

# Parents' Beliefs and Children's Code-switching

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## Abstract

This paper reports a part of our current longitudinal study that started in 2009 when the researchers first investigated 1st grade students in an international elementary school in Japan about their nature of code-switching. The previous studies found that students code-switched to Japanese for psychological and interpersonal reasons, that is, for ease and comfort and to maintain good friendships. They also code-switched to English to observe the school 'English only' policy. This paper first briefly reviews the previous studies and then reports the results of the current study that examined how, if at all, their parents' beliefs on language acquisition influenced the children's use of code-switching. The result showed that the parents' beliefs have impact on their children's language learning experiences as well as their use of code-switching.

## Introduction

The first study on the nature of children's code-switching launched when the researchers wondered when children learned to use code-switching and why. Do they code-switch because of the lack of English proficiency? Or are there any other social or psychological reasons? What are the characteristics of children's code-switching? Do they code-switch within clause boundaries (intra-sentential CS), or at clause boundaries (inter-sentential CS)? How do children learn to use

two or more languages?

The previous research (e.g., Meisel, 2004; Muller and Cantone, 2009) indicates that children will come to be able to alternate between two or more languages when they acquire the basic structures of languages. That is, children's ability to switch two languages within a sentence level correlated with their increased ability of syntax.

The goals of this longitudinal study then are to investigate 1) if children use more code-switching or less code-switching as their language proficiency improves, 2) if they have specific reasons for code-switching, and if they change over time, 3) and if they do, how do they change? 4) What is the nature of code-switching and do they change over the course of years? That is, does the characteristic of children's code-switching change along with their English proficiency levels? Finally, 5) does the children's code-switching originate externally as well as internally? What external factors influence children's code-switching? Particularly, are the children's code-switching influenced by their parents' beliefs about language learning and acquisition? If so, what are their parents' beliefs? What influence do they have?

The researchers set off the investigation by first examining if children code-switched. If they did, who code-switched when, and why? Are there any differences in the use of code-switching between higher English proficiency students and lower English proficiency students? We wanted to find if the students' English proficiency levels had any influence on their use of code-switching, and if their reasons for code-switching were related to their English proficiency.

The research was conducted on first year students in an international elementary school in Japan where every class, except Japanese language and Japanese studies that were taught in Japanese by a Japanese teacher, was taught

in English. Our second research was conducted on the same students we interviewed in their first grades. We wanted to investigate if a year of immersion in an international school had any influence on their use of code-switching.

The current study investigated if the students' code-switching was influenced in any way by their parents' beliefs about language learning or language acquisition. In order to discover this, we conducted extensive interviews with their parents (mothers) first to find out what beliefs they had and then to examine how they were reflected on the children's use of code-switching. The current paper reports the result of the study about the parents' beliefs and children's code-switching.

Knowing about the children's use of code-switching is significant and has a number of educational implications. Code-switching may reveal the children's psychological state, such as ease and comfort or anxiety and distress, as they alternate between two languages. It may also indicate social and interpersonal as well as cognitive and linguistic development. These findings in turn will have educational implications ranging from classroom activities to curriculum development or teaching skills to school educational philosophy. While quite a few studies (e.g., McKinley & Sakamoto, 2007; Norton, 2000; Stroud, 1998) focus on the reasons or purposes of code-switching, they are generally transitory and they neither investigate qualitative or quantitative changes over the course of years nor in relation to their language development or level of language proficiency. This paper describes the changes that were observed in three studies and the results of the following two research questions:

- (1) What kind of beliefs do parents of bilingual children have about language learning and acquisition?

- (2) Does the parents' beliefs about language acquisition influence their children's use of code-switching, and if it does, how?

## **Literature Reviews**

Throughout our studies, we have employed the definition of code-switching by Auer (1984), which states that code-switching is "the alternating use of more than one language." This definition does not limit the use to "the course of a single communicative episode" or "in the same discourse" as is in the definition by Heller (1988, p.1), or Myers-Scotton (1993, p.vii). That is, it does not limit code-switching to certain linguistic phenomenon or contact situations and is more applicable for our participants as their use of code-switching depends on situations, such as classroom or playground, or during a break time, in which case their discourse is wider in range, and not just "a single communicative episode."

As for parents' beliefs and attitudes about language learning, the importance of having multilingual capacity has gained significant recognition in Japan, and parents have taken more proactive approaches to deciding their children's schools. In such a context, international schools have attracted many parents despite their high tuition and other additional expenses. Underlying parents' such active participation in choosing children's schools from an early stage are the beliefs, or the expectations, for short-term as well as long-term benefits from immersion schools for their children, such as becoming a complete bilingual and having more opportunities for career success (Hung, 2010). While such beliefs of parents are sometimes viewed as misconceptions, some researchers in language learning support their beliefs. Enever, Moon, and Raman (2009), for example, argue that early language learning comes with lifelong results. Hamayan (1986) also suggests beneficial influences of

early foreign language learning on children's cognitive and linguistic development. Such benefits are further extended to the children's broader perception, more holistic understanding, and further understanding of language as a phenomenon.

