

日本の国立大学における外国人大学院生家庭でのバイリンガル及びトライリンガルの子どもに対する言語ポリシー研究

Family Language Policies for Young Bilingual and Trilingual Children of Foreign Graduate School Students at Japanese National Universities

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Keywords

言語政策, 親の意識, ファミリーバイリンガリズム, トライリンガリズム, 母語教育
language policy, parental awareness, family bilingualism and trilingualism, mother tongue education

ABSTRACT

本発表では日本における国立法科大学での外国籍大学生と研究者の家庭でのヤングバイリンガリズム／トライリンガリズムの子どものファミリーバイリンガリズムに対する保護者の意思および言語ポリシーについて報告をする。本研究では文部科学省により支援されている同じ寮組織に属する9家族をコントロールグループとして選ばれた。2008年10月から12月にかけて記述式による詳細なアンケート調査と2度のインタビューを行った。調査協力者より抽出された量的・質的の双方の結果を本論文で述べる。本調査の主な調査結果として、家庭内バイリンガルおよびトライリンガル教育には強い親の意思が必要不可欠であり、とりわけ日本の中で少数派言語となる母語を持つ場合には顕著であることが分かった。9家族のうち7家族では実用的理由によって3ヶ国語（母語・日本語・英語）で子どもを育てていることが分かった。また、家庭言語を最優先させており、両親の祖国の教育の影響により様々なパターンが見られた。日本への短期滞在の研究者への付帯家族の多くは各家庭の言語ポリシーが重要な役割を担うことが分かった。

This article reports an investigation of parental awareness of family bilingualism and the language policies

adopted for the young bilingual/trilingual children of foreign graduate school students and scholars at national universities in Japan. Nine families, who live in the same dormitory, sponsored by the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), were chosen as the control group of this study. An extensive, written survey was conducted followed by two rounds of interviews between October and December, 2008. Quantitative and qualitative results were analysed in this report. The main findings of this research indicate strong parental awareness of the necessity of home bilingual and trilingual education, especially in mother tongue education at home, among minorities in Japan. Seven out of nine families were found to be raising children trilingually (i.e. mother tongue, Japanese and English) for pragmatic reasons. With regard to prioritizing the home languages, various patterns were found which showed the influence of parents' home country education. The fact that many of the families were short-term scholars-cum-residents in Japan also played an important role in the formulation of language policies in each family.

1. Introduction

Japanese society is moving toward a more multi-racial, multi-cultural and multilingual society with more and more foreigners coming in as immigrants and/or as students. By the end of 2008, the number of registered foreigners in Japan was 2,217,426 according to the Immigration Bureau of Japan, 2009. In the same year, 28,779 foreign students and scholars entered Japan, which was an increase of 8% from the previous year (Immigration Bureau of Japan, 2009). The steady increase of the number of foreign students and scholars is viewed as a direct result of the recent immigration policy changes by the Japanese government aiming at attracting more international students, especially Asian students, to

come to Japan. The unfavorable tendency of less Japanese nationals advancing to graduate studies than before and the declining birth rates in the past decade are considered to be two foremost important reasons for the Japanese government's new encouraging immigration policies which include providing more national scholarships for graduate students and scholars to study and conduct research at Japanese universities. The new policy of MEXT of Japan is to have an increase of 150,000 foreign students in Japan by 2030. The statistics already shows this trend: up till May 1, 2008, the total number of foreign students in Japan was 123, 829, the highest number in the history of Japan, with an increase of 5,331 (4.5%) from 2007. The breakdown of the increase is as follows:

Table 1
Number of Foreign Students Enrolled at Japanese Tertiary Institutions and the Increase of Foreign Students

	Total Number of Students in 2008	Increase of Foreign Students from the Previous Year & the Rate of Increase
Graduate School	32,666	1,074 (3.4%)
Undergraduate/3-Year-University/2-Year-College-Level High School	63,175	1,016 (1.6%)
Polytechnic	25,753	3,354 (15.0%)

(Japan Student Services Organization, 2009)

The top five countries with the most increase in 2008 are as follows:

Table 2
Top 5 Countries with the Most Increase of Students in Japan

Countries/Areas	Total Number of Students in Japan	Increase of Foreign Students from the Previous Year & the Rate of Increase
China	72,766	1,489 (2.1%)
South Korea	18,862	1,588 (9.2%)
Taiwan	5,082	396 (8.5%)
Vietnam	2,873	291 (11.3%)
Malaysia	2,271	125 (5.8%)

(Japan Student Services Organization, 2009)

Among those students and scholars, some mature international students (usually students in graduate schools or researchers sponsored by the Japanese government or universities) bring their spouses and children to Japan to accompany them during their study. According to MEXT, there were 70,963 foreign students who were enrolled at public schools (primary-high schools) in 2008 (MEXT, 2009). Considering the rate of increase of Asian immigrants, long-term and short-term residents, the number of Asian children with a different mother tongue than Japanese will increase proportionally. However, mother tongues (MTs) of minorities in Japan are mostly handled by parents at home. This problematic situation has been linked to the issue of foreigners' rights and identity (Noguchi, 2001). It is rather unfortunate to note that not much improvements of MT education in public school curricula have been reported recently. If this problem of MT education remains the same, it is foreseeable that the following situations may happen in Japan (if and when the government's policies succeed in increasing the number of foreign students to two times of present number): due to the unsatisfied system and environment regarding their

children's MT and/or English education, more foreigners will leave Japan or stay a shorter time than originally planned.

