

What Does the Research Really Say? Debunking the Myths of Raising Bilingual Children in Japan

Blake TURNBULL
Otani University

This article attempts to dispel the myths surrounding the raising of bilingual children that have been prevalent in many contexts throughout Japan. I first discuss the typical patterns of bilingual family interaction and the effects these have on children's language development. I then examine the extensive research on bilingualism from infancy and the need for parents to familiarize themselves with this literature to ensure the success of their child's bilingual development. Next, I discuss the role of parents' discourse strategies, and explain some of the perceived issues in bilingual development, including language delay, language mixing, and language loss. Finally, I examine the Japanese education system and the stigma and issues that children developing their bilingualism often face within this environment. It is hoped that the points raised in this article will allow parents of bilingual children in Japan to understand the reality of dual language development so that they can dismiss the uninformed, erroneous opinions of those in professional positions that might otherwise damage their child's chance of developing successful bilingualism.

本論文は、日本中に広がっている、バイリンガルの子供に関する俗説を払拭するものである。まず、バイリンガル家庭の典型的なパターンと、それが子どもの言語発達に与える影響について説明する。次に、乳幼児期からのバイリンガリズムに関する広範な研究と、子どものバイリンガルの発達を成功させるために親がこの研究に精通する必要性について検討する。続いて、親の談話方略の役割について述べ、言葉の遅れ・混合・消失など、バイリンガル発達の問題点として認識されている事柄について説明する。最後に、日本の教育制度と、その中でバイリンガルとして育てられる子どもたちがよく直面するスティグマと問題について考察する。この論文で指摘することが、日本でバイリンガルの子供を育てる親に二言語発達の現実を理解させ、子供がバイリンガルになる可能性を損なうような専門職の無教養で誤った意見を退けることができるようになればと願っている。

Keywords: bilingualism, bilingual myths, bilingual children, parent discourse strategies

The development of bilingualism in children is often shrouded with myths and misunderstanding: “Learning two languages will confuse the child”; “Bilingualism results in language delays”; “Children will develop only partial competence in their languages”; “Dual language acquisition will affect children's national identity.” Rumors such as these are abundant, but few are actually grounded in research or empirical evidence. Like many countries, Japan suffers from an over-reliance on these erroneous beliefs and on outdated

research when it comes to approaching children with more than one language. This fact is supported by a long-held belief that Japan is a homogenous and therefore monolingual and monocultural society (see Turnbull, 2020).

In a critical review of (so-called) self-help bilingual parenting books in Japan, Nakamura (2021) shows that many of the books written in Japanese perpetuate untrue ideologies about bilingualism that might plague the successful development of bilingual children. It is exactly this kind of continued reliance on (1) unproven rumors and (2) out-of-date research by both uninformed parents and under-informed professionals that adds unnecessary barriers to the raising of bilingual children in Japan. But changing linguistic landscapes in Japan and a greater depth of research on matters of bilingual development are proving the notion of Japanese homogeneity to be untrue. The need is now greater than ever for the common mindset in Japan regarding bilingualism to be replaced with research-based truth.

Bilingualism is inherently ambiguous, difficult to define, and even more difficult to measure. Despite extensive attempts at defining the concept (for in-depth analyses, see, for example, Baetens Beardsmore, 1982; Skutnabb-Kangas, 1981), it remains difficult to pin down. I will follow Carder's (2007) definition throughout this paper: Carder defines bilingualism as "the ability to understand and use two (or more) languages, in certain contexts, and for certain purposes" (p. 125). I have chosen this definition due to its focus on context, which is crucial to understanding the reality of bilingualism, especially in the development of bilingualism in children. I use the term "bilingual child" to refer to any child who has heard and learnt two languages from birth (also known as *Bilingual First Language Acquisition*—see Meisel, 1989); although I acknowledge that many of the points raised throughout this article may also apply to those children developing their bilingualism as a form of early second language acquisition in early childhood (2 to 6 years old) (see De Houwer, 1990). When discussing bilingual child rearing in Japan, my use of the term *societal language* will refer to Japanese, and *non-societal language* to any language other than Japanese, although my examples will pertain to English.

It is not the case that all children raised bilingually will be successful in their dual language acquisition. Research by De Houwer (2020a) suggests that one in four children who are raised bilingually do *not* learn to speak both (or all) of the languages heard in their home. Case studies in Japan have shown similar findings, in which not all children who are raised with one native English-speaking parent learnt to actively speak English (see for example Noguchi, 2001, and Yamamoto, 2001, in which around 30% of the children surveyed were found not to actively use English at home). However, research has shown that the way parents interact with their children, and react when their children use one language over the other, can have significant effects on their children's bilingual development (De Houwer & Nakamura, 2022).

To help parents increase their children's exposure to and sense of need for the non-societal language, this paper focuses on the role of monolingual discourse strategies in the raising of English-Japanese speaking bilingual children in Japan (although the research discussed here can apply to bilingual children learning any languages). Throughout the paper I will examine the current research on raising bilingual children in various parts of the world and apply the main findings to a specifically Japanese context. The main goal of the paper is to dispel some of the most commonly-held myths surrounding bilingualism and to provide research-driven advice for parents looking to raise their children to become bilingual in a specifically Japanese context.

