

CROSSROADS

An interdisciplinary journal for the study
of history, philosophy, religion and classics

SPECIAL ISSUE – 2008 RHIZOMES CONFERENCE

VOLUME III ISSUE II 2009

ISSN: 1833-878X

Pages 58-71

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Language, Power and Identity in Bilingual Childrearing

ABSTRACT

It is commonly supposed that in families of linguistically intermarried couples communication is conducted in both parent's respective native languages, resulting in the children naturally and spontaneously developing bilingual proficiency. Despite this assumption, such children do not always pick up the two target languages nearly as effortlessly as is often imagined, and bilingual childrearing has been shown to be a labour intensive and emotionally demanding pursuit. In instances where the bilingual development of children proves disappointing, parents frequently are portrayed as unable or unwilling to follow commonsense advice regarding how to raise their children in two or more languages. Why is this so?

This paper posits that parental language choice in bilingual childrearing is shaped by discursively constructed identities and relationships of power between such couples. By incorporating questionnaire, logbook, and in-depth interview data, a single case study is presented. For linguistically intermarried couples, bilingual childrearing is shown to be a much more intricate and politicized practice than is commonly assumed.

BIOGRAPHY

Originally from Melbourne Australia, Lachlan Jackson is a lecturer in the Faculty of Policy Science, Ritsumeikan University. His Ph.D. thesis, which he is currently completing at the University of Queensland, is a sociolinguistic investigation of the

bilingual childrearing practices of native English-speaking intermarried fathers living in Japan. Lachlan's research interests concentrate on bilingual child-rearing, power, and the discursive construction of identities in linguistic intermarriage.

LANGUAGE, POWER AND IDENTITY IN BILINGUAL CHILDREARING

Over the last two decades, literature spanning various fields of linguistics has displayed an increasing awareness of the need to study language learners within the context of their social worlds.ⁱ Pointedly, social identities and relations of power have been shown to be pivotal factors affecting the behaviours of, and outcomes for language learners and educators alike. Yet while these developments have also been incorporated into segments of bilingualism studies, much of that literature has ignored the ways in which power relations and identities structure both the specific language choices and the broader parental practices of linguistically intermarried couples.ⁱⁱ Having offered overly simplistic and prescriptive models of ‘the good bilingual child-raiser,’ⁱⁱⁱ such literature has underestimated the way in which power and identity render bilingual childrearing an intricate, complex, and highly political activity.

The phenomenon of linguistic intermarriage provides an excellent context within which to examine the socio-political and socio-economic dimensions of language contact. To date however, despite Heller & Levy’s^{iv} call over a decade ago for more studies to explore the role that the abstractions of power and identity(ies) play in shaping bilingual childrearing practices, the gap in the literature remains striking. This is surprising because, as Piller points out, “relations between native and non-native speakers, between natives and foreigners, between women and men in the family do not simply mirror those in society at large...these roles and relations are being negotiated, upheld or contested...and...[t]he experience of having to reposition oneself in a new language, learned after puberty, is shared by bilingual couples...[and]... an increasing number of migrants worldwide.”^v

The single case study outlined in this paper forms part of a larger qualitative sociolinguistic investigation into the bilingual childrearing experiences of eight intermarried native English-speaking fathers residing in Japan.^{vi} It examines how linguistic practices are tied to questions of power and identity within a *political economy of language*.^{vii} Specifically, the extent to which second language (L2) proficiencies impact on relations of power, as well as the way in which language is used to discursively construct identity(ies), and in turn, position both self and spouse will be discussed. By incorporating data collected from questionnaires, logbooks and in-depth interviews, linguistic intermarriage will indeed be shown to be a fitting lens through which to view language contact, the discursive (re-)construction of identities, and discourses of bilingualism.^{viii}

THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

It is commonly supposed that in families of linguistically intermarried couples communication is conducted in both parents’ respective native languages, resulting in the children naturally and spontaneously developing bilingual proficiency.^{ix} Despite this assumption, such children do not simply ‘pick up’ the two target languages nearly as effortlessly as is often imagined, and bilingual childrearing has been shown to be a labour-intensive and emotionally demanding pursuit.^x Furthermore, while some children of linguistically intermarried parents do indeed become active bilinguals, many do not. Numerous previous studies have attempted to ascertain specifically why bilingual developmental outcomes are not the same for all such children. Some suggested possibilities have included familial factors (such as the existence of siblings^{xi}), sociocultural factors (such as the status of the target languages,^{xii} or the gender of the minority language speaking parent^{xiii}) and linguistic environmental factors (most notably the parental discourse strategy being implemented^{xiv}).^{xv}

