

## 日本地方と二言語を状況に応じ併用する立場

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# Bilingualism and Family Language Policy in Outlying Areas of Japan

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## 日本地方と二言語を状況に応じ併用する立場

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**Abstract:** *In Japan many families face various challenges in their attempts to bring up bilingual/multilingual children. There are identity conflicts, community language dominance, time pressure constraints in negotiating conflicting language demands, and the negative effects of institutional social processes such as state mandated language in education policy. This is particularly the case where families live in multilingual 'resource poor' areas where there is limited access to facilities, amenities, and support networks for bilingualism. This paper reports on the results of a survey examining how bilingual families in Japan living in 'resource poor' areas raise their children to be bilingual. It details both the planned strategies and actual interactional processes that families use to promote the regular use of two or more languages.*

**Keywords:** Bilingualism, Family Language Policy, Japan, Bilingual resources

### 1. Introduction

In Japan many families face various challenges in their attempts to bring up bilingual/multilingual children. There are identity conflicts, community language dominance, time pressure constraints in negotiating conflicting language demands, and the negative effects of institutional social processes such as state mandated language in education policy. This is particularly the case where families live in multilingual 'resource poor' areas. 'Resource poor' areas can be defined as locations where access to both formal and informal facilities, amenities, and support networks for acquiring two or more languages is minimal or completely absent. Such locations typically apply to families living in remote locales, conventionally rural areas, far from large urban centers that are the usual repositories of multilingual resources.

Yet, even in these difficult circumstances, families do succeed in raising their children as bilinguals. Understanding how immigrant or intermarried families achieve success in their family language policy in the Japanese context despite very challenging social conditions can help us understand how we can best support others in a similar situation.

This paper reports on the results of a survey examining how bilingual families in Japan living in 'resource poor' areas raise their children to be bilingual. It details both the planned strategies and actual interactional processes that families use to promote the regular use of two or more languages. It also examines how families reconcile their proactive policies on bilingualism with a Japanese public school system that, despite the allocation of substantial resources for English foreign language education, emphasizes monolingualism. The paper thus provides an enlightening bricolage of families efforts to support and maintain bilingualism in differing environments across Japan that are often inimical to achieving this aim.

## 2. Family Language Policy

Family Language Policy (hereafter FLP) is generally defined as “the explicit and overt planning in relation to language use within the home and among family members” (King & Fogle, 2017: 315). It represents “an integrated overview of research on how languages are managed, learned and negotiated within families” (King *et al.*, 2008: 907). Lanza (2007) defined family as a ‘community of practice’ with “its own norms for language use” and which has its “own ways of speaking, acting and believing” (p. 47). Family language policies, therefore, can be conceived as “a deliberate attempt at practicing a particular language use pattern and particular literacy practices within home domains and among family members” (Curd-Christiansen 2009, 352).

Studies on family language policy also suggest that children’s language acquisition and development are largely influenced by larger societal discourses and ideologies, which in turn affect the ways in which family members plan when and how they use a particular language (King and Fogle 2006). Family language policy does not exist in a vacuum; the way society values certain languages and the way certain languages gain more economical value occur socially, outside the family domain. For example, in a study of Chinese families living in Quebec, Canada, Curdt-Christiansen (2009) described how Chinese immigrant parents valued English and Chinese, in addition to French, which was a dominant language in the local context and in which their children were required to receive their public school education.

Similarly, Yamamoto (1995), in her research into Japanese-English bilingual parenting in Japanese international families found that most families in the study chose to use one language at home (usually the minority language, English), a trend that was attributed to positive attitudes toward bilingualism. Yamamoto’s findings indicated that language use patterns varied according to interlocutors, concluding that lack of support for biliteracy and a perceived taboo over “conspicuousness” or visibility of bilingual international families in Japan were major obstacles.

Takeuchi (2016), in her study of Filipino mothers living in Japan, found that macro-level factors, particularly the low status of Tagalog and official neglect of minority language education, critically impacted on the type and extent of FLP these mothers could undertake. Similar to other studies on how the status of particular languages in a given society can influence multilingual development (Sakamoto 2006; Kirsch 2012), Takeuchi emphasizes that multilingual FLP is also subject to political influences whereby the dominant ideology is of monolingualism plus English. In this Takeuchi’s study echoes the comments made by Kubota and McKay (2009) concerning what they term ‘exclusive multilingualism’:

“What seems to be valued is exclusive bilingualism in the sense that the valued bilingualism involves only English and one’s L1 or double monolingualism in the sense that one is to be a fluent speaker of Japanese or English or both, but not other languages” (p.613).

