

The Political Economy of Language in Intermarriage

— Bilingual Childrearing in Japan —

Lachlan R. JACKSON

Abstract

本論文は、国際結婚という家庭環境において、子供をいかにバイリンガルに育てるか、ケーススタディーを通じて親の言語選択を考察する。従来の教育的観点からではなく、むしろ、夫婦の間で発生する力関係とアイデンティティに焦点を当て、それが、及ぼす影響を追及した研究内容である。アンケート調査、記録帳、インタビューによって行なったケーススタディーの一例を通じて、バイリンガル子育ての過程は、一般的に考えられるよりも遥かに複雑で政治的な要素が含まれていることを明らかにしたい。

Keywords : Bilingual Childreading, Intermarriage, Identity, Power, Japan

1. Introduction

Over the last three decades, a growing multi-disciplinary acknowledgement of the interplay between social identities and relations of power in language acquisition and use has developed (see, for example, review articles by Hansen and Jun Lui, 1997, or McNamara, 1997), and a significant literature now exists pertaining to the role of language in an array of socio-political and socio-economic spheres (Gal, 1989: 349). As such, this growing utilization of the concepts of identity and power in contemporary linguistic research reflects an enthusiastic theoretical and political concern for the social dimension of language use (McNamara, 1997: 566). Yet while these abstractions are increasingly being explored in various multilingual contexts, it remains striking how few studies have specifically investigated the interplay of power, social identity, and language in linguistic intermarriage (Heller & Levy, 1992: 14).

To be sure, language use among linguistically intermarried couples provides an excellent opportunity within which to examine the interdependent nature of identity and power. As Piller (2001a: 210-211) posits, the couples of such unions “are constantly performing a number of roles in terms of gender, nationality, cultural background or native-speaker status” whereby one of the partners find themselves positioned as ‘migrant’ and “economic asymmetry or downright dependence in the marriage relationship [can] create [sic] a potentially conflict-laden power imbalance”. And although several studies have explored the socio-cultural and socio-political

tensions that can occur in intermarriage (e.g. Imamura, 1990; Liamputtong 1991), there remains a need to more fully explore the link between linguistic behaviours in intermarriage and their broader social contexts (Norton Pierce, 1995).

With regard to the literature on bilingual childrearing specifically, there has been a profound tendency for studies to present multilingual development as a rigid, formulaic process. Typically, the mechanics of bilingual acquisition – *how it is done* – is well detailed, while sociolinguistic and socio-cultural explanations precisely accounting for certain linguistic behaviors – *why it is (or isn't) done a certain way* – remain deficient (e.g. Dopke, 1992; Harding & Riley, 1986). Stated candidly, much of the bilingualism literature has ignored the ways in which identity and relations of power shape the specific linguistic behaviors and discourse strategies, as well as the broader practices of parents attempting to raise their children bilingually. In the same vein that Norton (2000: 4-5) posited that the SLA literature had depicted a flawed model of the “good language learner” – based on the simplistic and erroneous assumption that language learners have control over how and with whom they can access the target language – much of the literature in bilingualism studies has also failed to account for the ways in which identity and relations of power shape the bilingual childrearing practices of linguistically intermarried parents. In much of the ‘public discourse’ on bilingual childrearing (to use Piller’s 2001b term, see also Jackson, 2007a), an erroneous model of the ‘good bilingual child-rearer’ has been propagated. This pervasive ideal has offered prescriptive and overly simplified accounts of how to raise bilingual children ‘successfully’ and ‘correctly’, and has consequently ignored the impact that abstractions of power and identity have in shaping the linguistic behaviours of the parents involved.

The qualitative sociolinguistic case study detailed in this paper incorporates data from questionnaires, in-depth interviews, and parental activity logbooks, and forms part of a larger research project examining the complexities of bilingual childrearing for eight intermarried couples in Japan (see Jackson, 2006; 2007a; 2007b). Viewing speech, as “a socially and culturally constructed activity” (Irvine, 1989: 294), this single case study investigates the bilingual childrearing practices of an American-Japanese couple residing in Japan. From the standpoint that linguistic practices are “acts of identity” (Le Page and Tabourlet-Keller, 1985) performed in a “political economy of language” (e.g.: Bourdieu, 1991; Gal, 1989; Walters, 1996; Woolard 1995; *et al.*), a rich and nuanced analysis of this couple’s bilingual childrearing practices will highlight how language both socially constrains and enables agency in intermarriage (Ahearn, 2001: 127).