While the findings of these studies are both varied and at times conflicting, a shared theme running through much of this literature is that in instances where the level of bilingual development proves disappointing, parents frequently are portrayed as unable or unwilling to follow commonsense advice regarding how to raise their children bilingually. To be sure, Piller has suggested that much of the information advocated in the public discourse pertaining to bilingual childrearing does not filter through into parents’ private language planning, arguing that parents often “act in a societal context where bilingualism is increasingly valorized, but where a limited understanding of the sociolinguistics of bilingualism often leads to disappointment and self doubt.”^{xvi} Rarely however, have studies attempted to specifically explain *why* parents, despite having reasonably informed themselves about what they are supposed to do, frequently do not display the language use patterns and wider parental practices advocated in much of the popular and academic literatures regarding how to raise children in two (or more) languages.

THEORETICAL APPROACHES

Like an increasing number of studies exploring the phenomena of multilingualism, the two theoretical paradigms of social constructionism and post-structuralism provide the theoretical foundations for this study. Of central concern is the influence that linguistic behaviour has on the discursive construction of identity(ies), and

the ways in which it, performed in a political economy of language, affects power relations and childrearing practices in linguistic intermarriage. Such a post-structuralist framework, argue Pavlenko & Blackledge,^{xvii} facilitates an examination of the “negotiation of identities as situated within larger socio-economic, socio-historic, and socio-political processes, and thus in more nuanced and context-sensitive ways than approaches offered by social psychology or interactional sociolinguistics.”

Language & the Discursive Construction of Identity

Ascribing or claiming identity is a highly political act, and for this reason conceptions of identity have traditionally but erroneously involved essentialist claims. Piller highlights an alternative, non-essentialist reading of identity – not as something one “is” or “has,” but rather as something one “does.”^{xviii} In this conception, where identity is viewed as a performance and is fluid and unfixed, language use becomes very much an ‘act of identity.’ Greer^{xix} has recently identified a marked growth in studies – situated in disciplines ranging from Critical Discourse Analysis to Discursive Social Psychology – that have adopted such a post-structuralist analytical approach to identity to account for how individuals position themselves and others through language. He highlighted how in such post-structuralist inquiry, identities are shown to be multiple, negotiated and co-constructed through one’s interaction with others.

Intermarriage & the Political Economy of Language

As Friedrich^{xx} states, there are several parallels between economic and linguistic theory, and linguistic phenomena are no longer seen as mere vehicles for conceptualizing the political economy – they play significant and multiple roles within it.^{xxi} The term ‘political economy,’ according to Mosco,^{xxii} broadly refers to ‘the study of social relations, especially the power relations, that mutually constitute the production, distribution and consumption of resources.’

Bourdieu^{xxiii} and Bourdieu and Passeron^{xxiv} are credited with expanding the conventional notion of resources (i.e. capital) beyond a purely economic sense (financial wealth), positing that capital could also be embodied as cultural capital (skills, knowledge), social capital (networks, memberships) and symbolic capital (prestige, status). In what Bourdieu termed the ‘linguistic marketplace’, ways of speaking (languages, dialects) are assigned different values such that speakers are considered to possess unequal amounts of ‘linguistic capital.’^{xxv} These values, derived from peoples’ beliefs about languages and the people who speak them, are sometimes referred to as ‘language ideologies.’^{xxvi} They are, according to Blackledge,^{xxvii} “about more than individual speakers’ attitudes to their languages, or speakers using languages in particular ways. Rather, they include the values, practices, and beliefs associated with language use by speakers, and the discourse which constructs values and beliefs at state, institutional, national, and global levels”. For linguistically intermarried couples, an individual’s language ideology determines the relative symbolic importance placed upon the two respective languages.^{xxviii} In this way, language choice in intermarriage reflects both the subversion and exertion of power in social relations, whereby individuals seek, through their linguistic practices, symbolic profit – other forms of capital associated with the particular language being utilized.^{xxix} This qualitative sociolinguistic investigation explores such issues – and the study’s methodological approach is outlined in the subsequent section.

METHODOLOGY

This study seeks to explore an apparent gulf between, on the one hand, what Piller^{xxx} has labeled the ‘public discourse’ of bilingualism (i.e. how bilingualism is described in both the academic and popular literatures), and on the other, how the bilingual childrearing process is actually experienced by linguistically intermarried couples. Specifically, the following questions are posed:

- 1) Why does bilingual childrearing prove to be more difficult for some couples than others?
- 2) Why do some parents appear unable / unwilling to follow seemingly commonsense advice regarding how to raise their children in two or more languages?