Faced with this increasingly serious situation that minority languages (MTs) of long-term and short-term foreign residents or of immigrants in Japan are left out of regular language curricula, some researchers are calling for more attention to be given to and discussions on the promotion of the rights of those children to both learning of their mother tongues (*bogo*) in addition to Japanese language assistance at schools (Aiso, 2009; Fujita, 2009; Kawasaki, 2009; Majima, et. al. 2009). Nakajima noted that there was a strong and immediate need to support MT education for all children (Nakajima, 2004). Nowadays, more and more schools are offering Japanese language support in the style of *shien-kyoushitsu* or literally "Supporting Classroom" (Utsumi & Yokosawa, 2008). There is also a need to separate MT education and Japanese assistance in *shien-kyoushitsu* (Supporting Classroom). These Supporting Classrooms do not offer any specific teaching of the mother tongues of the foreign children though some supporting staff could use the mother tongues of the

students. The focus of this system is on the improvement of the Japanese language of the foreign children. However, with the demographic and economic change in Japan, the requests for minority languages such as Chinese and Portuguese (especially for Brazilian Japanese) (Busingel & Tanaka, 2009; Ikuta, 2007) are getting stronger.

Numerous studies on family bilingualism in Japan reported the various systems and patterns of family bilingual education especially regarding family language policies and planning: one-parent-one-language (OPOL) (Maher & Yashiro, 1991; Shi, 2001 & 2005); one-person-one-language (Baker & Jones, 1998; Nakajima, 1998); time-based (Shi, 2001); location-based (Shi, 2005); prioritizing visitors (Shi, 2005); code-mixing/code-switching (including both systematic and random mixing) (Yamamoto, 1991); exposure-centered; majority or host language only (Maher and Yashiro, 1991); minority/home/parent language only (Maher and Yashiro, 1991). These previous researches showed favorable results when the bilingual families had a systematic approach to their home teaching of MT, 2nd or 3rd languages (Shi, 2005). Among the successful models of family bilingual/trilingual education with parents as the main facilitators or educators, some studies clearly indicated that education background of the parents is a crucial factor for the success of family bilingual/trilingual education (Shi, 2001).

2. Research Questions and Purpose

This research drew insights from the previous researches on home-based family language planning and policies by parents and focused on the following questions:

1. In the absence of teaching and support of non-prestigious languages at public schools and in the absence of studies on short-term foreigners in Japan, is MT of bilingual/trilingual children

taught or maintained at home, particularly by their parents?

2. Being highly educated and bilingual/trilingual parents, what were their awareness, attitudes and understanding regarding their children's MT or 1st, 2nd and 3rd language education?
3. What were the language policies and strategies in those families?
4. How are the policies and strategies executed?
5. Are there any characteristics that could be drawn for such a category of families?

Based on these questions, this study aimed to find out parental awareness of bilingual/trilingual education in the family and their home language policies and strategies (esp. for non-prestigious MTs) and strategies for their children.

3. Research Methodology and Procedure

This study was an investigation of a control group of 9 bilingual/trilingual families: 18 parents and 12 children. The 9 families lived in the international dormitory of the MEXT of Japan, "Kodaira International Campus", exclusively for foreign students and researchers who were studying or researching at the national universities of Japan. The main methods employed were one survey and two interviews. The survey consisted of 18 questions and was conducted to all 9 families between October and November, 2008. The interviews were conducted between November and December, 2008, after the survey. The survey and interview questions are as follows:

3.1 The Survey Questions:

- Q1. Name
- Q2. Age
- Q3. Citizenship(s)
- Q4. Educational background
- Q5. Current university and school in Japan
- Q6. Major or Research areas

- Q7. Current level of study at university
- Q8. If you are not a student, are you working full-time or part-work? If yes, please write the type(s) of your job(s).
- Q9. In what languages do you conduct your study and research? Roughly, how many percentages?
- Q10. Mother tongue(s)
- Q11. Self-evaluation of language abilities
- Q12. Number of years and months you have lived in Japan
- Q13. Future Plan: Do you plan to go back to your country?
- Q14. What language(s) do you use with your spouse?
- Q15. What language(s) do you use with your child/children?
- Q16. Are you doing anything to teach or support your child's/children's languages at home?
- Q17. How do you teach or support your child's/children's language?
- Q18. When your friends come to visit you, what languages do you usually use with your visitors?