Parents' involvement and role in their children's education has also been known to help enhance their academic achievement and behavior outcomes. In foreign language learning, in particular, prior studies have noted that the role of parents and their involvement in educational decisions is closely related to their children's intrinsic motivation to learn, self-perception of ability, expectations of success, and academic performance at school (Gottfried, 1990; Hung, 2010). Therefore, it is imperative to examine parents' beliefs towards their children's foreign language learning when studying children's perceptions and use of their languages in both formal and informal contexts.

### **Review of the previous studies**

In this section, we will briefly review our two previous studies to show how they are related to the current study. The first study (Study 1 below) is published in Tanaka, Allen, Rose, and Kandhasamy (2010), and readers are suggested to refer to it for a detailed analysis.

### **Study 1 (2009)**

The study investigated first grade students (43 in total from two classes) in an international elementary school, who were from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, over a series of five weeks. English classes were videotaped (496 minutes, 8.3 hours), and the classroom discourse between the teacher and the students was transcribed verbatim. A total of eight focus students were interviewed

to investigate the students' perceptions about why and when they code-switched.

Among the eight students, four were High English Proficiency (HEP hereafter) students, and the other four were Low English Proficiency (LEP hereafter) students. They were selected based on the school's ELL assessment ("Assessment for Learning: English Language Learners (ELL) Stages for Language Acquisition") that evaluated students "Use of spoken language," "Reading," and "writing." The researchers also referred to the homeroom teachers' perceptions about the students' overall English ability in the classroom settings.

From the discourse analysis and interviews with children along with the survey conducted on the children's parents, it was found that code-switching was context-sensitive, and children's preferences and the school language policy impacted their linguistic choice in and outside the classroom. That is, children code-switched depending on 'who' they were talking to (e.g., teacher, or students with good/low English ability), 'what' they were doing (e.g., playing) and 'where' they were (e.g., in class/playground). Students used English to improve English as well as to abide by the school 'English only' policy, while they used Japanese for psychological and physical release from intense classroom lessons, and as a strategy to facilitate communication.

## **Study 2 (2011)**

The purpose of Study 2 was to investigate if the focus students' attitudes and perceptions toward code-switching have changed as they moved up the school,

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<sup>1</sup> The source is from the British School of Tokyo. It was adapted from the document "EAL Formative Assessment Descriptors" by the National Association of Language Development in Children (NALDIC).

and if so, how. We used the same questionnaire and interview format to find when, where, with whom, and why they code-switched. Two Grade 2 classes were observed for five weeks in March, 2011, and interviews were conducted with four focus students (two high and two low English proficiency students from the same focus students in Study 1).

There wasn't any change with the two HEP students, but one of the LEP student's perception about 'understanding lessons in English' jumped from 20% in Study 1 to 90% in Study 2 (See Table 3, under Student C). She also answered that she did better in English than in Japanese in all aspects of language skills: speaking, listening, reading, and writing. She also responded that she spoke less Japanese at school on playground and during the break (100% in Study 1 to 90% in Study 2). Meanwhile one of the HEP students responded she used more Japanese at school (50% in Study 1 and 90% in Study 2). While we are not certain what influenced their use of Japanese more or less, the LEP student's improved English proficiency could be a reason for needing to speak less in Japanese.

In Study 2, an analysis of interviews with children revealed signs of emerging features in language developments. Such features included: 1) recognition of others and others' language level (e.g., "I feel sorry they can't speak English well."), 2) emphasis on Japanese identity (e.g., "Because we are all Japanese, so we can speak Japanese."), 3) stronger recognition of the contexts (e.g., "Because it's an English school."), and 4) more interpersonal and accommodative of others ("I speak English with those who are good at it."). Among the four features, development of Japanese identity was most prominent in Study 2, which may have impacted on their use of Japanese language. However, this finding needs further research support.

## **Current study**

### **Purposes**

The current study, a part of our longitudinal trace study, aimed to examine the following:

- (1) Did the children's attitudes and perceptions toward code-switching change as they moved up the school? If so, how?
- (2) What kind of beliefs do parents of bilingual children have about language learning and acquisition?
- (3) Do the parents' beliefs about language acquisition influence their children's use of code-switching, and if they do, how?

While the first purpose is our continued research focus we have been investigating throughout our research project, the second and third purposes were our main focus in the current study in which we examined if parents' beliefs about language learning had any impact on their children's perceptions of their language learning and language use. We investigated how, if at all, such beliefs of parents influenced their children's code-switching behaviors between English and Japanese, the target language and their mother tongue.