What these examples highlight is how multilingualism is not just the domain of language acquisition; it requires a multidisciplinary approach that combines language acquisition with issues surrounding language policy. Spolsky (2004) usefully conceptualizes this synthesis in his proposed language policy model which identifies three main components of a speech community, of which a bilingual family would be a micro example (Figure 1). Spolsky defined language practices as “the habitual pattern of selecting among the varieties that make up its linguistic repertoire; its language beliefs or ideology – the beliefs about language and language use; and any specific efforts to modify or influence that practice by any kind of language intervention, planning or management” (2004: 5). Using this model at the family level enables the integration of separate components within a structural, flexible, and expandable framework.

## Spolsky's Language Policy model

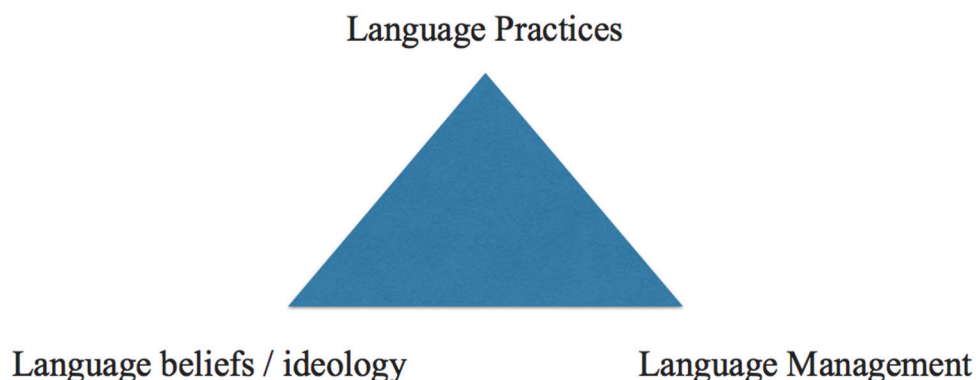


Figure 1: Spolsky's Language Policy Model.

### 3. Language in education policy in Japan

Baldauf (2005) defines language in education policy as “the organized, systematic, and formal efforts to promote the learning of a language” (p.152). Such policy making in Japan occurs within the framework of *kokusaika*, ‘internationalization’ (Hashimoto 2000, Butler 2007, Gottlieb 2007). Though the term ‘internationalization’ may suggest a form of intercultural exchange, in Japan *kokusaika* is primarily framed as an encounter between Japan and the English-speaking world (Kubota 2002). According to Liddicoat (2007) it is “directed at communication with the economically and politically dominant English-speaking nations, rather than communication across a broad geographical and linguistic spectrum” (Liddicoat 2007: 36).

For Suzuki (1995) *kokusaika* is also concerned with spreading Japanese culture and values internationally so that the foreign ‘other’ can see the world from a Japanese perspective. The inference here is that *kokusaika* is less about transcending linguistic and cultural boundaries, and more about maintaining them. As Ivy (1995) has argued, “the policy of internationalization implies...the thorough domestication of the foreign” (1995:3). It is essentially a policy of assimilation, one that, in its approach to English language education, corresponds to Lo Bianco’s idea of an “Assimilationist Language Policy” (2010:169), a situation in which there is monolingual language instruction and an emphasis on cultural homogeneity. Such an assimilationist orientation is also evident in Hashimoto’s (2000) argument that one of the main objectives of English language education is to foster within students a heightened sense of their own ‘Japaneseness’ (2000: 49). Liddicoat advances a similar criticism contending that *kokusaika* is “mono-directional - it allows Japanese self expression in the world rather than articulating a mutually informing encounter between cultures” (2007: 38).

### 4. Japan and multiculturalism

The effects of this ‘assimilationist language policy’ are felt even by families raising their children as Japanese-English bilinguals despite the apparent valorization of English. Although English is both politically and socially defined as an essential component of Japanese education, its recognition as a possible part of Japanese identity is much less welcome. There is a conditional acceptance of

bilingualism as a tolerated exception (Nakamura, 2016), rather than a potential multicultural norm. Moreover, such acceptance is a contingent on both the language combination and location.

The largest concentrations of minorities are found in Japan's manufacturing heartland centered on the country's three biggest cities, Tokyo, Osaka and Nagoya (Gaynor, 2016). It is here that the most noteworthy progress towards multiculturalism can be found. Tsuneyoshi (2011) cites the case of Oizumi city, near Nagoya, where 16% of the city's population is registered as foreigners, most of them immigrants from South America. To meet the linguistic and cultural needs of this sizable minority, the Oizumi Board of Education has established JSL classes for both children and parents, and provides a range of educational and social support systems for immigrants. In Kawasaki city south of Tokyo, the local government has established 'multicultural coexistence' (*tabunka kyousei shakai*) as one of its municipal goals, where diversity is respected and people of different nationalities, cultures and ethnicities can 'coexist as autonomous citizens' (Gaynor, 2016).