In order to answer these questions, three integrated research instruments were used to collect the data for this case study: 1) the questionnaire; 2) the parental activity logbook; and 3) in-depth interviews. Each of these three instruments are briefly outlined in turn.

The Questionnaire

The initial research instrument employed in this study was the questionnaire, which was designed to collect essential background data from which to frame specific probes for the subsequent in-depth interviews. It was administered separately to both informants in their respective languages and consisted of a variety of twenty-eight multiple-choice, open and closed questions. Some of the questions were originally designed, while others

were either replicated or modified from three prior studies (Barron-Hauwaert, 2004; Noguchi, 2001; and Yamamoto, 2001).^{xxxii} The questionnaire targeted four key themes: family background; the second language learning histories and proficiencies of all family members; language use dyads within the home; and attitudes and perceptions about bilingualism. In an attempt to triangulate the data, informants were requested to both self-report on their own language proficiencies and use patterns, as well as to describe those of their spouse and children.

The Parental Activity Logbook

Secondly, both informants were required to keep a *Parental Activity Logbook*. The couple was requested to concurrently but independently record their activities over a seven day period, paying particular focus on their contextual language use patterns with other family members. The logbooks were incorporated into the research design as they have been shown to render subsequent in-depth interviews a more focused, efficient, and triangulated method of data collection.^{xxxiii}

The In-Depth Interviews

The semi-structured in-depth interview was the third and most important research instrument employed in this study. It was decided to interview the mother and father independently because, as Okita^{xxxiii} has demonstrated, separate interviews of this nature are often deemed to yield more useful data than joint discussions. The interviews were conducted in the informants' home, enabling me to observe the family in its natural setting on two separate occasions. Running for approximately 50 minutes each, the father's interview was conducted entirely in English, while the mother's was predominantly conducted in English, but utilized some Japanese.

CASE STUDY – THE EVANS FAMILY

Family Background

Eddie and Erika Evans (pseudonyms) are an American-Japanese couple with two children. The couple met in the United States where Eddie (35) was a high school art teacher and Erika (35) worked as a Japanese language instructor. They then resided in Taiwan for several years where Eddie taught English until five years ago, when they relocated to Japan and were married shortly after. Erika's career is in finance, while Eddie works flexi-time as a copy writer and freelance journalist. While both children attend *hoikuen* (day-care), Eddie is the primary caregiver of the two children – their son Paul (4;7), and daughter Sarah (1;3). They currently reside in a two bedroom apartment in a housing complex in central Tokyo.

Family Member Profiles

Eddie writes that he “followed [his] wife to Japan because she was sick of living in Taiwan and wanted business experience”. Upon arriving in Japan, he first taught corporate English classes and wrote freelance articles. Eddie then landed a job that better utilized his background in fine art – working in the field of advertising. Around this time, he also undertook four short term introductory Japanese language courses at a private language school in Tokyo. Although Eddie's Japanese proficiency is low, he does use the language daily to carry out limited casual conversations, and as such can therefore – according to contemporary definitions^{xxxiv} – be described as an English-dominant active bilingual. His mean language proficiencies are indicated in the table below.

Erika is a full-time employee in a major Japanese finance corporation. Her hours are demanding and she often brings work home with her in the evenings. Erika is clearly career-driven – she is currently studying for a demanding internal examination upon which her future promotion hinges, and also has applied to undertake MBA studies. She is the primary breadwinner in the family. Having spent over six years living abroad, Erika's English ability is impressive. Not surprisingly, she can be described as a Japanese-dominant active bilingual. Before living abroad, Erika also majored in English at a Japanese foreign language university. Her mean language proficiencies are also indicated in the table below.

The Evan's son, Paul (4;7), is a Japanese dominant active bilingual. Although he attends a Japanese medium *Hoikuen*, he does spend several hours each day in the care of his father, and as such, his English proficiency is functional, but below native peer level. Paul also has made numerous extended visits to his grandparents in the United States, and on two occasions they have also come to live with the family in Tokyo for several weeks.

Sarah (1;3), the Evan's daughter, also attends a Japanese-medium *hoikuen*. As might be expected, Sarah is not yet verbalizing in either language. According to Eddie, however, she displays receptive comprehension of several words in both English and Japanese. It can be expected that her oral proficiencies will develop as she grows. Her current language proficiencies are also indicated in the charts below.