## **Methodology**

### **Setting**

The research site of the current study is an international elementary school in Japan. With the designation as a "special zone for structural reform" by MEXT, the school has developed their own curricula taught in English with the exception of the subjects of Japanese and Japanese studies. The school rule dictates that all children attending the school to speak English during the lesson time while excep-



tions can be made during the playtime at school. When considered necessary, ESL children are withdrawn from the main class for remedial English help. Classes are conducted using a variety of activities including individual/pair work, small group, and whole class activities.

### **Participants**

We first began this stage of the project with four focus children, two children (Students A and B) with higher level English proficiency and two (Students C and D) with lower level English proficiency. However, Student D had left the school a year before the data collection, and so we decided to invite the twin sister (Student F) of Student C instead to the study. The English level of Student F from her 2009 ELL Assessment was about the same as her twin Sister C (See Table 1), so it was not a random choice to replace her with Student D. We, therefore, had two HEP and two LEP students in our study. However, the mother of Student B was not available for the interview, so we decided to exclude Student B's interview data in this study. This paper reports the results of interviews with one HEP student and her mother and two LEP students with their mother.

As for their background of English learning and knowledge of Japanese language, Student A was born to Japanese speaking parents in Japan. Her family moved to Singapore when she was Age 3 (2.10 months), which gave her an English immersion experience for four years from Age 3 until Age 7. When she returned to Japan and began to attend this international school, she named English as her dominant language at an interview. The other two children C and F, the twin sisters, had no living experience in an English speaking country. Unsurprisingly, their dominant language was Japanese, which was their native tongue.

Table 1 below gives additional information of the children’s English proficiency at the time of enrollment at the school in comparison to the school average based on their ELL Assessment System (See Appendix A for the English levels indicated by numbers). Student A, who spent her early years in Singapore, demonstrated native-level English ability in speaking, reading, and writing, while Student C started her schooling off at a lower level than the school averages in all the skills.

**Table 1. ELL Assessment of the focus children (in 2009)**

Student	Spoken language	Reading	Writing	Average
A	10	10	10	10
C	4	5	5	4.6
D→F	4	5	4	4.3
School Average	6.4	6.4	6.1	

Table 2 below presents two mothers’ demographic information such as age, study or living experience abroad, educational background, and the level of their English proficiency.

**Table 2. Parents’ demographic information**

Questions	A’s Mother	C & F’s Mother
1. Age	45	45
2. Study abroad	No	No
3. Living abroad	Singapore for 4 years	No
4. Education	4 year college; department of commerce	High school
5. English level	Poor	Very poor
6. Father’s English level	Average; Worked in Singapore for 5 years	Very proficient; Went to college in the US and worked there

While the two mothers are the same age, there is a notable difference in their educational background and experiences in living abroad. While Student A's mother is a university graduate with living experience in Singapore, the mother of the two sisters, Students C and F, completed her education up to high school. A's mother does not consider herself as a proficient English speaker, and C and F's mother identified herself as a very poor English speaker; she also responded that she could not help her children with their homework in English at home.

## **Procedures**

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with four children and their parents in September 2012 when the children became the 4th graders. Interview questions for both children and their parents are attached at the end as Appendix B and C respectively.

### *Interviews with children*

The purposes of the interviews with children were to find out: 1) when, where, with whom, and why they code-switched, and 2) what their attitudes and perceptions were about their language use in class, at school, and at home. We let the children choose the language for the interview, that is, their preferred language. All of them chose Japanese, and hence the interview was conducted all in Japanese. Each interview lasted about 20 to 25 minutes. It was video-recorded and later transcribed verbatim and translated into English. Their speech transcripts together with the video data were coded using the coding schemes developed by Tanaka et al. (2011).

### *Coding schemes*

The following coding schemes were used to code the interview responses from the children. If any of the children's responses contained the descriptors such as "easier," "in class," the utterance was labeled as belonging to the specified category shown in brackets.

#### Reasons for using/speaking Japanese

- a) [Personal]...easier, more relaxing, comfortable, understand/speak/like better
- b) [Contextual]...in class, on playground, break time
- c) [Interpersonal]...my friend understands Japanese better, my friend doesn't speak English well, for my friend

#### Reasons for using/speaking English

- a) [Personal]...want/like English, to improve, do better than Japanese
- b) [Contextual] ([Obligation], [Policy], [Compulsory])...at school, in class, international school, expected, rule

### *Interviews with parents*

The purposes of the interviews with the parents were to investigate their beliefs about the child's language learning. Two mothers, one of whom is a mother of the twin girls, accepted our request for the interview.

Each interview was conducted in Japanese and lasted about an hour. It was video-recorded, and later the parents' answers to the questions were transcribed verbatim and translated into English.

## Results and discussion

### 1) Results of the child interviews

#### (1) Understanding of lessons and preferred language skills

In order to examine if and how parent factors influenced children's perceptions and use of their languages, we first interviewed children. The results of their responses to our interview questions are reported in Table 3. The table shows the three children's preferences and usage of the target and native languages for different language skills.