3.2 Interviews

A. 1st Interview

- Q1. Do you have any worries about your children's MT learning at home?
- Q2. Do you have any worries about your children's identity and cultural development, in addition to language development?
- Q3. To what extent did you carry out your family language policies?
- Q4. As your children grow in age, are there any changes in the roles that each parent plays?
- Q5. What is the balance between One-Parent-One-Language (OPOL) and Mixed-Languages (ML) when the two methods are both employed?
- Q6. What are the rough percentages of the

languages in the case of ML that children use?

- Q7. Does living in this dorm give your language use at home any positive or negative influence? Why so?
- Q8. Do you think your children are in the advantageous place in terms of cognitive abilities and thinking than Japanese students in the same school?
- Q9. Are there any topics that you will not use MT to talk about with your children?
- Q10. Do you think your family language policies gives your children stresses in any way?

B. 2nd Interview

- Q1. Did you already decide on whether you would go back to your country before you came to Japan?
- Q2. What financial support are you receiving for your study in Japan (government or non-government)?
- Q3. Did you apply different strategies to different children of yours? Why did you do that?

4. Results

This section shows the results of both survey and interviews.

4.1 General family background of the Control Group

Table 3 below shows the general information of the 9 families. The constitution of this control group lies in the following elements: they were foreign students and researchers; they were enrolled at national universities; they had similarities in educational and financial background; the length of their stay was short-termed or undecided; they were all bilingual or trilingual; and they had young children.

Table 4 shows the age of the parents of the

Table 3
Control Group and Family Background

Families (All married)	Nationality	Current Universities	Level of Education of Parents	Number of children (Age=year)	Level of Education of Children	Length of living in Japan by Dec, 08
Family 1	China	F: Liaoning Normal University M: Hitotsubashi	Undergraduate 4 M1	2 (8 ; 0)	Child 1: E3; Child 2: Not at school	5 years 6 months
Family 2	Vietnam	F: Hitotsubashi M: No answer	M2 No answer	1 (1)	Not at school	1 years 4 months
Family 3	Egypt	F: TAT M: No answer	D3 M1	1 (1)	N	2 years 10 months
Family 4	Malaysia	F: TAT M: No answer	D1 No answer	2 (5 ; 2)	Child 1: K; Child 2: Not at school	1 years
Family 5	China	F: TGU M: TGU	M2 M1	1 (7)	E2	6 years 11 months
Family 6	China	F: Keio M: UEC	Undergraduate 4 M2	1 (1)	Not at school	7 years
Family 7	Vietnam	F: UEC M: No answer	D2 No answer	2 (9 ; 8)	Child 1: E3; Child 2: E2	6 years 6 months
Family 8	Bangladesh	F: UEC M: No answer	D3 No answer	1 (9)	E4	3 years 1 months
Family 9	Vietnam	F: UEC M: No answer	M2 No answer	1 (1)	N	1 years 6 months

Note. F=Father; M=Mother; E=Elementary School; K=Kindergarten; N=Nursery

Control Group. Most of them were in their 20s and 30s. The majority was in their 30s because some of them had had working experience in their home countries before coming to Japan.

Table 4
Age of Parents

	Twenties	Thirties	Forties
Fathers	1	7	1
Mothers	5	4	0
Sum	6	11	1

Figure 1 below shows the summary of the nationalities of the Control Group. There were 3

families from China, 3 families from Vietnam, 1 family from Malaysia, 1 family from Bangladesh, and 1 family from Egypt (Figure 1).

4.2 Future family plan of the Control Group

Five families indicated that they would go back to their home countries after they finished studying in Japan while four families could not decide yet.

4.3 Educational background of the Control Group

Figure 3 indicates the educational background of the parents of the Control Group. 14 parents were enrolled in graduate schools at various universities; 2 out of 4 parents who indicated university level were studying in the 4th year of the undergraduate

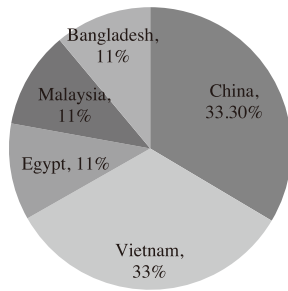


Fig 1. Nationalities of informants.

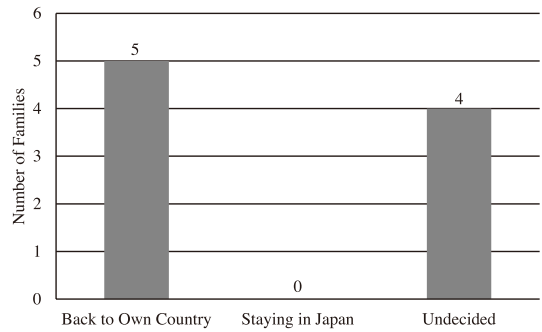


Fig 2. Future plan of the Control Group.

