

## バイリンガル児童教育プロジェクト (BCEP)

### Bilingual Children's Education Project (BCEP)

During the period from April, 2006 to March, 2008, the BCEP had three participating families and four student members (see Table 1). One student, JM, went to England with his family in September, 2008 and will come back in September, 2009. Another member, SFR, withdrew from the project due to her busy study schedule and preparation for entering junior high school in July, 2008.

Table 1: Members of BCEP 2006 – 2008

Families and Teachers (by students' father's last name)	Children (Members of the BCEP)	Age (in 2006)	Current School (in Dec., 2008)	Kindergarten /Elementary School Year in 2006 (2008)	Current Membership (Dec., 2008)
M	JM	7	Oosawadai Elementary School	1 (3)	1 year off (England)
K	SK	8	Oosawadai Elementary School	2 (4)	active
	OK	6	Oosawadai Elementary School	K (2)	active
R	SFR	9	Oosawadai Elementary School	4 (6)	Withdrawn (from Sept 08)

All three families used at least two languages, English and Japanese, on a daily basis. In K's family, a one-parent-one-language policy was adopted: father (English) speaking English and mother (Japanese) speaking Japanese. R's family also had planned to adopt the same policy, but did not seem to follow this policy consistently at home as the parents did not "push" for formal or informal use of English at home with SFR.

The teachers of the BCEP during this period were the fathers from the three families. All of the three fathers were working on the ICU campus (at the university: M and K, and at ICU High School: R). They felt that participating in the teaching of their children was an active part of parenting. Having fathers participate in child-raising was a good contribution to the balance between husband and wife in the family.

During this period, the frequency of classes remained at once a week. From April, 2006 to July, 2008, the classes were conducted on Tuesday evenings between 5:15pm and 6:15pm; from September, 2008 to December, 2008, the classes were conducted on Monday evenings. The location of classes was at M's and K's houses on ICU campus. The location usually rotated along with the rotation of teachers, i.e. M taught his classes at his house while K and FR taught at K's house. Teachers were rotated according to availability and work schedules.

At the beginning of the academic year, the secretary of the group, R, drew up a tentative teaching schedule which was divided into blocks of 4-6 weeks per teacher. The schedule was

then presented to other teachers at a meeting for discussion before the final schedule was made. The blocks were changed to longer ones (mostly 4 weeks each block) than previous years due to the consideration that longer blocks would be better for continuity for both teaching and homework. When there were more complex grammar points, it needed more time to teach those points and check the exercises.

Two series of textbooks published in Britain were used:

1. *English Basics* - for Ages 5-6, 6-7, 7-8, 8-9, 9-10 (developed for both school instruction and home learning)
2. Nelson Thornes (British): *Bond No Nonsense English* 6-7 (developed for home learning for 5-11 years of age)

The level of textbooks was usually one year younger/lower than the age of BCEP students considering the level of proficiency of the BCEP students. Whenever the content was too difficult or the context was not suitable (usually due to the lack of cultural background, e.g. common expressions in the UK, formulaic and figurative speech and proverbs), the teachers would skip those pages. Beside the two textbooks, a limited amount of supplementary teaching materials were employed in class, e.g. poems, reading from short stories.

The curriculum and the syllabus of the BCEP during this period were based on the textbooks for the reasons that those textbooks are developed for both school and home teaching covering all necessary elements of language and basic learning skills. It was considered to be a rational as well as practical decision. The holistic goals for the curriculum were set with the aim of improving literacy, i.e. mainly grammar, spelling, vocabulary, reading and writing. The specific objectives for each block depended on both the requirements of the textbook units as well as teachers' judgment on the relevance of the content to the students. Individualized rate of progress and attainment of the students was considered to be a natural aspect of the group due to the differences in age and level of English proficiency. The medium of instruction was English, therefore, speaking and listening were taught rather "incidentally" in class. All the students were exposed to natural spoken English at home from at least one parent in daily parent-child interactions, which also helped in developing speaking and listening skills. No specific lessons or formal tasks were designed additionally aimed at teaching speaking and listening as commonly seen in L2 situations. Methods of evaluation and assessment were not formally executed. Through checking homework weekly and at the end of each teaching block, the teachers were able to obtain a relatively accurate understanding of students' achievements. Since the main purpose for parents to form and continue with home teaching and the project was not to pass any specific type of examinations, students' achievement in English language per se was not taken as the ultimate and only goal of the project. Therefore, the achievement in English language was not measured formally using any standard tests, and individual differences in terms of attainment amongst the students were evident.