Patterns of Bilingual Interaction

There are two approaches parents might take towards their children's bilingualism: a mixed-languages approach, or a monolingual approach. Researchers promoting parent discourse strategies that fall within a *mixed-languages approach* (see for example Noguchi, 1996; Ruiz Martín, 2017) advocate for parents code-switching between languages either arbitrarily, or for specific events (such as reading books) or locations (such as going back to a parent's home country). There are, however, studies that have also shown how excessive language mixing by parents may hinder children's vocabulary development in both languages (Byers-Heinlein, 2013). This is likely due to the fact that early speech perception lays a foundation for vocabulary acquisition (Werker & Yeung, 2005), and thus any difficulties children experience with language separation might result in similar difficulties in bilingual vocabulary development.

Of course, that is certainly not to say that mixed-language approaches play no role in raising bilingual children. There is undoubtedly a place for parents to act as models of bilingualism and biculturalism for their children (see Noguchi, 1996); but this is likely to be more effective after children have developed solid foundations in both languages first. As we will examine throughout this paper, consistent language strategies that allow for children to become exposed to and use their minority, non-societal language (in addition to the majority language) during the early stages of language development are important. Especially in a country such as Japan, where Japanese is so prominent in society as the majority language, research has shown that the linguistic pattern of the home should emphasise the minority language as much as possible (see Yamamoto, 2001).

Two important factors for children to become bilingual are *exposure* and *need*. Children not only require ample exposure of direct quality input to both languages (Pearson et al., 1997), but they must also come to realise that they need to use both languages in their everyday lives (Grosjean, 2010). Parents raising their children to be bilingual are able to influence both of these factors through their own language practices.

De Houwer (2021) identified four different patterns in which potentially-bilingual children may receive dual language input from their parents: (1) both parents speak the non-societal language to their children at home; (2) both parents speak to their children in both languages; (3) one parent speaks both languages to their children, and one parent speaks a single language; or (4) each parent speaks to their children in just a single language (the well-known "one parent, one language" system).

These input patterns are also complemented by other people, both inside (e.g., siblings) and outside (e.g., grandparents, extended family, friends) the home, and by the amount children are exposed to these sources of language input. Because bilingual children are receiving input in two languages, the argument is often made that they are thus receiving less input in each than a monolingually-raised child would. This assumption, however, has been shown to be doubtful, given the wide range of variability in parents' interaction patterns (De Houwer, 2018). For example, a chatty bilingual mother will provide more language input than a quiet monolingual mother.

De Houwer (2007) investigated bilingual families with at least one 6- to 9-year-old and at least one parent who spoke to them in the non-societal language at home. She found distinct patterns of language use at home that corresponded to different rates of successful bilingual development in the children. The most commonly found pattern was when both parents spoke to their children in the non-societal language *as well as* the societal language, in which case 79% of the children learnt to speak the non-societal language also. The second most common pattern was families in which both parents spoke to their children in the societal language and one parent also spoke the non-societal language, which had

the lowest chance (36%) of the children learning to speak the non-societal language. Next were families in which both parents spoke to their children in the non-societal language and one parent also spoke the societal language, which has the highest chance of children learning to speak the non-societal language (93%). The least frequent family type was the so-called “one parent, one language” families, where one parent spoke to their child in the societal language and the other parent spoke the non-societal language, in which case 74% of the children learnt the non-societal language.

De Houwer’s (2007) findings as applied to an example of a bilingual child in Japan are displayed in Table 1.

Table 1
Success Rate of a Bilingual Child Raised in Japan Learning to Speak English, Extrapolated from De Houwer (2007)

	Parent A (Japanese, English)	Parent A (English)	Parent A (Japanese)
Parent B (Japanese, English)	79%	93%	36%
Parent B (Japanese)	36%	74%	

Let’s now contextualise the above findings for a bilingual child acquiring English and Japanese in Japan. Assuming the child is attending an ordinary Japanese public school (i.e., receiving large amounts of the societal language outside of the home), those children whose parents *both* speak to them in English at home are 93% likely to successfully acquire English in addition to Japanese. However, those with only one parent speaking English are between 36% to 74% likely to achieve the same level of bilingualism, depending on whether that parent also uses Japanese and to what extent (similar data can be found in Yamamoto, 2001, within a specifically-Japanese context).

De Houwer (2009, 2018) notes that children’s language use and proficiency can fluctuate considerably in response to changes in the amount of input they receive in each language. This might include times when they visit a parent’s home country where the minority language is spoken widely, develop friendships with children who speak the minority language, or attend Saturday school in the minority language. However, given the relatively low potential for bilingual development in some of the cases presented in Table 1, it is more important now than ever that people in Japan, both parents and educators, become clear on the truth regarding bilingualism in children.

Research on Bilingual Development

Throughout the past two and a half decades, research on bilingual development in children has grown exponentially (Bayram et al., 2018). Despite what is often thought, no difference has been found in the language development process between bilingual and monolingual children. Bilingual children hit the same linguistic milestones as monolingual children at around the same time. The overall timing of first word comprehension is no different (Clark, 1993), nor is there any difference in the number of words they learn to

understand (Carbajal & Peperkamp, 2020). Both bilingual children and monolingual children understand more words than they initially say, begin to produce their first words and word combinations around the same time, and both follow the same patterns for initial word production (e.g., deleting or substituting sounds, repeating syllables, shortening words, etc.) (De Houwer, 2021). There is also a great deal of variation in the speed at which *both* bilingual children and monolingual children learn to say new words (see Cote & Bornstein, 2014; Vihman, 2016) that is simply a matter of individual differences.