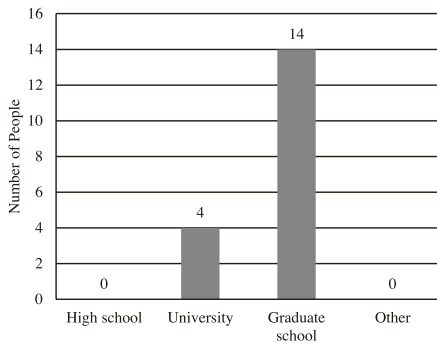


Fig 3. Educational background of parents.

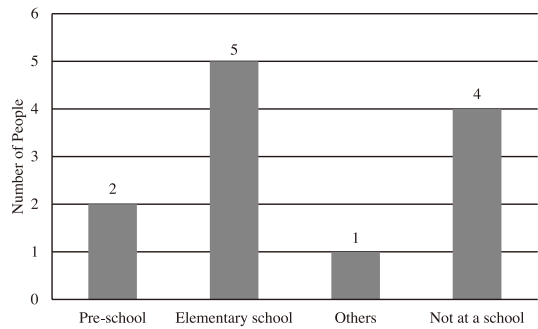


Fig 4. Educational background of the children.

programs at Japanese universities; 2 other parents already graduated from university. Out of the 14 parents who indicate graduate school level, 7 were studying in the Master's programs; 4 were studying in the Doctor's programs; and 2 already graduated from graduate school.

In December, 2008 when the survey and interviews were taken, 11 children lived with their parents in Tokyo and 1 child lived with his grandparents in China. It was worth noting that 4 children under the age of 6 did not attend any schools, including kindergarten. They stayed at home with their mothers.

4.4 Language background of the Control Group

All of the 9 families were found to be functionally

bilingual or trilingual. Eight families could use both their mother tongue and Japanese as social and academic languages. These parents could also read and write English but with limited speaking abilities. One of the eight families, the Egyptian family, could use some French (both father and mother) and Germany (only father). Only one Vietnamese family (out of the 9 families) who had arrived in Japan about two months prior to this research could not use Japanese when answering the survey and interview questions. They preferred to use English in their daily life and studies beside their mother tongue.

Figure 5 shows the mother tongues of the 9 families. The MTs coincided with the nationalities of the Control Group.

Figure 6 shows the main research languages used

by the parents of the Control Group. In this question, the parents were asked to mark multiply if applicable. The parents who were not enrolled in any studies at the time of this research did not answer this question.

In Question 11 of the Survey, the parents were also asked to evaluate the abilities of their mother tongues of both themselves and their children. For both groups of the fathers and mothers, 8 indicated their mother tongue's abilities was "Excellent" in all four language skills (speaking, listening, reading and writing); only one indicated "Good" for their reading. The evaluation of their children's mother tongues is as follows:

It is clear that the literacy of children's mother tongue was considered to be poorer than listening and speaking. As English was indicated by parents

to be a very important 2nd or 3rd language, the parents were also asked to evaluate their children's English abilities. Figure 8 shows that most parents either found it difficult to make a responsible judgment on their children's English language abilities or indicated that their children's English was "Poor".

In addition, the parents were asked to evaluate the Japanese abilities of their children. Figure 9 shows the results. Similar to the level of mother tongues in Figure 8, the Japanese language of children was also perceived to be either hard to judge or "Poor".

4.5 Language use at home

Figure 10 shows that the language used for communication between spouses in 8 families was their mother tongue. Only one Chinese family

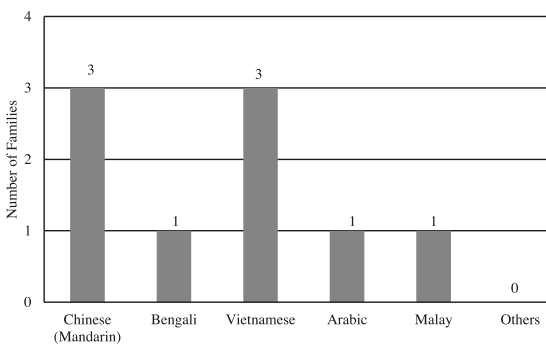


Fig 5. Mother tongues of the Control Group.

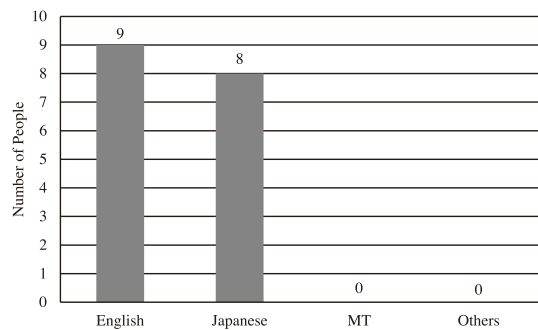


Fig 6. Research languages of the Parents.

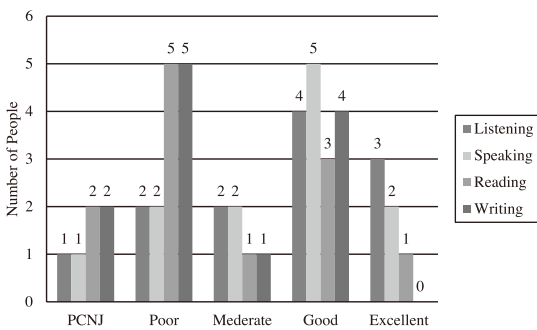


Fig 7. Level of mother tongue of children as evaluated by parents. PCNJ=Parents could not Judge.

