

## **Becoming Truly Bilingual and Bicultural in Japan**

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With the increasing number of kikokushijo (returnees) returning from abroad, there have been a number of research studies investigating their first and/or second language proficiency, and their social and cultural readjustment after they start attending Japanese schools in Japan. Less attention has been devoted to the Japanese children of Japanese parents who have had their early education in an English speaking school within Japan. Since these children live in Japan throughout their lives, it is taken for granted that a switch from an English speaking international school in Japan to a regular Japanese school causes neither burden nor anxiety. However, since their daytime at school is in a non-Japanese environment, similar to the environment a school in the US would offer, they do in fact learn non-Japanese language and customs even though the school is located in Japan. This paper discusses some key findings from an observational study on the cultural identity, cultural adjustment, language maintenance and language preference of two Japanese children who began their formal education at an international school in Japan, then switched to a Japanese school, one at the age of 10 and the other at age 11. The study involved detailed interviews and the analysis of journals. The findings indicate their difficulty in identifying themselves, maintaining both languages and adjusting to the new school. While this is a small-case study, it provides a deeper understanding of self-identity and attitude toward the English and Japanese languages of Japanese children switching from an English speaking international school in Japan to a regular Japanese school in Japan. In particular, it highlights some interesting areas in the relationship between language(s), and motivation to use the language(s). Some suggestions are also made for the bilingual child who has trouble in an English classroom in Japan with classmates who are complete beginners in English.

### **Introduction**

Instead of sending me back to the local elementary school in our area I had attended prior to our stay in the US, my parents decided to send me to an international school in our city when we returned to Japan in 1973. Their decision was nothing but a ridiculous idea to not only the teachers and headmaster at the local school but also the officers in charge of education at the Ward Office. At that time, I had no idea what the nationalities of the students in the upper school of the international school were, but I remember I was the only Japanese elementary school student at the school, and when I was at school, I felt as though I was back in the US. In the early 1970's, a term, kikokushijo, was still an unfamiliar term, and going to and living in a country outside Japan was so extraordinary that my parents' decision at that time must have been quite innovative.

Progressively Japanese people have been spending more and more time, effort and money to

become bilingual. These days there are many ways to become bilingual in Japan. These include attending an English conversation school, listening to an English language program on the radio or TV and so on. As Wakabayashi (2002:631) states, “among those who deliberately choose to promote bilingualism in their children, international schools have become increasingly popular.” According to the 2005~2006 edition of the International Schools Directory published by the Japan Times, there are twenty-five international schools in Japan accredited by the Japan Council of International Schools. The following is the beginning of an article by Halbur in the Directory: “Japan is fortunate to have a wealth of first-rate international schools for the children of foreigners working in this country, as well as for the sons and daughters of Japanese families who choose these institutions of learning.” This citation also indicates that nowadays it is not rare for Japanese children to attend an international school in Japan and choose to not go to a Japanese school.

With the increase in the number of kikokushijo, much research has been performed to analyze and investigate their re-entry adjustment to Japanese school. However, not much attention has been focused on understanding the re-entry or entry adjustment of Japanese students from international schools in Japan transferring to Japanese school. This paper discusses some key findings from an observational study on cultural identity, cultural adjustment, language maintenance and language preference of two Japanese children who switched from an international school to a local Japanese school at the ages of 10 and 11.

### **Participants**

There are two Japanese participants for this study. They are siblings: a fourteen-year-old boy, R, who attended an international school from the age of 3 to the age of 11, and a ten-year-old girl, N, who attended an international school from the age of 3 to the age of 10. Four months are about to pass since N switched to a Japanese elementary school in the area. Their parents are both Japanese residing in Japan with them. In addition to exposure to English at the international school, R attended summer school in California in the summer of 1995. Accompanied by his mother, R did a home stay in Vancouver with a Canadian family in the summer of 1997. Then in the summer of 1998, he went back to the summer school in California with N, and in the following summer, they attended another summer school (camp) in California. Every time they were out of Japan in the summer, no one around them could understand Japanese, so the use of the Japanese language was limited to speaking to their mother and grandmother who accompanied them.

### **Research Questions**

The research undertaken with R as a subject was a five-year qualitative case study, and the one with N as a subject was a two-year qualitative case study. Both case studies made use of a journal, direct observation and interview. This study made use of several types of data which included the children’s work, tests taken at school and juku, their journals and their verbal opinions occasionally

made to the researcher of this study. As more data became available, the following research questions were set up:

#### **Research Questions #1**

Is a switch from an international school in Japan to a regular Japanese school in Japan as easy as a switch from one Japanese school in Japan to another in Japan?

