

# Does Having an Older Sibling Support or Hinder the Development of Bilingualism in Younger Siblings?:

A Case Study of British and Japanese Families

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## Abstract

This study examined whether or not having an older sibling supports or hinders the development of bilingualism in their younger siblings through case studies of eight families with two or more children residing in the UK and Japan. Results showed that through the sibling's role and the language they interact in with the younger sibling, they can shape how much or how less the younger sibling uses the L2.

The findings show that overall the older sibling tends to interact with their younger brother or sister in the L1. It is argued that this can be a hindrance to the development of bilingualism in the younger sibling. However, relying on the older sibling for L2 input is not a reliable strategy for bringing up a child bilingually. The parent's role is also pivotal in engaging the child in the L2 by giving them exposure to the language through media texts and networking with other similar families.

**[Keywords child bilingualism/UK/Japan/sibling/bilingual development]**

## Introduction

This paper examines several case studies of international couples comprising of a Japanese and English native speaking married couple with bicultural bilingual children who are being raised in the UK and Japan.

There are many influential factors that define and determine how successful parents can be in raising their children to be bilingual. Raising a bilingual child in a monolingual country like Japan or the UK is a difficult task (Kavanagh, 2013). Exposure to the minority language through trips abroad and the language of family interaction (Garcia, 1986) are seen as important elements in raising a successful bilingual. Baker (2007) states that the quality of interaction in the target language is highly influential in determining whether or not a child may become a successful bilingual. This study aims to show how the amount of L2 input the child receives from their older sibling hinders or supports the bilingual development of the younger child. Does the older sibling for example, promote a language shift to the dominant language within the home by not speaking the minority language?

## Bilingual strategies and input

There are many strategies that parents can employ in order to raise their children bilingually. The minority language at home approach (MLAH) requires both parents to adhere to speaking the minority language at home. This of course requires both of the parents to have a high level of proficiency in the target language. A more common method is the one parent one language (OPOL) approach whereby the native speaking parent of the minority language speaks in the L2 with the child all the time. Needless to say, this method needs the parent and child to adhere to the principles of this approach. Dopke (1992) states that there are two main factors in the home that foster child bilingualism. These are the parents' consistency in their language choice along with their insistence that the child respects this one language 'principle'. However, the most successful with raising their children bilingually seem to be families who are surrounded by a close network of minority language speakers (Dopke, 1988).

Regardless of what bilingual approach families take, the amount of L2 input the child is exposed to can be considered to be the most influential aspect in determining a successful bilingual. Yamamoto (2001) advocates the 'principle of maximal engagement with the minority language'. She states that "the more engagement the child has with the minority language, the greater her or his likelihood of using it" (p.128). The amount of input a child receives however can be influenced by the presence of an older sibling. The following section will address this notion.

## Sibling influence

There are very few studies that have looked specifically at whether or not the older sibling can influence the bilingual development in the younger sibling. Common sense would suggest that if the older sibling uses the minority language with their sibling this will result in more input and practice for the child. In contrast, if the child only speaks in the dominant language with their younger brother or sister this will lead to less input and consequently less usage of the L2 (Pearson, 2007). Unsworth (2016) states that "there is to date very little systematic research addressing the influence of siblings on bilingual children's language development" (p.140). Below however, is a brief review of the literature that has touched upon this subject.

Some research has found that bilingual siblings usually choose to interact in the dominant language of the country they reside in rather than the L2 or minority language (Miller, 1983). Yamamoto (1987) suggests that if the L2 is used as the medium of interaction between siblings it can lead to productive bilingual acquisition. She studied Japanese bicultural children in Japan. She found that if the children used the dominant L1 language of Japanese with each other, they were also more likely to use it with their parents including the English native speaking parent. In a further study, Yamamoto (2001) hypothesized that the most influential factors on the children's language choice were "the medium of instruction in school and the presence of siblings" (p.103). In most cases the medium of instruction of the school is the

dominant language.