As welcome as such initiatives are, unfortunately they are still the exception rather than the rule. Outside of these major urban areas with their concentrations of foreigners and 'mixed' Japanese families, official public policy is one of benign neglect, with local authorities neither having the expertise nor the financial resources to adequately cater for such multicultural families (Gaynor, 2016). Rather, the default option is assimilation and such families are left to fend for themselves, a situation made more difficult by their inability to access educational options and support networks that would be more prevalent in large urban areas.

## 5. Bilingualism

The focus of this study is on families in the locations and situations outlined in the preceding section: areas, predominantly rural (though not necessarily so) across Japan, where both formal state support and informal social networks for bilingual development are predominantly absent. In such cases families intent on raising bilingual children must resort to their own initiatives and utilize a multitude of resources to implement their FLPs.

Due to the linguistic limitations of the author, the paper confines itself to examining Japanese-English bilingual families, though I do hope in the future to broaden the scope of the research to include other language combinations.

As the emphasis of this paper is on FLP, I follow Butler and Hakuta's (2004) broad definition of bilingualism as

"individuals or groups of people who obtain communicative skills, with various degrees of proficiency, in oral, and/or written forms, in order to interact with speakers of one or more languages in a given society" (p.115).

In appropriating this definition I am emphasizing practical communicative skills rather the formal acquisition of rules. This is necessary to position the communicative English ability of Japanese-English bilinguals as distinct from the reductive subject of *Eigo* (English), which they formally study at school. In making this distinction I am following the domains of language proficiency proposed by Bachman and Palmer (1996) who distinguished between the language used by bilinguals in real-life domains and language instructional domains. Doing this permits for an encompassing range of bilingual competencies dependent on the communicative functions and situations in which families use their two languages. Such a stance recognizes the fact that family members are

"rarely, equally, or completely fluent in their languages because the needs and uses of both languages are completely different, the languages will be used separately or together for different purposes, in different domains of life, with different people" (Grosjean, 1989:6).

## 6. English as a minority language

Despite the seemingly unstoppable rise of English as the world's *lingua franca* and its preeminence within both Japanese education and the nation's economy (Sakamoto, 2012), domestically the language

retains a minority status, used in a limited number of situations. This has a number of implications for families raising their children as Japanese-English bilinguals, a significant one being that the process is perceived by many as being relatively straightforward:

“A lot of people assume that it is just a natural process to learn two languages in a bilingual home, and in some countries it is, since the community supports that. But Japan is still such a monolingual society that parents really have to make an effort” (Nobuoka, 2013).

Dopke (1992) writes that, “Traditionally, the success or failure of bilingual first language acquisition is related to sociolinguistic factors such as the amount of exposure to the minority language, the need to talk the minority language and the status of the minority language in the society at large” (p.53). While there is no doubting the valued status of English in Japan, the practical manifestations of this attitude are less positive. There has been sustained criticism of the pedagogical shortcomings of formal English education at all levels of schooling (Johnson, 2014; Gaynor 2015), particularly the entrenched use of the language as a crude means for determining overall academic ability.

This in turn has a number of adverse affects on bilingual families, particularly in areas where alternative educational options are severely limited. Pulvermuller and Schumann (1994) point out that in situations where the minority language is spoken only at home and not in the wider community, the child will most likely acquire only a receptive competence in the minority language. Such a situation pertains for many Japanese-English families where the communicative use of English is limited to the family home. Pulvermuller and Schumann contend that “the completely acquired language will be the one frequently used in interactions that are socially more significant for [the bilingual child], whereas the socially less significant language will not be acquired properly” (1994: 689).

Yet, even given this pessimistic prognosis, parents in diverse situations and locations across Japan still manage to successfully raise bilingual children. To understand how they achieve this requires an investigation of the various FLPs they implement. This in turn suggests a number of interrelated research questions:

- What are the FLPs they decide upon?
- What do families do to implement these FLPs?
- How do FLPs change over time, particularly as children progress through the different stages of formal education?

The following sections attempt to provide answers to these questions based on the results of a survey into bilingual Japanese-English childrearing practices across Japan.

## 7. Methodology

A survey entitled ‘*Bilingualism off the beaten track in Japan*’ was designed to elicit information about the family language policy of Japanese-English bilingual families across Japan. The questions in the survey sought information from the respondents on the following issues:

- (1) Family background.
- (2) Children’s education in Japan.
- (3) Children’s education overseas.
- (4) Family language policy.
- (5) Social networks.
- (6) Types and uses of bilingual resources.

