

## バイリンガル児童教育プロジェクト報告 (BCEP)

### The Continuation of the Bilingual Children's Education Project (BCEP)

The Bilingual Children's Education Project (BCEP) is a research project devoted to the longitudinal study of child and family bilingualism. It is a Saturday School which has been organized and is managed by a group of bilingual parents in Tokyo who have decided to raise their children bilingually or trilingually by themselves. This Saturday School was established in 1998 and became an IERS bilingual research project in 2000 (Shi, 2000, 2001, 2002).

In the 2004 academic year the BCEP Saturday School made significant changes to its structure and organization. Up to December 2003, the BCEP had only one class for four to five regular members/students (on average). In January 2004, a "Junior Class" was added to the Saturday School with a group of younger children ranging from 4 to 8 years of age. In other words, the BCEP Saturday School was expanded to a total of two classes: "the Senior Class" and "the Junior Class".

#### I. The Senior Class

The most noted development with the Senior Class was changes in the class roster. Two regular members went to the United States for a year each because of family arrangements. One of them (MS) was away from August 2003 till August 2004, and the other (EW) left in August 2004 and will return in August 2005. Another member quit the school at the beginning of the year for personal reasons. In addition, one member has had to take temporary leave from the class due to a schedule conflict with another Saturday activity and another member frequently cannot attend for the same reason. Despite these undesirable situations, from September 2003 till the end of 2003 the Senior Class continued normally. However, it was agreed amongst the families that the Senior Class needed more members in order to maintain a satisfactory number of regular students. At the beginning of February 2004, a new member (KO) from outside the ICU campus community joined the Senior Class. (See Table 1 and Table 2 for the summary of the Senior Class members and their families). This and other additions that were made to the Junior Class at around the same time was an important development for the School because it was for the first time ever admitting as regular members individuals from outside the ICU community. This kind of shift in the class roster, though a constraint to some extent, has always been an expected factor and is considered to be a normal phenomenon in the development of the School as international families in Japan tend to be mobile for a variety of reasons.

The curriculum of the Senior Class was unchanged from the previous year. It continued with the family-controlled, individually based syllabus for the literature component that was designed to maximize family as well as student autonomy. Until the fall term of 2003, the Saturday School had been following curricula that had been developed by the parents of the students in various stages of the project. Although there were differences among the teachers handling the classroom activities and among the students in terms of proficiency level, the syllabi were basically kept generic. As most of the senior students were approaching the end of their elementary education, their interests, activity preferences and pace of progress had started to vary. These concerns were

discussed and resulted in the decision to implement a new curriculum that allowed maximum individual family and student input and control over their choice of literature and the rate of progress. Unlike the previous curriculum that required all students to use the same reading materials chosen by the teachers, the students and their parents were encouraged to make a joint decision on the reading materials at home before bringing them to the class on Saturdays. Along with these changes in the curriculum, the teaching methodology was also restructured, especially with regard to the frequency of classes, lesson procedures and the roles of the teachers. Instead of meeting on Saturdays and Wednesdays, the students met only on Saturdays and the class session was lengthened. During the class, the students read their own books silently under the supervision of the teacher. They prepared for oral reports on the plot and their evaluation of the plot with the help of the teacher, and gave their reports to the class. When time permitted, other activities designed by the teachers could be added. To maintain the development of the students' writing abilities, a written report was given as homework to be submitted the following week. In this new lesson design, classes were more student-centered and this led to changes in the roles that the teachers play in the classroom. The main responsibilities of the teachers were that of facilitating activities and providing support in the acquisition of language and literature-related knowledge and skills.

During the first few months of the new curriculum, the students seemed satisfied with it, enjoying the increased emphasis on individual pace and control. However, towards the middle of 2004, students started to voice complaints about the method, pointing out that it was too silent for most of the lessons and that they wanted more interaction amongst members and with the teacher. In addition, the students felt that they wanted to repeat some of the language-oriented activities that they had studied with textbooks and teachers before. This alerted the parents and prompted a discussion as to whether the curriculum ought to be changed again. Some teachers decided to cope with the students' needs in their own lessons by introducing language games such as riddles and puzzles, which evidently improved students' motivation. Two parents' meetings were held to work on this issue, though final decisions were postponed to April 2005. The main suggestions on the reform of the Senior Class curriculum are as follows:

1. **Literacy development:** *The current curriculum is focused on improving literacy competence primarily through reading and basic writing exercises. The two parts have gone well so far. The silent reading has helped improve the children's reading span and removed the fear of reading a long story in English. The writing aspect is good, but it can be improved with by introducing other writing styles and genres such as poems, journals, letters-to-the-editor/author, and so on. As far as writing literacy is considered, our curriculum would be considered weak without adding styles / genres such as those mentioned above.*
2. **Academic skills development:** *This is an aspect that needs to be added to our curriculum. Of course reading and oral reports are solid academic skills, and there are a lot of sub-skills that support them. However, as the kids' minds grow more sophisticated, their Japanese academic skills grow stronger, and their interests become wider, it is evident that they need to experience something new and exciting in our afternoon school in order to remain interested. If these kinds of hands-on and task-based projects can be incorporated into our curriculum, the kids' cognitive abilities, research abilities, subject knowledge and use*

of language would most definitely improve. Along the way, training in other supporting skills such as typing and the use of computer software will need to be given at home. Ultimately it is the skills mentioned above that will enable our children to autonomously carry on their learning beyond our classes.

3. **Language development:** This component has been taken off the present curriculum for the purpose of improving literacy. In some schools this component is called Language Arts and promotes students' understanding of their language system: grammar, vocabulary and creative use of language. For example, it/there sentences, differences of language styles (spoken vs. written), language history and word roots could be included.

Based on the above, I would like to suggest that all three of the above components be included in our curriculum in an integrated-skills syllabus with a flexible balance. Of course, the teachers will have to plan a little bit more before the classes, and the children will have to do more homework. But it might stimulate the children at the same time. As one teacher teaches two lessons each round, it is highly probable that he or she will cover all three components in some way over the two-week period, with some reading and homework done before and after class. (by SJ)

Table 1  
Background of Families  
Senior Class (Feb. 2004 - Dec. 2004)

Family (Abbr. of Father's and Mother's First Names)	Ethnic-National Background of Parents	Languages Spoken by Parents	Name of Children in Senior Class	Main Language(s) Used with Children at Home
JA	F*: British, Irish M: Japanese	F: English, French, Japanese M: Japanese, English	SM	F: English, French M: Japanese, English
WJ	F*: Chinese, Singaporean M*: Chinese, Singaporean	F: Chinese (Mandarin), Japanese, English M: Chinese (Mandarin), English, Japanese	JJ	F: Chinese, Japanese M: English, Chinese
TM	F* (C): Japanese M: Japanese	F: English, Japanese M: Japanese, English	MS	F: Japanese, English M: Japanese, English
PMH	F (C): American M*: Korean	F: English M: Korean, English, Japanese	EW	F: English M: Japanese, English
JM (from outside of ICU community)	F*: American M: Japanese	F: English, German, Japanese M: Japanese, English	KO	F: English M: Japanese
PM	F*: Irish M: Japanese	F: English M: Japanese, English	AF	F: English M: Japanese

F = Father      M = Mother      \* = the main teacher from the family

(C) = Coordinator

Table 2  
Background of Children/Students  
Senior Class (February 2004)

Children's Names	Age & Sex	Dominant Language(s)	Years of Exposure to Japanese	Years of Exposure to English at home	Other Languages Understood beside Japanese and English	Other Information
SM	10 f	Japanese	10	10	French	On temporary break from Jan. 2004
JJ	11 m	Japanese, English	9	11	Chinese (Mandarin)	Transferred to an English-Speaking international school in Aug. 2004
MS	8 f	Japanese	9	9	none	Away in U.S. from Aug. 2003 to Aug. 2004
EW	10 f	Japanese	10	10	Korean	Away in U.S. from Aug. 2004 to Aug. 2005
KO	10 f	Japanese	10	10	none	Joined BCEP Feb. 2004
AF	11 f	Japanese	11	11	none	Left BCEP August 2004

m = male      f = female

## II. The Junior Class

In January 2004, the Junior Class commenced its activities. The coordinator and founder of the Junior Class was one of the parents who had a daughter in the Senior Class and a son, JM, in the Junior Class. This pattern of having children in both classes or more than one child in one of the classes was repeated in other families, as seen in Table 3 and Table 4. As mentioned above, the Saturday School welcomed its first ever regular members from bilingual families that were not associated with the ICU campus community. The Junior Class met each Saturday from 1:30 pm to 2:30 pm on the ICU campus, during the ICU terms. In the fall this class session was lengthened by 30 minutes.