Kamada's (1998) study on Japanese-English bilinguals in Japan found that once the oldest child attends schooling in the dominant language (Japanese), it would likely result in the child using the dominant language with their younger pre-school infant sibling. This happens she argues, even if one or both of the parents use the minority language (English) at home.

Bridges & Hoff (2014) examined the influence of the older sibling on Spanish-English bilingual toddlers raised in America. The siblings spoke in English together at home and to their mother rather than in the minority language of Spanish. These kinds of findings writes Unsworth (2016), "suggest that siblings should not only be seen as sources of language input themselves but also as potential agents of change in the language use of other family members" (p.140).

The research conducted thus far has still not clarified with precision whether the presence of an older sibling promotes or hinders the bilingual development in the younger child. Some studies have suggested that the presence of a sibling can encourage L2 acquisition in the younger sibling as they can act as teachers or role models in the L2 (Gregory, 1996, Gregory & Williams, 2000). Other studies have found mixed results. Obied's (2009) research findings showed that in her sample of Portuguese-English bilingual families "there may be conflicts due to the arrival of a younger sibling and a language shift towards Portuguese, or older siblings may act as mediators of both languages in the home and support the younger sibling's emerging biliteracy" (p.705). She concludes that siblings should not be expected to naturally play the role of providing L2 input to the younger sibling without it being learned and encouraged.

## **The data**

The data used in this study is taken from a longitudinal study on bicultural bilingual children residing in the UK and Japan. 15 families comprising of 26 children are taking part in this research. This paper addresses one aspect and portion of the collected data that looks specifically at families with two or more children and addresses the following research questions.

1. Does having a sibling (s) support or hinder the development of bilingualism in children?
2. Does the oldest child speak the minority language with their younger sibling?

## **The families**

A total of 8 families with two or more children took part in this study, 3 in the UK and 5 in Japan. In this data sample the children's ages ranged from 2 to 17.

Collectively the families had 16 children, 6 of these children came from 3 families residing in the UK and the remaining 10 from 5 families in Japan.

Table 1. *The UK based families*

Family one	Family two	Family three
Japanese mother English father with 2 children	Japanese mother English father with 2 children	Japanese mother English father with 2 children

Table 2. *The Japan based families*

Family four	Family five	Family six	Family seven	Family eight
Japanese mother Irish father with 2 children	Japanese mother American father with 2 children	Japanese mother Irish father with 2 children	Japanese mother American father with 4 children	Japanese father Australian mother with 2 children

The bicultural bilingual children within this study were all born to a native English-speaking parent married to a Japanese. All of the native English speakers within the UK were fathers and English born. The English native speaking parent in Japan varied in nationality and consisted of 2 Irish fathers, 2 American fathers and an Australian mother. All of the families are very concerned about bringing up their children to be successful bilinguals. The data within this paper stems from questionnaires given to the families with follow up interviews, home visits and observations.

## Results

Employing an ethnographical approach in analyzing the data the findings are organized into case studies of each family. Families residing in the UK are documented within case studies 1-3 and the families within Japan are discussed within the case studies of families 4-8. The discussion within each case study will focus on:

1. Does having an older sibling influence the L2 development and bilingual process of the younger sibling?
2. Which language is used between the members of the families?

As part of the study, parents were asked to rate their child's bilingual status from the categories of:

- a. **Balanced bilingual** (They can speak both languages in equal proficiency)
- b. **Dominant bilingual** (One language is dominant over the other) If this is the case which language is dominant, English or Japanese?
- c. **Passive bilingual** (They can understand the second language but cannot speak it proficiently if at all)

The parent's answers are included within the tables at the start of each case study that also detail the make-up of each family.

## The UK based families

Case studies 1–3 give an account of the families who reside in the UK.

### The case study of family one

Family one consisted of an older sister and her younger brother. They are described as being passive bilinguals by their parents. As the father cannot speak Japanese they are reliant on their mother for Japanese language input.