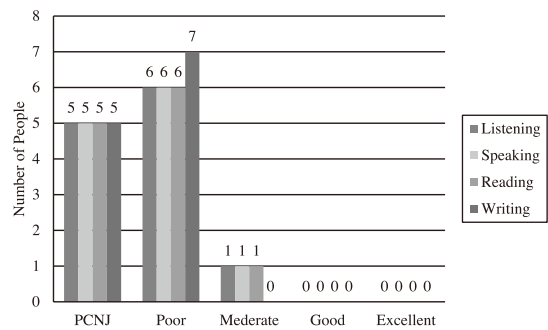


Fig 8. Level of English of children evaluated by parents. PCNJ=Parents could not Judge.

indicated that there were mixed languages, i.e. Mandarin and Japanese, used between the spouses.

Figures 11 and 12 shows that code-mixing is a common practice in the Control Group between the parents and children. However, some differences could be detected between the parents when mixing the languages with their children. Evidently, fathers mixed Japanese language more than the mothers. It is logical to assume that some mothers mixed English more than the fathers.

The following two figures show that the children used Japanese language more and English less to friends and visitors than their parents.

4.6 Language support rate, methods and strategies for children at home

Figures 15 and 16 indicate that both fathers and

mothers make efforts to support their children’s language development at home, though minor differences to the rate of involvement were found. Considering there were 6 mothers who did not work or study at the time of investigation, it is understandable that mothers’ rate of home language support is higher.

Figure 17 demonstrates the methods and strategies employed by the parents of the Control Group for their children’s language development at home. The languages being supported at home using the methods and strategies as shown in this chart include mother tongues, Japanese and English. The responses show the most commonly used strategies are reading books, showing TV programs in different languages, and one-parent-one-language (OPOL), followed by speaking to children in different languages, teaching children different

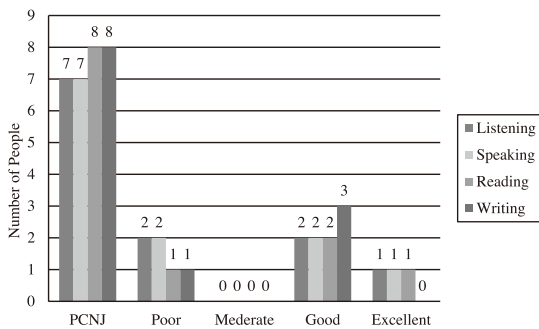


Fig 9. Level of Japanese of children evaluated by parents. PCNJ=Parents could not Judge.

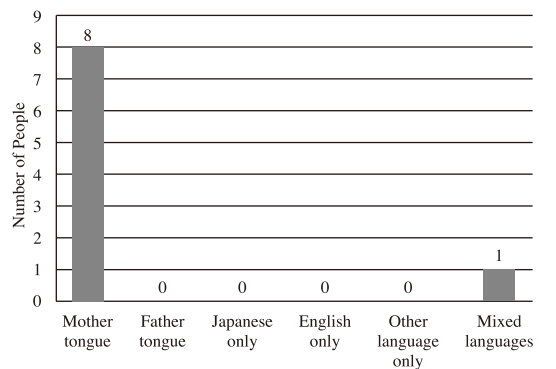


Fig 10. Language use between spouses.

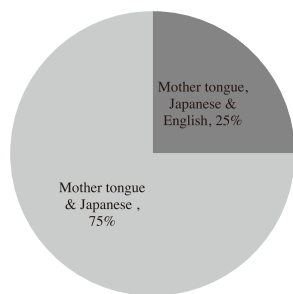


Fig 11. Languages used between fathers and children.

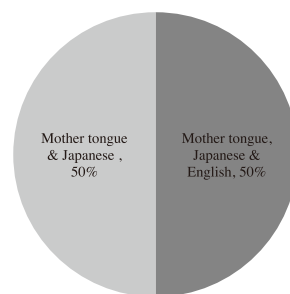


Fig 12. Languages used between mothers and children.

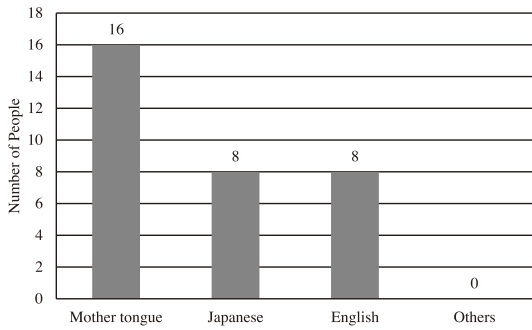


Fig 13. Languages used with visitors by parents.