2. Theoretical Framework

In all social relationships, language has the potential to “enact, create, or subvert power relations between people” (Ng & Bradac, 1992: 1), and any investigation of language in intermarriage is, in

part, an exploration of parents' creative and strategic perusal of socially and economically valued resources (Heller & Levy, 1992: 11). Consequently, in this research project, I draw on the two theoretical paradigms of social constructionism and post-structuralism. A central tenet of social constructionism is that reality is neither fixed nor static, but rather is created in and through human interaction (Giddens, 2001: 82). Social constructionist theory is a rejection of essentialist claims about gender and identity in that it holds that who we are manifests from local, cultural, and historical contexts (Kamada, 2005: 20). As such, post-structuralists maintain that our identities are constructed discursively – i.e. individuals use language in various ways to produce their own social and psychological realities (Davies & Harre, 1990: 45).

2.1. Language Use as 'Acts of Identity'

It has come to be accepted that speech is a social act in its own right, not just a means by which to comment on other social activities (Gal, 1989; Irvine, 1989; *et al.*). In linguistically heterogeneous situations, language use, to use Le Page and Tabouret-Keller's (1985) term, becomes very much an 'act of identity' whereby individuals make calculated decisions about the languages they speak and the identities that those choices engender. For as important as group identity is, identity in multilingual and multicultural contexts assumes an even greater significance, and as Kanno (2003: 11-14) has shown, individuals make fluid choices regarding language use about how and when to belong to certain groups, and may also resist negative identities imposed upon them by others. Consequently, in intermarriage, an individual's linguistic ideology determines the relative symbolic importance (Walters, 1996: 546) placed upon the two respective languages. Conceptualizing language use in interlingual families as acts of identity therefore aids in our understanding of the role that language plays in shaping identity. It is a tool for understanding how the way someone speaks reveals how and where they are trying to position themselves and others in social relationships.

2.2. Positioning Theory

Usually attributed to the work of Hollway (1984), and popularized in the writings of Davies, Harre, and Langenhove, Positioning Theory offers a social constructionist reading of social interaction that rests on two main tenets: that human behavior is both goal directed and constrained by social norms; and that human subjectivity manifests from an individual's interactions with others (Barnes, 2004: 1). Positioning Theory is often described as a dynamic alternative to the static notion of Role Theory, and as Luberda (2000: 1-3) states, "whereas roles...imply a loss of choice, a scripted existence, positions provide opportunities for individual action, the dynamic manipulation and development of social exchanges based on subjective experience". According to Davies and Harre (1990: 47), positioning implies "a multiplicity of selves", such that positions may be either assumed or ascribed, either intentionally or unintentionally. As such, Positioning Theory makes its contribution to this study in that aids in our understanding of how linguistically intermarried

parents make decisions about their language use choices and the identities that those choices engender.

2.3. The Political Economy of Language

There are, as Friedrich (1989: 303) maintains, several parallels between economic and linguistic theory (e.g. Bourdieu, 1977), and the notion of a political economy of language is grounded primarily in (neo) Marxist concepts. Practice theorists such as Giddens and Bourdieu have been influential in the notion's development and propagation (Ahearn, 2001: 109), and several scholars (Ahearn, 2001: 111; Irvine, 1989: 248) have argued that linguistic phenomena are not merely vehicles for conceptualizing the political economy, but rather play significant and multiple roles within it.

Whilst acknowledging that there exists a range of perspectives on what actually constitutes a political economy (Mosco, 1996: 22), the term broadly refers to “the study of social relations, especially the power relations, that mutually constitute the production, distribution, and consumption of resources” (*Ibid* 25). Bourdieu (1977) and Bourdieu and Passerson (1977) broadened the conventional notion of resources or capital beyond the purely economic sense (financial wealth), arguing that capital could take its form as cultural capital (knowledge, skills), social capital (networks, memberships etc) and symbolic capital (status, prestige) (Kamada, 2005: 22; Mesthrie *et al.* 2000: 343).

Bourdieu insisted that “the dominance of forms of language is ultimately related to the power structure of society” (Finlayson, 1999: 58). In what he terms a ‘linguistic marketplace’, ways of speaking (languages, dialects etc) are assigned variable ‘values’ such that speakers are considered to possess different amounts of ‘linguistic capital’ (Finlayson, 1999: 69, Mesthrie *et al.*, 2000: 343). In this sense, the political economy of language is the arena in which linguistic practices in social relationships are used to both subvert and exert power, and to vie for symbolic, social and economic capital (Gal, 1989: 353). As such, it is an excellent theoretical tool for examining the way in which linguistic behavior manifests in the tension between the structural constraints of intermarriage on the one hand, and the possibilities of human agency on the other (Gal, 1989: 347; Heller & Levy, 1992: 13).