Bilingual children tend to follow similar development patterns as they acquire both languages. For example, when they eventually begin babbling, bilingual infants tend to use different prosodic (stress and intonation) patterns depending on which language they are interacting in (Andruski et al., 2014; Sundara et al., 2020). In other words, bilingual infants often replicate the sound patterns of their two languages even during the babbling stage of language development. Although not all bilingual children will start saying words in both languages at the beginning (De Houwer et al., 2014; Legacy et al., 2018), most will start producing words in both languages by the age of 1.5 years (De Houwer, 2009), but the number of words produced in each language may differ (De Houwer & Bornstein, 2016). However, there is wide variation in bilingual children in terms of when they start to combine words, just as there is in monolingual children (De Houwer, 2009; Vihman, 2016), although this usually occurs in the second half of the child's second year. Bilingual children may combine words from one language (unilingual utterance), or combine words from different languages (mixed utterance) (see below for more on language mixing). Important to remember, however, is that their use of two-word combinations does not necessarily appear in both languages at the same time (Lindquist & Gram Garmann, 2021).

Parents' Discourse Strategies

Bilingual children are sensitive to their parents' discourse strategies by age two (De Houwer & Nakamura, 2022). This means, children are aware of, and respond to, the language choices parents make in the household. For parents looking to prioritise their child's development as a relatively balanced bilingual, it is vital that they are conscious of the way they interact with their child to help socialize them into using one language instead of the other to develop the non-societal language, which is often the weaker of a child's two languages.

In order to encourage a child to speak the non-societal language, parents can use what are known as *monolingual discourse strategies*. These are techniques that involve using only the non-societal language, even when the child uses the societal language. Monolingual discourse strategies for a bilingual child in Japan involve the parent(s) speaking only English, even when the child speaks to them in Japanese. For example:

- Asking for confirmation (“Did you mean X?”)
- Asking the child to repeat (“What did you say?”)
- Feigning misunderstanding (“I don’t understand. What do you mean?”)
- Simply repeat what the child said back in English (see De Houwer, 2021).

It is important to note here that monolingual strategies are not necessarily the same as the one-parent-one-language system, nor must it be the one parent whose native language is the non-societal language who uses these techniques.

On the other hand, *bilingual discourse strategies* allow the conversation to take place in both languages. Examples include when a child speaks in Japanese and the parent simply replies in English without alluding to the child's choice of language, or when the parent simply switches to the language chosen by the child (see De Houwer, 2021; Lanza, 1992). While these strategies may help to ensure the conversation between parent and child

continues smoothly (which some parents may prioritise over their child's dual language development), they do not work to encourage the development of the child's productive bilingualism.

Parents' discourse strategies are important as they signal to children what kind of language is and is not accepted. For example, if a child responds to their parent's use of English with a Japanese utterance, and the parent simply continues without correcting them (a bilingual discourse strategy), it signals to the child that code-mixing is acceptable and provides little motivation for the child to develop their competence in English (also see Nakamura, 2018, for an example based in Japan). However, if the parent responds with a monolingual discourse strategy, they work to discourage the child's code-mixing and refocus their attention on using English (De Houwer, 2021; Lanza, 1992).

This kind of strategy also works to develop the *need factor* in bilingual children. This concept refers to the necessity or motivation for a child to use both languages in their daily life. When children perceive a genuine need to communicate in multiple languages, they are more likely to actively engage in language use and develop proficiency in both languages (Grosjean, 2010); however, if children cannot understand why they need to speak one of their languages, there is a very real chance they will simply not use it and thus never develop the ability to speak it (see Baker, 2011; Paradis et al., 2011). In order to avoid this, parents can select strategies that will provide their children with ample input and chances for exposure to the non-societal language.

Addressing the Issues that Are Often Misunderstood

Language Delay

To put it simply, early bilingualism does *not* cause language delay in children (Paradis et al., 2011). Despite the widely-held misconception, there is no evidence in any credible research that bilingual children suffer any kind of language delay or are in any way slower in their language development than monolingual children (De Houwer, 2021). If a bilingual child does suffer a language delay, it is not a result of their bilingualism. Studies have found that bilingual children with a specific language impairment (SLI) exhibit similar patterns of impairment to monolingual children with SLI, suggesting that language impairment is unrelated of the number of languages a child speaks (see Oller et al., 2007; Paradis et al., 2011).

Bilingual children will begin to speak in at least one of their languages around the same time as monolingual children, but their two languages may not always emerge at the same time. This can lead some parents or caregivers to think their child is suffering a language delay as a direct result of their bilingualism. But it is extremely common for bilingual children to experience lagging in one language over the other. These lags often result from a lack of exposure to that language, not from any internal impairment caused by their dual language acquisition, and can thus fluctuate with time and life circumstances (De Houwer & Bornstein, 2016).