Table 1 Mean Japanese Proficiency Evaluations:^{xxxv}

Name (Age)	Speaking	Listening	Reading	Writing
Eddie (35)	5.5	5	3.5	3
Erika (35)	10	10	10	10
Paul (4;7)	10	10	10	10
Sarah (1;3)	0.5	2	0	0

Table 2 Mean English Proficiency Evaluations:

Name (Age)	Speaking	Listening	Reading	Writing
Eddie (35)	10	10	10	10
Erika (35)	8.5	8	8	8
Paul (4;7)	7.5	8	0.5	0.5
Sarah (1;3)	0.5	2	0	0

KEY

Speaking / Listening

- 0: Never says anything/understands nothing.
- 2: Says/understands a few words and phrases.
- 4: Can carry out simple conversations.
- 6: Is functional in that language in 'everyday situations.'
- 8: Is highly proficient, but not at native speaker level.
- 10: Is a native speaker (or age appropriate native speaker).

Reading / Writing

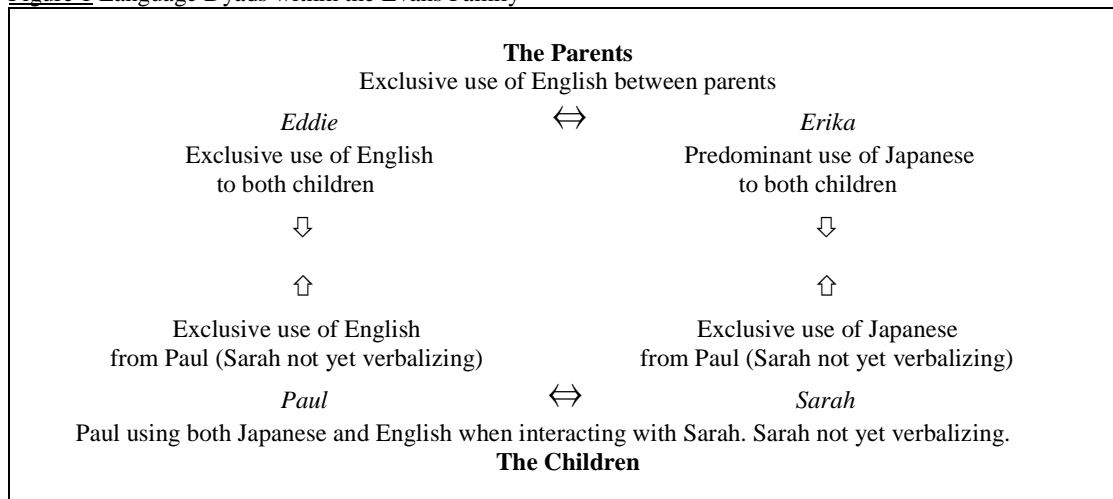
- 0: No literacy skills
- 2: Reads/Writes the alphabet/hiragana.
- 4: English – reads & writes simple sentences but may make many simple errors.
Japanese – reads & writes words in hiragana & katakana.
- 6: Reads/writes simple material, but is not at an age appropriate native-speaker level.
- 8: Reads and writes adult level material, with the aid of a dictionary and occasional help from a native speaker.
- 10: Reads and writes at age appropriate native speaker level.

Proportional English/Japanese Use and Household Language Dyads

Overall proportional language use in the Evans household is relatively evenly split between English and Japanese. Eddie reports that he speaks English about 95% of the time – a claim substantiated by Erika who estimates his English use to be about 90%. Erika claims to use about 70% Japanese, while Eddie estimates it to be about 60%. Both parents report relatively consistently that Paul's English to Japanese use ratio is almost balanced (according to Eddie 45:55, according to Erika 40:60). Although Sarah is not yet verbalizing, the Evans estimate that her receptive comprehension of both English and Japanese words is balanced.

With respect to individual language dyads, Eddie and Erika almost exclusively use English amongst themselves. And because the Evans are attempting to implement a one parent – one language discourse strategy, Eddie also only uses English when interacting with both children. Erika states that she '*banned* [emphasis in original] him, not [sic] to speak Japanese. I asked him to speak to the kids in correct English, rather than crappy Japanese'. Yet while Erika tries to restrict herself to speaking Japanese when interacting with the children, she will, on occasion, use English. When interacting with his parents, Paul exclusively uses their respective native languages. He reportedly will use both English and Japanese when speaking to Sarah. These language dyads are represented in the diagram below.

Figure 1 Language Dyads within the Evans Family^{xxxvi}



Language Work and Transmission Strategies

Data collected from all three research instruments suggests that the Evans initially implemented and have consistently maintained a somewhat flexible interpretation of the one-parent-one-language (OPOL) strategy of bilingual childrearing. In what is sometimes referred to as OPOL-mL,^{xxxvii} Erika sometimes uses English during communal conversations (such as during family meals) to ensure that Eddie is not excluded. Considering that Eddie as the minority language native speaker is the children’s primary caregiver, the Evans appear well positioned to employ such an approach to their children’s bilingual development.