The structure and the procedure of teaching were similar to the Senior Class. Parents taught the classes in rotation and followed a syllabus agreed upon as a group to maintain continuity in lesson content. At the same time, allowance was made for differences in teaching styles so that each teacher could make the most of his or her individual strengths. According to one of the teachers (JO), this style of curriculum management was satisfying for the teachers as they were able to incorporate their own interests in the classes. The teaching materials ranged from textbook materials to self-designed activities and authentic materials.

The class finished its first pass through the alphabet before the summer break. Based on the progress that the students had made, the focus was shifted to the learning of phonetic spellings and basic reading. In addition to the regular weekly lessons, there was also a drama component (performed jointly with the Senior Class) which will be discussed in the section below.

The curriculum of the Junior Class was essentially a literacy-oriented one focusing on the teaching of the alphabet, phonetic spelling, sentence-level reading and learning of vocabulary. In addition, training in aural and oral skills was provided. Despite the differences in student ages, the curriculum was flexible enough to incorporate individual needs.

Table 3  
Background of Families  
Junior Class (Feb. 2004 - Dec. 2004)

Family (Abbr. of Father's and Mother's First Names)	Ethnic-National Background of Parents	Languages Spoken by Parents	Name of Children Main Language(s) Used Class in Senior	with Children at Home
JA	F* (C): British, Irish M: Japanese	F: English, French, Japanese M: Japanese, English	JM (Brother of SM in Senior Class)	F: English, French M: Japanese, English
JM (from outside ICU community)	F*: American M: Japanese	F: English, German, Japanese M: Japanese, English	CO (Brother of KO in Senior Class)	F: English M: Japanese
PY (from outside ICU community)	F*: Australian M: Japanese	F: English, Japanese M: Japanese, English	SK MK	F: English M: Japanese
JN	F*: British M: Japanese	F: English, Japanese M: Japanese, English	OK SK	F: English M: Japanese
RS	F*: British M: Japanese	F: English, Japanese M: Japanese, English	SFR	F: English M: Japanese
PMH	F: American M*: Korean	F: English M: Korean, English, Japanese	KW (Sister of EM in Senior Class)	F: English M: Japanese, English

F = Father M = Mother \* = the main teacher from the family (C) = Coordinator

Table 4  
Background of Children/Students  
Junior Class (February 2004)

Children's Names	Age & Sex	Dominant Language(s)	Years of Exposure to Japanese	Years of Exposure to English at home	Other Languages Understood beside Japanese and English	Other Information
JM (Brother of SM in Senior Class)	5 m	Japanese	5	5	French	Joined Junior Class (JC) Jan. 2004
CO (Brother of KM in Senior Class)	6 m	Japanese	6	6	none	Joined JC Feb. 2004
SK	7 m	Japanese	7	7	none	Joined JC Feb. 2004
MK	9 m	Japanese	9	9	none	Joined JC Feb. 2004
OK	4 m	Japanese	4	4	none	Joined JC Apr. 2004 Not a regular member
SK	6 m	Japanese	6	6	none	Joined JC Apr. 2004
SFR	8 f	Japanese	8	8	none	Joined JC May 2004
KW (Sister of EW in Senior Class)	8 f	Japanese	8	8	Korean	Away in U.S. from Aug. 2004 to Aug. 2005

m = male f = female

\* All children in the Junior Class attend Japanese kindergarten or Japanese public elementary schools.