#### **Research Questions #2**

Depending on the school they attend, would each of the children identify himself or herself differently? In other words, would they try to be more Japanese when they are at Japanese school or would they still maintain “self” and value their own identity no matter which school they attended?

#### **Research Question #3**

How will each child try to maintain both languages? Will attending Japanese school hinder them from being bilingual?

#### **Research Question #4**

How can their family help them get used to the adjustment and to maintain both languages?

### **Method**

After occasional discussion with R concerning his future education and career, R’s parents came to one conclusion for his education which he also agreed: R would be graduating from a regular Japanese elementary school in Japan and that he would be starting 6<sup>th</sup> grade at a regular Japanese school in April 2002. From the time R began 6<sup>th</sup> grade at the international school, the researcher asked R to write a journal explaining his past/present/future school life. R submitted the journal to the researcher bimonthly and when what he had written was not clear or when further explanation was necessary, the researcher had an interview with him.

N, like R, started writing a journal in September 2005 when she began 5<sup>th</sup> grade at the international school. Since April 2006 she has been a 5<sup>th</sup> grader at a regular Japanese school in the area and continues making contribution to the journal. The researcher has been meeting with N weekly since she started writing her journal. Occasionally more detailed information was considered necessary to clarify her points in the entry.

R and N’s mother has been keeping a journal since April 2003 for the purpose of jotting down any changes in their cultural behavior or attitudes that she noticed after R and N’s transfer to the regular Japanese school.

### **Results available from R’s Data**

The journal R had kept when he was attending the international school indicated the he had some anxiety towards attending the regular Japanese school. He was the only Japanese student in his class. He was also the only student in that class who had never studied at a Japanese school. He

sometimes indicated that he felt puzzled as to why he was not studying at the regular Japanese school, yet at the same time he indicated a relief for not having to do some of the duties that students in Japanese school would have to do that he did not have to do at the international school. These duties included cleaning school, fixing up school lunch, walking to school with younger children. When considering switching from the international school to the Japanese school R had different thoughts. Whether it was a Japanese school or a school of another nationality, a switch to a school with a different system seemed a bother to him. However, since he had no intention of going to a university outside Japan, he accepted the transfer as necessary.

As the day to start 6<sup>th</sup> grade got closer, he was not sure how to identify himself when his future classmates asked him about his past education. He felt that they were likely to curiously ask him why he had never studied at a regular Japanese school. He was honestly going to explain the truth when he was introduced to his classmates on the first day of school. However, because his teacher told the class to be kind to the boy who was about to start the first day of school at a Japanese school, everyone undoubtedly assumed he was a recent returnee. R indicated in the journal that this misunderstanding was somehow a relief to him. It made him feel he did not have to try to be purely Japanese. He could still be what he used to be like at the international school, “the natural self”. In other words, even when he felt his behavior may have made his classmates feel it was non-Japanese or foreign-like, he thought being a “false returnee” (a term mentioned in his journal) could explain his choice for such behavior. No one in the class asked him about life before attending the Japanese school, but from the first day of school, many of his classmates said some words or sentences in Japanese and asked him to translate them to English out of pure curiosity to find out what the English language sounded like. He kindly did the translation every time he was asked to do so.

The image of himself he had in his mind was a recent returnee full of spirit. He felt that in a Japanese school, students would not normally raise their hands and voluntarily answer questions asked by a teacher in class and would not usually volunteer unless personally ordered by a teacher to do a certain task.. When he was at the international school, class participation was an important factor, and he remained active in and outside class during the school hour. It was something always expected from his teachers from the beginning of his school life, and thus this kind of behavior was natural for him. Because he had decided to maintain his own “false returnee” image, he always raised his hand every time he knew the answer to the question asked by his teacher in class, he always volunteered to help his teacher and students. On the Sports Day, he was busy voluntarily serving as a line man and helping the younger students participate in the events and races. His teacher once indicated to his mother that she had been helped by him when there was no reaction to the questions she set to the class.