3. Methodological Approach and Research Instruments

This section will briefly outline the methodological approach and three interrelated research instruments used in the study – questionnaires; logbooks; and in-depth interviews. It should also be noted that all family members have been allocated pseudonyms.

3.1. The Questionnaire

The first research instrument used was the Questionnaire, administered to both the mother and father in their respective native languages. Consisting of twenty eight multiple-choice, closed, and open-ended questions, it targeted four themes: family background; the second language learning histories and proficiencies of all family members; language use dyads within the home; and attitudes and perceptions about bilingualism. I designed the questionnaire by incorporating originally devised questions with both modified and replicated questions from three prior studies – Barron-Hauwaert, 2004; Noguchi, 2001; and Yamamoto, 2001. From data collected through the questionnaires, I gained essential background information from which to frame specific probes for the subsequent in-depth interviews. Both parents were requested to complete their questionnaires independently, and in an attempt to triangulate data, the participants were required to both self-report on their own language proficiencies and use patterns, as well as to describe and evaluate those of their spouse and children.

3.2. The Logbook

The second research instrument required both informants to complete a parental activity logbook. As was the case with the questionnaire, the logbooks were incorporated into the research design because they have been demonstrated to be an effective means of making in-depth interviews a more focused, efficient, and triangulated method of data collection (Tedlock, 2003: 178-179). Concentrating on the interactions with their children, both parents were requested to concurrently record their activities over a seven day period, with a particular focus on their contextual language use patterns with other family members.

3.3. The In-depth Interview

The third and most significant research instrument was the use of in-depth semi-structured interviews. As stated above, the interviews targeted specific issues or episodes alluded to in the questionnaires and logbooks. Heeding the advice of Okita (2002: 49), I elected to interview the mother and father independently of each other because separate interviews of this nature are often deemed to yield more useful data than joint discussions. The interviews were audio-taped in the participants' family home, providing me with an opportunity to observe the family in its natural setting. Both the mother and father's interviews were conducted in English. The father's interview took approximately 60 minutes, while the mother's interview took about 50 minutes. After the interviews, the audio-tapes were transcribed and analyzed. The transcripts were coded for comments pertaining to four common themes that regularly emerged from prior studies: family discourse strategy; gender; parental second language proficiency; and parental attitudes towards bilingualism.

4. Case Study – Meet the Hill Family

The Hills are an American-Japanese family of five. Although Henry (40) had previously lived and studied in Japan, he met and married his wife Hiroko (45) in the United States. The Hills came to reside in Japan when Hiroko fell pregnant with their first child thirteen years ago and have lived in an industrial area of the Kansai region ever since. The couple has three children: an elder son, aged twelve; a younger son, aged ten; and a daughter, aged seven. The Hills live next door to Hiroko's parents, and the extended family is in daily contact with each other.

4.1. Family Member Profiles

Henry is a full-time internet systems engineer for a large Japanese company. He first came to Japan almost twenty years ago as college exchange student. At that time Henry spent one year studying at a prestigious Japanese university while living with a Japanese host family. As well as studying Japanese there, he also took four years of Japanese language classes at two American institutions. Data collected from both Henry's and Hiroko's questionnaires and logbooks indicate that he is an English dominant active bilingual. While Henry appears to be functional in Japanese in everyday situations, his Japanese literacy skills seem rudimentary.

Hiroko met Henry in the United States, where she worked for a Japanese company for a period of five years. Prior to that, she had spent four years studying psychology at an American university, and had also studied English extensively in Japan in both junior and senior high school, as well as at private language schools. Not surprisingly, Hiroko is a Japanese dominant active bilingual with a near native proficiency in the English language. Though working part-time as a bookkeeper in her father's business, Hiroko is the children's principal caregiver and assumes primary responsibility for the running of the household.

The Hill's elder son Sam (12;9) is in the sixth grade of school. Henry describes him as being "very good academically", if not a little introverted. Sam is best described as a Japanese dominant active bilingual. His parents believe Sam has a basic level of literacy in English, and also rate his oral and aural English proficiencies to be somewhere between being able to "carry out simple conversations", and "functional in that language in everyday situations". He is attending a Japanese private elementary school where the medium of instruction is Japanese. Sam also attends a weekly English conversation class at a local conversation school. He has visited the United States on several occasions, and last summer was sent to stay with his American grandparents for the entire summer vacation.