**Table 3. Children's language preference and use (2011 responses italicized; 2012 responses in bold)**

Student	Year	Dominant language	Understand Lessons in English	Speaking	Listening	Reading	Writing
A (High)	2010	English	100%	English	English	English	English
	<i>2011</i>	<i>English</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>English</i>	<i>English</i>	<i>English</i>	<i>English</i>
	<b>2012</b>	<b>Japanese</b>	<b>90%</b>	<b>English &amp; Japanese</b>	<b>English</b>	<b>English</b>	<b>English</b>
C (Low)	2010	Japanese	20%	Japanese	Japanese	Japanese	Japanese
	<i>2011</i>	<i>Japanese</i>	<i>90%</i>	<i>English</i>	<i>English</i>	<i>English</i>	<i>English</i>
	<b>2012</b>	<b>Japanese</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>English</b>	<b>English</b>	<b>English</b>	<b>Japanese</b>
F (Low)	<b>2012</b>	<b>Japanese</b>	<b>90%</b>	<b>Japanese Both</b>		<b>English</b>	<b>English</b>

The letters in bold all indicate the responses that the children provided at the time of research. Overall, preference change is most notable in Student C. As she moved up with higher English proficiency (as shown in her perception of 'Understand lessons in English'), she may have found English more convenient to use in speaking, listening, reading, and writing. However, in 2012, she said that she was better in Japanese in writing because she could not spell English

correctly. While the development of her English proficiency was reflected to her preference for English in all skills, she still identified Japanese as her dominant language. Such discrepancy may reveal that she has developed awareness of the languages for different purposes, i.e., Japanese for her daily life use and English for academic tasks.

As for Student A, there was a change of her dominant language from English to Japanese. She had started to attend the school immediately after her return from Singapore, noting English as her dominant language. Although she has been attending this international school, living in Japan and speaking Japanese with her family members and peers must have helped alter her dominant language from English to Japanese (“I can speak English because I was in Singapore, but I was born in Japan, and the language I speak is Japanese, so I do better in Japanese.”). The fact she developed more identity as Japanese also may have contributed to the change (“Well, I am Japanese, so I do better in Japanese.”). Her preference of Japanese as her dominant language was also reflected in her preference for speaking.

Student F, the twin sister of Student C, joined the project only from this year, and hence her interview data for the past years are not available. While she chose Japanese as her dominant language just like her sister, she found English more convenient for listening, reading, and writing at school. However, she still found Japanese more convenient than English for speaking.

Next we asked the focus children about how often they spoke English and Japanese at school and in particular in class. Table 4 presents the result of their responses in percentage rate and the rate changes over three years from 1<sup>st</sup> grade to 4<sup>th</sup> grade.

**Table 4. Percentage rate of how often children speak English and Japanese**

Student (proficiency)	Grade	Speak Japanese at school	Speak English in class	Speak Japanese in class
A (High)	1 (2010)	0%	100%	0%
	2 (2011)	0%	100%	0%
	<b>4 (2012)</b>	<b>depends</b>	<b>mostly</b>	<b>rarely</b>
C (Low)	1 (2010)	100%	90%	10%
	2 (2011)	90%	90%	10%
	<b>4 (2012)</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>85%</b>	<b>15%</b>
F (Low)	<b>4 (2012)</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>85%</b>	<b>15%</b>

Student A with high English proficiency never spoke Japanese but spoke English all the time both at school and in class in her first two years. However, as she moved up to the 4th grade, she began to use Japanese, which in turn affected her use of English. At the time of this research, she answered that she switched her language in between English and Japanese depending on the person she spoke to. Also, when there was a difficult expression or word that she was not able to understand in class, she asked her classmates questions in Japanese.

While Student A was increasing the use of Japanese in class at school, Student C claimed that she was using less Japanese at school. However, her use of English and Japanese in class did not involve distinctive changes. Also, her twin sister, Student F indicated identical patterns of English and Japanese use with her sister.

## **(2) Reasons for code-switching**

As with Study 1, we coded the students' responses by the same five categories: For using/speaking Japanese, (1) Personal [ease and comfort], (2) Personal [contextual], and (3) Interpersonal, and for using/speaking English (1)

Personal, and (2) Contextual [obligation, policy, compulsory] (See under Coding schemes above for descriptors). The following are direct quotes from the students' interviews. The alphabets in parentheses indicate the participants. A is a High English Proficiency student, while C and F are Low English Proficiency students. The following are translations of students' responses in Japanese.

### **Why use/speak Japanese**

#### Personal [ease, comfort]

"When I can't express well." (A)

"I want to say words I don't understand (in English) in Japanese." (F)

#### Personal [context]

No instances were found that indicated Personal [context] in the students' responses.