Another common reason for the misconception about language delays in bilingual children comes from an unjust comparison of their vocabulary knowledge with that of monolingual children. There are two ways in which to compare the vocabulary sizes of bilingual and monolingual children. The first is a comparison of the total number of words a child can produce. For bilingual children, this covers both of their languages. Most research suggests bilingual children have a much greater vocabulary than their monolingual peers when comparing in this way (see De Houwer et al., 2014; Legacy et al., 2018; Marchman et al., 2010). This is often attributed to bilingual children's knowledge of cognates (i.e., words that sound the same and mean the same thing in each language, such

as *glass* and グラス); and translation equivalents (i.e., words in each language that differ in form but mean more or less the same thing, such as *tea* and お茶).

The second way to compare vocabulary sizes is to use only a single language for bilingual children and compare it to the vocabulary of a child who is monolingual in that language. In this case, research has found a much larger variation in results, with some studies (e.g., De Houwer et al., 2014; Legacy et al., 2018) suggesting no difference, and others (e.g., Cote & Bornstein, 2014; Hoff et al., 2012; Marchman et al., 2010) finding a greater lexicon in monolingual children over their bilingual peers. However, these differences can be attributed to the high variability amongst bilingual children in the number of words they produce in each language and when they begin to produce them (see De Houwer, 2021). This may also be a result of the *Complementarity Principle*, which suggests that bilinguals use their languages in different contexts, for different purposes, and with different people (see Grosjean, 2010). In other words, bilingual children may only use one language in a specific context, or with a limited number of people, which could limit their exposure to that language in comparison to their other one, thus resulting in a comparatively slower development.

Unfortunately, language development for a bilingual child is often measured solely in terms of their performance in the society language, and in comparison to monolingual children (De Houwer, 2021; García, 2009). When tested in only one of their languages (especially if it is the weaker one), bilingual children tend to score lower than their monolingual peers (Thordardottir et al., 2006). This is not surprising, as these bilingual children are only performing with half the knowledge they have. If a monolingual child knows 100 words in Japanese, and a bilingual child knows 50 words in English and 50 words in Japanese, both children know the same number of words. There is no language delay. However, when tested in only Japanese, the bilingual child appears to be suffering a delay in their language development because they are only being viewed through a lens that comprises half of what they know.

If a bilingual child performs worse than their monolingual counterpart in a monolingual test, blame is often attributed to their acquisition of two languages. However, research has shown for a long time now that bilingualism is not the same as double monolingualism (Grosjean, 1989). The bilingual mind does not function in the same way as one with only one language, and it is therefore unfair and, quite frankly, unfeasible, to compare the two in terms of performance. Bilingual children are better tested using their complete knowledge of both (or all) their languages; but, of course, this is a difficult concept. Especially in Japan, public schools rarely have the funds or human resources required to test bilingual children fairly in both languages. As a result, bilingualism in Japanese schools is often overlooked, pushed aside, or actively discouraged (see section below). It is important to remember that, even if they are compared to monolingual children and appear to know fewer words in the language they are tested in, bilingual children will eventually catch up and surpass monolingual children in terms of the overall number of words they know. Parents should trust in their child, stick to the discourse strategy they have decided on, and give them time to develop competence in both languages naturally.

Mixing Languages

Early studies on bilingual children's language mixing postulated that they do this because they are either confused or linguistically incompetent (Yow et al., 2018). This idea comes from the notion that the vocabulary and grammar sets of bilingual children's languages first exist as a single system that gradually develops into two separate systems

later. Mixing languages was thus seen as evidence of the pre-separation stage and of children's inability to differentiate the two linguistic systems (e.g., Köppe & Meisel, 1995; Redlinger & Park, 1980). However, we know now that bilingual children actually approach their languages as two distinct sets from the very beginning of their language development (De Houwer, 2005; Genesee, 1989). The mixing of these languages, then, is not a sign of confusion or cognitive deficiency; rather, most commonly, mixing languages is due to children simply not knowing a translation equivalent, or to the type of language input they receive, including parental speech acts (Nicoladis & Genesee, 1997).

In contrast to long-held perceptions, the perfect bilingual does not exist (Dewaele et al., 2003). In almost all cases of bilingualism in adults, one language takes dominance over the other on at least some occasions or for some instances of language use (Baker, 2011). Bilingual children are no different. Mixing languages is a common practice amongst bilingual children and adults alike that can occur for a number of reasons. For example, when speaking in the weaker of their two languages, bilingual children may encounter a lack of translation equivalents and switch to their dominant language to make up for unknown vocabulary (Cantone, 2007), grammar (Bernardini & Schlyter, 2004) or pragmatics (Vihman, 1985) necessary to communicate. This is a perfectly normal act that will disappear as the child's knowledge of the weaker language (usually the non-societal language) develops.

Research has shown that, from the age of 1.5 years onwards, bilingual children are able to choose word combinations in the language that matches that of their interlocutor for both familiar (Köppe, 1996) and unfamiliar (Genesee et al., 1996) speakers. This is known as the *Convergent Choice Principle* (see De Houwer, 2019). However, there are bilingual children who do not do this (De Houwer, 2021), and some bilingual children will use both languages to a person they know understands them, even if that person only addresses them in one primary language (Tare & Gelman, 2010). Bilingual children's mixing of their languages is often a point of worry for parents, who might fall into the fallacy that their child is confused. But code-mixing is a perfectly natural and normal part of bilingual development in children (Pearson, 2008). Children's mixing will ultimately become less frequent as their vocabulary knowledge of the weaker language grows with time because they will no longer need to borrow from the stronger language when speaking in the weaker (Bosma & Blom, 2019; Genesee, 1989).