Table 3. *Family 1*

Parents	Children	Parent perception of their child's bilingual ability
Japanese mother English father	Older sister (9) Younger brother (7)	Passive bilinguals

The parents both stated that their children never speak in Japanese with each other. The Japanese mother also suggested that having an older sibling hinders rather than supports the bilingual development of the younger brother. As table 4 below shows only 30% of language input within the house is in Japanese. This is through the Japanese mother. Although they have Japanese language resources such as DVD's, the children especially the youngest one, prefers media in English. The mother suggested that if the father could speak Japanese there would be more Japanese spoken within the home.

Table 4. *Language used from parent to child*

	To Child 1 (9)		To Child 2 (7)	
Mother	English	70%	English	90%
	Japanese	30%	Japanese	10%
Father	English	99%	English	99%
	Japanese	1%	Japanese	1%

The children attend a Japanese language school twice a week but the mother acknowledges that this is not enough minority language exposure. As she only speaks Japanese with her children 30% of the time she said that she feels she needs to be more proactive and speak to them more in her L1. The children however, only speak to her in Japanese a maximum of 10% of the time as illustrated in table 5.

Table 5. *Language used from child to family members*

	To mother		To father		Child 1	Child 2	
Child 1 (12)	English	90%	English	100%	X	English	95%
	Japanese	10%	Japanese	0%		Japanese	5%
Child 2 (9)	English	95%	English	100%	English	100%	X
	Japanese	5%	Japanese	0%	Japanese	0%	

The parents describe their children as passive bilinguals who can understand more than they can produce. The mother laments that she may not do enough Japanese educational activities with her children in comparison to other Japanese families within the community and feels the Japanese input the children are receiving is not enough.

### The case study of family two

The children within this family complete a correspondence course that they complete every month and attend a Japanese language school twice monthly. They also go to Japan every year for 6 weeks, 2 of which they attend a Japanese elementary school. The father cannot speak Japanese well but he is very supportive of their L2 development. Their mother is very determined to raise her children to speak Japanese and the effort that she and her husband have invested has produced two competent Japanese speakers, the older sister being more proficient of the two.

Table 6. *Family 2*

Parents	Children	Parent perception of their child's bilingual ability
Japanese mother English father	Older sister (9) Younger sister (7)	Both dominant bilinguals*English

\*denotes the dominant language

Both parents suggested that the presence of a sibling supports rather than hinders the development of the L2 in the youngest sibling. The eldest helps her youngest sister with her Japanese homework and at times they speak in Japanese together, especially in the presence of their Japanese mother. At the dinner table the mother and daughters speak in Japanese although not exclusively as the father cannot speak it fluently. Through observations at home and at their Japanese language school it was evident that the children spoke in Japanese in the presence of other Japanese parents. Both parents suggested that the parents along with the company they are in determines what choice of language they will speak in, and they will code switch accordingly. Table 7 outlines what language the parents speak to their children in.

Table 7. *Language used from parent to child*

	Child1 (9)		Child2 (7)	
Mother	English	60%	English	80%
	Japanese	40%	Japanese	20%
Father	English	98%	English	100%
	Japanese	2%	Japanese	0%

The children get the majority of their Japanese input from their mother and a little from each other as

shown in table 8. They do however study hard in terms of doing homework and stick to a course based on a syllabus designed by the Japanese ministry of education. The older child's Japanese is better as she has spent more time in Japan, as she was born there and left for England when she was two. The younger sister has weaker Japanese ability but the yearly Japan trips have seen her Japanese improve.

**Table 8. Language used from child to family members**

	To mother		To father		Child 1	Child 2	
Child 1 (9)	English Japanese	60% 40%	English Japanese	98% 2%	X	English Japanese	90% 10%
Child 2 (7)	English Japanese	80% 20%	English Japanese	100% 0%	English Japanese	90% 10%	X

### The case study of family three

The parents of family three described their children as passive bilinguals and during interviews and observations the children rarely spoke in Japanese to their mother or to other Japanese speakers present. The English father suggested that because he does not speak Japanese this does not help in the raising of a bilingual child in the UK. However he stressed that belonging to a close knit Japanese community and making his children attend a local Japanese school helps to keep them within a Japanese language environment. He conceded that getting his children to speak in Japanese is difficult and their exposure to the language is limited. They try to get yearly trips to Japan but financially this is not always achievable.