#### Interpersonal

"For those who speak English, foreigners, for example, I speak English so that they understand, but I find that I am speaking more Japanese with those who are always speaking Japanese." (A)

"Because they don't speak English well." "There are students who can only speak Japanese." (C)

"When foreign kids say weird things, or when they keep talking in English, I get bored, and I feel like speaking Japanese." (C)

"I use Japanese when I speak with Japanese, but when I speak with foreigners, I speak in English." (F)

"I speak English if he/she is Japanese but is better at English than Japanese because he/she was in the US." (F)



“Well, (I speak Japanese with ) those who speak to me in Japanese every time because they can’t speak English well, or those who can only speak in Japanese.” (F)

### **Why use/speak English**

#### Personal

“I’m here at a school where I can study English unlike the 4<sup>th</sup> grade children who are learning in Japanese (at public schools).” (A)

“It’s rare to study in a school like this.” “My dad and mom are working hard in order to let me go to this school.” (C)

“I’ll be in trouble if I can’t speak English well if I’m always speaking Japanese.” (C)

“I should go to a regular public school if I only speak Japanese at this English school.” (F)

#### Context [obligation, policy, compulsory]

“I am scared (that the teacher may get angry), so I speak English (in class).” (A)

“The teacher will be annoyed if we speak in Japanese all the time, so I speak in English.” (C)

The current study was conducted when the students were Grade 4, and there seems to be a substantial change when the study was conducted first when they were in Grade 1 (Study 1) and then in Grade 2 (Study 2).

When they were in Grade 1, children were mostly concerned about how relaxing and easier for them to use/speak Japanese. For this reason, most of the

focus students were using Japanese outside of the classroom when they were released from classroom tensions of having to speak nothing but English. This was also the case in Study 2 when they were in Grade 2.

In the current study, students responded that they wanted to speak Japanese when they found it difficult to convey messages in English. Student A responded that she understood lessons 100% when in Grade 1, but in the current study she said that she understood the lessons 90%. She, nevertheless, claimed that she understood English better than before. One possible explanation for the decrease in percentage is that the content of school subjects themselves became more difficult; that is, it was not her level of English but rather the content of the subjects that reflected on the percentage.

Student A also said that she was better at Japanese now than English, and when asked why she thought so, she answered, "It is easier to change English to Japanese, but it is difficult to change Japanese to English, so I think I'm better in Japanese." Her ability to respond based on her meta-cognitive analysis was a big surprise to the researchers, but her response certainly implies that her Japanese improved since Grade 1. She also responded that she used Japanese when she found it difficult to speak in English.

According to her responses in the interview, she used Japanese at school more than before. However, the researchers are not certain how she had changed to using no Japanese at school to using Japanese quite often especially outside the classroom (60% on playground and during the break). According to the interview with her mother, more Japanese is spoken at school than before because of the demographic changes that took place at school (more Japanese students with relatively low English proficiency), so she may be speaking Japanese with them

accordingly.

Interpersonal reasons for using/speaking Japanese remained the same: students regarded their peers' English proficiency and used Japanese to those relatively low in their English level. This response was prominent only among HEP students, but in the current study, LEP students now responded the same way; they used Japanese to those who didn't speak English well, or those who approached them in Japanese. Or else, they said that they spoke in English. This may indicate that their English level has improved over the years since they entered the school. Based on the perceptions of one LPE student (Student C), her understanding level rose from 20% in Grade 1 to 90% in Grade 2, and 80% in Grade 4.

The children's reasons for using/speaking English changed to more of 'responsibility' than 'obligation and compulsory.' Children now appreciate that they are studying in an expensive international school and that it is their responsibility to study hard and improve their English. Children are also aware that their parents want them to improve their English. However, children do not want to be scolded nor do they want to annoy teachers, so they also speak English and abide by the school 'English only' rule.

## **2) Results of the parent interviews: Parents' beliefs**

### **(1) Responses of Student A's mother**

The following are the results of our semi-structured interview with the Student A's mother. The interview was recorded and transcribed verbatim. The following quotes are translations from Japanese.

#### 1) About learning English

Student A's mother believes that the best way to learn English is to learn from native speakers of English, but from those who understand Japanese people's senses ("I think native speakers who understand Japanese people's senses are the best. If they understand what we mean, it will be the best."). She believes it's best to learn English in English and in a country where English is spoken, and these are part of the reasons why she is sending her daughter to an international school. Besides that, she wanted her daughter to keep her English she learned in Singapore.

## 2) About bilingual education

The mother wants her daughter to be a balanced bilingual. Student A once had an extreme opinion, when she was Grade 1, about learning language and said that it was fine even if she didn't speak Japanese as long as she spoke English well. She no longer thinks like that, but the mother said she would definitely go against it if she insisted that she only wanted to learn English. The mother said, "I tell my daughter, 'even if you love English very much, you are Japanese, and if you cannot speak English, it is no good.'"