Language Loss

The loss of a non-societal language (English, in the case of bilingual children growing up in Japan) is not uncommon. Especially common is for a child to suddenly stop using the non-societal language around the age four or five when they become more conscious of their own language proficiency (De Houwer, 2017). Another general trend sees parents start to use less of the non-societal language at home as children approach the age of five (Lauro et al. 2020), often as a result of the child using more of the societal language from school.

The interaction between parent and child, and parents' use of monolingual discourse strategies to encourage the child's production of the non-societal language, can thus be important in creating a need for children to use the non-societal language. Juan-Garau & Pérez-Vidal (2001) have shown that, even if a child completely stops using one language, they can begin again in response to the conversational efforts of their parents. A longitudinal study by Park et al. (2012) of parent-child interaction in bilingual families in the USA found that six-year-old children whose parents used monolingual discourse strategies and spoke the non-societal language at home were still highly proficient in that

language at age seven and a half. In contrast, those children whose parents used bilingual discourse strategies and allowed the use of the societal language at home had very low proficiency in the non-societal language at the same age, or had lost the ability to speak it altogether.

Furthermore, the number of non-societal language speakers around a bilingual child has been shown to be important. Gollan et al. (2015) have shown that the greater number of people who speak the non-societal language with a child, the better speaker of the language the child becomes between the ages of six and 10. Stubborn use of monolingual discourse strategies (i.e., when the parents strictly stick to the non-societal language even when the child speaks to them in the societal language) is the key to socializing children into speaking their weaker language at home.

The Japanese Education System: One Way Fits All?

When children start attending school, there will be an incredible burst in their development of the societal language. This results from an expanded domain of use, including with peers and teachers, and from the fact that it is generally the first language in which children begin to develop literacy skills (Grosjean, 2010). In an environment where only the societal language is spoken, children quickly learn this language is held in much higher regard than their non-societal “other” language. This, coupled with the heavy exposure children receive to the societal language at school, often leads to negative opinions towards the non-societal language, which contributes to many children no longer wanting to speak it, even at home.

Research has also shown that certain positive attitudes towards the societal language may foster negative attitudes in children towards their non-societal language (De Houwer, 2020b). Such negative attitudes may be shaped by teachers’ stance towards the language not used at school. For example, teachers may ignore the children’s non-societal language, or explicitly suppress it altogether (Pulinx et al., 2017). Cases have been documented in which children interiorise the monolingual, societal language-only ideology upheld by their teachers and move to speak only the language used in school (e.g., Karrebaek, 2013). Bilingual children may also stop using the non-societal language in the school environment to avoid presenting themselves as speakers of the other language, and to match the language used by their peers to avoid standing out (Grosjean, 2021).

Many parents of bilingual children in Japan will have experienced their child’s teacher insisting on a Japanese-only policy at home so as not to “confuse the child” or interfere with their learning to speak Japanese. Unfortunately, due to the level of trust placed in teachers, and parents’ own lack of knowledge on the matter, many parents will take this advice on board and inadvertently suppress their child’s chance at becoming bilingual (Lee et al., 2015). However, in reality, this kind of advice is simply the biased and ill-informed opinion of a teacher with no experience or knowledge of how to deal with a developing bilingual child (perhaps due to the relative lack of such children in Japan).

But it is not only teachers who may lack the necessary understanding of bilingual development. Research has shown that few professional speech therapists actually receive the necessary training to understand the learning needs of, and accurately assess, bilingual children, which can lead to misdiagnosis of language impairments (see Bedore & Peña, 2008). Although it is possible the extent of this issue is heightened in Japan, where there are relatively fewer bilingually raised children in comparison to their monolingual counterparts, it must be acknowledged that nothing in the research suggests it is necessary to select only one language for the child to use. In fact, there is actually evidence to suggest

that children's well-developed competence in the non-societal language actually supports their learning of the societal language (e.g., Tsai et al., 2012; Winsler et al., 2014).

Conclusion

Parents raising their children to be bilingual need not only an understanding of the practical aspects, but also of the theoretical foundation underlying bilingual acquisition for children. There are two main reasons for this. The first is so that parents are fundamentally aware of what their child is going through as they develop. Things are not always going to go according to plan, but dominance in one language, apparent delays in another, regression in one language, and code-mixing in both, are not signs of a child's failure. Understanding the research behind this will help parents become mindful of which factors require special attention for their particular circumstances so they may continue to support their child's bilingualism throughout their development.

The second reason for parents to understand the theoretical foundations of bilingualism is for when ill-informed doubters confront them and question their child's developing dual languages. Regrettably, many people in positions of power or knowledge, including teachers, caregivers, and even doctors (Byers-Heinlein & Lew-Williams, 2013), are entirely unaware of what the research actually says on matters of developing bilingualism. Instead, some of these people perpetuate simply untrue misconceptions of "one language to avoid confusion" that can have seriously detrimental effects on a child's bilingual development. This is especially the case in Japan, where relatively few children are raised bilingually and thus research-based understanding on the matter is lacking.