The Hill's second son Joi (10;2) is in the fourth grade of elementary school. Henry describes Joi as being much more social than his elder brother, as well as being less academically inclined. Joi is

also best described as a (weak) Japanese dominant active bilingual. Again, his parents report that he has a rudimentary level of literacy in English, and rate his oral and aural English proficiencies to enable him to at least be able to “carry out simple conversations”. Like his elder brother, Joi is also attending a Japanese private elementary school as well as a weekly English conversation class at a local conversation school. He too has visited the United States on several occasions.

The Hill’s daughter Emma (7;1) is in the first grade of elementary school. Emma is a Japanese dominant active bilingual with the oral ability to carry out simple conversations in English and the aural ability to be functional in English in everyday situations. Emma has just started to learn the English alphabet, but can not yet read or write in English. Like her brothers, Emma is attending a private Japanese elementary school and also takes an English conversation class once a week. She too has visited the United States on several occasions.

Finally it should be stated that the children’s grandparents reside next door to the Hill’s house and are monolingual Japanese speakers. All family members’ mean language proficiency evaluations (calculated by combining data from both the father’s and mother’s questionnaires – c.f. Jackson, 2007a: 5) are tabled below.

Table 1 Mean Japanese Proficiency Evaluations¹⁾

Name (Age)	Speaking	Listening	Reading	Writing
Henry (40)	6.5	5.5	3.5	2
Hiroko (45)	10	10	10	10
Sam (12;9)	10	10	10	10
Joi (10;2)	10	10	10	10
Emma (7;1)	10	9	9	9

Table 2 Mean English Proficiency Evaluations

Name (Age)	Speaking	Listening	Reading	Writing
Henry (40)	10	10	10	10
Hiroko (45)	7.5	7	8	8
Sam (12;9)	4.5	5	4.5	3.5
Joi (10;2)	4	4.5	2.5	1.5
Emma (7;1)	4.5	5.5	1	1

Key

Speaking / Listening

- 0: Never says anything/understands nothing.
- 2: Says/understands a few words and phrases.

- 4: Can carry out simple conversations.
- 6: Is functional in that language in 'everyday situations'.
- 8: Is highly proficient, but not at native speaker level.
- 10: Is a native speaker (or age appropriate native speaker).

Reading / Writing

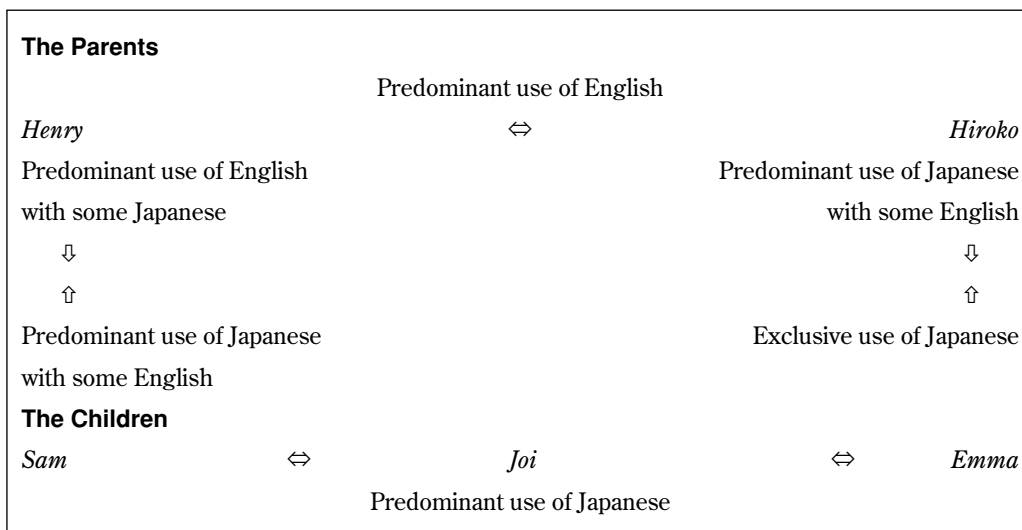
- 0: No literacy skills
- 2: Reads/Writes the alphabet/hiragana.
- 4: English – reads & writes simple sentences but may make many simple errors.
Japanese – reads & writes words in hiragana & katakana.
- 6: Reads/writes simple material, but is not at an age appropriate native-speaker level.
- 8: Reads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

4.2. Family Language Dyads

In analyzing the language dyads within the household, it is helpful to first consider the overall proportional use of Japanese to English. Both informants consistently reported that Henry's Japanese to English use ratio was 40:60 and that Hiroko's was 70:30. Henry reported that Sam's ratio was 90:10; Joi 90:10; and Emma 80:20. Hiroko's estimation of the children's proportional language use supported Henry's estimation – she reported Sam's ratio to be 95:5; Joi 95:5; and Emma 90:10. Whilst I acknowledge that these ratios are merely approximations reported by the informants, they do indicate that while both Japanese and English are used in the home, Japanese is clearly the dominant household language.

