date there has been limited research on *haafu* adults, the so-called earlier generation of mixed-race individuals born and raised in Japan in the early 60s, 70s and 80s. However, recently, this underrepresented group has started to gain more attention among researchers (e.g., Burkhardt 1983; Kich 1982; Murphy-Shigematsu 2017; Shaitan & McEntee-Atalianis, 2017). For example, Shaitan and McEntee-Atalianis (2017) explored the identity development of mixed-race adults in their late 30s, 40s, and 50s in Japan. The study investigated how *haafu* adults construct their identities with respect to others' ascriptions, the dominant discourses about being—“*haafu*”—and to the affiliations/ascriptions *haafu* individuals seek/invoke throughout their lived experiences. Based on an analysis of ethnographically-informed, semi-structured sociolinguistic interviews, the results reveal that “identity construction is borne out as a complex process and a product of localized practices, ideologies and lived experiences” (p. 95).

Whilst it is impossible to review all studies in this section due to the space limit, based on consulted literature and academic evidence, lacuna research on mixed-race Japanese adult individuals in their late 30s, 40s, 50s (born between 1960-1980) has been identified. Therefore, the academic studies reviewed above highlight the necessity for further work on the discursive construction of *haafu* identity of Japanese mixed-race adults.

⁹ Racial and ethnic covering can be achieved by changing names, clothing or behavior patterns. These are the ways to downplay the attributes that otherwise might become the center of attention (Osanami-Törnngren, 2018).

Theoretical Lens: Three Stages of Biracial, Bicultural Identity Development

In addressing biracial and bicultural identity development of 15 mixed-race adults of ‘White and Japanese’ heritage (ages 17-56), Kich (1992) shows that all mixed-race individuals’ lived experiences impinge on three crucial stages of developing and asserting a biracial, bicultural identity. He presents a heuristic model of biracial identity development life-cycles by claiming that the model may be applicable to all people of multiracial heritage.

This view, however, is contested by Rocha and Fozdar (2017) who argue that “mixed-race does not mean the same thing, in terms of histories, experiences or identities, across the world” (p. 9). Notwithstanding, according to Kich (1992, p. 305), all biracial individuals in his study report progressing through three major stages in the development and continuing resolution of their biracial identity. *Stage 1* highlights an initial awareness of differentness and dissonance between self-perceptions and others’ perceptions of them (initially, three through ten years of age). It is at this stage of initial awareness of difference and dissonance when almost all multiracial individuals are constantly reminded of their differentness by ever accompanying questions of “Where are you from?” or “What are you?” thus accentuating the experiences of being *both* yet *neither*. In addition, Kich (1992, p. 307) notes that it is during this stage when parental support is of paramount importance to a child who may experience isolation or loneliness facing such experiences on his own. In particular, when a name does not—“match”—the phenotypical makeup of a biracial child, he/she is likely to face situations where his/her belonging and identity might be questioned more often than not.

In *Stage 2*, the focus shifts onto the struggle for acceptance from others (initially, 8-years-old through late adolescence and young adulthood). By the time they have reached adolescence, most biracial individuals learn to shift between two—“worlds.” Namely, they start using self-ascribed labels to their advantage in order to fit into the society. In particular, those individuals who develop close ties with their extended families, are able to symbolically capitalize on their bicultural/bilingual commodities and deploy such in their social interactions with others.

Kich (1992) also shows that an instant reply to the question “Where are you from?” serves as a passport to being recognized and accepted or vice versa by the interlocutor. In addition, this stage provides a platform for mixed-race individuals to practice their—“chameleon ability”—and “*passing*” in order to feel the “temporary sense of freedom and relief from the restrictions and ambiguities of being—‘both’—and—‘neither’” (p. 312).

Another evidential feature of this stage is related to the issue of loyalty. Biracial people are faced with a constant dilemma of having to choose between the ethnic heritage of either parent. This, in turn, may result in inner struggle and resilience thus leading to *identity crisis*. Further, it is at this stage where adolescents begin to search for peer groups thus trying to “belong” somewhere. Such peer groups may provide a temporary relief from a social devaluation of themselves where members of such a peer group share similar lived experiences as themselves. To illustrate the latter, Kich (1992, p. 313) presents an example from his seminal study on biracial individuals: “When you’re with another Eurasian there’s a lot of things it seems like you don’t have to explain, that you might have to explain to other people ... that’s not explainable anyway. It’s just an understanding that you have” (Kich, 1982, p. 181). Interestingly, Shaitan & McEntee-Atalianis (2017) mirror similar findings in their study where one of the participants comments: “I wish there was a country called— ‘Hapa— where only *haafus* lived. It would feel great, as nobody would ever ask you questions like ‘Where are you from?’ or about your ethnicity or nationality. Because all *haafu* share similar experiences and stories” (p. 94).