**Table 9. Family 3**

Parents	Children	Parent perception of their child's bilingual ability
Japanese mother English father	Older sister (9) Younger brother (7)	Passive bilinguals

The father does not speak Japanese, leaving the Japanese input solely down to the mother. The children themselves spoke in broken Japanese and their pronunciation was very un-native like. These assertions were not just made by the researcher but also by native Japanese speakers who listened to a sample of interview recordings. The children spoke in English with each other and responded in English to their Japanese mother even when spoken to in Japanese. However, the Japanese parent asserted that having a sibling encourages L2 acquisition but the English father said the opposite as they only converse in Japanese together when forced or when in a Japanese environment such as their Japanese language school. The children's main source of native Japanese was perceived to be at 30%. This meant that only 30% of the time the Japanese mother spoke to her children in Japanese as shown in table 10 below. This L2 exposure along with a Japanese language school was the only input they receive.

Table 10. *Language used from parent to child*

	Child 1 (9)	Child 2 (7)
Mother	English 70% Japanese 30%	English 70% Japanese 30%
Father	English 100% Japanese 0%	English 100% Japanese 0%

Perhaps as a consequence of receiving little Japanese language input the children only spoke around 5% of the time with in Japanese with each other and their Japanese mother as outlined in table 11.

Table 11. *Language used from child to family members*

	To mother	To father	Child 1	Child 2
Child 1 (9)	English 95% Japanese 5%	English 100% Japanese 0%	X	English 95% Japanese 5%
Child 2 (7)	English 95% Japanese 5%	English 100% Japanese 0%	English 95% Japanese 5%	X

### The Japan based families

Case studies 4–8 give an account of the families who reside in Japan.

### The case study of family four

As illustrated in table 12 below, the parents in this family perceived their children as dominant bilinguals with Japanese as the dominant language. The children have achieved success in Eiken (a test of English communication) and the parents are very proactive in their children’s English education.

Table 12. *Family 4*

Parents	Children	Parent perception of their child’s bilingual ability
Japanese mother Irish father	Older brother (10) Younger sister (7)	Both dominant bilinguals*Japanese

\*denotes the dominant language

The father suggested that the presence of an older sibling could support the development of bilingualism with his younger child. He mentioned that the children can learn from each other and share newly learned vocabulary. He did concede however, that he has to remind his children to speak to each other in English as well as to his wife. The older brother does not speak to his younger sister in English and does so only when encouraged to by his father. This was evident during my observations but they spoke to myself and to each other in English when I was present. They also spoke to their father in English and adhered to the

OPOl approach. The father suggested that the parent rather than a sibling is more influential in the choice of the language used by the child and that the older sibling rarely teaches the younger sister English with the exception of some words which she may not know.

As evident within the table below the parents only speak in their native language to their children although the mother occasionally speaks to them in English which she said accounted for 10% of their interactions.

**Table 13. Language used from parent to child**

	Child 1 (10)		Child 2 (7)	
Mother	English	10%	English	10%
	Japanese	90%	Japanese	90%
Father	English	100%	English	100%
	Japanese	0%	Japanese	0%

Table 14 shows the data in percentage form of how often the children use Japanese or English with each other and with their parents. For example, child one speaks to his mother 95% of the time in Japanese but 100% of the time in English to his father. This shows that the children adhere to OPOl approach with their father. This may be helped by the fact that the father’s Japanese is at a basic level. The mother suggested that although she encourages English usage at home with her the children revert back to Japanese almost immediately.