She wants her daughter to have a Japanese identity because "she (Student A) was born as a Japanese, and she looks like a Japanese from every angle." Mother's strong emphasis for her daughter to have a Japanese identity probably contributed a great deal in her forming Japanese identity and that in turn influenced her acquisition and lead to more use of Japanese language.

With regard to their home language, she responded that they all spoke Japanese ("Our nationality is Japanese, and we are in Japan, so it's natural for us to speak in Japanese. Besides, I believe she is speaking English at school, so we don't have to speak English at home."). Here again, strong emphasis was made on being

Japanese.

The mother's biggest concern is that her daughter has troubles connecting Japanese and English. She said, "When she (=her daughter) doesn't know how to say a word in Japanese, I teach her how to say it. I try to connect English words with Japanese words because at the moment, I don't think English words and Japanese words are tied to each other in her head. Besides, she checks the meaning of English only in a monolingual English dictionary."

While a strong emphasis is made on having Japanese identity and acquiring Japanese language, she is not particularly concerned about her daughter's academic skills in Japanese language. She responded, "I am concerned about her Japanese skills, but now her environment is filled with Japanese language, such as on TV, books, etc., so I'm not worried about it." To the researcher's question if she helps her daughter to improve her Japanese, she said, "I tell her to read English books rather than Japanese books." The mother thinks daily use of Japanese is sufficient and will help her acquire skills in Japanese language.

## **(2) Responses of Student C & F's mother**

### **1) About learning English**

The mother of the twin sisters believes that it is best to learn from native speakers, but learning from Japanese people is fine as long as they are like native speakers. She claimed that it is better to learn from someone who lived in an English speaking country than from Japanese who learned English in Japan.

About the level of acquisition, she replied, "As long as they (= my daughters) can make themselves understood, that is fine." She stated, "A person does not have to be able to speak like a native speaker of English. There are also varieties of

English with different accents. If his English is not a problem at work, it is okay.” She is not persistent to just one type of English, but rather accepting of varieties of English, and not insistent on acquiring native English speaker level of English. She also thinks it is a great advantage to know English: she stated, “If you know English, you have a wider scope, no walls between people, and a possibility to see things more widely.” Mother’s wish is for her children to have such wider scopes, and this is part of the reason why she is sending her children to the international school. She responded, “I want my children to be able to learn English well because they are going to an international school, and I think it is possible.”

## 2) About bilingual education

The mother, however, thinks knowing Japanese as well is also very important, and her reply also reflected her identity as a Japanese (“With regard to learning English in English, we also need to know and understand Japanese because we are Japanese.”).

She perceives the importance of knowing Japanese, but she is not concerned about her children’s academic skills in Japanese, either. She said that their home language is Japanese (“They have Japanese as a base because everything at home is Japanese.”), and she doesn’t do much to help them learn Japanese. Instead she said, “I provide them with Japanese books.” The mother is aware that the children’s Japanese level is not up to the level of other Japanese children who go to Japanese public school. However, she thinks her talking to them in Japanese is sufficient for them to acquire Japanese. Besides, she thinks that her children have been working so hard at school trying to learn English from the scratch that she says, she “cannot push them more to work harder.” She also does not particularly help them to improve their English and leaves it up to the education at the school they attend.

## **Conclusion**

This paper reported a part of our longitudinal study on bilingual children's use of two languages and the nature of their code-switching. Our aims were twofold: 1) if the children's attitudes and perceptions toward code-switching changed as they moved up the school, and if so, how, and 2) if their parents' beliefs and attitudes had any influence on their children's code-switching.

As for the children's use of code-switching, their perceptions about their increased English ability helped them to speak more English at school than before (e.g., Student C), while their stronger sense of Japanese identity contributed to using more Japanese (e.g., Student A). An increased understanding of Japanese changed her dominant language from English to Japanese (Student A), while an increased ability in English skills had no effect on her perception of Japanese as a dominant language (Student C). Both HEP and LEP students resorted to Japanese language for clarification when they found something in English difficult to understand. In addition, as their level of English improved, they became concerned about their peer's English proficiency and sought which language to use for better communication. Moreover, from the students' response, they spoke in Japanese if they were spoken to in Japanese. Students' use of English became more of their responsibility to do well at school, than merely because it was a school rule although they also thought it was a rule they all had to abide by.

As for the influence of parents' beliefs on children's code-switching, we found that parent's beliefs and attitudes impacted on students' language use and code-switching. These include 1) stronger formation of children's identity as a Japanese through interaction with parents, which influenced more use of Japanese than before (Student A), and 2) more awareness of learning in an international

school and responsibility to study harder to acquire English.

Our focus children's (both high and low English proficiency students') parents strongly believe that it is important for them to maintain "Japaneseness." It has become more so as the children improved their English ability. The children's Japanese identity, therefore, has become even stronger, which in effect may have lead to more use of Japanese.