Finally, the *Stage 3* concludes the cycle by showcasing mixed-race individuals’ acceptance of themselves as people with a biracial and bicultural identity (late adolescence throughout adulthood), referred to by Kich (1992) as the stage of self-acceptance and assertion of an interracial identity. This

stage is characterized by the breakthrough achievement for biracial individuals in that they finally learn how to positively view and self-identify themselves. They no longer rely on others' labeling and mislabeling them, rather, they *self-ascribe* their interracial heritage. Moreover, they develop an awareness that not all questioners are necessarily racist or attempt to negatively identify them. Therefore, biracial people try to adapt and measure their answers based on a discursive situation they engage in.

Additionally, Kich (1992) reports that self-acceptance opens up numerous pathways for biracial people. That is to say, self-acceptance enables them to practice earlier-acquired skills of "*passing*," and to become more self-assertive and self-expressive rather than negatively reactive or defensive. Also, the ability to self-label rather than other-label themselves "creates and fosters a coherent, whole sense of self" (p. 317).

Methodology

Individual "Portrait": The Stories We Live By

The form of our stories (their textual structure),
the content of our stories (what we tell about),
and our story telling behaviour (how we tell our stories)
are all sensitive indices not just our personal selves,
but also of our social and cultural identities.

Schiffrin (1996: 170)

As Murphy-Shigematsu (2017) suggests, researchers should avoid generalizations and stereotyping of mixed-race individuals by placing them in one group. Rather, each individual account should be treated as a window into that particular person's meaningful lived experiences in order to understand the complexities and subtleties surrounding their biracial and bicultural identity development. In a similar manner, the current paper follows this line of thought by introducing readers to one ethnographic case study (Duff, 2018) of a *haafu* male adult, aged in his late 40s to highlight his lived experiences of growing up as a *haafu* in Japan. This ethnographically-informed, sociolinguistic semi-structured interview is one of the 15 that the author has conducted for her doctoral dissertation research (Shaitan, forthcoming). The thematic content of the interviews was adopted, adapted and developed based on Kamada's (2010) questionnaire, to match the age group of the study participants. Due to space limitations, the focus is on a data set extracted from a larger corpus collected as part of the author's doctoral research.

Key Participant:

The narratives presented here focus primarily on one main subject referred to (using the pseudonym) as William. The selection of William as a case study is based on the following criteria: William (aged 45) lives and works in Tokyo, Japan. William's father is American and his mother Japanese. He was born, raised, and educated in Japan and has lived there his entire life. However, he reports travelling to America at the age of twenty to pursue his university studies, thus having spent four years in the USA. He is proficient in both Japanese and English and reports using his bilingual skills at his current place of employment. William has also been a member of *haafu* community in the Tokyo area for more than a decade or so, thus enabling him to keep in touch with other mixed-race individuals.

The excerpts (see below) presented in this paper, aim to illustrate how William deployed small stories (as a discursive tool) told in an ethnographically-informed semi-structured interview to elaborate on how his lived experiences have shaped him into who he is now. Moreover, it should also be noted that the author has known William (as well as all other 14 participants) for the past

eight years, thus being able to interact with him/them in many social events organized by the *haafu* community in Tokyo, Japan, other than a one-time interview meeting.

It should also be noted that rather than *testing* any hypotheses or following any theoretical frameworks, this study was exploratory in nature, aimed to capture the moments and mechanisms of how individuals discursively project and (co) construct their identity and how they want to be perceived by the interlocutor.

However, after the data was coded and iterative/thematic analysis was performed following Bamberg and Georgakopoulou's (2008) *Small Story Analysis Framework*, it has been found that all 15 participants have gone through three stages of biracial and bicultural development throughout their entire lives as theorized by Kich (1982; 1992).

The stories presented here, were chosen as exemplars of repeated occurrences among all the participants running throughout the interviews in a larger part of the study.

Stage 1: *An Initial Awareness of Dissonance: Not Being Full-Blooded Japanese (childhood)* (Kich, 1982)