**Table 14. Language used from child to family members**

	To mother	To father	To child 1	To child 2
Child 1 (10)	English 5% Japanese 95%	English 100% Japanese 0%	X	English 5% Japanese 95%
Child 2 (7)	English 5% Japanese 95%	English 100% Japanese 0%	English 5% Japanese 95%	X

The parents stated that prior to the older sibling going to nursery (starts at age 4 in Japan) the children spoke in English together as the family adopted a MlAH (Minority language at home) approach but that since the influence of nursery, whereby Japanese is the only language of input, this influenced the older child to speak more Japanese with his sibling, and now they mostly converse in Japanese together as illustrated in table 14 above.

### The case study of family five

The make-up of family five is outlined in table 15. The parents try to use the OPOl approach in raising their child to be bilingual and they consider their children to be bordering on being passive to dominant

bilinguals with Japanese being the dominant language.

Table 15. *Family 5*

Parents	Children	Parent perception of their child's bilingual ability
Japanese mother American father	Older sister (12) Younger brother (10)	Passive to dominant bilinguals*English

\*denotes the dominant language

The father suggested that having a sibling can support L2 acquisition in his children, however, he does not require his children to speak English to each other and consequently the children rarely speak to each other in English. The children do, however, help each other with English for Eiken tests. The mother wants the children to speak in English more in the presence of their father. In my presence however, the children did not speak in English to each other and often looked to their father for guidance when speaking English to me.

The father suggested that it is the responsibility of the parent to influence what language the children choose to speak in rather than the children themselves and admitted that although he speaks in English with his children he could be more proactive in their bilingual development. The parents adhere to an OPOL approach as shown in table 16, although the father may occasionally slip into Japanese.

Table 16. *Language used from parent to child*

	Child 1 (12)	Child 2 (10)
Mother	English 0% Japanese 100%	English 0% Japanese 100%
Father	English 95% Japanese 5%	English 95% Japanese 5%

Table 17 shows in what language the child interacts with his or her family members in percentage form.

Table 17. *Language used from child to family members*

	To mother	To father	Child 1	Child 2
Child 1 (12)	English 0% Japanese 100%	English 30% Japanese 70%	X	English 0% Japanese 100%
Child 2 (10)	English 0% Japanese 100%	English 30% Japanese 70%	English 0% Japanese 100%	X

The father has an advanced level in Japanese, which may explain why his children speak to him in Japanese most of the time. He also predominately speaks in Japanese to his wife. This would suggest that

Japanese is the dominant language within the home. This relates to the literature that a lack of input in the minority language can lead to it being used less. The father speaks in English with his children but the results here may suggest that because the children only hear Japanese for the most part, unless spoken to in English by their father, that the use of Japanese becomes the default language.

### The case study of family six

As shown in table 18, family six has one of the youngest children who is only two and is still developing her language skills. Her brother, who is six, was originally brought up through a minority language at home (MLAH) approach as his mother is fluent in English along with his native English-speaking parent.

Table 18. *Family 6*

Parents	Children	Parent perception of their child's bilingual ability
Japanese mother Irish father	Older brother (6) Younger sister (2)	Japanese mother Both dominant bilinguals* Japanese

\*denotes the dominant language

English was the stronger language with the older brother until he went to nursery at the age of 4 where he was exposed to a Japanese only language environment. This gradually led to a process whereby Japanese became the more significant language socially and he now speaks in Japanese with his mother rather than English but adheres to English with his father. The dominant language has now become his default language and he automatically uses it with his sister, who in turn repeats what he says. The parents agree that this is fine for their daughter's interaction and language development but not for her bilingual progression.

The father and mother ask their son to use English with his sister but he soon falls into Japanese after a few minutes. However when the father interacts with them the older son will speak in English with his sister. At the time of observations however, the daughter used mainly Japanese words with her father, but as the parents suggested, their daughter's language progression in both languages is what you would expect from a child of that age.

Now the parents mainly employ an OPOL approach although the mother tries to use English in her interactions with her children, although the older child will always reply in Japanese 80% of the time as illustrated in table 19. The father is also at an advanced level in Japanese but uses English mostly with his wife. Unlike family five above, even though his child knows his father can speak Japanese well, he never uses it with his father and this is a pattern he seems to naturally adhere to since he was born. The father was also very active in his first child's L2 development from birth and feels he needs to take the same approach for his second child as he cannot depend on his son to give the required L2 input to his 2 year

old sister.