The survey was initially piloted on four respondents and suggestions for question clarity and additional information resulted in a number of changes. The final survey was then posted online via Survey Monkey. Respondents were recruited through a number of online mailing lists for bilingual/multilingual families living in Japan. The survey sample was thus self-selected and represents a form of purposive sampling where “the sample is chosen on the basis of [the researcher’s] judgement of their typicality or possession of the particular characteristics being sought” (Cohen *et al*, 2007: 115). This type of sampling

strategy does not make any claims towards objective generalizability, but rather is “deliberately and unashamedly selective and biased” (*ibid*: 115).

## 8. Participants

The survey was left open on Survey Monkey for twelve weeks during the autumn of 2014. It garnered a total of 108 respondents (though different family circumstances meant that there was not necessarily 108 valid responses to each question). The number of children covered by the survey respondents was 188, and the average length of residence of the foreign parent in Japan was just over 17 years.

An interesting statistic was that the average population size of the town in which the families resided, a rather large 790,000. One of the assumptions underlying the survey was that the majority of respondents would be from rural areas across Japan. In this I was pre-defining the purposive sample in geographical terms. However, a number of respondents interpreted “off the beaten track” in terms of social exclusion from other bilinguals and/or minority English language users. One participant commented that *“Sendai is a huge metropolis, but even here the chances for English usage in ‘normal’ life is rare. My village (a town inside Sendai) might as well be in a tiny rural town for all of the non-Japanese contact available.”*

Similarly, a resident of Tokyo wrote:

*“Tokyo is hardly an off-the-beaten-track location, but if it’s tough here, I can hardly imagine what people in inaka go through.”*

The inclusion of Sendai and Tokyo skewed the average population size quite high; when the median population size is used, this results in 67,000 people, still a sizable number.

The following section outlines the main results obtained from each of the six sections of the survey. For the purposes of elucidation, detailed statistical analysis is omitted (but see Gaynor 2018, forthcoming) in favour of a descriptive overview.

## 9. Family Background

The majority of foreign parents were American (47%), followed by Australian (18%), and then single figure respondents from the UK, Ireland, New Zealand, and Canada. There were three participants from non-English speaking countries (Tunisia, Holland, and Mexico), which is perhaps tentative evidence of the difficulty of raising bilingual children in Japan in languages other than English.

In reply to the question on whether their children had lived outside of Japan for more than a month, 58% answered yes and 42% no. An examination of the affirmative answers shows that one year was approximately the median duration with almost equal percentages living longer and shorter durations than this. However, there were considerable variations within families with different children having different experiences. As one parent commented:

*“My oldest has made three visits to the U.S. The first was a two-week visit when she was 6 months old. The second was when she was in 8 years for 1 month. The last time was a one-month visit when she was 16. My son has only been outside Japan once for a month when he was 6 years old.”*

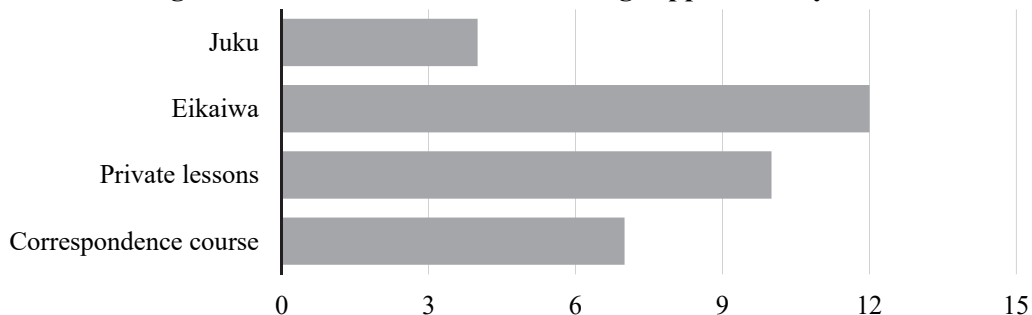
What this suggests is that FLPs and their instigation are affected by dynamics within the family as well as socio-political variables and may very well require individual micro-FLPs for different children.

## 10. Children’s education in Japan

The majority of the respondents children were attending, or had attended, Japanese public schools to the end of high school (77%). Of these only children in two families were enrolled in a specialized English course in their school; again the vast majority of children received the standard English as a foreign language education curricula in their formal schooling. With regard to informal or ‘shadow’ (Enrich, 2018) education, only 19 families responded that their children were currently undertaking some form of supplementary education (figure 3). The low response can be partially attributed to children who were too young to have started such education or, conversely, had already completed their education. However, as some of the respondents’ comments suggest, it could also be because they see little linguistic merit in enrolling their children in such establishments.