This paper has introduced research related to monolingual discourse strategies at home as a strong way to establish bilingualism in children. These monolingual strategies allow parents to provide their children not only with added exposure to the non-societal language, but also a need to use the language by signaling to the child that their use of the societal language in the home situation is not acceptable, encouraging them instead to speak the non-societal language. In Japan, where children are widely exposed to Japanese outside of the home (e.g., at school, with friends, with Japanese family, in the community, etc.), it is important that they also be given opportunities and reasons to use English (or any other minority language) at home whenever possible. Monolingual discourse strategies are one useful tool in parents' inventory to achieve this.

Developing bilingualism and biculturalism is a personal, family matter. Every case is different and factors such as the child's individual needs, the family's language goals, and the linguistic environment must constantly be taken into account. However, the theoretical foundations will generally remain the same. There are a lot of negative prejudice surrounding bilingualism in child development, but there is also a lot of positive research to dispel these. It is hoped that the ideas and research findings presented in this paper might help to dismiss some of the un-supported rumours that cloud the notion of bilingual development in children, particularly in a Japanese context. Only by arming themselves with knowledge based on actual research will parents be in a position to effectively support their child's language development, regardless of the myths that others may try to press upon them.

References

- Andruski, J. E., Casielles, E., & Nathan, G. (2014). Is bilingual babbling language-specific? Some evidence from a case study of Spanish-English dual acquisition. *Bilingualism: Language and Cognition*, 17(3), 660–672. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1366728913000655>
- Baetens Beardsmore, H. (1982). *Bilingualism: Basic principles*. Multilingual Matters.
- Baker, C. (2011). *Foundations of bilingual education and bilingualism (5th Ed.)*. Multilingual Matters.
- Bayram, F., Miller, D., Rothman, J., & Serratrice, L. (2018). Studies in bilingualism: 25 years in the making. In D. Miller, F. Bayram, J. Rothman, & L. Serratrice (Eds.), *Bilingual cognition and language: The state of the science across its subfields* (pp. 1–12). John Benjamins.
- Bedore, L. M., & Peña, E. D. (2008). Assessment of bilingual children for identification of language impairment: Current findings and implications for practice. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 11(1), 1–29. <https://doi.org/10.2167/beb392.0>
- Bernardini, P., & Schlyter, S. (2004). Growing syntactic structure and code-mixing in the weaker language: The Ivy Hypothesis. *Bilingualism: Language and Cognition*, 7(1), 49–69. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1366728904001270>
- Bosma, E., & Blom, E. (2019). A code-switching asymmetry in bilingual children: Code-switching from Dutch to Frisian requires more cognitive control than code-switching from Frisian to Dutch. *International Journal of Bilingualism*, 23(6), 1431–1447. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1367006918798972>
- Byers-Heinlein, K. (2013). Parental language mixing: Its measurement and the relation of mixed input to young bilingual children's vocabulary size. *Bilingualism: Language and Cognition*, 16(1), 32–48. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1366728912000120>
- Byers-Heinlein, K., & Lew-Williams, C. (2013). Bilingualism in the early years: What the science says. *LEARNing Landscapes*, 7(1), 95–112.
- Cantone, K. F. (2007). *Code-switching in bilingual children*. Springer. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4020-5784-7>
- Carbajal, M. J., & Peperkamp, S. (2020). Dual language input and the impact of language separation on early lexical development. *Infancy*, 25(1), 22–45. <https://doi.org/10.1111/infa.12315>
- Carder, M. (2007). *Bilingualism in international schools*. Multilingual Matters. <http://dx.doi.org/10.21832/9781853599422>
- Clark, E. V. (1993). *The lexicon in acquisition*. Cambridge University Press. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511554377>
- Cote, L. R., & Bornstein, M. H. (2014). Productive vocabulary among three groups of bilingual American children: Comparison and prediction. *First Language*, 34(6), 467–485. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0142723714560178>
- De Houwer, A. (1990). *The acquisition of two languages from birth: A case study*. Cambridge University Press. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511519789>
- De Houwer, A. (2005). Early bilingual acquisition: Focus on morphosyntax and the separate development hypothesis. In J. Kroll & A. De Groot (Eds.), *Handbook of bilingualism: Psycholinguistic approaches* (pp. 30–48). Oxford University Press.
- De Houwer, A. (2007). Parental language input patterns and children's bilingual use. *Applied Psycholinguistics*, 28(3), 411–424. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0142716407070221>