Regarding individual language dyads, both the questionnaire and in-depth interview data suggests that Henry and Hiroko use predominantly English, though at times some Japanese, among themselves. Henry appears to speak predominantly English mixed with some Japanese to all three children. However, all three children reportedly use more Japanese than English when speaking with Henry. Hiroko predominantly uses Japanese with some English when communicating with the children. However, all three children reportedly only use Japanese when addressing her.

Figure 1 *The Hill Family Language use Dyads*²⁾



5. Discussion

As will be revealed in the following discussion, the Hills, despite their best intentions and efforts, regard their bilingual childrearing experience in quite pessimistic terms. Despite the fact that both Henry and Hiroko held positive attitudes towards bilingualism, and vigorously sought to inform themselves by engaging with what Piller (2001b) terms its “public discourse”, they at times found this issue to be a site of conflict and frustration (c.f. Jackson, 2007b). The Hills’ experience is not an uncommon one. Many bilingualism studies have analyzed parental descriptions of their efforts characterized by explanations of ‘what went wrong’ and how things ‘should have been done’. This paper, however, aims to go beyond such superficial analysis – to connect, as Norton Pierce (1995: 9) advises, all of the actors with the social world, and to address “how relations of power affect interaction between language learners [i.e. the children] and the target language speakers [i.e. the parents]”. In order to do this, it is necessary to examine how Henry and Hiroko position themselves and each other, how they mutually construct and ascribe identities – in short, how they behave in the political economy of language that exists within their marriage. The following section will examine what is it that each of the informants bring to the ‘linguistic marketplace’, and what forces both constrain and engender their linguistic practices. The Hills’ experience will be presented as a case specific examination of the interface between relations of power, identities, and linguistic behavior as relating to four emerging themes from the existing literature: choice and implementation of family discourse strategy; gender of the minority language speaking parent; parental second language proficiency; and parental attitudes towards bilingual childrearing.

5.1. Power, Resources and Social Positioning in the Linguistic Marketplace

Hiroko's comments in the in-depth interview suggest that she views Henry not only as a native speaker of a prestigious foreign language bestowing social / cultural capital upon the other family members, but also as a linguistic resource for the other family members in his own right. Hiroko remarks

If you think about what kind of life is waiting for our kids if they just spoke good English...[people] are going to say "You're good!" And if they make perfect on the test, they'll say "Yeah, of course. Your father is American"...I always tell our kids...people will think, you know, you speak the language – it's normal. So if you don't speak it, you will be in trouble. But at the same time, you have all the opportunities.

Despite this however, Henry's interview comments suggest that he is keen to position himself as a bilingual Japanese-speaking, culturally savvy Japan hand. If, as the adage goes, things are defined by what they're not, Henry appears eager to be viewed as *anything but* an English teacher. Regarding his successful application to his current employer, he states

They wanted someone who was not an English teacher, and that was my first criteria for a job, I didn't want to teach English.

Henry goes on to attribute his disappointment in the children's English development to his Japanese proficiency and his 'non-teaching' career.

It became more pressure on me to speak more Japanese, in a lot of senses, because I can speak, I can get by in Japanese if I have to, so therefore, it's a lot easier for me to fall into that sort of Japanese trap I guess...Other people, like the English teacher types, seem to be more able to do this language thing, but I think a lot of them don't really, well they can't speak Japanese very well to begin with...I work for a Japanese corporation. I do a lot of overtime, and I don't have much time in the home.

The above quotations clearly illustrate that, as Norton Pierce (1995: 15) posits, social identity "is multiple and contradictory...produced in a variety of social sites, all of which are structured by relations of power in which the person takes up different subject positions...some positions of which may be in conflict with others". From Hiroko's perspective, Henry's native English speaker status is both a resource and a certain source of status, yet for Henry it detracts from his positioning of himself as a successful student of the Japanese language who has been successful in establishing an alternative career to English language teaching.

Of course Hiroko also wields a degree of power and agency in the relationship. To start with, in international marriages, the partner in whose native country the couple lives tends to be the more legally, economically and socially privileged (Piller, 2001a: 215). For example, the Hills live next door to Hiroko's parents on family land. From a legal viewpoint, Henry's visa was initially sponsored by Hiroko, so in a sense, she was his 'ticket' into Japan. And whilst Henry is functional in Japanese, it is Hiroko, as the native speaker, who presides over the household administration – taxes and school correspondence for example. In this sense, Hiroko can be viewed as the gatekeeper of the information that flows in and out of the Hill household. As Kouritzin (2000: 321) puts it, Hiroko, as the majority language native speaking parent, is the 'ultimate linguistic authority' in the family.