Despite his choice to be a “false returnee”, he faced some difficulties in understanding some of the Japanese practices. One was the Japanese notion of responsibility. At the Japanese school

when a student misbehaved, everyone in the class got punished and scolded. This was something not easy for him to accept. Someone in the class scribbled on the toilet wall, and as punishment, no one in the class was allowed to go to the toilet. He could not understand why he had to be punished for something he had not done. Another practice he could not understand was the notion of sempai kouhai relationship. For example, the punishment just indicated was inflicted not by his own classroom teacher but by a teacher in the next class who was his teacher's sempai. It was not actually clear to R why the teacher who was not in charge of R's class inflicted the punishment. R believed that being a sempai gave this teacher even control even over a class for which he was not directly responsible. Furthermore, he is still suffering from the sempai vs. kouhai relationship at the present school and does not understand why he needs to show respect and be humble to students who are only a year older than him. However, he has learned to follow the Japanese custom and has become more humble to the students in the upper grade.

As far as maintaining his English is concerned, when he was in Japanese elementary school, he saw no value in maintaining his English. He mentioned in his journal that he would want his Japanese to be as good as the Japanese used by native speakers of his age. When he was at the international school, he learned kanji, and learned to read and write Japanese at home, so he assumed he would have no trouble with the language at school. However, there were some school terms he could not understand because he had never heard them anywhere, not even on the "Chibi Maruko chan" cartoon program which depicted a typical elementary school life of Japan, and which seemed to have helped him form some kind of image of a Japanese school. The terms included: "Maeni narae" (to make the students in a line form a straight line, a teacher would say this phrase, and a student would try to stand directly behind a student in front of him/her and leave an arm length of distance between himself or herself and the student in front of him/her), "(zoukin o) shiboru" (wringing a mop) and "taisou zuwari" (half squatting way of sitting down on the floor during PE class).

These new Japanese words that he was not familiar with, reduced his motivation to maintain English until he entered junior high school. During the first year of junior high school he did not have trouble with his English class at school. There was no need for him to learn any of the vocabulary. He knew that! He did the minimum homework and never bothered to study English outside class. Nevertheless, as the days in junior high school went by, he started having difficulty in English classes in mainly two ways. First, he began to realize that he was not familiar with the phonetic symbols and could not figure out where the accent mark goes in a word, although he could pronounce all the words he studied at school correctly. His friends, on the other hands, though not able to pronounce the English words like a native speaker could, would do much better than he did when they took a written test on pronunciation and accent. In other words, R had good sound pronunciation with proper accent in English, but this did not help him pass a "written" test on pronunciation and accent. Second, when he had to work on translation, he sometimes used grammar

or expressions his teacher had not yet taught. For example, an expected answer was “I have never seen such a big plane”, yet he wrote “This airplane is the biggest one I have ever seen” which seemed to him and to me a better translation for 「これは私が今までに見た最も大きな飛行機です。」His teacher did not mark his answer wrong, but discouraged him from using the grammar which had not been covered in class. When translating 「お久しぶりです。」he wrote “Long time no see” but his teacher was expecting “I have not seen you for a long time.” In a way the teacher was saying, forget all the English you learned and start relearning it my way.

Despite this discouragement, R is ambitious to pass the STEP Test in practical English proficiency. Everyone in his junior high school has to pass the Second Grade of the STEP Test before graduation. Therefore, just after he entered junior high school, he took the test and passed it. He wants to eventually pass the First Grade, and to pass the test, he sees the need to maintain his English and thus he indicates the need to have the opportunity to communicate in English. He writes in his journal that communicating in English with his sister and mother is the easiest way to maintain his English.

The journal written by the mother says that R often tells her that he wants to somehow maintain and improve his English. Since he has no chance to go abroad, she believes if he could continue speaking to her in English, it would be beneficial to him. It has also been suggested that watching and listening to the TV news on CNN, viewing American movies on TV and DVDs, etc., as well as reading books in English are helpful in maintaining one’s English language proficiency.

### **Results available from N’s Data**

Shortly after N started writing her journal, she indicated she liked the international school she was attending and her classmates at the school. However, she knew one day she would be transferring to a Japanese school as her brother had done. She indicated she did not know when that was going to be but indicated no dislike for the transfer. The researcher asked her for the reason in the interview, and her reply was simply because it would be a transfer to the school her brother had also transferred into. If there was something for which she needed information on the school, she felt she could easily get it from R.

In the spring of 2006 N visited the Japanese school with her grandfather for the transfer process. To her surprise, most of the teachers including her present teacher knew her brother. This made her feel the transfer would be even smoother. On the first day of school in front of her new classmates, she was asked to introduce herself. She did not say anything about her past. All she said was her full name and “yoroshiku onegaishimasu” (the customary introductory greeting in Japan). Her classmates still do not know what school she used to attend before she came to the present school. This also means they do not know that this is her first time to attend Japanese school.