*“Never did any of the above. A waste of time and money. I taught them myself, of course.”*

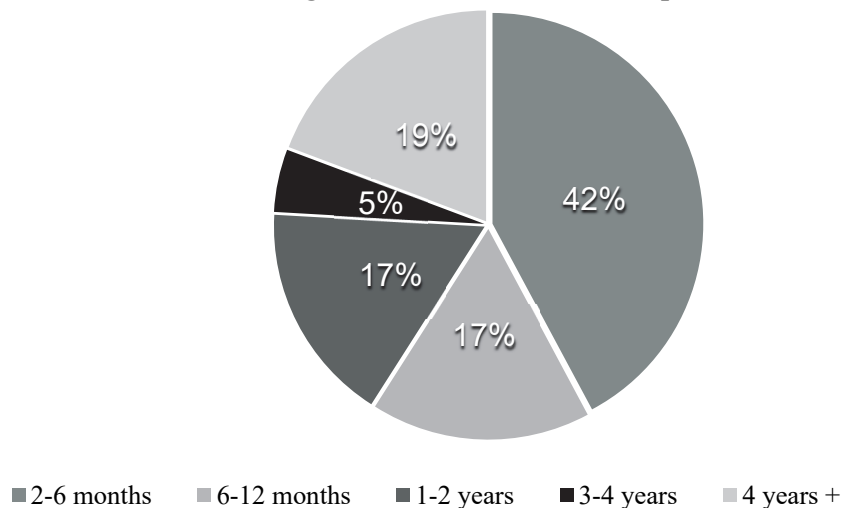
**Figure 2. Number of children receiving supplementary education**



#### 11. Children's overseas education

25 families had sent their children to school overseas with the majority of families (16) sending their children while they were attending elementary school. Responses to how long their children had spent at school overseas were skewed by children's ages. Younger aged children averaged less than a year whereas families with older children spent more four or more years attending schools overseas.

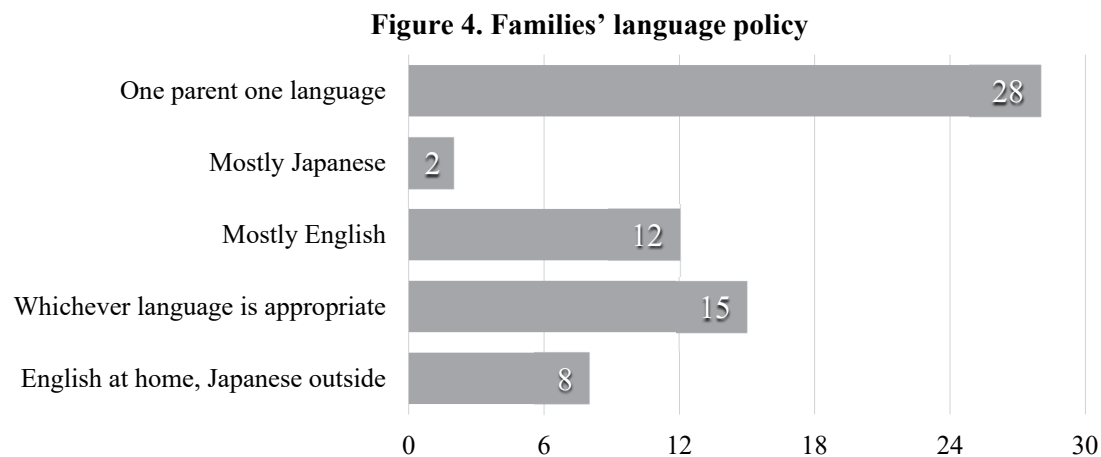
**Figure 3: Total time children spent overseas**





## 12. Family Language policy

Figure 4 shows the main language strategies undertaken by families to promote bilingualism.



As can be seen the majority of families followed the one parent, one language (OPOL) approach, though as the comments reveal, this wasn't strictly adhered to.

Comment 1: *"English to father, Japanese to mother mostly. Sometimes all English for short periods of time for practice. All Japanese for extended family events and all English for Western friends events at home."*

Comment 2: *"The above is our basic strategy but my wife speaks English to the kids sometimes. I speak Japanese to my wife in front of the kids sometimes."*

Comment 3: *"We use OPOL, but my wife uses both; I use 90% English at home or out."*

Such flexibility in the use of OPOL correlates with De Houwer (2015) observation that families seldom are able to maintain a strict policy of language separation as contextual factors often make this practically unfeasible. In addition, OPOL can be unidirectional with children passively accepting English but actively responding only in Japanese.