- De Houwer, A. (2009). *Bilingual first language acquisition*. Multilingual Matters.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.21832/9781847691507>
- De Houwer, A. (2017). Early multilingualism and language awareness. In J. Cenoz, D. Gorter, & S. May (Eds.), *Language awareness and multilingualism* (pp. 83–97).
http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-02240-6_6
- De Houwer, A. (2018). The role of language input environments for language outcomes and language acquisition in young bilingual children. In D. Miller, F. Bayram, J. Rothman, & L. Serratrice (Eds.), *Bilingual cognition and language: The state of the science across its subfields* (pp. 127–153). John Benjamins.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1075/sibil.54.07hou>
- De Houwer, A. (2019). Language choice in bilingual interaction. In A. De Houwer & L. Ortega (Eds.), *The Cambridge handbook of bilingualism* (pp. 324–348). Cambridge University Press. <http://doi.org/10.1017/9781316831922.018>
- De Houwer, A. (2020a). Why do so many children who hear two languages speak just a single language? *Zeitschrift für Interkulturellen Fremdsprachenunterricht*, 25(1), 7–26.
- De Houwer, A. (2020b). Harmonious Bilingualism: Well-being for families in bilingual settings. In S. Eisenclas & A. Schalley (Eds.), *Handbook of home language maintenance and development. Social and affective factors* (pp. 63–83). Mouton de Gruyter.
- De Houwer, A. (2021). *Bilingual development in childhood*. Cambridge University Press.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/9781108866002>
- De Houwer, A., & Bornstein, M. H. (2016). Balance patterns in early bilingual acquisition: A longitudinal study of word comprehension and production. In C. Silva-Corvalán & J. Treffers-Daller (Eds.), *Language dominance in bilinguals: Issues of measurement and operationalization* (pp. 134–155). Cambridge University Press.
- De Houwer, A., Bornstein, M. H., & Putnick, D. L. (2014). A bilingual-monolingual comparison of young children’s vocabulary size: Evidence from comprehension and production. *Applied Psycholinguistics*, 35(6), 1189–1211.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0142716412000744>
- De Houwer, A., & Nakamura, J. (2022). Developmental perspectives on parents’ use of discourse strategies with bilingual children. In U. Rønnefeldt & R. Blackwood (Eds.), *Multilingualism across the lifespan* (pp. 31–54). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Dewaele, J., Housen, A., & Wei, L. (2003). Introduction and overview. In J. Dewaele, A. Housen, & L. Wei (Eds.), *Bilingualism: Beyond basic principles* (pp. 1–9). Multilingual Matters. <http://dx.doi.org/10.21832/9781853596315>
- García, O. (2009). *Bilingual education in the 21st century: A global perspective*. Wiley & Blackwell.
- Genesee, F. (1989). Early bilingual development: One language or two? *Journal of Child Language*, 16(1), 161–179. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0305000900013490>
- Genesee, F., Boivin, I., & Nicoladis, E. (1996). Talking with strangers: A study of bilingual children’s communicative competence. *Applied Psycholinguistics*, 17(4), 427–442. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0142716400008183>
- Gollan, T. H., Starr, J., & Ferreira, V. S. (2015). More than use it or lose it: The number-of-speakers effect on heritage language proficiency. *Psychonomic Bulletin and Review*, 22(1), 147–55. <https://doi.org/10.3758/s13423-014-0649-7>
- Grosjean, F. (1989). Neurolinguists beware! The bilingual is not two mono-linguals in one person. *Brain and Language*, 36(1), 3–15. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0093-934X\(89\)90048-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/0093-934X(89)90048-5)
- Grosjean, F. (2010). *Bilingual: Life and reality*. Harvard University Press.
- Grosjean, F. (2021). *Life as a bilingual*. Cambridge University Press.

- Hoff, E., Core, C., Place, S., Rumiche, R., Señor, M., & Parra, M. (2012). Dual language exposure and early bilingual development. *Journal of Child Language*, *39*(1), 1–27. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0305000910000759>
- Juan-Garau, M., & Pérez-Vidal, C. (2001). Mixing and pragmatic parental strategies in early bilingual acquisition. *Journal of Child Language*, *28*(1), 59–86. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0305000900004591>
- Karrebaek, M. S. (2013). “Don’t speak like that to her!”: Linguistic minority children’s socialization into an ideology of monolingualism. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, *17*(3), 355–375. <https://doi.org/10.1111/josl.12035>
- Köppe, R. (1996). Language differentiation in bilingual children: The development of grammatical and pragmatic competence. *Linguistics*, *34*(5), 927–954. <https://doi.org/10.1515/ling.1996.34.5.927>
- Köppe, R., & Meisel, J. M. (1995). Code-switching in bilingual first language acquisition. In L. Milroy & P. Muysken (Eds.), *One speaker, two languages: Cross-disciplinary perspectives on code-switching* (pp. 276–301). Cambridge University Press. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511620867.013>
- Lanza, E. (1992). Can bilingual two-year-olds code-switch? *Journal of Child Language*, *19*(3), 633–658. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0305000900011600>
- Lauro, J., Core, C., & Hoff, E. (2020). Explaining individual differences in trajectories of simultaneous bilingual development: Contributions of child and environmental factors. *Child Development*, *91*(6), 2063–2082. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cdev.13409>
- Lee, M., Shetgiri, R., Barina, A., Tillitski, J., & Flores, G. (2015). Raising bilingual children: A qualitative study of parental attitudes, beliefs, and intended behaviors. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences*, *37*(4), 503–521. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0739986315602669>
- Legacy, J., Zesiger, P., Friend, M., & Poulin-Dubois, D. (2018). Vocabulary size and speed of word recognition in very young French–English bilinguals: A longitudinal study. *Bilingualism: Language and Cognition*, *21*(1), 137–149. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1366728916000833>
- Lindquist, H., & Gram Garmann, N. (2021). Toddlers and their translingual practicing homes. *International Journal of Multilingualism*, *18*(1), 59–72. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14790718.2019.1604712>
- Marchman, V. A., Fernald, A., & Hurtado, N. (2010). How vocabulary size in two languages relates to efficiency in spoken word recognition by young Spanish–English bilinguals. *Journal of Child Language*, *37*(4), 817–840. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0305000909990055>
- Meisel, J. M. (1989). Early differentiation of languages in bilingual children. In K. Hyltenstam & L. K. Obler (Eds.), *Bilingualism across the lifespan: Aspects of acquisition, maturity and loss* (pp.13–40). Cambridge University Press.
- Nakamura, J. (2018). Parents’ use of discourse strategies in dual-lingual interactions with receptive bilingual children. In E. Babatsouli (Ed.), *Crosslinguistic research in monolingual and bilingual speech* (pp. 181–200). Institute of Monolingual and Bilingual Speech.
- Nakamura, J. (2021). English parenting for Japanese parents: A critical review of advice in self-help books for raising bilingual children in Japan. *English Today*, 1–6. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0266078421000286>
- Nicoladis, E., & Genesee, F. (1997). Language development in preschool bilingual children. *Journal of Speech-Language Pathology, and Audiology*, *21*(4), 258–270.