The journal by the mother indicates that when N and the mother bought stationery she would

need in her new school, she insisted on buying red or pink stationery. Knowing blue was N's favorite color, the mother asked her why she was not buying the blue stationery. Her reply was that in Japan red or pink is a color for girls and blue is a color for boys, and if she took something blue to school, she may become the target of bullying. She further stated that at the international school, she could feel more at ease and chose any color she liked, but at the Japanese school, she felt choosing something that she thought was more girlish was more appropriate.

For N to be the same as the majority in appearance was important and she did not want to look like a nail that stuck out. Wearing a "randoseru" was a must for her. She knew from her brother that girls usually wear a randoseru (knapsack type of school bag elementary school students in Japan use to carry school supply to and from school) throughout the six years of elementary education, so she insisted on getting one, and she did get one. Then as the first day of school got closer, she started feeling worried that wearing a brand new randoseru at her age was not appropriate. R comforted N by telling her that some careful girls take good care of their own randoseru and thus their randoseru would look rather new, so she should not worry about her brand new randoseru. R, on the other hand, thought buying and using a randoseru just for a year was a waste of money and he used a backpack which he happened to find at home for his one year of Japanese elementary school. What N wears for PE is also an important factor for her although there is no specific PE shirt and short assigned at school, and every student can wear a shirt and a short of preference as long as they are appropriate for exercise. However, some girls wear a shirt and a short that are available at the school uniform section in any department store or shopping mall. N insisted on buying them so that she would not be the one to stick out and be different from the rest. Just like the PE clothes, specific indoor shoes are no longer assigned although the specific type which used to be assigned to all the students in the school is still available at a local store. Her journal indicates that she is wearing the one which was once an assigned one. It is twice as expensive as a normal type available in any store, yet getting it was an important factor for her.

Having a brother who had attended the same school was a help to her, but he could not always answer her questions, and she often had questions for she did not know the routine for the Japanese school. One day her teacher told the class to bring "odougu bako" (toolbox) to school. She knew it was a box with a lid made of cardboard available in stationery stores. It had its own size which was the right size to fit in the school desk, so she bought a red one and took it to school. To her surprise, she was the only one who had nothing inside. All her classmates including a new student who had transferred to the class at the same time she did, had some stationery inside. She could not spot what exactly was in their boxes, but knew something had to be inside. Unfortunately R could not be of help. He could not remember what he had in his own toolbox when he was in the Japanese elementary school. Their mother was willing to write a note asking the teacher about this, but N did not want such a note sent. She simply wanted to be like the other Japanese students in her class, and did not want to show that she lacked in what was common sense to those with experience of

attending Japanese school. Writing a note to the teacher was not the only option. She could have asked one of the classmates, or the mother could have called and asked some mothers whose children were R's friends. However, N disagreed with all of these options. One day with tears in her eyes, she had a note sent to her teacher and finally found out what needed to be in the box: a pair of scissors, glue, crayon, "kurepasu" (brand name for one kind of crayon), old newspaper, notebook, "renrakucho" (notebook a teacher and a parent use for correspondence and a student writes down what should be done for homework) and so on.

Sometimes N came back home an hour after the school closed. Her mother, thinking she was playing at school after school, would often ask her why she was late. There were various reasons for being late, which included not finishing up a meeting in time. Her class teacher scolding the whole class for an individual student's misbehavior was one of the frequent reasons for getting home late. However, N did not seem to mind the fact that she had to be scolded for something she was not responsible for. She felt it was something she could not help.

As far as communicating in English is concerned, N refuses to communicate in English at home. When a family member speaks to her in English, she replies in Japanese. Sometimes when the family member is desperate to hear a response in English, the member would pretend he or she does not catch the response in Japanese until N replies in English. Once she knows a reply in English is strongly desired, she would reply in English, however with hesitation. She may not always communicate in English to her family members, but by speaking to her in English as much as possible, her mother hopes she will maintain her English. Her mother also hopes that by watching English video tapes and DVDs, listening to English songs, and reading English books and websites, that these will help her maintain her English. She will normally not speak in English, even with her family, except when in public or with Japanese friends around — she wants to express a "private" or "personal" thought, one she does not want "outsiders" to hear. Although she hesitates to speak in English, she has motivation to study for STEP Test in practical English proficiency. One of the private junior high schools her mother hopes she would get in, has a new extra system of offering an interview to those applicants who have passed the second grade of STEP Test in practical English proficiency. This has motivated her to take the test, and she has passed the first part of the test which is the written test. She is now waiting for the result of the interview for which she practiced with her mother, and she was more than willing to speak in English with her. Once she passes this test, she wants to take the next test, the pre-first grade, and then the first grade.