5.2. Choice and Implementation of the Family Discourse Strategy

Much of the literature related to bilingual childrearing has focused on the merits and demerits of specific discourse strategies available to interlingual families. The majority of such work has maintained that consistent language separation is crucial in promoting bilingual development (e.g. De Houwer, 1999; Dopke, 1992; Dopke, 1998; Harrison and Piette 1980; Lanza, 1997) and that a clearly defined discourse strategy increases ones chances of successful bilingual development (Shang, 1997). Of the various types, considerable debate has focused on the perceived merits of the two most popular discourse strategies, one parent-one language (OPOL) and minority language at home (ML@H). The Hills initially elected to implement the OPOL strategy. The issue was a source of anxiety, guilt, and fear however, when just before the birth of her first child, Hiroko heard anecdotes about the 'risks' of bilingual child-raising. She attempted to inform herself more about the issue.

I had a friend working in Japanese high school in [an American city]. And she was mentioning the word 'semi-lingual'. She said, some of the kids, they speak both languages, but none of them complete, so they can't have deep thoughts because you can not think without the words...I started reading like 'Bilingual' and stuff, science about the bilingual, all the books, [laughs] right? I mean everything. But it didn't change anything...It just worried me more. Because they tell me, I should do this way and that way, but in real life, I couldn't do any of that"

This excerpt is illustrative of the fact that, with a few noticeable exceptions (e.g. Noguchi, 2001: 267; Tokuhama-Espinosa, 2001: 57; Yamamoto, 2001: 130) much of the public discourse on bilingual childrearing rarely aligns neatly with the practical circumstances of individual families (Jackson, 2007b; Piller, 2001b).

Although the Hills initially attempted to implement the OPOL strategy, they questioned this decision when Sam was not progressing as well as they had initially envisaged. Realizing that

Henry's work commitments limited his language input, Hiroko later began inconsistently speaking English to the children. And finally, Hiroko persuaded Henry to teach the children English on a structured daily basis. This caused considerable conflict between the couple. According to Hiroko

If I don't force it, he won't do it. And if I force it, he won't like it. So I don't know...He doesn't know what to do, that's what he says. He says "I'm not an English teacher"...But I think he just doesn't want to know how to do it...But I don't want to get in a fight, so I don't know.

Although data in the logbooks suggests that Henry is continuing to 'teach' (i.e. formally, using flashcards, drilling activities and workbooks etc.) the children English on a daily basis, he is neither enthusiastic about it, nor according to Hiroko, particularly good at it. In light of much of the public discourse on bilingual childrearing, it would appear that the Hills inability to adhere to a pattern of complete and sustained language separation may be one reason why the children's English development was, from the perspective of their parents, disappointing. What must be considered, however, is why this was the case. In the following sections, I will consider why Henry frequently resists being positioned 'the English speaker' as opposed to the power he perceivably derives by speaking Japanese in his communities of practice (Lave & Wegner, 1991; Ekert & McConnell-Ginett, 1992).

5.3. Gender of the Minority Language Speaking Parent

In much of the research on bilingual childrearing, there is a propensity to report on families in which the mother is the minority language native speaker (e.g. Imamura, 1990; Okita, 2002; Takeuchi, 2006; Walters, 1996), however there is now a growing number of works that also examine families where the father is the minority language speaker (e.g.: Bingham, 2007; Jackson, 2006; Jackson, 2007b; Kouritzin, 2000; Saunders, 1988). Considerable discussion has focused on the extent to which the gender of the minority language speaking parent affects bilingual development, and conflicting findings have emerged. It has been argued that the socio-economic expectations placed on fathers as 'breadwinners' often limit their ability to perform the necessary language work required to promote active bilingualism (Kamada, 1995), and Clyne (1982) has shown that language shift in intermarriage is more probable when the father is the minority language speaker. Several studies have also correlated the mother's language to the child's language (Luk, 1986; Lyon, 1996). However, Dopke (1992) has argued that that the quality of interaction from the minority language speaking parent is far more important than the quantity of interaction, and Noguchi (2001) and Lucasavich (2000) also found no significant correlation between the gender of the minority language speaking parent and bilingual development.

Regarding this particular case study, both Henry and Hiroko were in agreement that Henry's role as provider impacted negatively on the children's bilingual development. Hiroko comments

“Henry’s language wasn’t enough. He, he doesn’t...well, the father leaves real early.”