Excerpt 1

- 1 **Alex:** What were your experiences of growing up in Japan?
- 2 **William:** I was teased in my neighborhood. Yeah, we (*referring to his brother*) were
- 3 teased. I was teased quite a bit. My mom told me that I pretty much came back home
- 4 crying every single day. When I was, like a kid up to like, five, six years old. And...
- 5 but yeah, I was kind of like, (*laughing*) maybe I was just stupid enough to still go out
- 6 there and try to hang out with them. But my mom remembers... remembers... it
- 7 being almost every single day. I don't remember it. So, must have not been as
- 8 traumatic or I am just like hiding it (*laughing*)...you know...almost every single day.
- 9 **William:** Oh, Alex, um, oh, just one extra thing I was going to mention. I went to the
- 10 Japanese kindergarten. And I remember, the teacher (*in a high pitch voice*) was even
- 11 picking on me! Yeah, it sounds like, oh, just like saying, oh, "Because you're not full
- 12 Japanese." It shouldn't make me cry. I don't remember. I just remember she had like,
- 13 her hair was dyed, brown, you know, *chappatsu*. And back then, erm... usually, like
- 14 the bad people, like the gangsters and punks did that. So, she wasn't really cool to
- 15 begin with. Anyways, I just wanted to just throw that in there. So that's why my
- 16 parents decided to send me to school on the Navy base, because they're like, "This is
- 17 really bad. Yeah, it's getting bad."

Stage 2: *The Struggle for Acceptance (adolescence)* (Kich, 1982)

Excerpt 2

- 1 **Alex:** Did you have any part-time job back then?
- 2 **William:** Let's just say like, 15, between 15 and 16 years old. Yeah. So, this is a high
- 3 school time. I did get have some work on the Navy base easily. But if I wanted to
- 4 have a job, let's say at a *kombini* or Starbucks it would pretty much be a no!
- 5 **Alex:** Did they say why?
- 6 **William:** It's because I look, I don't look Japanese to people. Um...Well, I've never
- 7 gone to the interview. But you would see that that you would only see Japanese
- 8 people working at these places. Also, my mom would just tell me, she's like, "You
- 9 probably won't get a job." Like, you can't, you can't even get a job as maybe even as a
- 10 garbage man. You know, just because I don't look full Japanese. And that scares
- 11 people. And that's the xenophobia that's pretty have... has been embedded in the
- 12 Japanese culture for centuries and centuries.

- 13 **Alex:** So, did you finally manage to get a job?
 14 **William:** I just never took that kind of risk.... but you know, I did. I did find a job at a
 15 field maintenance place, just because my other *haafu* friends were working there for
 16 the summer. So, you know, with a lot of physical labor and getting sunburned and
 17 stuff. But they're really cool, though...and... Yeah. So yeah.

Stage 3: Self-acceptance and Assertion of an Interracial Identity (adulthood) (Kich, 1982)
Excerpt 3

- 1 **Alex:** How do you explain to strangers, if asked, that you are mixed-race? Do you say
 2 you are *haafu*, *double* or *mixed-roots*?
 3 **William:** In the late 90s, people were already talking about their experiences as
 4 mixed Japanese, and almost all of them mentioned about having identity crisis which
 5 I've never had... And it's because I believe, because I already had an identity as a
 6 "*haafu*". Now, the term *haafu* is, among some people, mostly *non-haafu people*, they
 7 find it as an offensive term because it derives from the word half in English. Right?
 8 But the thing is that the I always refute that, because Japanese people, including
 9 myself... we never, we don't think of the word term *hanbun* or half something that is
 10 half...
 11 **Alex:** So, you do not think of it as a derogative...
 12 **William:** And...yeah, no, not at all.
 13 I recently made a self-revelation is that people who are handicapped, right? Physical
 14 handicap where they can't walk, their hands contorted, they're blind, they have other
 15 kind of disability abilities to physically, you know, you don't hear them like, yeah, of
 16 course, they will complain. A lot of people that will complain, but they, they're like.
 17 "I can't change this. This is how I am. This is my disability. I'm in a country with
 18 people who walk regularly... I can't do that. But I will make the best of it. I can, I'll
 19 make the most of what I have." And I, the main important thing is changing your
 20 mindset. That's why from the *Haafu* film, David, the half Ghanaian guy, he obviously
 21 looks black to most people in the world. But his view, is that, really inspired me and
 22 I'm still working on it myself because of my own issues. But he said that, "I consider
 23 everything a teaching opportunity." Each time I, people ask, oh, "Where you're
 24 from?" is like, "Not that damn question again!" No, no, no, that's, that wasn't his
 25 attitude. He's always like, "Oh, no, my mother's Ghanaian and my father's Japanese.
 26 That's why I have this last name." He's even asked like, "Oh, are you married? Is that
 27 why you have a Japanese last name?" Which doesn't make sense, right? And so, I
 28 think just keep changing the attitude and your mindset is like the key.
 29 **Alex:** Sounds interesting, thank you very much.