*"I speak only English. DH [darling husband] mixes languages. We originally wanted to do an English-only home environment, but before DD [darling daughter] was born we had spoken Japanese exclusively, and the sudden switch to English caused a lot of stress for everyone. Plus his English is not fluent. So he fluctuates between languages. I am hardcore about speaking only English to DD, and to DH in her presence, but she almost always speaks to us in Japanese."*

The last comment also highlights how family language policy is not static and fixed, but must necessarily adapt and change as families change and children grow. Again, the comments from respondents give some insight into how their FLPs change as circumstances change.

Comment 1: *"As more kids came along, we couldn't keep up the English only at home strategy that we'd had."*

Comment 2: *"As our kids get older, our approach needs to become more sophisticated and sensitive to circumstances."*

Comment 3: *"Sometimes difficult for child to communicate in targeted language especially as they get toward teenage years. Sometimes requires firmness, sometimes not but child is made to understand they have to improve/develop in both languages, so sometimes have to negotiate how to achieve this. Also, we have to work a little harder getting children to understand how to communicate properly with other people and also when it is appropriate/inappropriate to use Japanese/English."*

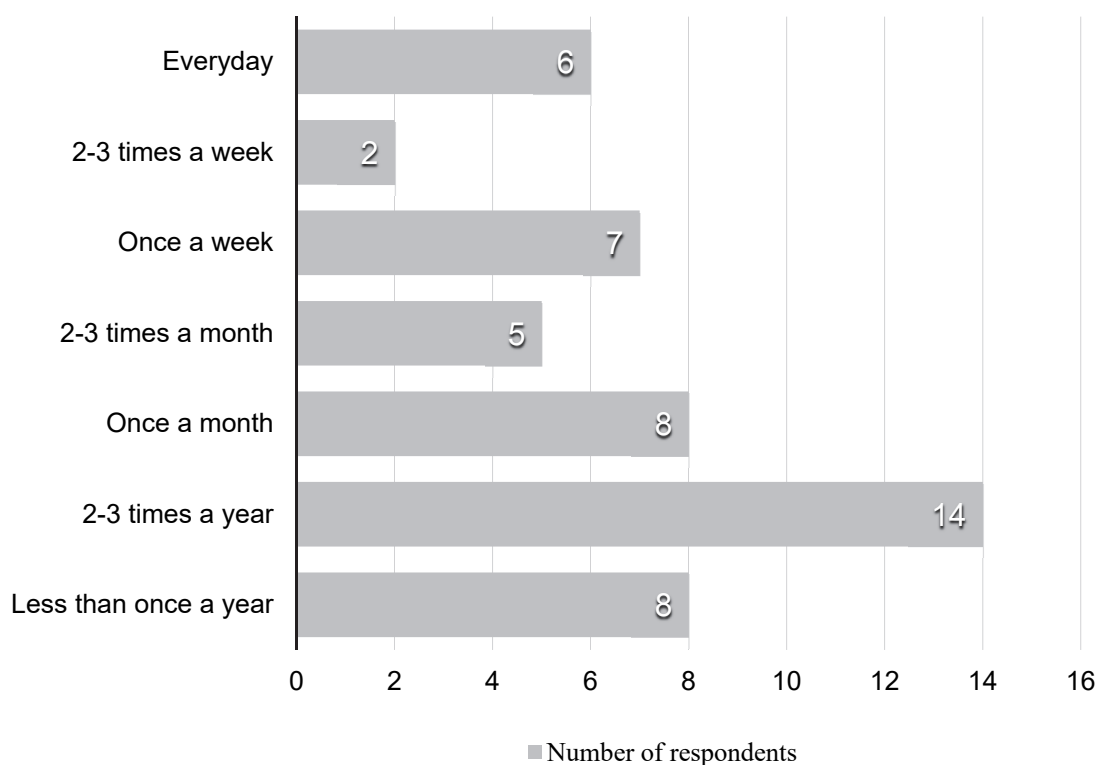
There is also an implicit recognition of the 'invisible work' (Okita, 2002) that goes into rearing a bilingual child and how such work can be hard to maintain. As one respondent explained: *"We were vigilant with the first and then decreased over time."* In many of these 'resource poor' cases the main source of minority English language input is the foreign parent. The inability to share this burden often

results in feelings of inadequacy and exhaustion (Baker, 2014), as the Japanese majority language comes to dominate family life.