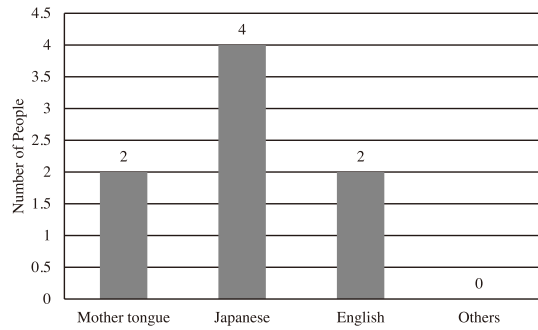


Fig 14. Language used with visitors by children.

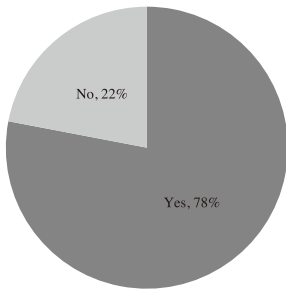


Fig 15. Home language support by fathers.

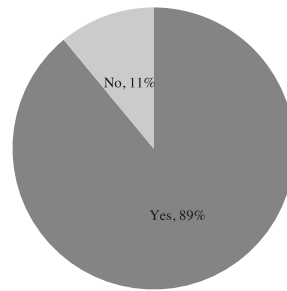


Fig 16. Home language support by mothers.

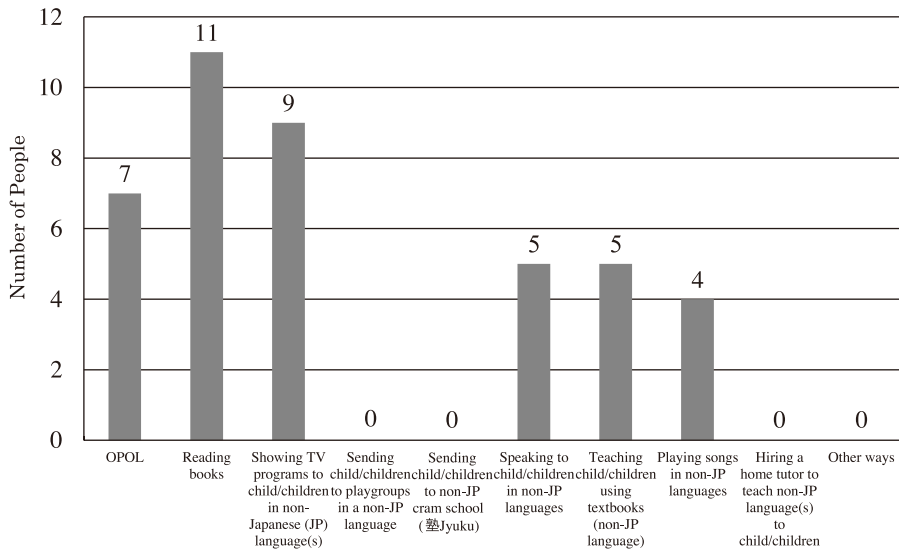


Fig 17. Methods and strategies of language teaching for children at home.

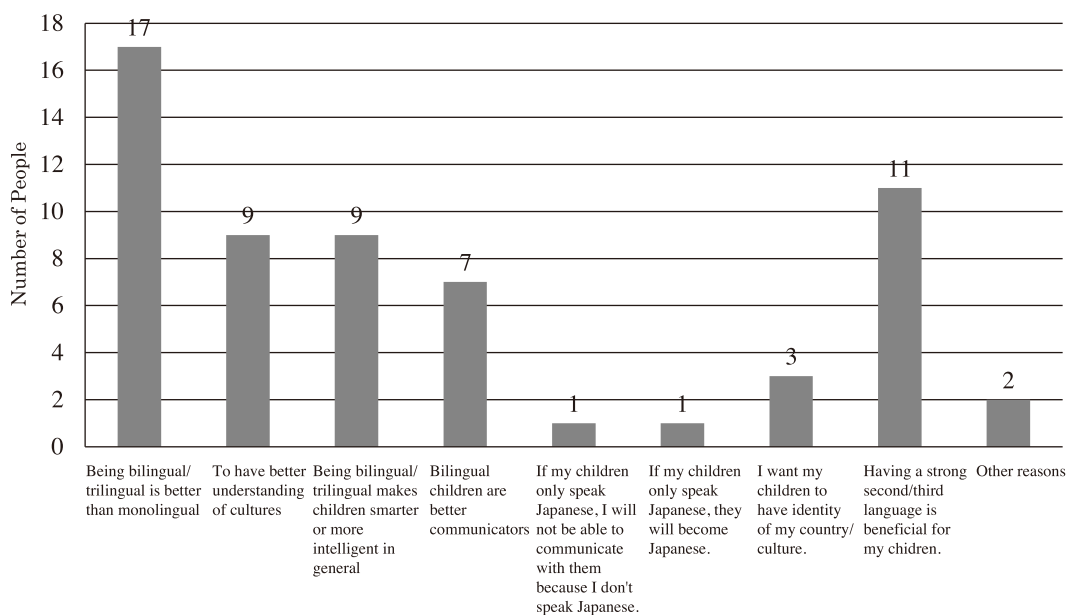


Fig 18. Advantages for children to be bilingual/trilingual indicated by parents.

language using textbooks, and playing to songs of different languages. When answering this question, the parents were told to mark multiply if appropriate and applicable.