## **Discussion**

From the findings it is clear that an extra support from the teachers can help a new transfer student get used to a new school environment. What is already so obvious to those students who have spent several years in school may be completely new to a new comer. In many cases the teacher and classmates of especially R's may have been occasionally surprised that he did not know

the routine for the Japanese school, yet their willingness to show him and help him out was an extra and necessary help for R. On the other hand, N did not get the extra help that R had gotten from his teacher and classmates. Sometimes her brother could not give her the information she wanted and N ended up suffering for she hesitated to ask for help at school. This shows that despite some help available from R, N still experienced the need to adjust herself to the new school environment. If she had been more willing to ask for occasional extra help, she may have avoided the need for trying to figure out what was mysterious to her.

Two differences were found between R and N in their attitude toward letting people know what school they had attended prior to attending the Japanese school. N wanted to hide the fact that she had attended an international school and that she was bilingual. She wanted to pretend she had transferred from another Japanese school in Japan. She was so afraid of being a nail that stuck out. She wanted to be look like the majority, and to act and think like the majority was very important for her. She even did not care to show that she could speak English when a language teaching assistant came to offer a special English class. She participated in the lesson as if she were a complete beginner of English. R, on the other hand, decided to be an independent individual. It was not clear why he decided to be this way, but from the moment his teacher told the class that he had never been to a Japanese school, he automatically became different from the majority, and thus decided to behave as he used to act when he was in the international school. The other difference was in their attitude toward group responsibility. R found it more difficult to understand why the whole class needed to be responsible for the misbehavior of a single student.

What R experienced in the new school environment is what is similar to what is experienced by returnees returning to Japan from a foreign country (Yoshida, et al, 1999). Yoshida, et al (1999) made some generalizations regarding interpersonal problems most commonly experienced by returnees. The three which have been cited most often as causing friction between returnees and non-returnees are:

1. patterns of self-assertion (自分の出し方)
2. relationships between the individual and the group (個人と集団の関係)
3. relationships between “older” and “younger” individuals (先輩—後輩)

They were all a problem R had to face. N, on the other hand, has suffered with patterns of self-assertion only so far. The relationship between the individual and the group does not seem to bother her. At the Japanese elementary school, she does not have a chance to get together with students in different grades, so she does not yet have the chance to experience the relationship between older and younger individuals.

As far as R’s English is concerned, he is not the only one who loses confidence with the English ability when taking English class at a Japanese school. Fujita (1999) had a similar experience. After three years of stay in Ethiopia, Fujita (1999) came back to Japan and attended a school which accepted returnees. Although she felt quite confident in English, she started losing

confidence when she worked on university entrance exam questions: “I was quite confident in English class because English was the only subject I could understand without preparation: However, my confidence was shattered when I tried the English questions in university entrance exams. Exam English was different from the English I knew, I began studying English grammar from scratch and relearned English.” (1999:38) This shows that R may also need to study the exam English needed for school exams and university entrance examinations he will be taking in the future. Why is this so? Why should people who already have a good proficiency in the English language find such difficulty with the English language section of the university entrance exam? What does “exam English” measure anyway? This issue raises more questions than answers.

Two ways of maintaining English were found by R and one by N. The first thing that both R and N are doing to maintain their English proficiency is to study for the STEP Test in practical English proficiency and to pass the test. R took it because passing it was once the graduation requirement at his junior school. N took it because passing it would be beneficial for passing the entrance exam to a private junior high school. Furthermore, passing the test would give them not only a qualification but pride and encouragement. The second way seen only in R was to communicate with the family in English. This is when the family members, especially the adults, can contribute to helping maintain the children’s English. The adults can help solve the practice questions for the STEP Test and can act as an interviewer when a practice for the interview section of the test is necessary. Needless to say, when the children are willing to communicate in English, they can do so to promote language maintenance. If the children are not willing to speak English at home, making a family rule immediately after they switch to Japanese school may have worked out. The rule could be setting up a day or time when only English is to be used for communication at home. However, if the children do not desire to communicate in English at home, setting up such a rule later may only discourage them from maintaining their English. If this kind of rule is to be set up, it should have been done just after their transfer to Japanese school or even before the transfer. Consistency and continuance are the key factor to success.