### 13. Social Networks

The term ‘social networks’ is broadly defined to include both formal and informal contacts with other bilingual families in Japan. Fogle and King (2017) emphasize the critical use of role models, both for parents and children, in promoting bilingualism in the family. This is especially crucial for families who find themselves living in predominantly monolingual environment where examples of diversification from the monolingual norm are particularly scarce. Encouragingly, the results from the survey show that the majority of families actively engage with other bilingual families on a fairly regular basis. Of the 77 valid responses received, 50 families answered that their children have similar bilingual friends. Figure 5 shows the frequency of encounters between these children.

Figure 5: Frequency of children’s interaction with other bilingual children



Unfortunately, though the frequency numbers are encouraging, concerns about the bilingual quality of these encounters emerged as the following respondent comment shows:

*There are a few bilingual children at my daughter's school, but because it is a Japanese educational environment they rarely converse together in English.*

Geographical location seemed to be a significant factor affecting the frequency of interactions. For one family living close to another bilingual family, there were numerous opportunities for meeting.

*Child two (daughter age 15) meets bilingual girls in her returnee class every school day. Younger daughter in elementary school meets other bilinguals about once a month at our bunko (book club for returnee kids).*

Conversely, for families in remote locations such opportunities were proscribed.

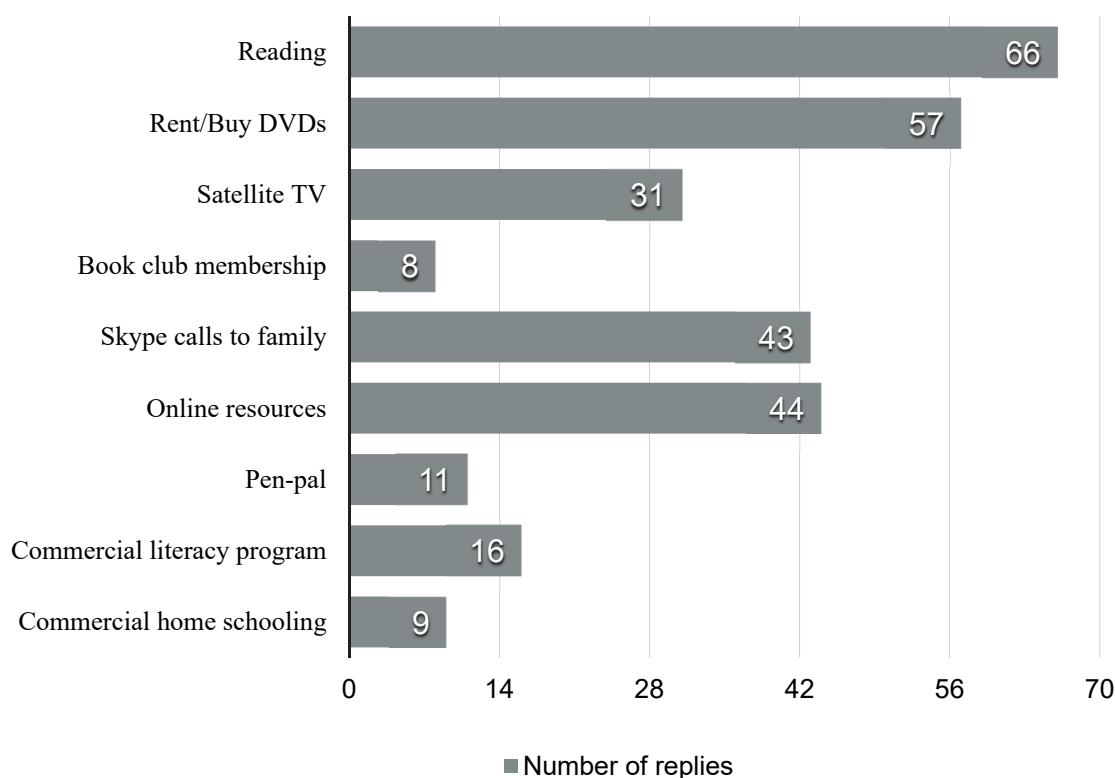
*Comment: Once or twice a year. Hard to call them friends but they get along quite well when we go camping or get together. They live far away.*

Social isolation is one of the main obstacles that bilingual families living in ‘off-the-beaten-track’ locations across Japan face. Although families may be proactive in promoting bilingualism within the family, geography constrains the active social relations they can engage in with other bilingual families in Japan.

#### 14. Types and use of bilingual resources

In answering this question respondents (71) were permitted to give multiple answers. Figure 6 below shows a usage ranking of the resources presented in the survey.

**Figure 6: Types of bilingual resources used at home.**



Reading was the most used resource, many of the additional comments testifying to the crucial role it plays in developing bilingualism.