As stated previously, despite the widely held misconception that children of linguistically intermarried couples simply ‘pick up’ second languages ‘naturally’, for the parents concerned, bilingual childrearing is indeed a labour exhaustive and emotionally taxing undertaking.^{xxxviii} To be sure, Okita contended that much of the ‘language work’ performed by the minority language native speaking parent is ‘invisible,’ i.e. it is often overlooked by those not directly involved in carrying it out. The language work undertaken by both informants will now be considered in turn.

Data collected from all three research instruments suggest that Eddie currently has more contact hours with the children than does Erika. This is largely because he was able to negotiate a flexi-time arrangement with his employer, and is regularly permitted to work from home. Eddie feeds, dresses and takes the children to daycare each morning, and usually also collects them and takes them to the park each afternoon. He is also primarily responsible for the domestic labor in the house (cooking, cleaning, laundry etc). On most evenings, Eddie bathes the children and reads to them (in English) before they go to sleep. Consequently, as the children’s main caregiver, he has plenty of opportunities to interact with the children in English. In summary, Eddie is the children’s primary model of English, and he displays both the opportunity and motivation to provide the children with the linguistic input required for their bilingual development. He reflects:

I try to keep conversation going with them the entire time. It is a ten minute bike to their day care center every morning. And so I try to maintain a conversation with Paul about, you know, while we are out there...I try to, you know, talk to them when we are getting ready, as we are brushing our teeth. Umm, I read books to them. I read more and more lately.

This strategy also extends to watching the television together.

We have got some DVDs like some English language like nature...BBC nature specials. I sit down and watch it with him. I only allow him one segment. And so if we are watching the tiger, I will sit with him and say “Wow! That’s fast!” I try to keep a commentary going.

Eddie has also supervised Paul’s structured study of an English-medium math workbook. In addition to this, Erika reports that they have purchased flashcards and other learning aids designed to teach phonics and reported that Eddie intends to start using these materials with Paul in the near future. Finally, it should be stated that the claims Eddie made concerning his language work are generally supported by Erika’s assessment of his bilingual child-raising efforts.

As stated in the previous section, Erika's language work centers on the children's acquisition of Japanese, and as such, she predominantly uses Japanese when communicating with them. She will, however, sporadically speak English in their presence. According to one entry in her logbook:

Kihonteki ni wa kodomo to nihongo de hanashiteiru ga, otto to hanasu toki arui wa otto ni hanashi kakeru kodomo wo daiben suru toki wa eigo de hanashitari tatsuketari suru.

[Basically I speak Japanese to the children, but I use English with my husband, and there are also occasions when I will help the children find the right words in English when they are speaking to their father.]

Erika reportedly also uses English when scolding her children. Again, in her logbook, Erika reflect:

Okoru toki wa 'No Paul / Sarah' to eigo wo tsukau toki ga ooi.

[There are many instances when I get angry and will say in English 'No Paul / Sarah'.]

In summary, the data suggests that the Evans are following a flexible OPOL-mL strategy whereby Eddie consistently and exclusively uses English when communicating with his children, while Erika primarily uses Japanese, substituted with some English when addressing the children. As several prior studies have suggested,^{xxix} it appears that Eddie, who is both the minority language native speaker *and* the children's primary caregiver, is well positioned to make a significant contribution to the bilingual development of his children.

DISCUSSION

The previous section provided a sketch of the Evans family's background, family member profiles, language dyads, discourse strategy, as well as the types of 'language work' undertaken by each parent. The subsequent section offers a discussion of two interesting and interrelated phenomena to emerge from the case study: 1) the profound impact that second language (L2) proficiencies have on relations of power within the context of bilingual childrearing; and 2) the way in which language is used to discursively construct identity(ies), and in turn, position both self and spouse in linguistic intermarriage.

Parental Second Language Proficiencies & Power in Intermarriage

The question of whether or not parental L2 proficiency effects child bilingual development has been the subject of ongoing debate.^{xi} Nevertheless, it is clear that the higher a couple's L2 proficiencies are, the greater the number of options and choices regarding bilingual childrearing discourse strategies they are presented with.^{xii} Although, as stated previously, Eddie might, by contemporary definitions, be regarded as being bilingual, his Japanese proficiency is, however, rather limited. He describes it this way:

I can give directions, I can make small talk, I can order food. I can't have meaningful conversation...I am not confident in my Japanese at all.

Eddie's self-evaluation of his Japanese skills are supported by Erika who states:

He can get by. Yes, he can get by. [But] if he has to go totally by himself in Japanese to banks or offices, he would be having trouble.