It must be noted that speaking in English is not the only way to maintain their English. Having the chance to hear English spoken by a native speaker of English is as important as speaking in English for the purpose of maintaining English. Since so many video tapes, DVDs, and audio tapes in the English language are easily available today, making use of them as well as the Internet is also a key factor to maintaining their English.

In helping bilinguals maintain their English, it is essential to distinguish their proficiency in the English language and their ability to do well in English class at Japanese schools. The English taught at English class in Japanese secondary schools does not seem to help bilingual children develop their real English ability. Indeed it seems to be unsuccessful in helping any Japanese student to achieve real proficiency in the English language.

### **Findings for the Three Research Questions**

From the data available, the answers to the four research questions were made clear as follows:

#### **Findings for Research Question #1**

Research Question #1: Is a switch from an international school in Japan to a regular Japanese school in Japan as easy as a switch from one Japanese school in Japan to another in Japan?

Because it was the first experience for the whole family to be part of a Japanese school when R started the last year of elementary school at a regular Japanese school, there were many things that the family did not know that the other children with the five years of experience at a Japanese school would know as common sense. It may be said that a switch from an international school in Japan to a regular school in Japan is not as easy as a switch from one regular school in Japan to another regular school in Japan. However, with cooperation available from the teachers and classmates, a switch can be relatively easy. Asking for help when necessary may be a key point to a successful transfer.

#### **Findings for Research Question #2**

Research Questions #2: Depending on the school they attend, would each of the children identify himself or herself differently? In other words, would they try to be more Japanese when they are at Japanese school or would they still maintain “self” and value their own identity no matter which school they attended?

The two children acted differently at their new school. R did not try to be like the majority, and did not try to be what he thought was typically Japanese. He seemed to have identified himself as he would have identified himself at the international school. Therefore, he did not mind being sticking out. N, on the other hand, wanted to be a typical Japanese girl. She wanted to be like the majority and never wanted to be different from the other people in appearance and in behavior. This was not the type of attitude she had when she was attending the international school.

#### **Findings for Research Question #3**

Research Question #3: How will each child try to maintain both languages? Will attending Japanese school hinder them from being bilingual?

Unfortunately attending Japanese school has hindered them from being completely bilingual. This was very natural for them because there was no need to listen to or speak in English at the Japanese elementary school. Although English is being taught in junior high school, learning English in English class at R’s junior high school is helping him prepare for the English exams only and is not helping him remain bilingual. Passing the STEP Test in practical English proficiency has been motivating both children to maintain English. In the future both of them want to pass the most difficult STEP Test, Grade One. This may be a challenge for both of them, yet preparing for the test will give them motivation to read English passages. Furthermore, input they get from English movies, TV programs and songs is a plus to maintaining their English.

#### **Research Question #4**

How can their family help them get used to the adjustment and to maintain both languages?

Encouraging the children to have pride in the extra English no other children in class have would certainly help them get used to and overcome the adjustment. This extra adjustment they would have to go through may be worth going through, considering the English ability they possess. To help them maintain English, it would be ideal for the parents to keep on giving help when the children need help with solving practice questions for the STEP Test. Since the test requires an interview in English, the parents can come up with a topic for discussion, and have the children take part in the discussion with the parents. This serves two purposes, first to help them practice their English and also to help prepare for the test.

#### **Conclusion**

Yamamoto (2001) categorized bilinguals in Japan into the following four main groups: “(1) mainstream Japanese studying a foreign/second language, (2) Japanese children repatriated after living abroad for an extended period (often called *kikoku shijo* or ‘returnees’), (3) offspring of parents who have different native languages, and (4) ethnic minorities (born and) residing in Japan.” (p.28) R and N do not fit into any of these categories. Perhaps they are “false returnees” as R identified himself in the journal. They may not be classified as “returnees”, yet the fact that they are bilinguals in Japan does not change. With the increase in the number of Japanese children at international schools in Japan, more studies on these children need to be conducted to truly understand bilingualism in Japan. Furthermore, not only to help these children maintain their English but also to help Japanese learners of English become competent in English oral skills for real communication purposes, the English education in Japan has a long way to go.

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