Table 19. *Language used from parent to child*

	Child 1 (6)		Child 2 (2)	
Mother	English	20%	English	20%
	Japanese	80%	Japanese	80%
Father	English	100%	English	100%
	Japanese	0%	Japanese	0%

The parents described their oldest son as a dominant bilingual. Japanese is the dominant Language. Their two year old daughter is too young to classify but they did say that although she cannot speak in Japanese and English very well she understands everything and speaks in words and broken sentences. However as her input in English comes predominately from the father her output is mainly in Japanese with her sibling and mother. She only engages in English with her father 50% of the time as illustrated in table 20.

Table 20. *Language used from child to family members*

	To mother		To father		Child 1	Child 2	
Child 1 (6)	English	5%	English	100%	X	English	5%
	Japanese	95%	Japanese	0%		Japanese	95%
Child 2 (2)	English	20%	English	50%	English	0%	X
	Japanese	80%	Japanese	50%	Japanese	100%	

### The case study of family seven

Family seven as shown in table 21 has the biggest group of siblings with four boys. The parents described their boys as being dominant bilinguals.

Table 21. *Family 7*

Parents	Children	Parent perception of their child's bilingual ability
Japanese mother American father	Oldest brother (17) Second oldest brother (12) Third oldest brother (10) Youngest brother (8)	Dominant bilinguals *Japanese

\*denotes the dominant language

The father stated that having four boys supports bilingual development as there are more conversational partners to use English with. He never has to remind them to use English together. In my presence they only spoke in English with each other. They also play English TV games together which encourages the

use of English as the medium of play is in that language.

Interestingly when another boy with a similar bicultural bilingual background played with 2 of these 4 boys they all used English but when a Japanese boy started to play with them they all code switched to Japanese and reverted back to English when the Japanese boy left. This reflects the father's comments when he suggested that his children speak in English most of the time and code switch to Japanese in the company of Japanese speakers.

Although this family has tried to adopt a MLAH approach, especially when each child was younger, the older children now speak mostly in Japanese to their Japanese mother but the two youngest boys speak predominately in English with their mother. When asked if he thought the language used by his children is more influenced by parents or the children themselves he replied "if both siblings and parents are present simultaneously, then more by parents, but this can also be affected by the presence of other Japanese-only speaking friends or family. In this situation they will speak in Japanese".

The table below illustrates the amount of English and Japanese used from each to parent to the four boys. The father employs a predominately OPOL approach whilst the mother speaks in both Japanese and English to her children. Japanese is slightly higher at 60%.

**Table 22. Language used from parent to child**

	To child 1 (17)		To child 2 (12)		To child 3 (10)		To child 4 (8)	
Mother	English	40%	English	40%	English	40%	English	40%
	Japanese	60%	Japanese	60%	Japanese	60%	Japanese	60%
Father	English	95%	English	95%	English	95%	English	95%
	Japanese	5%	Japanese	5%	Japanese	5%	Japanese	5%

Table 23 below shows how much English and Japanese the boys use with each other and their parents. This family's household consisted of a lot of minority language input. Both parents use English with their children and again to varying degrees the children responded in turn. The children also use English with each other especially through 'play' such as TV video games that were in the medium of English. The parents perceived their children as dominant bilinguals with Japanese being the dominant language. The children have also experienced success in Eiken examinations.

**Table 23. Language used from child to family members**

	To mother	To father	Child 1	Child 2	Child 3	Child 4
Child 1 (17)	English 40% Japanese 60%	English 95% Japanese 5%	X	English 70% Japanese 30%	English 70% Japanese 30%	English 60% Japanese 40%
Child 2 (12)	English 40% Japanese 60%	English 90% Japanese 10%	English 70% Japanese 30%	X	English 70% Japanese 30%	English 60% Japanese 40%
Child 3 (10)	English 70% Japanese 30%	English 85% Japanese 15%	English 70% Japanese 30%	English 70% Japanese 30%	X	English 60% Japanese 40%
Child 4 (8)	English 70% Japanese 30%	English 80% Japanese 20%	English 70% Japanese 30%	English 70% Japanese 30%	English 60% Japanese 40%	X

### The case study of family eight

Family eight consisted of an older sister and her brother and were the only children perceived to be balanced bilinguals by their parents.