It is evident that Erika is the more proficient bilingual in the family, and this obviously has ramifications for the way in which language, as a social resource, influences the construction of power relationships within the family.^{xiii} For instance, because Erika's second language skills are superior to those of her husband's, she reportedly assumes the role of translator within the household. She writes, in her logbook:

Otto no mae de wa, tokidoki eigo de kodomo ni hanashi kakeru koto mo aru. Naiyou ga sukoshii muzukashikunaruto otto no itteru koto o wayaku shiteru ko ni tsutaetari, ko no itteru koto wo eiyaku shite otto ni tsutaetari suru koto mo atta.

[There are times when I speak English to the children when my husband is around. When things become a little complicated, I translate what he says into Japanese for the children, or what the children say in Japanese into English for him.]

It can be argued that this disparity in second language proficiency between Eddie and Erika elevates Erika into the position of 'communication gatekeeper.' At the very least, in relation to complicated topics, she has the capacity to control both the amount and degree of interaction between Eddie and the children. She could, conceivably, exercise discernment over the flow of information in the father-child relationship. In this sense, the Evans case study is a good example of how a power imbalance can manifest in interlingual relationships when

one partner's second language proficiency is much stronger than that of the other. Interestingly however, Eddie appears both accepting and resigned to the power imbalance caused by this differential.

...after a long day at work it is probably extra brain work, to [request Erika to] sit and try and translate, you know, directly for every single sentence...so yeah, it is more out of convenience, you know? It makes conversation awkward, and sometimes he [Paul] loses his patience because we are not keeping up with what he is talking about...My Japanese just isn't good enough to follow. She [Erika] would have to say something in Japanese and then she might have to interpret it for me, so, you know, she just says it once.

Yet despite Eddie's acceptance to the fact that Erika will not act as 'family translator' all the time, it seems likely that he feels anxious about his weaker linguistic position. He states:

It's frustrating, knowing that my son is still not comfortable speaking to me. He has much more meaningful conversations with his mum in Japanese, because his language is enough [sic]. And I feel like I am missing out a bit, you know? He tells me certain things, but I know there are certain things he doesn't, because it is just not worth the trouble to explain. Or he can't explain, so he doesn't or just stops...He'd tell her [Erika] this whole dynamic story...I mean there was this whole dialogue that I wanted to have with him that he did not have with me, you know?...It happens on a pretty regular basis...He speaks much more with his mum, and in much more detail...You now, there is a wedge there, but it is a language barrier more than anything else.

Although Eddie expresses frustration at being the minority language speaker, he seems to remain committed to exclusively speaking English in the house. By his reckoning, it seems, the father-child relationship is dependant on developing the children's English, not on him becoming more proficient in Japanese. That is not to say, however, that he has no desire to improve his Japanese language skills. According to Erika:

He wants to learn Japanese and he would rather spend money and time to learn a little bit more and be decent and be able to get around even more. And then I think he wants to be involved in the work, in the Japanese meeting.

Yet despite this, Erika has not encouraged Eddie to further his Japanese studies because, according to Eddie:

She wishes I spoke better Japanese, but she doesn't want me to start studying now...She doesn't want me to start practicing the Japanese in the house...She says "How much would you really use it?" And another part is just the time and money.

Eddie's claim that his wife is opposed to him improving his Japanese language skills is supported by Erika's own comments. She says:

His Japanese level is too low to get that high up, and then he needs to spend a lot of time and money in order to be able to be in the business meeting...So I asked him **not** to learn Japanese, not to spend that much time and money.

Asked what he thought of Erika's rationale for specifically requesting him *not* to study Japanese, Eddie responds:

I completely understand what she said, but I am constantly embarrassed by my Japanese level, or I just feel pretty stupid to have lived in Japan for so long and not to be able to truly converse in the language. But I have basically kind of painted myself into a corner by sort of not studying earlier, because now, you know, I have less time than I have ever had. But you know, anyway, but it's all excuses.

The way in which Eddie and Erika rationalize both his low second language proficiency and her request that he not study Japanese is intriguing. One may wonder whether the couple isn't equating high second language proficiency of the minority language speaking parent with potentially disappointing bilingual developmental outcomes for their children. Several of Erika's comments in particular clearly imply the belief that Paul and Sarah's English development would be adversely affected if Eddie was to improve his Japanese (as stated previously, Erika "banned him from speaking Japanese"), and in this sense, the Evans seem unable to separate two distinct issues; the extent to which it is necessary for Eddie to consistently provide the children with English input, as opposed to a separate question concerning the advantages and disadvantages of him undertaking further formal Japanese study in order to elevate his L2 proficiency. After all, several prior studies have maintained that the two are not necessarily correlated,^{xliii} and other case studies in this research project have

found that (in conjunction with other variables) active bilingual development *can* occur in families where parental second language proficiency of the minority language speaker is high.^{xliv}