Comment 1: *We have a large and constantly growing collection of English books (over 1,000), which we read regularly.*

Comment 2: *LOTS [sic] of books in English at home - bought from Amazon.jp, used bookstores in the U.S., or sent from friends and family.*

Comment 3: *I regularly check graded readers out of the university library and my sons read them with me 2-3 times a week.*

Some comments suggested a categorical partitioning between ‘read-aloud’ activities and independent reading. ‘Read-aloud’ was most commonly used with younger children, principally as a means of exposing them to literacy based vocabulary. Independent reading was the hoped for goal, particularly as children moved through schooling and began to take formal exams in English.

Comment 4: *I have plentiful English books which they freely read. During the 10 minute reading time before school begins in junior and senior high schools, some of my kids chose to read English books. I am certain this helped their English abilities.*

DVDs were the next most oft used resource though like reading, this was perhaps too narrow a definition as it did not fully account for the different audio-visual resources that are now available through the internet.

*Comment 5: We don't have Japanese TV. They watch youtube a lot and only recently have found Japanese programs. But the vast majority of their media has been English.*

*Comment 6: My boys certainly excelled at English when they went through stages of playing PS3 and the younger son is obsessed with Minecraft, has set up a server and has international friends through that online medium.*

A theme running through many of the comments is the need to match the resources to the child's interests and a related awareness that as children grow older, so their interests change and these must be continuously accommodated. The most effective resources are those that are specific to the child.

## 15. Conclusion

The data highlights the diversity of parental approaches in negotiating FLP in bilingual Japanese-English families across Japan. Schwartz and Verschik (2013), in their overview of successful family language policies for achieving bilingualism, found that many families sought external assistance for promoting the minority language by searching for a supporting socio-linguistic environment such as schools and community initiatives. The results of this research clearly demonstrate that such options are curtailed for the majority of respondents. Instead, respondents call attention to the crucial role of parental communicative strategies in this developing their children's communicative ability in English. This is especially important as interactions with the foreign parent may represent the only opportunities for children to communicate in English in a focused and practical way. The distinct lack of opportunities for social interactions with other bilingual and/or native speakers of English means that families in such situations need to be diligent in promoting and facilitating English as an important and accepted means of communication within the domestic sphere.

Related to this is the intense focus on accumulating and using a wide range of educational and linguistic resources to maintain the development of English in the home due to the lack of accessible social and educational opportunities for learning English outside of the home. Reading plays a crucial role here, particularly as a relatively cheap and easily obtained resource. The increasing influence of online resources, both for passive and active learning, is also notable and perhaps represents a tacit acceptance of where children's interests lie.

Thus, in line with the overall objective of this research - to discover what Japanese-English bilingual families do to raise their children as successful bilinguals, I would propose the following summative answers to the three research questions.

- *What are the FLPs they decide upon?*

The majority of families follow the one parent one language strategy, though this is often situational specific, particularly when families are in an external environment. Many families also try to implement an 'English in the house, Japanese outside' strategy, though this requires the support and cooperation of the majority Japanese-speaking parent.

- *What do families do to implement these FLPs?*

Given that the vast majority of respondents' children attended local public schools, formal education was not an option. Instead families were considerably proactive in implementing their FLP, utilizing a wide range of linguistic resources, especially literacy based ones, and actively seeking out opportunities, both in Japan and internationally, to communicatively encounter and engage with English.

- *How do FLPs change over time, particularly as children progress through the different stages of formal education?*

As children get older, particularly from the onset of junior high school, the FLP needs to change in order to accommodate the increased academic demands being made through Japanese. A number of respondents described these changes as forms of 'negotiation', an implicit recognition that their

adolescent children also had a say, often literally in terms of how and when they use their two languages, in how FLPs were reconstituted and actualized.

A final respondent comment perhaps best captures the various issues that face families living in off-the-beaten-track areas. That they persevere even in such circumstances is perhaps the most valuable advice of all.

*I live in a small fishing village and I really have to travel to hang out with friends etc.. But we manage, it's not easy and if I wasn't pushing it than I think everything would just lapse into Japanese. I find their English is much better after trips home or foreign visitors. It's kind of exhausting at times but I've gotten this far so there's no going back. I get a bit irked when people just assume the bilingualism is natural and I have many friends, particularly when the father is not Japanese, whose children don't speak English or speak very little. I also feel that my own career and Japanese ability has suffered as I chose to keep the children home until they were three to establish the language. It really all has to come from the non-Japanese parents and a very supportive spouse. The other rule is we don't fight about it. I figure arguing won't help the cause so I try to maintain the English without being overly strict about it. I want them to cherish both cultures rather than set one against the other which sometimes happens.*

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