Furthermore, while Hiroko remained critical of her husband’s bilingual childrearing efforts during the times he was home, Henry self-justified the situation as circumstances beyond his control.

“I don’t think it is possible with the minimal amount of hours that I am around to be able to have that much influence on them...This is the existence we have been put into, so I don’t think there is much more that I could do...its just a fact of life. If I want to keep the job and keep doing what I have been doing, I have a bit less time.”

Whilst Henry is employed in a major Japanese corporation and the logbooks support the claim that his work hours are long, one again needs to return to the question of why Henry elects not to follow a pattern of consistent language separation with his children. One plausible rationale for his linguistic practices may lie simply in the fact that he has become disillusioned and frustrated with the OPOL strategy. Henry may indeed fear not being able to communicate with his children – and the future implications that would have on the relations of power within the marriage and the family in general. Perhaps he simply wants to communicate with his children in the most effective way he can – in Japanese.

5.4. Parental Second Language Proficiency

The effect of parental second language proficiency has also been examined in several celebrated case studies on bilingual childrearing. While Noguchi’s (2001) pilot survey identified no direct correlation between parental second language ability and children’s bilingual development, Kamada (1995) argued that when children become aware of their parents’ bilingual abilities, they become less motivated to use the minority language. What is certain is that parental second language proficiency provides options and choices about language behavior (Lucasavich, 2000). Parents can either restrict themselves to a pattern of total language separation, or they may elect to utilize their second language to varying degrees.

Henry accounts for the effect of parental second language ability on bilingual childrearing in a somewhat incongruous and ironic way. On the one hand, he maintains that Japanese language skills are essential for non-Japanese fathers to perform their functions within the family.

It’s pretty tough to be a gaijin dad here if you don’t have any Japanese skill...to be comfortable with the culture and...be understanding of Japanese society.

Yet at the same time, Henry advocates that his Japanese ability has hindered his opportunity to

communicate with his children in English.

It makes it easier for the kids if I didn't speak any Japanese at all...If you slip into the Japanese, it is a slippery slope, it just keeps snowballing down and you get stuck. I think that's what happens.

Hiroko is not overly accepting of Henry's hypothesis that his Japanese proficiency prevented him from using English with the children.

He was just speaking Japanese, teaching Japanese words, like umm...“Isu.” [chair] He'd say “Isu da yo!” [It's a chair!]. And then sometimes I'd say “Chair”. And I'd get tired of...you know?”

Sadly, and perhaps unsurprisingly, although his Japanese ability is functional, Henry now feels the linguistic divide widening between himself and his children. Of the father-child relationship, Henry states

The language separates it a bit. Because they are a little bit hesitant to speak to me in English. They will have no problem talking to me in Japanese, but I think it's going to be an issue down the road.

Why did Henry elect to use Japanese with his children in the first place? Given the heavy Japanese context of his communities of practice, it is helpful to consider what behaving as a monolingual English speaker would have meant for Henry. Perhaps he was unwilling to be positioned as 'the English speaker', because in doing so, he feared his positioning in his Japanese speaking communities of practice would have been somehow relegated. Henry uses Japanese at work, with Hiroko's parents (who reside next door and are in the house on a daily basis), and in his local community. Perhaps he felt that exclusively speaking English was too much of a trade off, considering what he perceivably stood to lose. It is possible that he did not want to be viewed – by his children and others - as the 'baka gaijin' [foolish foreigner] who could not speak Japanese and live a fully functioning adult life in Japan. To do so, from Henry's perspective, would have subverted his position in the family. Of course, because Henry is not a native Japanese speaker, a counter argument to the above hypothesis – that his position in the family could be strengthened as long as English was made the 'home language' – could also be waged. Nevertheless, one should attempt to understand Henry's linguistic behavior in its social context, and this is one such credible explanation.

5.5. Parental Attitudes towards Bilingual Childrearing

It is generally accepted that parental attitudes towards bilingualism are thought to be an influential factor in determining bilingual development (Harding & Riley, 1986). Yet parental attitudes alone

are no guarantee of bilingual acquisition, and must be combined with other conditions (Lyon, 1996). Notably, De Houwer's (1999) Impact Belief Theory has advocated that active bilingualism can not be attained unless the following conditions are met: the parents hold positive attitudes about the two languages in question; and the parents themselves believe that their own linguistic behavior will impact on the child's bilingual development.