Could it be that something else beyond the superficial justification that Eddie ‘does not need’ to speak Japanese is at play here? Indeed, language ‘use rights’ intricately reflect relations of power within linguistic intermarriage. For couples like the Evans, for whom the native minority language speaking parent’s L2 proficiency is low, the majority language native speaking parent becomes, to appropriate from Kouritzin,^{xlv} ‘the ultimate linguistic authority’ in the household. Furthermore, Piller^{xlvi} has argued that in intermarriage, the partner in whose native country the couple live tends to be the more legally, economically, and socially privileged, and several other studies have highlighted how, for the native minority language speaking parent, language can be a significant source of marginalization and disempowerment in intermarriage.^{xlvii} The way in which language is used to discursively construct identity(ies), and in turn, exert and subvert relations of power by positioning both self and spouse in linguistic intermarriage is, appropriately, the focus of the next section.

Subject Positioning & Identities in Linguistic Intermarriage

An increasing number of scholars have utilized the theory of *social positioning* (popularized by the works of Davies & Harré^{xlviii}) to describe the ways in which people “draw on the accumulated history of discourses available to them in their environments to position themselves as well as to position and reposition others.”^{xlix} The notion of subject positioning is particularly useful in aiding an understanding of linguistically intermarried couples because, as stated previously, they constantly perform multiple (and sometimes mutually conflicting) social roles defined in terms of gender, cultural background, or native-speaker status¹. In this section I will consider how and for what purpose Eddie and Erika use language to discursively position and reposition themselves and each other. I will explore how these multiple positionings influence language use within the family and bilingual childrearing practices in general.

In his interview, Eddie seems to position himself as a ‘new-age’ involved father. He refers to comments made by his wife to support this positioning by stating:

Erika frequently tells me, and this may be an ego flatterer, but when she goes out with her friends, whether they be day-care mums, co-workers, or whatever, they constantly show shock and amazement at how involved I am, and they can’t believe that she is out on the town while I am at home.

When asked how he thinks he is viewed by the daycare mothers, teachers and neighbors, he replies:

Well on the surface, they all, they all say that I am wonderful and am a ‘Super Dad’. You know, I don’t know what they really feel, but they are all pretty warm and welcoming to me.

Erika appears to derive an almost reciprocal identity from Eddie’s positioning as the progressive father. She states quite matter-of-factly:

We are different from, you know, Japanese-Japanese marriages.

In saying this, the inference seems to be that Erika and Eddie are not a stereotypical – read here, conservative – Japanese couple. Erika works full-time and is the family’s main breadwinner, and she is in turn positioned by Eddie as the new-age career woman in an ‘un-Japanese’ marriage.

My wife has started at a prestigious, for lack of a better word, but a pretty well known kind of finance job. And it could possibly lead to a promotion, or to you know, higher pay. And if she is happy with that, and I am happy with that, then we will stay here.

As stated previously, because Eddie, as the minority language speaking parent is also the children’s primary caregiver, the family is well placed to utilize the one-parent one-language discourse strategy. Interestingly, Erika goes on to infer that her career has, in at least one sense, been an advantage to her children’s English development. In her interview she emphasizes the fact that as a result of her paid employment, the family has been provided with the opportunity of Eddie spending a greater amount of time with the children than would conventionally have been possible. As such, she maintains that the children are exposed to more minority language input than children of other linguistically intermarried couples in which the minority language speaking parent typically is involved in full-time paid work. Of one of her intermarried friends she comments:

She was a bit frustrated. And her husband was even more frustrated because she doesn’t work. So she is at home spending [each day] with kids, so the kids speak in Japanese all the time.

In contrast to her friend, Erika tries to position her family situation in a very contemporary 'non-Japanese' way. She states:

Japanese salaryman life is like...it's kind of pathetic because even if they want to spend time with family, they can't.

Furthermore, as one might expect, because Erika is the main breadwinner, her career assumes high priority regarding the family's future plans. She explains:

I am planning to work on my...develop my career here at [company name deleted], and then you know, get a better payment, paid job, or go back to school... and then, I don't know, start career, you know, in the States.

Again she states:

So I don't know, I don't mind going back to the States, with Eddie and the Family, but I have to continue my own career.