Parents' desire and efforts to provide their children with the best English learning opportunities are well understood by the children. Children know how expensive the international school is and how hard their parents are working to send them to the school. Children, therefore, try hard to improve their English skills.

One other important thing to note about the parents beliefs is that they strongly believe that their children's Japanese will naturally improve through their daily interaction with their parents and by being surrounded with Japanese language in their daily lives. The interview with parents revealed that they are not aware of the difference between home language and school language, or BICS (Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills) and CALP (Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency), as theorized by Jim Cummins (1991). BICS are language skills needed in social situation or is the day-to-day language needed to interact socially with other people. CALP refers to formal academic learning, which includes listening, speaking, reading, and writing about subject area content material. According to several studies (e.g., Tomas & Collier, 1997), this level of language learning is said to take five to seven years, if a child has no prior schooling, to catch up to their peers. The studies are based on English language learners in the U.S., but it shows CALP is not an easily attainable level of



language learning. While we are not certain how the children's Japanese skills will develop without some academic instruction besides ones provided by the school, the mothers' beliefs about the development of native language skills was quite a surprise for the current researchers.

### **Limitations and future studies**

The current study is a part of a larger longitudinal study, and as is typical of longitudinal studies, maintaining the same participants over the course of years is a difficult task. Throughout our study, students left as their fathers' locations of job changed. Such was also the case with one LEP student this time, and we had to replace him with other LEP student. We had her record of English level when she was Grade 1, but we have no interview data, as she was not our focus student then.

There are a couple of areas where further studies are needed. Those are relationships between 1) identity and language acquisition, and 2) improved language acquisition and the use of code-switching. This study showed that as their Japanese identity became stronger, there was more use of Japanese language, but the prevalent use of Japanese language outside of the classroom may also be a reason for more use of Japanese language at school. As for the relationship between language acquisition and the use of code-switching, their English proficiency was based on the students' perceptions, and not on objective data such as tests on English language skills. Since this is a qualitative study based on students' perceptions, quantitative data may have consolidated our research.

One last area of possible future studies will be to investigate the children's Japanese academic skills and examine if the daily social conversations will help them acquire the level of academic language learning skills. Our participants did

not have problems communicating with us, but there were misuses of Japanese language. Whether these are typical of the children at their age, or if their basic Japanese communication skills is behind this is not known, and therefore it also needs to be examined.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A: Stage 10 and stage 5 cited from “Assessment for Learning: English Language Learners (ELL) Stages for Language Acquisition

Stage 10	
Spoken language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Can apply syntactic rules (e.g., subject/verb agreement, tense), but not consistently and will be beginning to use modals (might, will, must)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Can comprehend and can participate in mainstream academic learning activities and if help is given and if contextual support is provided</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Will continue to have difficulty following interaction at native-speaker speed because of need for processing time</li> </ul>
Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Can comprehend texts on familiar topics</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Will be continuing to develop reading strategies, through modeled reading by the teacher (e.g., in shared reading)</li> </ul>
Writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Can write simple texts (e.g., narratives, reports, recounts, procedures) modeled on those read with and/or by the teacher, but with particular features omitted (e.g., verb endings, and tense-time orientation difficulties) which will sometimes cause difficulties in comprehension for the reader.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Can demonstrate greater speed and fluency in writing because of their increased fluency in spoken English and their wider knowledge base in English</li> </ul>
Stage 5	
Spoken language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Can participate in activities on familiar topics, but may struggle with the language associated with complex ideas</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Can experience lapses in comprehension due to gaps in vocabulary, or overload of new vocabulary, or lack of understanding concepts due to previous lapses in comprehension</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Can lose concentration if the topic and language are unfamiliar</li> </ul>
Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Can comprehend literal meanings, but will have difficulty making inferences</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Can retell simple narrative with little prompting</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> May lack comprehension in longer texts due to lack of understanding of cohesive devices (e.g., because, so) and of pronouns referencing earlier text.</li> </ul>

Writing	<input type="checkbox"/> Can write with some fluency texts of limited length and on familiar topics when the text is of a familiar type (e.g. descriptions, narratives) <input type="checkbox"/> Can write with increasing accuracy and legibility; errors in hand-writing, spelling, omission of articles and use of tenses will not generally impede overall meaning
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### Appendix B: Interview with students

[A] Demographic questions:

1. What is your name? \_\_\_\_\_ Boy/ Girl  
 What nationality are you? \_\_\_\_\_  
 What nationality is your father? \_\_\_\_\_  
 What is your father's mother tongue? \_\_\_\_\_  
 What nationality is your mother? \_\_\_\_\_  
 What is your mother's mother tongue? \_\_\_\_\_  
 How many brothers and sisters do you have? How old are they?  
 \_\_\_\_\_
  