**Table 24. Family 8**

Parents	Children	Parent perception of their child's bilingual ability
Japanese father Australian mother	Older sister (12) Younger brother (9)	Balanced bilinguals

The mother suggested that having a sibling could hinder the L2 acquisition of her children as it is “less time spent directly interacting with a native speaker parent”. Both of the children are enrolled in international schools including a month stay in a school in Australia on a yearly basis. They were the most ‘balanced’ bilinguals among the participants and the mother stated that as they go to international school some Japanese mothers commented on her children’s Japanese ability as not being ‘Japanese like’.

**Table 25. Language used from parent to child**

	Child 1 (12)	Child 2 (9)
Mother	English 100% Japanese 0%	English 100% Japanese 0%
Father	English 60% Japanese 40%	English 50% Japanese 50%

These siblings speak in English together and with their mother as highlighted in table 26 below. As the father can speak English the oldest child speaks mainly in English with her father although the youngest son predominately uses Japanese with his father. Interestingly the mother suggested that the older sibling does not support their younger siblings L2 development. Essentially however, they speak in English together. The children’s balanced bilingual level as categorized by their mother is not just down to the

siblings speaking to each other in English. Input from their international school, English language school and the monthly trips abroad to Australia in an Australian school all amount to produce these balanced bilingual children.

**Table 26. Language used from child to family members**

	To mother	To father	Child 1	Child 2
Child 1 (12)	English 100% Japanese 0%	English 60% Japanese 40%	X	English 100% Japanese 0%
Child 2 (9)	English 100% Japanese 0%	English 0% Japanese 100%	English 100% Japanese 0%	X

## Discussion

All of the parents interviewed agreed that the parent is more influential than the older sibling in determining the language choice of their children. The majority of the parents want their children to converse with each other in the L2 especially within the home but realize that the dominant language of the society they live in becomes the more socially significant language. Common to the families residing in the UK and Japan, the children who experienced more input in the L2 at home from their native speaking parent, and who used the L2 with their parent were classified as dominant or balanced bilinguals by their parents. Native speaking parents who used the L2 sparingly with their children, and the children who also rarely used the L2 with their parent, were categorized as passive bilinguals by their parents.

The main input that the children received was predominately from the native speaking parent. This was especially true for the UK residing families where the only Japanese speaker was the mother, as the English fathers had little to no Japanese language ability. Families in Japan however benefited from both parents being able to speak English, a native speaker and a Japanese learner of English to varying degrees of proficiency. In monolingual countries such as Japan and the UK having both parents who can speak the L2 is to the advantage for their child's bilingual development.

The data within this paper suggests that the more input the child receives in the minority language, whether it is from one or both parents, the sibling or influence outside of the home such as international schooling, the more proficient and confident the child is in speaking the L2. What was apparent however is that the older sibling can shape and influence how and in what language the younger sibling communicates in. If the siblings speak in the L2 together this can support the bilingual development of the younger child. Conversely, if they only interact in the L1 this can be detrimental to the younger child's proficiency in the L2.

## Conclusions

Most of the siblings within this study speak to each other in their L1. This includes their language of play and interaction. Yamamoto (1987) has stated that if siblings speak in their L2 together productive bilingual acquisition can be attained. However, based on this small data sample, it can be suggested that overall, the older sibling who interacts with their brother or sister only in the L1 can be a hindrance to the development of bilingualism in the younger sibling.

However, relying on the older sibling for L2 input is not a reliable strategy for bringing up a child bilingually. The parent's role is also pivotal in engaging the children in the L2 and giving them exposure to the language through media texts and networking with other similar families.

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