In this single case study, data collected from both Eddie and Erika is illustrative of the way in which language choice and use reflects where and how individuals try to position themselves and others in social relationships. Eddie appears to be positioning himself as a progressive, committed and involved 'new age' father, and 'semi-stay-at-home-dad'. This identity appears linked to Erika's own discursive construction of herself as a progressive, bilingual, professional living in an unconventional, liberated – at least in the traditional Japanese sense –international marriage. Yet there were other additional identities being drawn upon during the course of the interviews. In different segments of both interviews, Eddie was also positioned in a range of alternative and sometimes conflicting identities – that of bumbling foreigner *and* savvy international person; native English speaker *and* 'crappy' Japanese speaker; and committed father *and* goofy *gaijin* (foreigner) dad frequently getting himself into a range of socially awkward situations at the day-care center. Erika in turn took up and was ascribed multiple alternative identities of her own – that of wife, mother, career woman, family translator, native Japanese speaker, fluent English speaker, partner in a progressive intermarriage, the 'Japanese parent' as well as the 'Japan rejecter'. Indeed, language use is intricately related to the ways in which individuals can discursively construct their identities, as well as position oneself and partner in linguistic intermarriage.

CONCLUSION

In the context of the overall research project, the Evans provided an interesting, 'reverse' case study because, atypically, the father is also the children's primary caregiver. It was shown how Eddie, as the native minority language speaker, was well placed to implement an OPOL strategy because he had more contact with the children than did Erika.

One prominent theme to emerge from this case study was the effect that a disparity in parental second language proficiencies can have on the construction of power relations within the family. It was suggested that Erika, as the stronger bilingual, assumed the dual roles of both 'family translator' and 'communication gatekeeper.' The fact that Erika had insisted Eddie not study Japanese and had 'banned' him from speaking it illustrated the way in which language 'use rights' are intricately constructed within the family's political economy of language. It seems that for Erika, it was preferable to have Eddie remain a weak Japanese speaker – both in terms of the way that affected the power differentials in the marriage, and the cultural capital potentially derived from being the bilingual wife of an English-speaking husband.

Secondly, and interrelated with the first point, by drawing from post-structuralist positioning theory, it was suggested that Eddie and Erika perform a number of identities – some taken up, some ascribed – in order to vie for various forms of social resources. In different segments of the interview, Eddie is positioned in a range of different and sometimes conflicting identities. Interestingly, it was suggested how the partners in interlingual marriage not only negotiate and assume ascribed identities for themselves, but also derive social capital from the identities performed by their spouse.

Bilingual childrearing in linguistic intermarriage is, to be sure, a highly political endeavor. As Okita^{li} maintained in her own study of linguistic intermarriage in the United Kingdom, there is a need to better explain the dilemmas of language use faced by intermarried couples so they might more clearly understand, if not resolve, some of the complexities they encounter in their person experiences with private language planning. For this to occur, a greater awareness of the way language use is shaped by abstractions of power and identity. Further

studies such as the one detailed in this paper, offering empirical data from a range of linguistic and cultural contexts, have the potential to move both the academic and popular literatures on bilingual childrearing in this direction.

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- ⁱⁱ I acknowledge that the term 'intermarriage' has always been contextually defined (see Jackie Waldren 'Crossing over: Marriage and matching in Mallorca' in *Cross-Cultural Marriage: Identity and Choice*, ed. Rosemary Breger & Rosanna Hill (Oxford: Berg 1998). I am employing the term 'interlingual marriage' to denote a married couple in which both partners do not share the same native language.
- ⁱⁱⁱ I have adapted Bonnie Norton's (2000: 4-5) term that critiqued the oft-touted image of 'the good language learner'. By 'good bilingual child-raiser' I am referring to acutely simplistic representations of bilingual childrearing as an apolitical and largely formulaic process.
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- ^{vi} See other single case studies from this project: Lachlan Jackson, 'Reconsidering public discourse on private language planning: a case study of a flexible one-parent-one-language model' in *Japan Journal of Multilingualism and Multiculturalism*. 13 (2007a) 1-11; Lachlan Jackson, 'Talking tactics – fathers' language work in bilingual childrearing in intermarried families in Japan' in *In Between Wor(l)ds: Transformation and Translation*, ed. Robyn Lonughnane, Cara Penry Williams, and Jana Verhoeven. (Melbourne: University of Melbourne 2007b) 99-117; or Lachlan Jackson, 'Foreign fathers – native English speaking fathers' contributions to bilingual childrearing in intermarried families in Japan' in *New Voices: Cross Cultural Encounters in the Australia-Japan Relationship*. (Sydney: The Japan Foundation 2006) 87-98.
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- ^{xxxv} These charts have been modified from Noguchi's (2001: 268) prior study.
- ^{xxxvi} The template for this chart was replicated from Yamamoto's (2001) prior study.
- ^{xxxvii} Whereby parents utilize the minority language together, see Barron-Hauwaert, 2004, 167-68.
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