4.7 Parents' awareness of bilingualism/trilingualism

In Figure 18, the most important advantage for children to be bilingual/trilingual as recognized by the parents is simply not to be a monolingual. The second advantage is that being bilingual/trilingual is beneficial for children's future, such as entering a better school or getting a good job. Next to the top two are to have a better understanding of cultures since most of these families will need to travel, live or work between cultures, for children to be smarter or more intelligent, and for children to become better communicators.

Some differences can be found between fathers' and mothers' answers to cultural advantages as shown in Figures 19 and 20. More mothers selected understanding mother's culture as an important

advantage than fathers. On the other hand, zero fathers selected understanding father's culture as important. However, both fathers and mothers agreed that understanding Japanese culture, the host culture, was important.

Figure 21 below shows the pragmatic benefits as perceived by fathers and mothers of the Control Group. The most noted benefit was to have a smooth transition for children when the families go back to their home countries. Though finding a good job in future, assisting present study at schools, and studying in an English-speaking country in future were attractive, the benefit of getting children into a better school was more practical comparatively, due to the age of the children of the Control Group.

5. Discussions and Concluding Remarks

This study was an investigation on the parental awareness of bilingualism/trilingualism and family language policies focusing on home support of mother tongues in nine families of highly educated

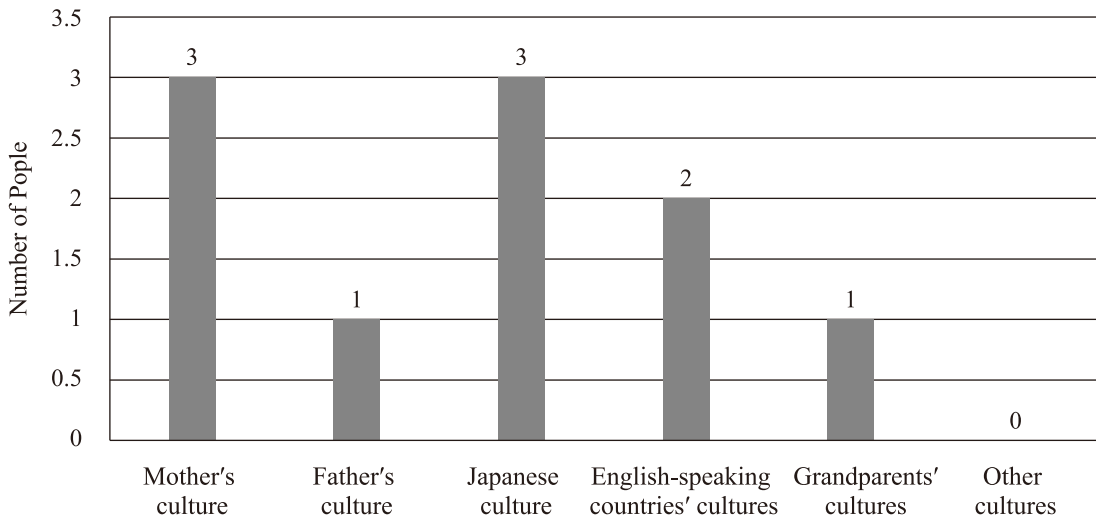


Fig 19. Cultural advantages indicated by fathers

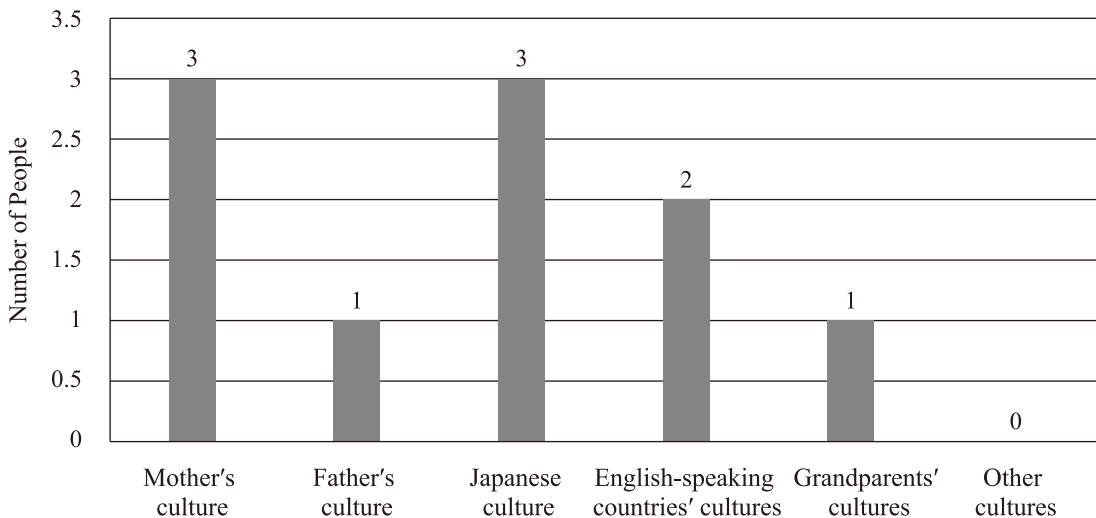


Fig 20. Cultural advantages indicated by mothers

foreign students and researchers in Tokyo, Japan. The main findings of this research are as follows:

- High motivation of the parents of the Control Group to raise children bilingually and/or trilingually was detected. Being bilingual/multilingual parents, they showed a strong awareness of the advantages of being bilingual/trilingual in their social, academic and

professional lives. The reasons for choosing to raise children bilingually/trilingually provided by the parents of the Control Group included the cultural, cognitive, pragmatic and communication benefits.

- Mother tongues of the children (all being minority languages in Japan) were taught and maintained in all families, though the degree of

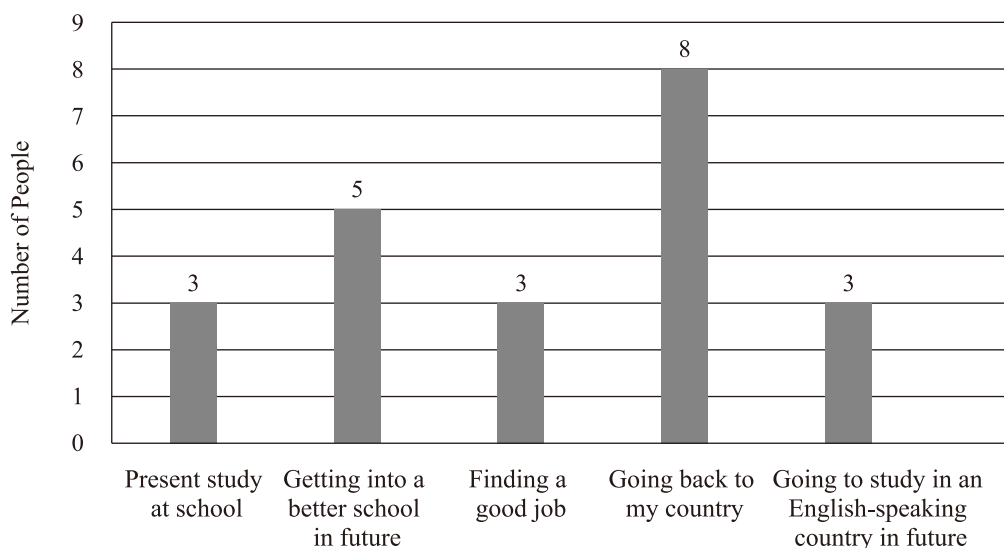


Fig 21. Pragmatic benefits for bilinguals/trilinguals indicated by parents

planning and strategizing and the choice of non-Japanese languages varied.

- The home language teaching of mother tongues in the nine families showed a strong focus on speaking, listening and reading. Writing was not specifically addressed in this data.
- OPOL (mainly MT and Japanese) was practiced by the majority of the Control Group though uncontrolled mixing of codes was also applied as a strategy.
- Participation by both parents in the teaching and maintenance of MTs at home even though all fathers of the Control Group were engaged in either study or research full-time at universities.
- Divided attitudes toward their children's learning of Japanese language among the nine families of the Control Group were found when the children could only stay in Japan for less than two years. Some parents felt that it was a good opportunity to learn another language for cognitive (for both intelligence and skills), cultural, and communication

benefits, while some others felt that it would be a waste of energy and time since the children would forget the language after they left Japan anyway. To learn a foreign language within two years was considered to be impossible. It would be wiser to use the energy and time on the mother tongue and English which would be useful when the families left Japan for either their home countries or an English-speaking country in future.

- The families that chose to support Japanese language at home felt that Japanese language was mostly a communication language of the host language but not necessarily important for cultural acquisition since the children were too young to really understand cultures.
- English was considered to be much more important than Japanese as a second foreign language because the children would need it much more outside of Japan.
- The families that had decided to return to their home countries after finishing studies in Japan showed less anxiety over the loss of children's

mother tongues than the families that had not yet made the decision of returning to their home countries. The former group felt that the children would be able to catch up with the mother tongue once they got back because “children can catch up quickly” and “children are fast learners”. But the latter group was most worried about the long-term loss of mother tongue abilities and about children having only Japanese language.

This study succeeded in identifying some characteristics of short-term residents handling bilingual education of young children at home and in identifying the concerns of the highly educated bilinguals/trilinguals who were engaged in academic studies. However, the weakness of this study is that size of the Control Group is too small. Similar research should be conducted on a larger number of families. In addition, follow-up studies should be done on the same Control Group in order to further examine the correlation between the length of stay and mother tongue maintenance.

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