In order to determine the parents' motivation for enrolling their children in the BCEP Saturday School and to collect their feedback on the project, an informal interview with parents of the Junior Class was conducted by the writer at the beginning of March 2005. A summary of the interviewees' answers is as follows:

**Q1. Why did you enroll your child/children in the Junior Class?**

Summary of Answers:

1. To improve the children's literacy skills such as reading and writing. All the parents agreed that teaching literacy was difficult to handle by parents at home. Moreover, some parents wanted their children to be able to move on to close to native level of cognitive and writing skills, e.g. discussion, analysis and presentation. It was also mentioned that it was very important to get the kids started on literacy in English before their Japanese literacy (e.g. Kanji) became too strong. According to one of the parents (JO), he did not make a consistent effort to teach English literacy to his daughter during the first three to four years of her elementary school education. By then her Japanese literacy was so good that she could read virtually anything she wanted to in Japanese. However, her English reading skills were too basic and the materials she was reading in English did not engage her enthusiasm to the same degree. The Junior Class offered his second child (CO, age 6) the opportunity to acquire English literacy before or at almost the same time as Japanese literacy.
2. To benefit from an English-speaking community of children outside of Japanese schools. As all the bilingual children in the Junior Class attended Japanese public schools, it was not easy for them to get involved in a bilingual speech community in their neighborhood and schools. Coming to ICU for the Junior Class was not only for the English lessons, as far as the parents' motivation was concerned. The parents were happy to see that their children could be with other bilingual children for both psychological as well as cultural reasons.

**Q2. What would be the most satisfactory aspect/thing (only one) of the Junior Class since you joined?**

Summary of Answers:

1. The Junior Class has continued for over a year now.
2. The kids could concentrate on study in an English class for 1.5 hours every week.
3. What they learned in the Junior Class could also benefit the children in their studies at Japanese schools.
4. Parents were happy to get involved in course design.
5. Children were happy about the classes and excited about coming to the School.
6. Children could read simple words and/or basic sentences in English, e.g. they could recognize the phonetic rules in spellings. Children's academic reading and writing skills showed great improvement.
7. Children's attitude towards English had improved. They were more open to improving their English writing skills.
8. Children showed improvement in their performance of English dramas in terms of both reading of the scripts and performing.

### III. Joint Activities of the Senior and the Junior Classes

The link between the two groups was an important one to the B CEP Saturday School, and both classes benefited from their joint activities during 2004. There were two types of joint activities: classes and dramas.

In the joint classes, the Senior Class students were asked to help the Junior Class with their English literacy-related assignments, such as reading and learning phonetic symbols. For two classes, the Seniors went over to the Juniors' classroom and acted out as tutors and assistants to the teachers. From the general feedback of both groups, most students in both groups enjoyed having such opportunities.

As the tradition of the Saturday School, the students usually have one to two annual performances. For the 2004 summer performance, the children performed "Intimations of Summer," a play about the changing of the seasons that was written and directed by one of the parents (JM). In addition to sonnets and poems from sources as varied as William Shakespeare, Samuel Beckett and Christina Rossetti, the play incorporated considerable original material and featured the recitation in English of haiku poetry and the singing in French of a traditional French children's song. In late November, the students began rehearsing for a performance of a modern remake of Aesop's fable "The Wind and the Sun." Once again written and directed by JM, this was a reading play in which students primarily read from the script during their performance. The style of the performance and the music was original and unique, and it included the recitation of haiku poetry and other elements of Japanese culture. One of the outstanding features of the design of the play was the teaming-up of the senior and junior members in various parts of the play. During the rehearsals, the Seniors supported the Juniors by learning and reading the script in pairs, which provided both groups with valuable opportunities to learn together and understand the meaning of cooperative education. In addition, a significant portion of the preparation was the training of how to achieve appropriate intonation and emphasis in the English language. For the actual performance, the Seniors and Juniors were joined by several other children in the ICU community. As with other plays in previous years, this play was also a bilingual one in which Japanese was used occasionally.

### IV. Conclusion

The year 2004 saw many changes and developments with the B CEP Saturday School. The most noteworthy development was in its structure and organization. As students grow older, their lives naturally become busier and more complex. For example, Japanese school and other academic studies demand more of the students' time and energy as they near the crucial last two years before junior high school. Also, the students' widening interests and the pursuit of new hobbies have necessitated changes in their daily schedules. As a result of these changes and several family relocations, the B CEP experienced some serious ups and downs during 2004, with the Senior Class facing a number of challenges and the Junior Class off to what is considered a very successful start. Finally, the two classes continue to benefit each other through their joint activities and performances, and this is producing a strong group cohesiveness.

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