A typical lesson began with a round of checking homework and proceeded to the teaching of new items in the textbook. At this stage, the teachers often had to vary the instructions according to the students' level of proficiency and vary the language skills, either focusing on reading or writing skills. Spelling tests and comprehension checking were sometimes done as well. The lesson

usually ended with an expansion type of activity, e.g. expanding a story, free composition using learned sentence structures, or reading a story.

In the writer's interview with K and R (conducted on Nov. 28, 2008), both fathers mentioned that their main motivation of joining the project was twofold: first, it was important for their children to fortify a sense of belonging as bilingual and bicultural children in the same context: "to share with other kids and to know that there are other kids like them out there (being bilingual and bicultural in English and Japanese)" (K in the interview); and "to give them confidence and know that the kids club is valid and worthwhile. All this awareness is not easy if the kids just go to a Japanese elementary school" (R in the interview). The second motivation for continuing with the BCEP according to K and R was for their children to obtain regular input, a so-called "weekly dose" , of English language to improve or maintain English literacy and to minimize fatigue of both children and parents. The structured weekly classes provided a framework for every member to follow. Teaching children other than one's own was also an important motivation for parents to keep to the schedules.

During this period, no extracurricular activities were conducted as an official group activity for all the students of BCEP. However, some families took trips to visit their English-speaking hometowns in England and had English-speaking visitors who stayed with the families for stretches of a few weeks in Tokyo. Both events stimulated the BCEP children to use English actively for communication and helped them capture the pragmatic benefits of being bilingual. In the case of K's family, grandparents and other relatives from England who visited Tokyo stayed with K's family for several weeks positively supported K's policies of raising children bilingually and biculturally and even helped out with reading stories in English to K's children.

Some difficulties with the group were shared by the teachers. The first difficulty was with the scheduling of the lessons: Tuesday evenings. The classes were conducted after the children came back from their regular school and Gakudo (after-school nursery). Naturally, the children were tired and not so enthusiastic about studying more. Sometimes children asked their parents why they had to go to study at this club. The answers that the two fathers, K and R, provided for their children focused on the fact that the children were bicultural, i.e. Japanese and English, and that it was natural that they speak English as well, and that English was useful for their future education and career when they grew up. The teacher also reminded the children that English could be easily lost if it was not maintained regularly. Currently, the elementary school, Osawadai Elementary School (Mitaka, Tokyo), that most BCEP children attended offers English as an academic subject. Though formal research was not conducted, the observation from the parents indicated that the BCEP children had an upper hand in their English classes. SFR was sometimes used as a model in class by the English teacher; SK could play with the language and make jokes with his English teacher. English has become a strong subject for the BCEP children at school, which could have contributed to the good attendance of the BCEP classes for two years.

From September 2008 (most likely till the end of July, 2009), the active members of the BCEP are the two children of K's family. The classes are scheduled on Mondays, instead of Tuesdays. There are some difficulties with having only one family. First of all, all the planning of curriculum and teaching falls on one teacher, K. Multi-tasking and teaching every week inevitably brings some

fatigue. Secondly, keeping to the weekly schedule became less strict occasionally, having lost the motivation of teaching other children besides one's own. Other aspects of this small educational group, e.g. curriculum, syllabus, teaching materials, assessment and extracurricular activities, however, remain consistent with the first part of this report.

史 杰  
SHI, Jie