Discussion and Concluding Remarks

Rather than providing readers with a detailed discourse analysis of the above-mentioned excerpts, the author has attempted to present detailed accounts of the interview thus enabling readers to read the stories and develop an insight into how William's meaningful lived experiences have influenced his life choices and molded him into the person he is now. The stories shown above (Excerpts 1, 2, 3) mirror three stages of biracial identity development introduced by Kich (1982, 1992). The narrative in Excerpt 1 is indicative of William's childhood experiences in Japan. Namely, William's negative experiences stem from (*Excerpt 1*) "*Because you are not full Japanese*" (Stage 1, line 11). He claims that this was the catalyst for his parents' decision to transfer him to an international school. Excerpt 2 shows William's struggle for acceptance (*Stage 2*) in Japanese society. He narrates his experiences

of trying to find a part-time job as rather painful. A prospect of finding a part-time job for him was rather slim. He claims that it was rather hard, basically impossible, to get a job, even at the convenience store. Moreover, his efforts to find a part-time job were further exacerbated by his mother's interference and reassurance of not pursuing it. Yet again, he explicates it clearly by stating that, "*It's because I look, I don't look Japanese to people*" (line 6). Finally, Excerpt 3 provides an example of William's self-acceptance and assertion of interracial identity (*Stage 3*). This narrative highlights the fact that William does not have identity crisis because the term—"haafu"—has provided him with a safety net of claiming his mixed-race status in Japan. He states that he always refutes claims by the "*non-haafu people*" (line 6) who often associate this term with a negative connotation. On the other hand, though, a story told by William in Extract 3, suggests that despite the fact that he is in his late 40s, he is still faced with some issues of how to navigate his own mixed-race identity at this stage of his life, "*I am still working on it because of my own issues*" (line 22). Therefore, we can cautiously suggest that an on-going identity development of biracial and/or bicultural people is not something that is "achieved" at a certain point in life by all individuals. Rather, it is a fleeting, fluid, and on-going rite de passage which ebbs and flows at crucial points of an individual's life and is dependent on a contextualized and localized discursive event (s) and sociocultural practices.

Also, despite the on-going debate surrounding the term—"haafu"—among the lay people and in academia, it can be observed that William has internalized the term—"haafu"—as a positive concept which gives him an identity in Japan. He elaborates that the term "*haafu*, instead of being *neither/nor*,"—gives him an identity of being not *either or*, rather *both and*, that is, Japanese and American.

Whilst this short paper has only briefly looked into small stories of one case study that exemplifies three stages of biracial identity development (Kich 1982, 1992); nevertheless, the excerpts above can provide insight into how the earlier generation of mixed-race individuals in Japan have grappled with the issue of claiming their—"Japaneseness"—throughout their lives. Therefore, future studies of this under-researched community might contribute to identity studies in the context of Japan.

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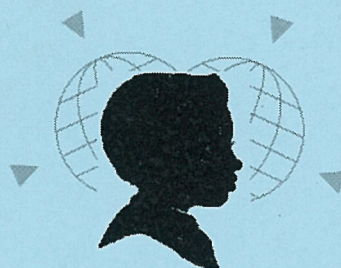
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JALT Bilingualism Special Interest Group

Statement of Purpose

The modern Japanese situation holds unique challenges and opportunities for the study of bilingualism. Linguistically, Japanese, because of its extensive historical borrowing, shares some surface features with Korean, Chinese, and even modern European languages, but it appears to have no clearly traceable linguistic ties to any other major language. Sociologically, it can be argued that, as one of the most industrialized of the Asian nations, postwar Japan has had an extraordinarily high degree of economic and cultural exchange with Western nations, but that its adopted Western artifacts are only thinly overlaid on zealously protected traditional culture. Psychologically, local bilingual and bicultural speakers of Japanese and another language live in an environment with unique pressures and potentials. In view of these rich areas for research and of Japan's rising political and economic importance, disappointingly few studies of bilingualism have emanated from Japan to date.

One of the purposes of the Bilingualism Special Interest Group is to address the need for high quality research in this uniquely exciting venue. As JALT members and their families comprise a significant portion of the bilinguals available for convenient study, this Special Interest Group helps to identify an extremely valuable pool of researchers and bilingual participants willing and able to help each other conduct significant studies, not only in the linguistic arena, but also on the many social and psychological ramifications of bilingualism in this particular society. As educators, JALT members are ultimately dedicated to developing fully functioning bilinguals. As bilinguals themselves, as the parents or spouses of bilinguals, however, JALT members at the same time recognize that these individuals, minors in particular, are often in need of social and psychological support. A second purpose of the Bilingualism Special Interest Group, then, is to provide that support, in the form of disseminating research findings among this network of individuals sharing common pressures, and providing timely information on alternatives and responses to common problems affecting bilinguals in Japan, such as multicultural education, peer acceptance, and legal status.



Accordingly, this Special Interest Group proposes to:

1. encourage bilingualism research projects and the wide dissemination of findings by organizing an extensive network of researchers and willing bilingual participants;
2. promote awareness of current developments of interest to these overlapping communities;
3. provide a base for mutual support among the group's members.

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