2. Have you lived in an English speaking country before you came to MIS?  
 Yes / No  
 If yes, where did you live and for how long? In \_\_\_\_\_, for \_\_\_\_\_  
 Have you studied in an English speaking country before you came to MIS?  
 Yes/ No  
 If yes, where did you study, public school, international school, or Japanese school and for how long? In \_\_\_\_\_, for \_\_\_\_\_
  
3. What language do you usually use with your parents/ sisters/ brothers?  

	Always English	-----				Always Japanese
With Mother	1	2	3	4	5	6
With Father	1	2	3	4	5	6
With your sister(s)	1	2	3	4	5	6
With your brother(s)	1	2	3	4	5	6

(1= Always English, 2= Mostly English, 3= More English than Japanese, 4= More Japanese than English, 5= Mostly Japanese, 6= Always Japanese)
  
4. Who do you speak more, with your father or with your mother?  
 What do you talk about with them?  
 With my father/ With my mother ( \_\_\_\_\_ )
  
5. Do your parents help you learn English (e.g., with your homework)?  
 Yes, my father helps me learn English (by \_\_\_\_\_ )  
 Yes, my mother helps me learn English (by \_\_\_\_\_ )

[B] Questionnaire:

1. Do you understand lessons in English?  
All the time Most of the time Usually yes Sometimes not Usually not  
いつも分かる ほとんど分かる 大抵分かる 時々分からない 大抵分からない  
(100%) (90%) (80%) (60%) (20%)
2. Which do you understand better in General English or Japanese?  
English/ Japanese/ Both about the same/Other language ( )
3. Which is easier for you to speak/ listen/ read/ write, English or Japanese?  
a) Speaking: English/ Japanese/Other  
b) Listening: English/ Japanese/Other  
c) Reading: English/ Japanese/Other  
d) Writing: English/ Japanese/Other  
Other language? ( )
4. Which language do you use with your friends at school/ in class (besides Japanese class)?  
At school: English ( %)/ Japanese (%)  
In class: English (%) / Japanese (%)
5. Do you use more Japanese/ English with some friends than others?  
If so, why?  
More Japanese with some friends (reason: )  
More English with some friends (reason: )
6. Do you feel you have to speak English at school?  
Yes/ No If yes, why? ( )
7. Do you want to speak English only in class? Yes/ Sometimes/ No  
Why/ why not? ( )  
Do you want to speak Japanese sometimes? Yes/ Sometimes/ No  
Why/ why not? When? ( )
8. Do you feel you are more Japanese or (your nationality: )?  
Why do you feel so?  
Feel more Japanese (reason: )  
Feel more (your country: )  
(reason: )
9. Do you feel you're proud that you can speak English?  
Yes/ No  
Why/ Why not?
10. Do you want to learn English more? If yes, why?  
Yes/ No  
Why? ( )

**Appendix C: Interview with parents**  
**Beliefs about language acquisition & bilingualism Questionnaire**

[A] Demographic information

- 1) How old are you?
- 2) Do you have experience studying abroad? Yes No  
When and how long? Age: ~ ; for \_\_\_\_\_year(s)
- 3) Have you lived in a foreign country? Yes No  
When and how long? Age: ~ ; for \_\_\_\_\_year(s)
- 4) What's your highest education you obtained?  
Junior college, 4-year college (university), Graduate school (MA, Ph.D.)
- 5) How do you rate your English skill?
  - 5 Very proficient (90~100%): No problems at all.
  - 4 Proficient (80~ 90%): I rarely have problems understanding and communicating with people.
  - 3 Average (60~70%): Usually I understand what others are saying, and I can say what I want to say.
  - 2 Poor (30~50%) : I have some difficulty communicating in English.
  - 1 Very poor (0~30%) : I cannot communicate very well.  
I have difficulty helping my children's HW.
- 6) How do you rate your spouse's English skills?

[B] Questions about beliefs and expectations

What are your beliefs? Please answer what your beliefs are based on 5 scales. Please also indicate why yes, if Yes, and why not if No.

[1] Language acquisition

- |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. It is best to learn from native speakers of English.                                 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. English should be taught only in English.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. Some people are born with a special ability that help them learn a foreign language. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. It is important to speak English with an excellent accent.                           | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. It is better to learn a foreign language in the foreign country.                     | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. If you learn to speak English very well, it will help you get a good job.            | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

[2] Reasons for sending a child to the international school

[3] Beliefs about bilingualism

1. Do you think children should speak in English at home, too?
2. What do you think is important to raise a child to be bilingual?

[4] Helping children

1. Do you help your child to improve his/her English ability?  
How and what do you exactly do?

2. How do you motivate/encourage your child to study?
- [5] Wishes and expectations about children's future
1. Do you want your child to be good at both English and Japanese?  
Is it ok if your child says he/she is not interested in Japanese?
  2. Do you want your child to have a Japanese identity?