- Noguchi, M. G. (1996). The bilingual parent as model for the bilingual child. *Policy Science*, 3(4) 245–261.
- Noguchi, M. G. (2001). Bilinguality and bicultural children in Japan: A pilot survey of factors linked to active English-Japanese bilingualism. In M. G. Noguchi & S. Fotos (Eds.), *Studies in Japanese bilingualism* (pp. 234–271). Multilingual Matters.
- Oller, D. K., Pearson, B. Z., & Cobo-Lewis, A. B. (2007). Profile effects in early bilingual language and literacy. *Applied Psycholinguistics*, 28(2), 191–230.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0142716407070117>
- Paradis, J., Genesee, F., & Crago, M. (2011). *Dual language development and disorders: A handbook on bilingualism and second language learning*. Paul H. Brookes Publishing.
- Park, H., Tsai, K. M., Liu, L. L., & Lau, A. S. (2012). Transactional associations between supportive family climate and young children’s heritage language proficiency in immigrant families. *International Journal of Behavioral Development*, 36(3), 226–236.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0165025412439842>
- Pearson, B. Z. (2008). *Raising a bilingual child*. Random House.
- Pearson, B. Z., Fernández, S., Lewedeg, V., & Oller, D. K. (1997). The relation of input factors to lexical learning by bilingual infants. *Applied Psycholinguistics*, 18(1), 41–58.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0142716400009863>
- Pulinx, R., Van Avermaet, P., & Agirdag, O. (2017). Silencing linguistic diversity: The extent, the determinants and consequences of the monolingual beliefs of Flemish teachers. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 20(5), 542–556.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13670050.2015.1102860>
- Redlinger, W. E., & Park, T. Z. (1980). Language mixing in young bilinguals. *Journal of Child Language*, 7(2), 337–352. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S030500090000266X>
- Ruiz Martín, A. (2017). Mixed system 1: A language strategy for bilingual families. *Estudios de Lingüística Inglesa Aplicada*, 17, 125–156.
<https://doi.org/10.12795/elia.2017.i17.06>
- Skutnabb-Kangas, T. (1981). *Bilingualism or not: The education of minorities*. Multilingual Matters.
- Sundara, M., Ward, N., Conboy, B., & Kuhl, P. K. (2020). Exposure to a second language in infancy alters speech production. *Bilingualism: Language and Cognition*, 23(5), 978–991. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1366728919000853>
- Tare, M., & Gelman, S. A. (2010). Can you say it another way? Cognitive factors in bilingual children’s pragmatic language skills. *Journal of Cognition and Development*, 11(2), 137–158. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15248371003699951>
- Thordardottir, E., Rothenberg, A., Rivard, M. E., & Naves, R. (2006). Bilingual assessment: Can overall proficiency be estimated from separate measurement of two languages? *Journal of Multilingual Communication Disorders*, 4(1), 1–21.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14769670500215647>
- Tsai, K., Park, H., Liu, L., & Lau, A. (2012). Distinct pathways from parental cultural orientation to young children’s bilingual development. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 33(5), 219–226.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.appdev.2012.07.002>
- Turnbull, B. (2020). Beyond bilingualism in Japan: Examining the translingual trends of a “monolingual” nation. *International Journal of Bilingualism*, 24(4), 634–650.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1367006919873428>
- Vihman, M. (1985). Language differentiation by the bilingual infant. *Journal of Child Language*, 12(2), 297–324. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0305000900006450>

- Vihman, M. (2016). Prosodic structures and templates in bilingual phonological development. *Bilingualism: Language and Cognition*, 19(1), 69–88.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S1366728914000790>
- Werker, J. F., & Yeung, H. H. (2005). Infant speech perception bootstraps word learning. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 9(11), 519–527.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tics.2005.09.003>
- Winsler, A., Kim, Y., & Richard, E. (2014). Socio-emotional skills, behavior problems, and Spanish competence predict the acquisition of English among English language learners in poverty. *Developmental Psychology*, 50(9), 2242–2254.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/a0037161>
- Yamamoto, M. (2001). *Language use in interlingual families: A Japanese–English sociolinguistic study*. Multilingual Matters.
- Yow, W. Q., Tan, J. S., & Flynn, S. (2018). Code-switching as a marker of linguistic competence in bilingual children. *Bilingualism: Language and Cognition*, 21(5), 1075–1090. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1366728917000335>