Data collected from both parents' questionnaires and in-depth interviews indicate that the Hills were initially very positive and enthusiastic about the potential benefits that bilingualism would give their children. However, as stated above, both parents came to the conclusion that Henry's work commitments did not allow him to provide enough English input for the children. Hiroko remained very determined to counter this problem, and she devised a plan for Henry to 'teach' each of the children for fifteen minutes daily. Henry recalls,

The wife is very, very, very into the education side...She pushes me into making sure that I take the time to do the English...So she does put pressure on that. And she spends an inordinate amount of time reading books or on the net reading about education and all the things like that...She is very, very, very into that aspect of the kids lives and so she spends a lot of time looking at it, thinking about it, writing up lists, planning stuff. So I get a lot of direction.

Yet while Henry views Hiroko as overzealous, she construes him as apathetic.

Well, about three years ago, I decided, we're gunna do English lessons! Everyday. Like even fifteen minutes a day. And then Henry and I get together. What I do is, I prepare the papers, phonics, all the books and cards, and games. I prepare and explain to Henry. And then he plays, but sometimes he is too tired and doesn't want to do it...He feels like he is forced. He says "I'm tired, I'm not an English teacher" and gets mad.

Clearly, Hiroko is more committed to the language work required to raise the children bilingually. She encapsulates the gulf between the perception and reality of bilingual childrearing in intermarried families succinctly when she states

Language is the number one stress in our house! You see, the Japanese people around us say "Hi, your husband is American, so your kids must be bilingual". And I say "No, you don't know". A lot of families I know, especially where the fathers speak Japanese, they have a problem. And it is not that easy. And they don't understand that.

It seems that while the Hills readily recognize the potential benefits of bilingualism for their children, Henry is far less motivated than Hiroko in performing the necessary language work

required for Sam, Joi and Emma to attain active bilingualism. The Hills are exemplary of the fact that bilingual child-raising is not solely a matter concerning the development of metalinguistic awareness of the children. It is also intricately and acutely tied to parental practices and language use patterns, the dynamics of which are shaped by identities and relations of power. My subjective interpretation is that Henry will support the children's English learning (by sending them to English schools and on holidays to the US etc.) as long as he himself is not disenfranchised in the process. As such, Henry elects to protect his position and identity in the family's political economy of language by refusing to exclusively speak English in the household.

6. Conclusion

This paper has examined the interface of identity, relations of power and language use in the bilingual childrearing practices of linguistically intermarried couples. It sought to go beyond mere descriptions of language use patterns by relating language choice to the social context within which individuals act. Arguing that speech is an 'act of identity' performed in a political economy of language, the way in which actors position and reposition themselves and others was examined. It was suggested that subject positioning (Barnes 2004; Davies & Harre 1990; Kamada, 2005: 21; *et al.*) is a way of explaining not just *how*, but more importantly *why* people display certain language practices, particularly those practices that run counter to the public discourse on bilingual childrearing.

Incorporating data from three integrated research instruments – questionnaires, logbooks, and in-depth interviews – a single case study of an American-Japanese family residing in Japan was presented. Four emerging themes from the existing literature: the choice and implementation of family's discourse strategy; the gender of the minority language speaking parent; parental second language proficiencies; and parental attitudes towards bilingualism were used to examine the dynamic of identities, relations of power, and language use within the Hill household.

It was shown how both Henry and Hiroko activate multiple assumed and ascribed identities that are sometimes contradictory and the source of tension within the context of their bilingual childrearing practices. Specifically, it was illustrated how Henry was ascribed the identity of 'native English speaker', and was, consequently expected to be the children's main linguistic resource of 'authentic English'. The paper described how this positioning clashed with Henry's positioning of himself as a Japanese speaking bilingual and the power that Henry perceived that afforded him. It was suggested that Henry's linguistic choices were, ironically, constrained by his perception of the political economy of language operating within his marriage. Henry was unwilling to operate in a monolingual English speaking context because he felt that such linguistic behaviour would have disadvantageous ramifications on his relationships with his Japanese dominant speaking children,

wife, and extended family.

From this single case study, it can be seen that linguistic behavior is both engendered and constrained by identities and relations of power. By analyzing linguistic behaviour through the theoretical lens of a political economy of language, the interplay between the structural constraints of inter-marriage on the one hand, and the possibilities of human agency on the other (Gal, 1989: 347; Heller & Levy, 1992: 13) can be expounded. Finally, it is suggested that further work should build on the initial studies using this framework (e.g. Heller & Levy, 1992; Walters, 1996) so that this body of literature might accrue an array of studies from a multiplicity of linguistic and cultural contexts.

Notes

- 1) These tables and key have been modified from Noguchi's (2001: 268) prior study.
- 2) The template for this table has been adapted from Yamamoto (2001)

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