



# Multilingual Literacy Practices of Grades 1-9 Students from the Japanese School in Barcelona

Misa Fukukawa, Universidad Pompeu Fabra

misa.fukukawa01@estudiant.upf.edu



## Introduction

- ✓ Today the increasing levels of migration and subsequent cross-cultural marriages have grown prominently and as such the importance of multilingual education has needed to be addressed urgently.
- ✓ Developing literacy skills in both the dominant and the heritage languages is increasingly important for culturally and linguistically diverse students. Thus, **multilingual education** is needed.
- ✓ There have been a number of studies carried out in Japanese Saturday schools in North America, Australia and Asia (Hashimoto & Lee, 2011; Lee & Harada, 2006; Li, 2006; Matsunaga, 2003; Shibata, 2000), however there have been just a few studies conducted **in Europe**.

## Research Questions

How do they attain four distinctive languages and what is the common literacy practice inside and outside of the school?

How does technology affect writing practices in academic and private contexts?

## Analysis of interviews

- ✓ Interviews were first audio-recorded, transcribed and then the content was analyzed with using discourse analysis techniques.
- ✓ Interviews were conducted mostly in Japanese.
- ✓ Questionnaires were designed using open-ended questions.
- ✓ For qualitative analysis, Atlas.ti was utilized.

## Results

### Keeping a diary as literacy practice at home

*-I make my son to write something every day like diary in Japanese even if it's short. Also he sometimes does workbooks in Japanese to comprehend short texts. After reading short texts, he is asked to write a few sentences in Japanese. A mother of seven-year-old boy*

*-As homework, he (my son) has to write short diaries or letters every day. After his writing, I have to reply to him which is part of homework at the Japanese Saturday school. In order to improve essay writing skills, I try to take time on the weekend to write something together. Also he practices Kanji and write example sentences using new Kanji every day. That often develops and expands to short essays and I think that he ends up practicing writing. A mother of eight-year-old boy*

### Negative influence of technology toward writing skills

*-I don't think it (technology) enhances nor hampers writing skills. Personally, I have very few expectations from technology and do not want to rely on it. In my opinion, active learning such as reading books or writing is more important than passive learning like watching TV and using tablets. That stimulates creativity and critical thinking. Also it leads to advanced and sophisticated writing skills. A mother of six-year-old girl*

*-I think Japanese skills will decrease, especially Kanji skills, because if you don't practice with your hands, you can't remember it. But if you use the apps where you can practice Kanji with your fingers, writing skills will probably not be hampered. I think other languages skills won't change much by using technology. A mother of eleven-year-old girl*

*-I think it hampers Japanese writing skills especially for younger children (under 9 years old). It is very important for young children to use pens, papers and 'muscle memory' in order to memorize alphabets. Technology could be useful for older children, over 10 years old, because they can utilize knowledge they have already acquired when they use technology. A mother of eight-year-old girl*

### Positive influence of technology toward writing skills

*-I don't think technology is bad because my daughter enjoys using it, practicing Kanji a lot because she wants to go to next level of a Japanese Kanji writing app. Using WhatsApp has pros and cons. One of the cons is that she can send messages easily without thinking too much. But as she has to write short sentences, she tends to summarize what she wants to convey. By doing this, she has probably improved her summarizing skills. I am not worried about her losing Kanji skills like many other people think. When she gets some messages from her Japanese aunts, sometimes Kanji she hasn't learned appears. In that case, she asks me to pronounce them and then she learns it. It seems she is eager to read messages even if there are some unknown Kanji. A mother of nine-year-old girl*

## Literature Review: Kakiuchi (2003)

Investigated parental attitudes towards their involvement in school management in a Japanese school in Europe.

- ✓ Parental attitudes towards the school were very **positive**.
- ✓ The parents thought that this unique experience helped them understand not only their own children but also other children who were growing up in foreign countries.
- ✓ Although participation in a Japanese school increased among parents, they did not participate with the local community.
- ✓ The school should embrace the **local community** much more in order to develop the school on a **more global stage**.

## Theoretical Background

Li (2006) investigated three Chinese-Canadian children whose parents had different perceptions and attitudes toward learning languages and the society they live in and discovered that there were different factors that may help shape bilingual or trilingual development:

- ✓ **home environment**
- ✓ **parental attitudes**(the degree and direction of parental support)
- ✓ **media**

## Data Collection

- ✓ **11 students** (age 6-14) attending the Japanese Saturday school
- ✓ Languages used: **Spanish, Catalan, Japanese, English, French**
- ✓ They have **Spanish/Catalan/French father** and **Japanese mother**.

## Methodology

- ✓ **Interviews with parents (Japanese mothers), students and teachers**
- ✓ Classroom observations
- ✓ Collecting materials
- ✓ Collecting students' writing samples

## Writing samples

Genre	In-school writing	Out-of-school writing
With hand writing	Compositions	Letters
	Reports	Diaries
	Notes, etc	Memos, etc
With a keyboard (digital texts)	Compositions	IM (chats to family and friends)
	Reports, etc	Emails
		Social networks
		Online posts, forums, etc

## Discussion

### Diary

One of the typical literacy activities of Spanish-Japanese children is keeping a diary.

Parents consider that this is a crucial literacy activity to maintain Japanese as a heritage language.

### Technology

Many parents think that technology might hamper their children's writing skills. They think that children should use pens and papers. Also they have the mentality that "practice makes perfect" and repetition is necessary.

Others believe that we write more often compared to the old days thanks to technology and children can learn summarizing skills by using technology.

## Limitations

As this research has a very small number of participants.

- ✓ More various Japanese families in Spain or even other countries should be involved
- ✓ Comparing other international families regarding home literacy practices

## Reference

Cummins, J. (2005). *A Proposal for Action: Strategies for Recognizing Heritage Language Competence as a Learning Resource within the Mainstream Classroom*.  
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